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BCI Principles & Criteria Annual Self-Assessment –

Brief Information

Dear Producer / Programme Partner,

All producers participating in the BCI programme — Producer Units (PU), Large Farms and Large Farm Groups — must complete a self-assessment every year. This is a condition for obtaining and maintaining the right to trade BCI Cotton. This document summarises who completes the self-assessment, with which tool and when, the content of the survey, and the consequences of not submitting it on time.

1. What is a self-assessment and why is it mandatory?

A self-assessment is an annual assurance activity in which the producer scores their own performance against the indicators of the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria. It aims to demonstrate that self-monitoring continues between external audits.

- It is mandatory: the annual self-assessment must be completed in order to obtain or maintain the right to trade BCI Cotton.
- The survey (Qualtrics online survey)/Self-Assessment has been prepared according to the Principles and Criteria standard. Regardless of which P&C version you were previously audited against, you must complete this version.
- Aims: to maintain self-monitoring between audits; to support PUs in meeting the Principle 1 requirements (1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 — monitoring, consultation, annual activity plan review); to measure the readiness of new Large Farms for certification.
- The results are not a penalty tool; they are a management tool for the PU/Large Farm manager to identify areas for improvement themselves.

2. Who completes it, with which tool, and when?

Producer type	Who completes · tool · submission	Reference
Producer Unit (PU)	The PU Manager completes it separately for each PU. Tool: the Excel template provided by BCI — sent to the Programme Partners by the Country Team during the season, so it can be completed throughout the season. Submission: 4 weeks after the end of harvest ; collected by the in-country assurance team.	cl. 2.9.1
Role of the Programme Partner	The Programme Partner may assist in a supervisory role ; however, the information must be at PU level and, for all PUs under the partner, must not be completed collectively .	Overview
New Large Farm (non-US)	Completed by the farm owner or manager. Tool: Qualtrics online survey . Two parts: Part 1 → by the end of sowing (for the auditor to review at the first audit), Part 2 → 4 weeks after the end of harvest . Part 2 contains fields to verify the information given in Part 1 and new questions asked only at the end of the season.	cl. 2.10.5
Existing Large Farm (non-US)	Single survey, end-of-season requirement: 4 weeks after the end of harvest .	cl. 2.10.5

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Producer type	Who completes · tool · submission	Reference
Sharing of the survey	The survey is sent to Large Farms via Qualtrics 4 weeks before the submission date.	Overview
New PU set-up phase	One of the PU set-up requirements is that the self-assessment is completed using the form/template provided by BCI and sent to BCI .	cl. 2.3.2

3. Prerequisite for PUs only: Internal assessment

Before completing the self-assessment at Producer Unit level, the PU Manager and Field Facilitators must carry out an annual **internal assessment**. The self-assessment is based on the results of this internal assessment.

- **Sample:** In Smallholder PUs, **at least 10% of the Learning Groups**; in Medium Farm PUs, **at least 10% of the Medium Farms**.
- During the set-up phase, the internal assessment establishes the **baseline** of existing farmer practices; after certification, it measures the **level of understanding and adoption by farmers** of the practices conveyed through training.
- The PU Manager **keeps a record of the internal assessment**. This record **is not sent to BCI**; however, auditors may take this record into account when auditing Indicator 1.1.2.
- The internal assessment may be carried out as part of the ongoing monitoring activities under Indicator 1.1.2, and BCI's internal assessment template may be used.
- **Timing:** the recommended start is the beginning of sowing, at the latest by the end of harvest.

4. On what information is it based?

The self-assessment must be completed on the basis of the records you have, not from memory. To the extent applicable, the following sources are used:

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| ☐ Certification audit results | ☐ Labour monitoring and remediation system |
| ☐ Readiness Check | ☐ Practice adoption data |
| ☐ PU Support Visits | ☐ Results Indicator Reporting (RIR) data |
| ☐ Internal assessment | ☐ Previous self-assessments and progress on actions |

5. Structure of the Self-Assessment — 9 sections

Section	What is asked?
1. Producer information	Producer code, project, country, province, partner, farm category. PUs also report the number of female and male Field Facilitators.
2. Contextual information	Exceptional circumstances affecting the season (flood, economic crisis, etc.). Large Farms upload an organisation chart if any, and state management changes during the season and their impact. Large Farms in Türkiye must upload their ÇKS (Farmer Registration System) record or an official document showing the status of their production land.

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Section	What is asked?
3. Land conversion	Relates to Principles and Criteria Indicators 2.4.1 and 2.4.2. You confirm that "no cotton has been grown on land converted from natural ecosystems after 31 December 2020"; if you cannot confirm this, an explanation is requested. You describe how you monitor past, present and future land conversion. Uploading a separate land conversion self-declaration form is no longer required.
4. Consultation activities and findings	<i>(Not applicable to Large Farms.)</i> Under Criterion 1.1: a description of the consultation carried out, the stakeholder list, the priorities set according to community needs, and the selected livelihood focus areas.
5. Monitoring of improvements	<i>(Partially applicable to Large Farms.)</i> Five sub-sections: lessons learned from the results indicator reports; positive changes in farmer attitudes (not applicable to LF); practices whose adoption is still low, their barriers and steps to overcome them; capacity-strengthening plans and the training needs of Field Facilitators (not applicable to LF); at least 5 locally meaningful, four-year continuous improvement targets — at least 3 of which must relate to regenerative agriculture , how they are measured and the progress status. A separate practice adoption record document is no longer required.
6. Labour monitoring and remediation	Relates to Principle 5, in particular Indicator 5.1.1. The number of workers in the labour profile by gender; the two busiest labour months of the year; the labour risks prioritised for monitoring and the status of the interventions addressing them (planned / ongoing / completed). Risk categories: child labour, discrimination, forced labour, freedom of association, seasonal/migrant labour, OHS (general, heat stress, pesticide exposure, water-sanitation-hygiene), wages/income and other.
7. Indicator-based self-assessment	For each indicator of the Principles and Criteria standard, you score your season performance from 1 to 5 (see the box below).
8. Outcomes	Areas where progress was made during the season and how this was achieved; areas requiring more work next season. In addition, the unintended effects of the BCI programme on farmers, communities and the environment — which may be positive (use of BCI practices on other crops, learning groups working together on other topics) or negative (conversion of natural habitats into cotton land, depletion of natural resources for bio-input production, food insecurity due to over-focus on cotton).
9. BCI Producer Monitoring	Completed only by producers who have received a BCI Producer Monitoring assessment and, as a result, had an observation or gap identified. The certification body's initial/renewal audit findings are not written here. The findings, the actions taken to date, their results/effects and the difficulties encountered are requested.

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Indicator scoring scale (Section 7) — the most critical point

- **1 – Very poor** (systematic non-conformity level)
- **2 – Poor** (occasional non-conformity level)
- **3 – Open to improvement** (compliant with an observation)
- **4 – Good** (compliant)
- **5 – Excellent** (beyond the minimum requirements)

For every indicator you score 3 or below you must write what the gap is — even if the problem is outside your control — and the steps you plan to take to close this gap. This is **mandatory**.

Loss of the right to trade

If a Producer Unit or Large Farm does not submit the self-assessment **at an acceptable quality** and complete by the deadline, it **may lose the right to trade BCI Cotton**.

Under Table 23 (Withdrawal of the Certificate), the compliance requirements in Table 8 no longer being met — i.e. **failure to submit required information such as the self-assessment or RIR** — is a reason for withdrawal of the certificate. In this case there is no fixed waiting period for re-entry; **once compliance is restored**, re-entry is possible.

Extension of time possible

In exceptional circumstances, additional time may be requested to complete the self-assessment. This is a **variation** request and is submitted to BCI under Section 5.16. Request it before missing the deadline.

6. What happens if you do not submit on time or at sufficient quality?

In addition, if no gaps appear in your self-assessment but many gaps are found during the audit, the certification body is expected to open a non-conformity via Indicator 1.1.2 for PUs and Indicator 1.1.4 for Large Farms. Therefore, honest and realistic scoring is in your favour.

7. Responsibilities of the Programme Partner and Group Manager

Programme Partners (for Producer Units)

- Carry out the activities in Table 4 according to the defined season calendar and submit them to BCI.
- Be responsible for the **accuracy of the information they collect and submit**.
- Obtain the self-assessment template from the Country Team, deliver it to the PUs during the season, and provide support in a supervisory role — **not completing it collectively**.
- Ensure that the self-assessment is completed and submitted to BCI during new PU set-up.

Large Farm Group Managers

- Ensure that BCI self-assessment submissions **are made on time**.
- In the annual internal audit, assess each individual farm on the basis of its own internal management system — **including completed self-assessments and the correction of findings**.
- When adding a new farm to the group, ensure that the farm management completes the BCI self-assessment and **submits it to BCI**.
- Carry out the annual management review and submit its record to the certification body.

Individual farms in the group

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- Review **all compliance gaps identified in the self-assessment** and ensure that they are resolved on time.

8. How is your self-assessment used in the audit?

- At the application stage, the certification body requests, for Producer Units, **a copy of the completed self-assessment**.
- When the audit is planned, the producer's history — **including the self-assessment** — is assessed together with previous audit reports, BCI monitoring reports and corrective action records.
- In PU first audits, the self-assessment is included in the pre-site document review.
- During the on-site audit, **the self-assessment records** are examined as part of the document review.
- The auditor uses the self-assessment record — in PUs **together with the internal assessment record** — to assess the producer's ability to identify non-conformity risks.
- In the PU management interview, the design, implementation and improvement follow-up of the monitoring plan — **including the internal assessment and the self-assessment** — are discussed.

9. Final checklist before submission

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| ☐ If PU: internal assessment completed first (10% sample) and record kept | ☐ 3 or below: for each such indicator, the gap and the planned steps were written |
| ☐ Current BCI tool used (PU: Excel template · LF: Qualtrics survey) | ☐ At least 5 continuous improvement targets defined, at least 3 of them regenerative agriculture |
| ☐ Completed separately for each PU, not collectively | ☐ Land conversion declaration made and monitoring method described |
| ☐ Answers based on audit, support visit, RIR and monitoring records | ☐ If a Large Farm in Türkiye: ÇKS record uploaded |
| ☐ All indicators scored from 1 to 5 | ☐ Deadline scheduled: end of harvest + 4 weeks |

10. Frequently asked questions

Do I send the self-assessment to CERES?

No. The P&C self-assessment is sent to **BCI** — in Producer Units it is collected by the in-country assurance team, and in Large Farms it is submitted via the Qualtrics survey. CERES requests this document from you as part of audit preparation and the document review.

Will I lose my certificate if I give myself a poor score?

No. The self-assessment results are not directly linked to the certification decision. The real risk is the opposite: **high scores that do not reflect reality**, when they conflict with the gaps found during the audit, lead to a 1.1.2 / 1.1.4 non-conformity.

Can the Programme Partner complete it on my behalf?

The Programme Partner **may assist in a supervisory role**, but the information must be at PU level and must not be completed collectively for the PUs under the partner. The responsibility lies with the PU Manager.

I was previously audited against P&C v3.1, which version do I complete?

In any case, **P&C v3.2**. The survey has been prepared according to this version, and all producers complete it regardless of which version they were previously audited against.

I will not be able to meet the deadline, what should I do?

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If there are exceptional circumstances, a **variation (extension of time) request** must be submitted to BCI under Section 5.16 before the deadline passes. Delay without a request may lead to loss of the right to trade BCI Cotton.

Do I also need to upload the land conversion self-declaration form?

No, it is no longer required. The declaration within the survey is sufficient; if you cannot confirm the declaration, an additional explanation is requested.

This document has been prepared by CERES for producer information purposes on the basis of the BCI Principles and Criteria Monitoring and Certification Requirements, the Producer Self-Assessment Overview and the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria. The binding text is the original English documents published by BCI; for the current version, check bettercotton.org/document-library . For your questions, contact your CERES representative or helpdesk@bettercotton.org .