

That Organic Cotton T-Shirt May Not Be as Organic as You Think

New York Times article, published Feb. 13th, 2022

Reply by bioRe Foundation, 9th of March 2022

Dear partners, supporters, donors and friends,

The NYT Article sheds light on the non-transparent certification system for organic cotton in India, which offers many opportunities for fraud. **We highly appreciate efforts of independent journalists to disclose fraudulent business practices, as they harm the entire sector including those who are committed to producing and selling real organic cotton.** The team of journalists focuses on India, as it is the largest single producer of organic cotton in the world and accounts for half of the organic cotton sold worldwide. However, experts estimate that between half and four-fifths of the cotton sold as organic from India is not genuine.

The efforts of the non-profit and independent bioRe foundation are aimed at enhancing organic agriculture and focusing on a variety of social projects to support the livelihood and well-being of the organic cotton farming families. The foundation has no commercial interests and responsibilities. The foundation works closely with Remei AG to ensure that cotton bought by Remei AG from these farmers and sold to customers around the world is truly organic and also meets high social standards.

In its replica to the NYT article “NOT TRUE FOR US!” - Remei AG states that bioRe Sustainable Cotton purchased, processed and sold by Remei India Ltd and Remei AG meets highest standards to prevent GMO contamination. **bioRe Sustainable Cotton is traced from its origin until sold to textile companies or retailers (see biore.ch). A sound control system was established by Remei India Ltd. to minimize GMO contamination in seeds or anywhere else along the supply chain.** This significantly reduces the risk of fraudulent behaviour of partners. bioRe Sustainable Textiles contains a 100% of bioRe Sustainable Cotton.

Jointly with Remei India Ltd and bioRe Association India, bioRe Foundation invests in training of farmers in a variety of fields from biodynamic cotton production to water saving irrigation technologies. Together with the University of Agriculture Sciences, Dharwad and FIBL, we run several research activities such as testing different agricultural approaches, but most importantly **research on organic cotton seeds**. Faced with a severe shortage of GMO-free seeds for cultivation available in India that also affects Remei India Ltd., the research program aims to overcome these challenges.

bioRe Sustainable Cotton also meets high social criteria. Remei AG provides farmers with a 5-year purchase guarantee and a premium of 15% on market price is paid. Farmers furthermore enjoy free agricultural inputs and free transport of cotton purchased is provided by Remei India Ltd.

Thanks to its numerous generous donors, bioRe Foundation together with bioRe Association India are supporting farmers with social projects in the areas of education, health, sanitation, water and others. In collaboration with bioRe Foundation and bioRe Association, CO₂ emissions of Remei AG and Coop are reduced by insetting activities that offer additional benefits to farmers, such as biogas plants in India. By replacing open fire stoves with biogas and smokeless stoves, the use of firewood as well as the workload on women and children is reduced, respiratory diseases are prevented and the environment is protected.

Unfortunately, the NYT journalists did not adhere to ethical standards of serious investigations.

Thus, the article contains numerous misleading and confusing statements as to the activities of the bioRe foundation's support for organic cotton farmer families in India.

There is a misleading intermingling of different entities: "bioRe foundation", "bioRe cotton project projects", "bioRe facilities", "bioRe ginning mill", "bioRe", are mentioned in the article without a correct understanding of the roles and functions of the different actors and organisations.

Aashish Joshi is a team leader of bioRe Association India overseeing the above-mentioned social projects, and not, as wrongly suggested in the article, employed to "oversee the bioRe organic cotton project". Mr. Joshi explained farmer's premium issues in general to highlight the challenge many organic farmers face today in India, where they do not receive a premium. He did not speak about any system bioRe Association India is engaged in. Farmers registered with bioRe India Ltd. have received their premium since 2007, constantly and correctly. His statement was taken out of context, he was not informed about it being printed, nor had he given permission

Furthermore, NTY Journalists also never asked for permission to take photos or obtained permission under misrepresentation.

For 25 years, bioRe foundation has been dedicated to improve farmers livelihoods through organic agriculture and we will continue this important journey together with our partners, supporters, donors and friends.

Best regards,



Jürg Peritz

Chairman of the board of trustees



Monika Tobler

CEO