

## **Social and Environmental Impacts of Pesticide Use in Cotton Production**

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### **Abstract**

*Cotton is the world's most important nonfood crop, yet it is responsible for the release of chemical pesticides worth 2 billion U.S. dollars. It accounts for 25% of global insecticide releases—more than any other single crop. 99% of the world's cotton farmers live and work in developing countries and are responsible for 75% of global cotton production. These farmers and their families suffer low levels of safety awareness, lack of access to protective apparatus, illiteracy, poor labelling of pesticides, inadequate safeguards, and chronic poverty. Pesticide poisonings are a fact in cotton producers' lives and are often taken for granted by pesticide users in developing countries. Chemical pesticides not only have a negative health impact, but they are responsible for economic loss and too often lead into indebtedness.*

*At the same time, hazardous pesticides associated with global cotton production represent a substantial threat to global freshwater resources. Pesticide use and production in monoculture, furthermore, pose a major threat to biodiversity.*

*Organic cotton production offers a strong alternative to current conventional production methods. To date, ca. 100,000 farmers around the globe profit from organic cotton production. Increasing demand in northern consumer markets offers the opportunity to follow a “top-down” approach to improve the overall situation in cotton production.*

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