Aggregated Verification & Implementation Report 2024

Cotton made in Africa Standard by Aid by Trade Foundation

Executive Summary

Key findings of CmiA verification activities 2024

In 2024, CmiA worked with **22 partnering cotton companies in 10 African countries** south of the Sahara.

800,000 smallholder families producing about **630,000 tonnes of lint cotton** on an area of about **1.6 million hectares** were verified.

CmiA verified cotton companies conducted farm level **trainings for farmers** on various topics, ranging from good agricultural practices to fighting child labour.

CmiA verified partners **achieve good to very good ratings** in the four sustainability pillars: the Prosperity pillar performs best, followed by Management, People and Planet.

Compared to 2022 and 2023, partners **improved or maintained their scores** in all pillars except in the Planet pillar, where there was a slight deterioration.

On principle level, partners are performing well in **Principle 10 ('High quality inputs & pre-financing')** and **Principle 11 ('Productivity & fibre quality').** There's room to grow in **Principle 7 ('Land use, biodiversity and climate')** and **Principle 8 ('GMO-free, water & soil').**

Several events for **knowledge transfer and exchange** were facilitated to support CmiA partners in implementing the standard.

The AbTF (co-)financed several projects for **training and other implementation measures.**

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INTRODUCTION

About

Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) is a well-recognised standard that follows a **continuous improvement approach** for a sustainable development of the cotton sector in African countries south of the Sahara.

Compliance with the standard requirements is regularly monitored by **third-party verifiers** to give independent feedback to cotton companies on their performance and to ensure CmiA remains a **credible standard** that brands and retailers, and ultimately consumers can have confidence in. The verification process is a tool which at the same time checks if the cotton companies comply with the **standard minimum requirements**, and independently assesses the success in continuously improving the sustainability performance, thus motivating each company to further advance.

By comparing verification results across the certified cotton companies, the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) can analyse remaining challenges and jointly act with all relevant stakeholders to overcome those hurdles.

Independent and qualified third-party verifiers regularly check the performance of cotton companies ("Managing Entity") participating in CmiA, on field level – i.e. related to the contracted small-holder farmers – and at the ginnery level – i.e. in one or more ginning factories – against the requirements of the Cotton made in Africa standards (CmiA and CmiA Organic).

The **annually published Aggregated Verification & Implementation Report** provides information on the **results of last years' verification missions**, serves as a reference to monitor future verifications, and helps to continuously revise and improve the work on field and ginnery levels in line with the CmiA standards.

The following chapters comprise an **overview of the 2024 performance results** of verified cotton companies, the **verification management activities** conducted by the AbTF as well as the **implementation support offered**.

The CmiA Standard covers the most significant aspects of cotton cultivation and ginning

The Management Pillar
sets out the requirements related to responsible business conduct, the verification process, and commitment to CmiA values.

The People Pillar
contains requirements intended to define CmiA's understanding of small-scale farmers and to ensure decent working conditions on ginning mill level, it specifically focuses on the empowerment and development of women and children.

The Planet Pillar
aims to cover the most pressing environmental issues and to define how cotton can be cultivated in a way that mitigates negative impacts for nature while increasing the resilience of the agro-ecosystem and the environment of communities farming cotton in rural areas across Africa south of the Sahara.

The Prosperity Pillar
consists of requirements that enable cotton farmers to acquire fundamental business skills and to sustainably increase productivity and quality. On a broader scale, these requirements make it possible for communities to improve their livelihoods and resilience.

The four Pillars of CmiA

Principles of the CmiA Standard

The **CmiA principles** define aspirational goals and expectations for Managing Entities and farmers.

Each of the **12 principles** contains several **criteria**, 58 in total, which must be met to fulfil the principle.

Each criterion, in turn, is defined by concrete indicators. Verifiers use these **measurable indicators** to assess whether the criteria, and therefore the principles, are met.

CmiA standard volume 4 classifies indicators as either **core** or **improvement.**
All core indicators must be fulfilled without non-conformities to obtain or maintain a CmiA certificate.

Managing Entities are responsible for adhering to CmiA principles, criteria, and indicators.

VERIFIED COTTON COMPANIES AND COTTON PRODUCTION IN THE 2023-24 SEASON

In 2024, CmiA worked with 22 partnering cotton companies in 10 African countries south of the Sahara.

1 CÔTE D'IVOIRE
CIDT
COIC
Ivoire Coton
SECO

2 BURKINA FASO
Faso Coton
SOFITEX

3 TOGO
NSCT

4 BENIN
Benin Coton
Label Coton
OBEPAB
SODECO

5 CHAD
Cotontchad

6 CAMEROON
SODECOTON

7 UGANDA
MMP Agro

8 TANZANIA
Alliance Ginneries
Biosustain
S.M. Holdings

9 ZAMBIA
Alliance Ginneries
CGL (Parrogate)
HCT (Parrogate)
LDC Zambia

10 MOZAMBIQUE
SAN JFS

After successfully completing the first verification cycle, **one company from Tanzania and two companies from Benin became new CmiA partners in 2024**, bringing the number of cotton companies verified according to CmiA and CmiA Organic to 22.
In Uganda, one cotton company has been in the onboarding process since 2024 and has undergone its first field-level verification. At the end of 2024, two partnerships with one cotton company from Uganda and one from Zambia were terminated.

CmiA Cotton Production Overview 2024

	2024 Harvest 2023/24
Verified cotton companies (as of 12/2024)	22
Farmers	801,435
There of Organic farmers	32,241
Area (ha)	1,607,947
Seed cotton (mt)	1,504,715
Lint cotton (mt)	630,568
thereof Organic lint cotton	12,267

In 2024, about **800,000 smallholder families** producing about **630,000 tonnes of lint cotton** on an area of about **1.6 million hectares** were verified under the CmiA and CmiA Organic standards.

OVERVIEW OF VERIFICATION MISSIONS IN 2024

Verification Activities Overview 2024

22
COTTON COMPANIES

10
PRODUCTION COUNTRIES

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE
11
13
NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

2
ECOCERT, BURKINA FASO
AFRICERT, KENYA
VERIFICATION COMPANIES

24
VERIFICATION MISSIONS

3
FOR CMIA CANDIDATES

1
WITNESS VERIFICATION IN TANZANIA

24
VERIFIERS

14
ON FIELD LEVEL

10
ON GINNERY LEVEL

FARMER TRAININGS PROVIDED BY CMIA COTTON COMPANIES

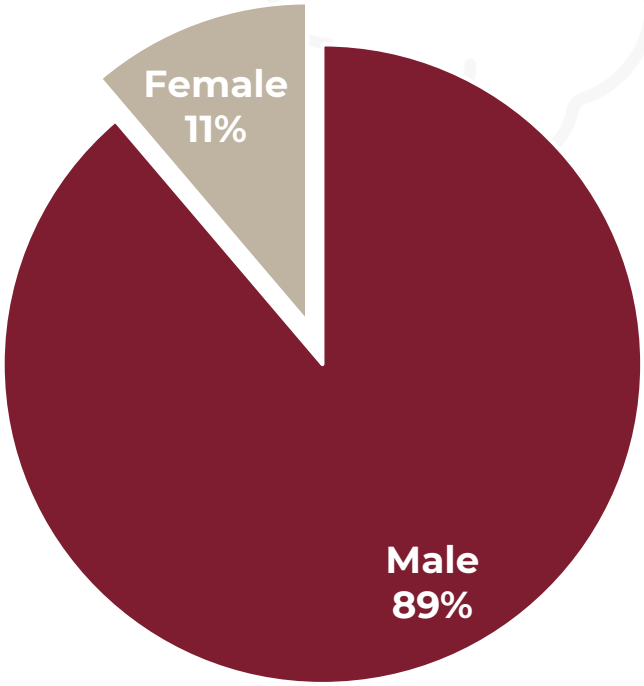
Farm-level Training Attendance

Training Topics	Attendance	
Harvesting and storage of seed cotton	100.031	1.413
Integrated Pest Management	196.413	31.035
Handling and application of pesticides	507.012	62.519
Gender and Child Labour	249.231	52.550
Farmer Business School (FBS)	92.346	17.870
Conservative Agriculture (CA)	415.444	53.016
Basic Agricultural Techniques	680.296	64.481

Training Attendance by Gender

In 2024[1], CmiA verified cotton companies conducted farm level trainings on various topics (see p.14).

While the general share of female to male CmiA-contracted farmers is 8% to 92%, the training sessions saw a **slightly higher participation of women**, with 11% female and 89% male attendees.



Farm level training attendance by gender 2024

[1] Data referring to 2023-24 agricultural season

VERIFICATION PERFORMANCE RESULTS 2024

Average Verification Results

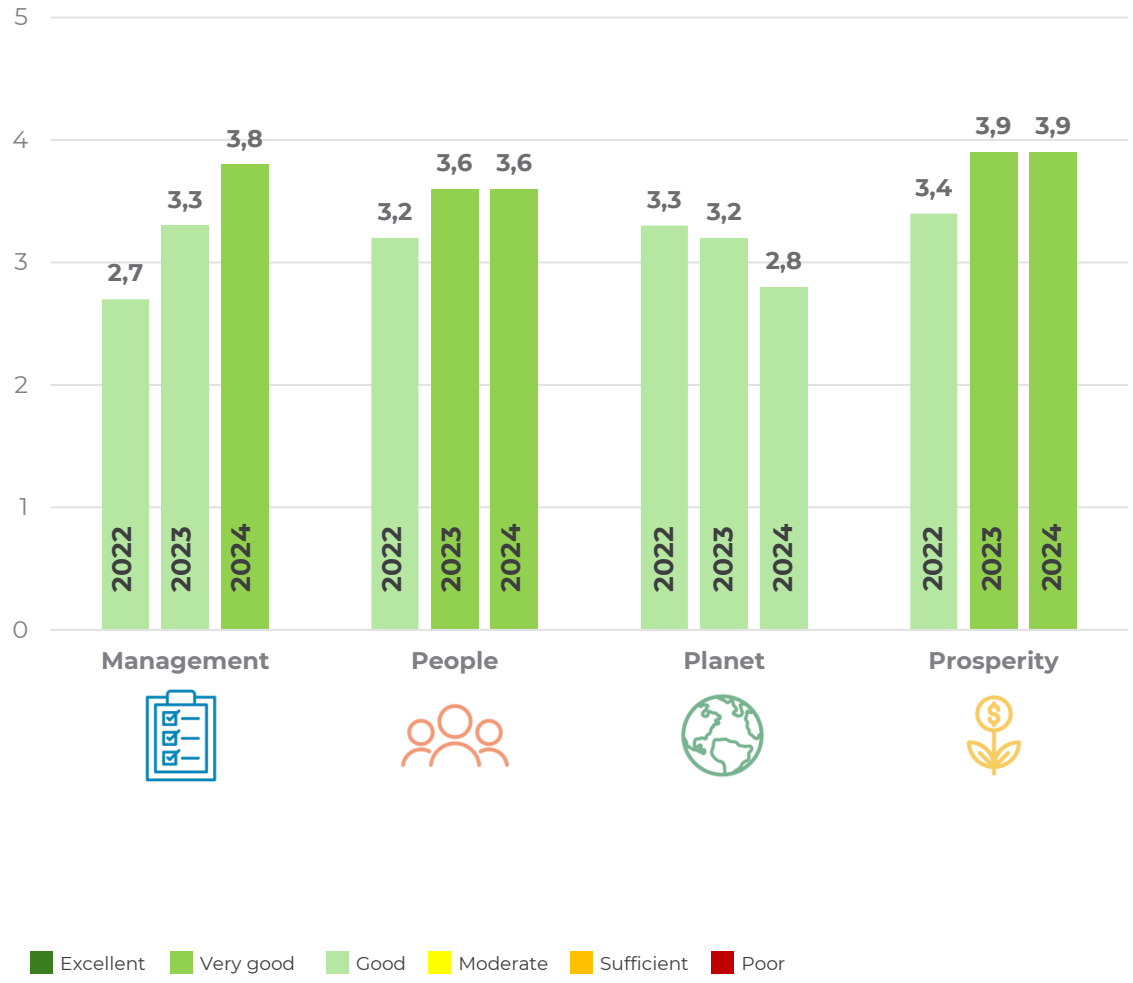
Per Pillar

The verification results from 2024 show that CmiA verified partners performed good or very good.

Best ratings were achieved in the Prosperity Pillar, followed by the Pillars Management, People, and Planet.

Includes core and improvement indicators.

Average Verification Results Comparison 2022-2024



Per Pillar

The Management and Prosperity pillars demonstrate improvement over the years, while the People pillar showed initial gains that remained the same. The Planet pillar experienced a decline in its aggregated score.

It should be noted that the results are only comparable to a limited extent, as CmiA partners fluctuate and the verification cycle is alternating (ginnery and field level verification on an annual rotation).

Average Verification Results Comparison Field – Ginnery

Per Pillar

In 2024, the aggregated verification results show a generally consistent performance between field and ginnery indicators across the four pillars.

The Management pillar presents a slightly higher score at the field level. Conversely, the People, Planet and Prosperity pillars demonstrate slightly better performance at the ginnery level.

Average Verification Results Comparison WCA[1] – ESA[2]

[1] WCA = West and Central Africa
[2] ESA = East and Southern Africa

Excellent | Very good | Good | Moderate | Sufficient | Poor

Per Pillar

In 2024, a comparison of the aggregated verification results reveals some regional differences.

The East and Southern African (ESA) region shows a slightly higher average score across the four pillars compared to the West and Central African (WCA) region.

On average, ESA scores were 0.65 points higher than WCA scores.

Distribution of ratings among indicators

The distribution of ratings among indicators reveals that over half (52%) of the indicators achieved excellent (31%) or very good (21%) ratings, indicating a generally high level of performance.

Per Principle

Average Verification Results

The results show that all Principles were rated good, very good or excellent.

Principle 11 on Productivity and fibre quality stands out with the strongest score, followed by Principle 10 on High quality inputs and pre-financing.

Conversely, Principle 7 on Land use, biodiversity, climate and Principle 8 GMO-free, water & soil scored lower suggesting these areas may benefit from focused attention and support.

Per Principle

Average Verification Results Comparison WCA[1] – ESA[2]

The East and Southern African (ESA) region generally demonstrates stronger performance across most principles, while the West and Central African (WCA) region, scores lower overall.

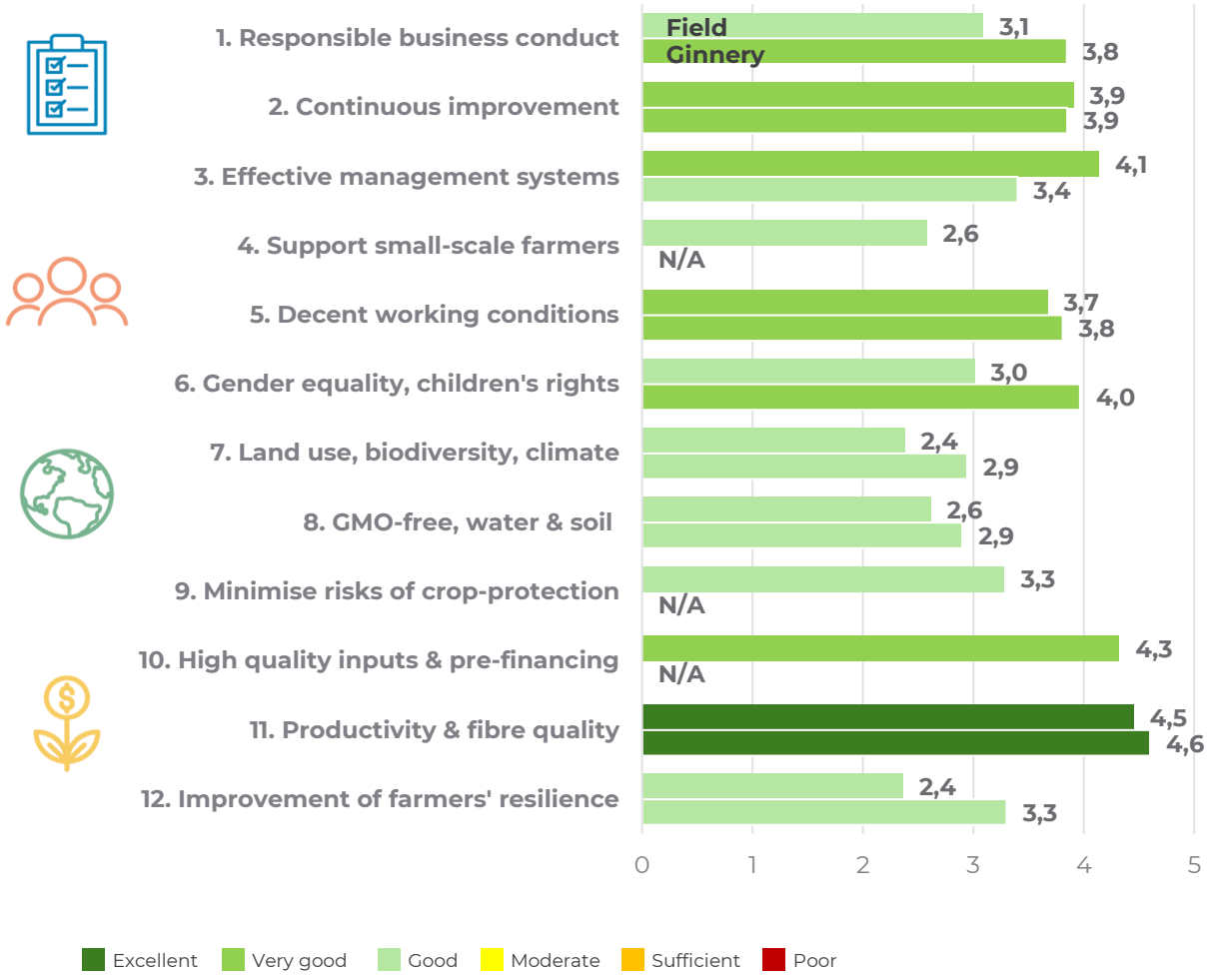
[1] WCA = West and Central Africa
[2] ESA = East and Southern Africa

Per Principle

Average Verification Results Comparison Field – Ginnery

The results reveal some differences between field and ginnery level indicators.

Principles 4, 9 and 10 are only measured at field level, and therefore have no comparable data.



IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT FOR MANAGING ENTITIES

Events for knowledge transfer and exchange

- ✓ C24 AbTF Cotton Conference In Mumbai p. 27
- ✓ Innovations Club with African Cotton Foundation p. 28
- ✓ Community Engagement Exposure and Learning with African People and Wildlife p. 29
- ✓ Regional Workshop West- & Central Africa p. 30
- ✓ Raising awareness through football p. 31
- ✓ Regional Workshop Eastern & Southern Africa p. 32

Project funding for training and other implementation measures

- ✓ Cooperation between ACF and AbTF with seven grants for projects p. 33
- ✓ CAR-iSMa Project p. 34
- ✓ Growing Benin's Organic Cotton Sector Project p. 35 - p.36

C24 AbTF COTTON CONFERENCE IN MUMBAI

Mumbai, India

In March 2024, the AbTF invited one person from each verified cotton company to the C24 AbTF Cotton Conference in Mumbai.

The conference took place in India for the first time and enabled African partners to interact with the approximately 100 participants from the expanded stakeholder network of the Cotton made in Africa® initiative.

The first two days were devoted to presentations and panel discussions on various topics related to cultivation, including a focus on climate resilience, as well as the supply chain and digital solutions.

At the end of the event, participants visited the Cotton Association of India.

Participants of the C24 AbTF Cotton Conference

INNOVATIONS CLUB

Tanzania

The Innovations Club, launched in May 2023 by AbTF and the African Cotton Foundation (ACF), held its second workshop in April 2024.

This workshop coincided with Earth Day and aimed to combine traditional knowledge with modern research.

Participants, including ICAC scientists, cotton company agronomists, and APW representatives, discussed restoring soil health, optimizing climate-resilient cultivation, and testing sustainable methods. A key initiative aims to plant over 520,000 useful trees in CmiA cotton regions by 2025 to improve food security and income for smallholder families.

INNOVATIONS CLUB
by CmiA & ACF

Participants of the Innovations Club

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP WITH APW

Tanzania

In August 2024, AbTF and CmiA partners from Tanzania and Zambia participated in a week-long training on Community Engagement facilitated by Alais ole Morindat and Revocatus Magayane, ACTIVE Program Director and Senior Program Officer at African People & Wildlife.

Aim of that training was to enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes towards a comprehensive engagement with cotton farming communities. From theoretical background, for example on the philosophy of being, becoming and belonging, to Training-of-Trainers skill in facilitation, leadership, pedagogic approaches and managing group dynamics, the participants then prepared two training sessions to put learning into practice.

Training participants group in Kimokouwa

Training participants group in Mundarara

REGIONAL WORKSHOP WEST- & CENTRAL AFRICA

Cotonou, Benin

In September 2024, the AbTF invited two representatives of each certified cotton company from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo as well as of the Ivorian association APROCOT-CI and the Beninese association AIC for the annual regional workshop.

The three-day regional workshop included updates on standard requirements, the presentation of the AbTF learning platform, an exchange between cotton companies and the presentation of specific agricultural topics by individual partners.

The group visited Glo-Djigbé Zone Industrielle (GDIZ), to observe the processes of spinning and textile production in Benin.

Visit of the Glo-Djigbé Zone Industrielle (GDIZ)

Workshop attendees during classroom session

RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH FOOTBALL

Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire

In October 2024, APROCOT-CI hosted the "Ligue Sport Coton" football tournament in Bouaké.

The event, was supported by AbTF and aimed to raise awareness among small-scale farmers about improving cotton quality year-round.

The campaign provided training on quality-enhancing measures, enabling farmers to sell their cotton at higher prices and improve their economic well-being.

Group picture at "Ligue Sport Coton"

Winning team at the "Ligue Sport Coton" event

REGIONAL WORKSHOP EAST & SOUTH AFRICA

Lusaka, Zambia

In November 2024, the Regional Workshop for the certified cotton companies from Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique and Uganda took place in Lusaka, Zambia.

The three-day workshop included classroom sessions on standard-related topics and reports on the project activities of various partners, the presentation of the AbTF learning platform and a presentation by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

A field visit was made to the Alliance Zambia organic farmers to gain insights on how to start with organic cotton production and sustainable agricultural practices.

Workshop participants learning about sustainable agricultural practices

Group picture of Workshop participants during the field visit

COOPERATION BETWEEN ACF AND AbTF

Throughout Africa

The cooperation between AbTF and ACF continued in 2024. Since March 2021, AbTF has been cooperating with the African Cotton Foundation (ACF).

In 2024, the seven projects were successfully continued, benefiting a total of 28,550 people.

The main topics for projects aimed at the implementation of the CmiA standard criteria and measures to improve soil health and fertility, diversification and integrated pest management.

In addition to project funding, the cooperation agreement also includes the organisation of the Innovations Club (see page 28).

CAR-ISMA PROJECT

Côte d’Ivoire, Mozambique

In 2024, project activities focused on improving soil health to ensure local partners could continue and expand successful strategies after the project’s end.

These activities directly reached 118,433 smallholder farmers, training them in improved soil management and sustainable cotton cultivation.

The AbTF, along with sustainable AG consultants, visited project partners in Côte d’Ivoire and Mozambique to evaluate and adapt soil health practices.

The three-year CAR-iSMa project came to an end in November 2024.

Participants of the exchange visit in Mozambique assessing soil

Field visit in Côte d’Ivoire

GROWING BENIN'S ORGANIC COTTON SECTOR I

Benin

The Growing Benin's organic cotton sector project, launched in November 2021, was successfully completed at the end of October 2024. It was coordinated by PAN UK (Pesticide Action Network, United Kingdom), implemented under the leadership of the non-governmental organisation OBEPAB (Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique) and supported financially and substantively by AbTF and the cotton trader Paul Reinhart AG.

By October 2024, a total of 8,870 farmers had been trained in organic farming methods and certified by CmiA Organic.

The project improved their living conditions and, through expanded market access via CmiA, secured long-term investment in the organic cotton sector in Benin.

GROWING BENIN'S ORGANIC COTTON SECTOR II

Benin

In November 2024, the CmiA representative for West and Central Africa held a two-day workshop for OBEPAB agricultural advisors on the CmiA standard in Dassa, Benin.

The workshop focused in particular on communicating the requirements for good agricultural practices and various aspects of sustainable cultivation.

The training materials developed by AbTF for CmiA were presented and, following the workshop, AbTF took over the printing of these materials for the advisors.

AID BY TRADE FOUNDATION

The Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) was founded in 2005 and is now an internationally renowned and active nonprofit organization for sustainable raw materials. Through its work, it makes a decisive and measurable contribution to improving the living conditions of people and animals and to protecting the environment. With its certified raw materials Cotton made in Africa (CmiA), Cotton made in Africa Organic (CmiA Organic), Regenerative Cotton Standard (RCS) and The Good Cashmere Standard (GCS), the foundation puts its goals into practice.

A globally active alliance of textile companies and brands requests the certified raw materials and pays a license fee to the foundation's marketing company, ATAKORA Fördergesellschaft GmbH. This entitles the partners to market their goods with the labels of the standards. In view of the increasing challenges small-scale farmers and textile companies are facing, the standards are of fundamental importance for their resilience and future viability. The AbTF works in close cooperation with industry experts, animal welfare and nature conservation specialists.

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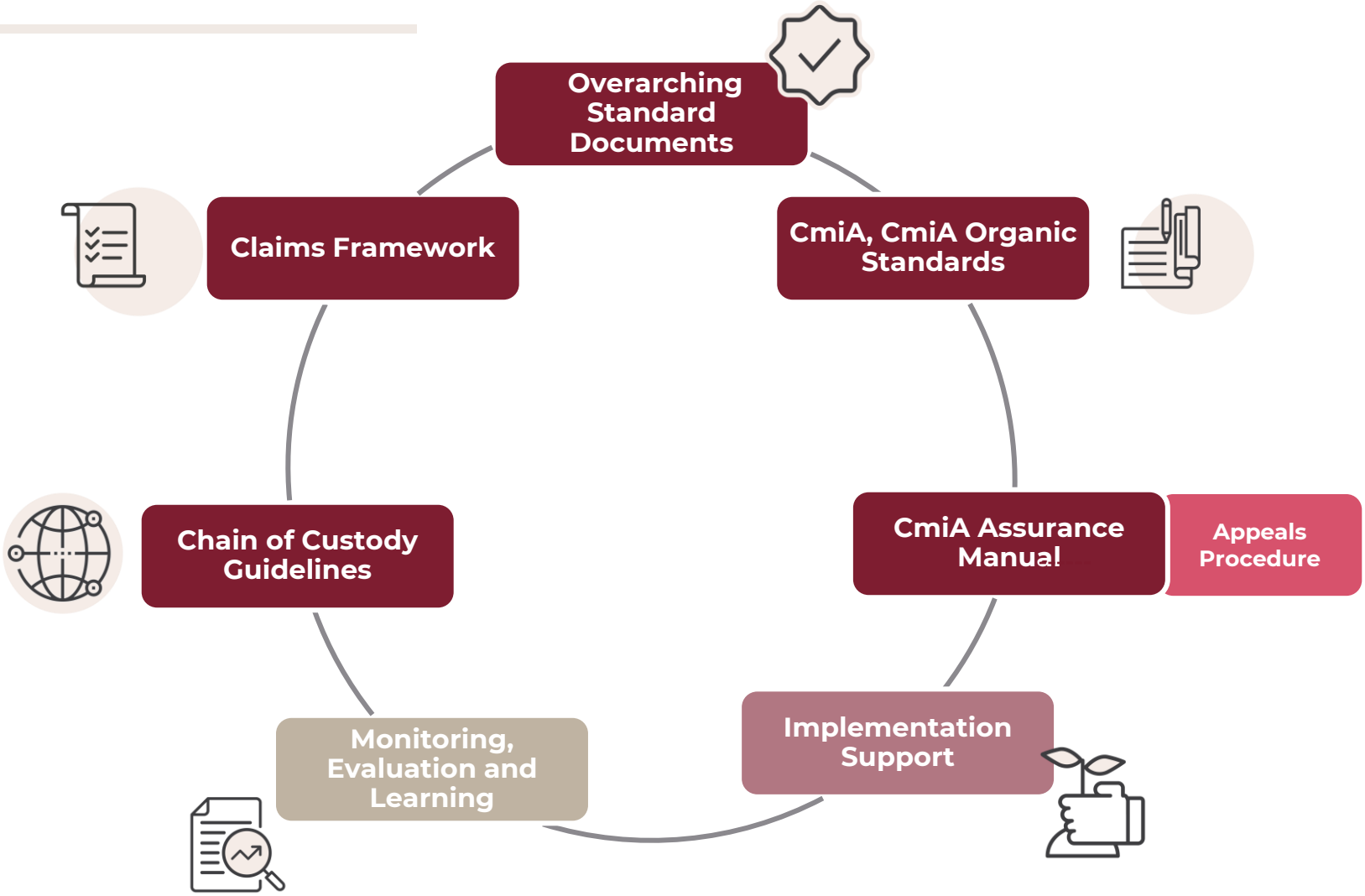
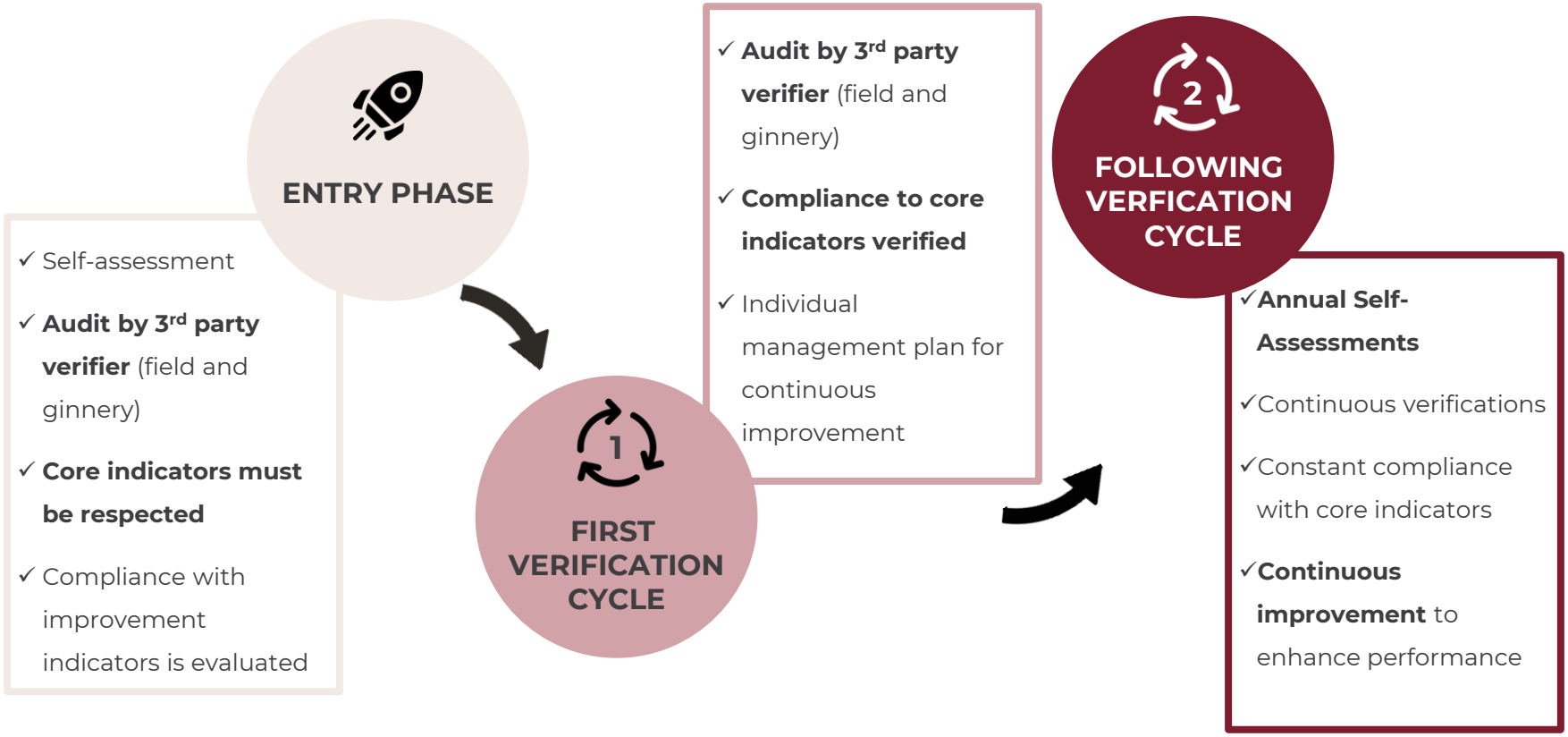
www.regenerative-cotton.org
www.aidbytrade.org

ANNEX: THE CMIA STANDARDS SYSTEM

Core components of the CmiA Standards System



The Cotton made in Africa Standards System follows a defined procedure to ensure credibility and continuous improvement.