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Better Cotton Initiative acquires Materra's Co Platform to scale regenerative agriculture

15 October 2026 | News

The acquisition will extend AI-powered farm intelligence from 10,000 farmers to a network of more than 1.3 million aligned with BCI's standard, strengthening digital monitoring and impact measurement across global cotton supply chains

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) has acquired Co, an artificial intelligence-powered agricultural technology platform developed by Materra, as it seeks to scale regenerative agriculture and strengthen the credibility of sustainability data across the global cotton industry. Announced on October 15, 2026, the acquisition will bring Co's digital field intelligence capabilities into BCI's operations, extending a platform previously used by Materra's programme with 10,000 farmers to a network of more than 1.3 million farmers aligned with BCI's standard.

BCI CEO Nick Weatherill announced the acquisition at a launch reception in Vancouver, Canada, marking the organisation's evolution towards a regenerative standard system. The deal addresses a growing challenge for agricultural sustainability programmes: translating commitments to regenerative farming into measurable, verifiable improvements at the farm level. As brands and retailers face increasing pressure to substantiate environmental claims, the availability of consistent field-level data is becoming an important factor in sourcing decisions.

Co is designed to streamline digital data collection, support farmers through AI-powered guidance and tutorials, and help field-level organisations monitor the adoption of regenerative practices. Its capabilities include digital farmer profiles, regional dashboards and comparable historical datasets that can be used to track progress and identify areas requiring intervention.

By bringing the platform in-house, BCI intends to strengthen its ability to validate impact data, improve operational oversight and establish feedback mechanisms that support continuous improvement across its cotton sustainability programme. "Co will

manage BCI's field intelligence, enabling efficient digital data collection at farm level and delivering high-quality validated impact data, actionable insights, greater integrity controls and feedback loops to drive continuous improvement," Weatherill said.

He added that integrating established field technologies and specialist expertise would strengthen BCI's digital capabilities, reduce administrative burdens on farmers and make it easier for retailers to source BCI cotton supported by credible impact data.

From pilot programmes to global scale

Co's integration into BCI represents a significant expansion in the potential reach of the technology. Materra developed the platform to help farmers and supply-chain partners coordinate the transition towards regenerative agriculture while improving the visibility of on-farm practices and outcomes. The platform's earlier engagement with 10,000 farmers provided a foundation for broader deployment. Under BCI, the intended reach extends to more than 1.3 million farmers aligned with its standard, although the scale of actual adoption and the resulting impact will depend on implementation across participating regions.

For field organisations, digital profiles and historical datasets can improve consistency in monitoring agricultural practices across geographies. AI-powered guidance may also help farmers access relevant information and simplify reporting, potentially reducing the administrative work associated with sustainability programmes. The acquisition also gives BCI a technology platform through which it can provide brands and retailers with more detailed information about the farms and practices underpinning their cotton sourcing.

Brands seek stronger evidence of sustainability

The move comes as fashion and retail supply chains place greater emphasis on traceability, measurable environmental outcomes and the credibility of sustainability claims. For cotton buyers, certification or alignment with a sustainability standard is only one part of the equation. Reliable assessments of farm-level practices and their outcomes are increasingly important for evaluating progress and directing sourcing strategies.

Co's dashboards and historical data are intended to help BCI's members compare performance over time, identify gaps and make more informed sourcing decisions. The platform could also improve the flow of information between farmers, field-level organisations and downstream buyers.

However, digital data collection and AI-based guidance do not, by themselves, establish that regenerative practices have delivered measurable environmental improvements. The value of the platform will depend on the quality of the underlying data, the robustness of validation processes and the ability to demonstrate outcomes across different farming systems.

Materra sees an opportunity to expand its model

Materra CEO Ed Brial said the company's original ambition was to help farmers and supply chains work together on a regenerative transition that reflects local farming conditions while achieving scale through consumer-facing retail markets. Having worked with 10,000 farmers through its sourcing programme, Materra sees BCI as a partner capable of extending the model across a substantially larger cotton network.

The acquisition brings together Materra's technology expertise and BCI's established sustainability programme, creating an opportunity to integrate digital monitoring more deeply into cotton production and sourcing. The strategic test will be whether this expanded infrastructure can translate greater data coverage into measurable improvements in farming practices, environmental performance and farmer outcomes. For BCI, scaling regenerative agriculture will require not only reaching more farmers but also demonstrating that the transition delivers credible, sustained results across the supply chain.