



**COTTON
MADE IN
AFRICA**



PRESS RELEASE

**International Women's Day, 8 March:
Cotton made in Africa Supports
Women's Rights and Independence**

Hamburg, 2024-03-01



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Forming the hub of hundreds of thousands of small-scale farming operations and households in African countries south of the Sahara, women play a key role in sustainable cotton cultivation. However, they are often at a disadvantage due to discriminatory structures and societal prejudices. The Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) aims to address these issues through Cotton made in Africa (CmiA). Gender equality is enshrined in the CmiA standard, and CmiA also supports the economic and social independence of women and girls through community projects. Current examples include a project for organic shea butter in Benin and a project at a girls' school in Tanzania, which is being conducted in collaboration with local partners and the fashion brands comma and s.Oliver, both part of the S.OLIVER GROUP.

Hamburg, 2024-03-01. As small-scale farmers and labourers, women play a key role in Africa's cotton industry, in their families and village communities. There is empirical proof that women are just as productive as men if they have the same access to land and resources; beyond that, women also invest in their children's education and health.¹ However, much of their crucial contribution to society and the economy tends to be ignored. Despite their skills and productivity, women still face many challenges, including a lack of access to resources such as land, education, and credit.

"Inspire Inclusion" is the theme of this year's International Women's Day. This call to improve the integration of women aligns with CmiA's pursuit of equal rights at all levels. For instance, the CmiA standard requires that women and men receive equal pay for equal work as well as equal access to resources and means of production; it also affirms maternity rights. "It is important to make people aware of why gender equality matters and how it benefits everyone," states Tina Stridde, the managing director of the Aid by Trade Foundation, continuing, "We promote social, economic, and environmental sustainability in cotton production. This includes combating structural discrimination against women. We believe that sustainable cotton is not possible without equality."

Going beyond the requirements of the CmiA standard, CmiA and its partners have already conducted many projects through the CmiA Community Cooperation Programme (CCCP), for instance supporting female farmers by providing seed capital for income-generating activities that range from growing vegetables and raising livestock to building up village shops and processing food. To date, CmiA has supported 90 women's clubs through these projects, thereby enabling some 2,300 women to take a step towards economic and social independence.

In Benin, Cotton made in Africa is currently working together with the local implementation partner for CmiA Organic, Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique (OBEPAB), to support women in the production of sustainable organic shea butter. There are 130 CmiA Organic cotton farmers, all women, taking advantage of this opportunity to train in cultivation, processing, and marketing in order to generate an

¹ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). *The state of food and agriculture – Women in Agriculture, closing the gender gap*, 2011, available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i250e/i2082e00.pdf>



income in addition to their revenue from cotton sales. They have already found success in selling their products through two businesses, including one in Benin's largest city, Cotonou.

In East Africa, CmiA is working with the Tanzanian cotton company Biosustain to build a dormitory for girls at a school in Mtekente. The village community is performing the construction itself, including of washrooms, a kitchen, and a water supply system. Previously, these young women had long and often dangerous commutes to school, barring many from regular attendance. Thanks to the project, 80 girls will now be able to attend class without restrictions, and 2,000 people in Mtekente will benefit from the new drinking water supply. This is already the second stage of this project, which is supported by the S.OLIVER GROUP. "We are convinced that a sustainable future can only succeed if it is based on equality," states Sabrina Müller, the head of global sustainability at S.OLIVER GROUP, concluding, "A key aspect of this is ensuring that girls and women have equal access to education and to social and economic participation." To achieve this goal, the Aid by Trade Foundation, through CmiA and its partners, is working to ensure that comprehensive support for women and girls in cotton-growing regions will remain integral to its activities in Africa in the future.

About Aid by Trade Foundation

Founded in 2005, the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) is now an internationally renowned non-profit organisation that works throughout the world to promote sustainable raw materials. Its activities make a decisive and measurable contribution to improving the living conditions of people and animals while protecting the environment. AbTF takes a practical approach by creating and maintaining a variety of standards to certify raw materials: Cotton made in Africa (CmiA), Cotton made in Africa Organic (CmiA Organic), Regenerative Cotton Standard (RCS), and The Good Cashmere Standard (GCS). A global alliance of textile companies and brands purchases the certified raw materials, paying a licensing fee to AbTF's marketing company, ATAKORA Fördergesellschaft GmbH. The payment of this fee entitles the partners to sell their goods under the standards' labels. As the challenges facing textile companies and small-scale farmers grow, the standards have a major role to play in ensuring their resilience and future viability. AbTF collaborates closely with industry experts and with specialists in animal and nature protection.

About s.Oliver Group

Since 1969, the S.OLIVER GROUP has developed into a multi-brand group. In addition to the s.Oliver and QS brands, the brand portfolio also includes comma, LIEBESKIND BERLIN, COPENHAGEN STUDIOS and lala Berlin. The Group employs around 4,700 people internationally.

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