

Better Cotton Media Coverage November 2, 2011

1. *New York Times*, Stone-Washed Blue Jeans (Minus the Washed)
Also published in:
The International Herald Tribune
The Times of India
The Bend Bulletin
Blue Ridge Now
Ocala
Sarasota Herald-Tribune
The Ledger
Tuscaloosa News
The Hindu
2. *Women's Wear Daily*, Levi's, Adidas, H&M Back Better Cotton
3. *GreenBiz*, A Better Way to Make Cotton Better
4. *California Apparel News*, Levi's Launches Sustainable-Cotton Jeans
5. *Huffington Post*, Levi Strauss Aims To Use Less Water In Jeans-Making Process
6. *New York Times*, For Parched Times, a New Water Calculus
7. *Esquire Blog*, Levi's Gives Us a New Reason to Avoid Washing Machines
8. *Ecouterre*, Levi's, H&M, Adidas Debut Apparel Made With Eco-Friendly "Better Cotton"
9. *The Examiner*, Freeze your jeans, don't wash them
10. *The Examiner*, Better Cotton in our Backyard

[Stone-Washed Blue Jeans \(Minus the Washed\)](#)

New York Times
By Leslie Kaufman
November 1, 2011



A line of Levis jeans was made with world water shortages in mind.

SAN FRANCISCO — From the cotton field in rural India to the local rag bin, a typical pair of blue jeans consumes 919 gallons of water during its life cycle, Levi Strauss & Company says, or enough to fill about 15 spa-size bathtubs. That includes the water that goes into irrigating the cotton crop, stitching the jeans together and washing them scores of times at home.

The company wants to reduce that number any way it can, and not just to project environmental responsibility. It fears that water shortages caused by climate change may jeopardize the company's very existence in the coming decades by making cotton too expensive or scarce.

So to protect its bottom line, Levi Strauss has helped underwrite and champion a nonprofit program that teaches farmers in India, Pakistan, Brazil and West and Central Africa the latest irrigation and rainwater-capture techniques. It has introduced a brand featuring stone-washed denim smoothed with rocks but no water. It is sewing tags into all of its jeans urging customers to wash less and use only cold water.

To customers seeking further advice, Levi Strauss suggests washing jeans rarely, if at all — the theory being that putting them in the freezer will kill germs that cause them to smell.

Conservation worries are not limited to the clothing giants: food and beverage conglomerates, tobacco companies and metal and mining companies are all starting to reckon with their heavy dependence on water. Pepsico, for example, has embraced a method of sanitizing plastic bottles with purified air instead of water at a plant in Georgia. For its Frito-Lay brands, it has identified drought-resistant potato strains that it provides to farmers along with a soil-monitoring method so that crops are watered only when necessary.

The Carbon Disclosure Project, a group that monitors corporations' greenhouse gas emissions, recently added water security to its priorities. Of the 150 companies that responded last year to a questionnaire that it sent to the world's largest corporations, nearly 40 percent reported that water problems had already resulted in "detrimental impacts" to their businesses.

The threat of water shortages was brought home to Levi Strauss last year when floods in Pakistan and parched fields in China destroyed cotton crops and sent prices soaring. Roughly two pounds of cotton go into every pair of jeans that the company manufactures. Although scientists are wary of linking specific extreme weather events to climate change, recent increases in floods and droughts are in line with patterns that experts have long projected would result from global warming. The general rule of thumb is that wet regions will get wetter and dry regions will become even more arid.

Upmanu Lall, director of the Columbia Water Center at Columbia University's Earth Institute, said that the local implications of those changes were still being sorted out but that "agriculture, which does best with a relatively consistent supply of water, will be impacted the most."

That is particularly the case for cotton, the world's biggest nonfood crop. Many big cotton-producing countries like India, which has tens of thousands of small cotton farmers, lack the reservoirs to store water, heightening the risk of shortages.

Companies doing business overseas are also contending with rising water costs or water that is not clean enough. Then there is the threat of bad publicity if a corporation is perceived to be squandering precious local water.

"The total volume of water used by a single beverage business, for example, may not be much," Dr. Lall said. "But they are often the most visible users in a locality, depleting groundwater much more quickly than, say, a small farmer."

It is not lost on American and European manufacturers that cotton already competes with grain for what arable land exists in some regions, a tension that will only grow as the world seeks to feed its growing population in coming decades.

Making 'Better Cotton'

Because cotton is mostly grown by a diffuse network of very small farmers in more than 70 countries, encouraging water-efficient practices is a formidable challenge. Cotton cultivation accounts for more than 3 percent of the world's agricultural water use and 6 percent of all pesticide purchases. Outmoded practices like field flooding contribute to overconsumption.

In 2005, nongovernmental and cotton industry organizations and some giant retailers, including Ikea, the Gap and Adidas, founded the international nonprofit Better Cotton Initiative to promote water conservation and reduce pesticide use and child-labor practices in the industry.

Levi Strauss joined in 2009. Partners include groups like Cotton Inc., an American industry association that has provided technical know-how. A three-year independent study of Indian farms found those adopting the new techniques reduced water and pesticide use by an average of 32 percent, the initiative says. The profit was 20 percent higher than that of a control group using traditional methods.

Kailash Himmitrao Mahalle grows cotton in Shelu, India, about 90 miles east of Mumbai. On one side of his 15-acre farm, which was used to compare methods, the cotton plants are about a foot taller and bear more flowers than the ones on the other side. The lush field has a drip irrigation system — a tangle of plastic veins that direct water to each plant's root system — that was installed with advice from the Better Cotton Initiative.

Mr. Mahalle said the drip system spreads water and fertilizer more evenly than traditional pumping, and because it puts water only where it is needed, it also results in fewer weeds.

Power failures, commonplace in India, are less worrisome now because drip irrigation does not require electricity over an extended period of time, as traditional irrigating methods do. "This takes three hours; that takes three days," Mr. Mahalle said, and his water use is down by about 70 percent.

The resulting crop from the new methods of farming is now referred to by Levi Strauss and the initiative as "better cotton." Levi Strauss's top management says that about 5 percent of the cotton used in the two million pairs of jeans the company shipped to stores this fall was grown with the sustainable method. The company wants that number to rise to 20 percent by 2015.

Ikea, the furniture chain, hopes to be using "better cotton" exclusively by 2015. The footwear maker Adidas has said it will do the same by 2018.

To reach its 20 percent goal, Levi Strauss says it must radically change how it does business, engaging more directly with contractors as well as farmers. There was a time when American corporations preferred not to know what was going on in foreign factories — to afford them maximum deniability in the event that poor labor or environmental practices were discovered.

Levi Strauss, which reported \$4.4 billion in net revenue last year, would not reveal how much it is spending on water sustainability efforts, beyond saying that the company and its foundation have given a combined \$600,000 to the Better Cotton Initiative since 2009.

Selling an Idea

On a recent morning at Levi Strauss headquarters here in San Francisco, company executives were trying to figure out how best to capitalize on their water conservation efforts. After being briefed on the cotton initiative by the sustainability team, the new chief marketing officer, Rebecca Van Dyck nodded her approval, then asked, "But do our customers know?"

Internal company research tells them that Levi Strauss consumers like to see themselves as changing the world, Ms. Van Dyck said.

The company does not disclose sales figures for individual products, but it says that Levi Strauss jeans that were marketed this year as less water-intensive sold faster than regular Levi's that were similarly priced.

The company will start to publicize its commitment to better cotton in videos on its Web site and at sustainability conferences.

Customers shopping at the Levi's store in Times Square one recent afternoon said they had never heard of the company's WaterLess brand or other conservation efforts.

There was more awareness on online jeans forums. Edmund X White, a Brooklyn photographer, even chronicled his efforts to avoid washing his jeans. Two months into his experiment, on his honeymoon in Jamaica, he wrote, he dived into the ocean with a pair on. Afterward, Mr. White boasted, 11 months passed without a wash.

"As long as you don't get dirt on them, don't do a lot of strenuous activity in them and — sorry if this is a bit vulgar — be sure to always wear underwear, you can really go a very long time between washing," he wrote.



Kailash Himmitrao Mahalle, whose cotton farm in Shelu, India, tested a drip system that he said spreads water and fertilizer more evenly than traditional pumping.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

VOL. CLXII ... No. 30,377 ... WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2010

CAIN ACCUSER GOT A YEAR'S SALARY IN SEVERANCE PAY

CHARGE OF ABASMENT

Candidate Played Down Outlay by Restaurant Group He Led

By THE WRITER AT THE BUREAU AND AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

WASHINGTON — The House of Representatives on Tuesday passed a bill that would require a presidential candidate to disclose the names of all donors who have given more than \$10,000 to his or her campaign. The bill also would require the candidate to disclose the names of all donors who have given more than \$10,000 to his or her campaign.



AMERICAN DEMONSTRATORS A few days ago, "The people before Finance," an affiliate of the Occupy Wall Street movement, held a protest in New York City. The protesters held up a sign that says "SUPPORT WALL STREET" and carried a banner that says "THE PEOPLE BEFORE FINANCE".

In Corzine Comeback, Big Risks and a Steep Fall

BY PETER LICHTNER

When Jon S. Corzine joined BP last year it seemed like a strategic choice — the firm had some of the gas reserves in the world and he had a reputation as a risk taker.

REVOLT IN GREECE (ON BAILOUT VOTE MAY OUST LEADER)

EUROPE PACT IS AT RISK

No-Confidence Vote Set — Analysts Warring

By MICHELLE MORGAN

ATHENS — The government of Prime Minister George Papandreas is set to face a vote on Tuesday that could oust the leader.

Political Test For Austerity

BY STEVEN LEVITSKY

PARIS — The crisis of the eurozone has finally led to a political test of the austerity measures that have been imposed.



Southern Charm Is Alive, but Ailing. Deborah in August, Ga. before Hurricane Janeline, but others showed signs of a chilly. Photo: AP/Wide World

Bank of America Drops Plan for Debit Card Fee

BY TARA STRAIN BERKOWITZ

Bank of America dropped its plan to charge a fee for debit card transactions, a move that analysts say is a sign of the bank's financial struggles.

Jeans Maker Sees Incentive in Saving Water

BY CHRIS WATSON

LEVI'S JEANS CO. — About the only thing that is more important to Levi Strauss than his jeans is water.

LEVI'S JEANS CO. — About the only thing that is more important to Levi Strauss than his jeans is water.

LEVI'S JEANS CO. — About the only thing that is more important to Levi Strauss than his jeans is water.

Libyan Militia Keep Weapons

INTERNATIONAL AS IS

Libyan militia are refusing to disarm, saying they want to preserve their autonomy and influence.

New Trouble for Chinese Artist

INTERNATIONAL AS IS

The incident related to Wang's case has led to a new bill for the U.S. House.

Lawmaking a Satisfying Gap

NATIONAL AS IS

Some producers are tired of the gap between what they want and what is possible in the current political climate.

Lossing Electricity, Yet Again

NATIONAL AS IS

Victim number 10 in the Northeast is being the victim again.

Sweetness and Light

FOOD AS IS

Once a treat in New York, it's now a staple in other parts of the country.

Monks and Monks

FOOD AS IS

The New York City Marathon has had 10th anniversary over the years.

Taking the Measure of the Sea

SCIENCE AS IS

A California company is building a fleet of measuring robots that can send in data to measure everything from sea level to algae blooms.

Giving

SCIENCE AS IS

The rise in the number of give people is a surprise, especially since spending their money.

Arts & Entertainment Guide

ARTS AS IS

A new calendar of cultural events in the New York area, selected by critics.

Thomas L. Friedman

ARTS AS IS

Thomas L. Friedman is a columnist for The New York Times.

LOUIS VUITTON

Discover LV 277 automatic chronograph

louisvuitton.com 800.LVUITTON

[Levi's, Adidas, H&M Back Better Cotton](#)

Women's Wear Daily

By Joanna Ramey

November 1, 2011



SAN FRANCISCO — The first apparel containing cotton grown using more sustainable farming methods under the global Better Cotton Initiative, started in 2005, has reached the marketplace.

Although in small quantities, and with no fanfare, this initial step is regarded by BCI corporate members as a clear example that cotton worldwide can eventually be raised with more environmentally sound practices and labor standards.

The first apparel companies and retailers to sell Better Cotton products are Levi Strauss and Co., the Adidas Group, H&M and Marks & Spencer, which have made commitments to introduce the fiber to the marketplace as participants in BCI's Fast Track Program. Ikea, the home furnishings retailer, is also part of this group to create Better Cotton demand.

"It really is a big goal and big vision to change the way cotton is grown," said Michael Kobori, Levi's vice president of social and environmental sustainability and the chairman of the Geneva-based BCI, a consortium of farmers, gin operators, traders, textile mills, consumer brands, retailers and nonprofits.

San Francisco-based Levi's today will reveal that it will start selling two million pairs of Levi's and Denizen brand men's and women's jeans containing a blend of Better Cotton and cotton from mainstream sources.

The first BCI cotton for the 2010-11 crop year was harvested from some 68,000 small farms in India, Pakistan and Mali. The farmers are using sustainable agricultural methods with fewer pesticides and less fertilizer and water to reduce the environmental impact, while increasing crop yields and profits. They are also adhering to worker labor standards.

Because Better Cotton's quality and prices are indistinguishable from mainstream cotton, Levi's, as well as the other BCI-member companies, aren't labeling products containing the fiber. The reason: to avoid a spike in demand for the currently limited quantities that could create a shortage and higher prices along the supply chain. The idea is to make Better Cotton the new commodity cotton.

“We want to be very patient about it and grow [Better Cotton] over time,” Kobori said. “The key to that is ensuring the price remains affordable.”

For the first crop year 2010-11, the yield of BCI cotton was 38,000 metric tons, in contrast to the 27 million metric tons of all cotton raised worldwide, according to the International Cotton Advisory Committee.

For the 2011-12 cotton season, the Better Cotton yield is expected to be 70,000 metric tons from some 150,000 farms participating, with the addition of the West and Central African nations of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Senegal and Togo.

By 2015, BCI’s aim is for one million farmers to harvest 1 million metric tons. This year, farms in Brazil were added to the program and BCI is now working to include China.

“We believe we are getting closer and closer to that tipping point where [Better Cotton] will be very much a desired commodity and more brands and retailers will be procuring it,” Kobori said.

The Adidas Group this summer began selling apparel containing a blend of Better Cotton and mainstream cotton. The athleticwear company “is committed to using 100 percent Better Cotton by 2018,” said a spokeswoman for the German sports apparel company.

Swedish fast-fashion retailer H&M began offering Better Cotton apparel this fall. The company has a 2020 goal to carry cotton products only from sustainable sources — Better Cotton, as well as organic and recycled cotton, according to a company spokeswoman.

Marks & Spencer has started incorporating Better Cotton in a range of men’s, women’s and children’s apparel, as well as home furnishings. “Customers can shop M&S with every confidence that we are taking a responsible approach to how cotton is sourced,” stated Mark Sumner, M&S cotton specialist. The retailer has a goal of 2020 to carry products produced with sustainable means across all categories.

It’s foreseeable that within 50 years, cotton farmers worldwide could be adhering to BCI or similar sustainable-farming standards, said Terry Townsend, ICAC executive director, who makes a distinction between a larger potential market for Better Cotton and that of organically grown and Fair Trade cotton.

For the current 2010-11 cotton crop year, organic cotton accounted for 180,000 metric tons and Fair Trade, a market where farmers are guaranteed a minimum price, equaled 10,000 metric tons.

Helping to bolster Better Cotton’s prospects is its status as a commodity fiber grown under farming protocols specific to each farm, as well as region, climate and culture, Townsend said. “This whole concept of Better [Cotton] is highly specific to each situation,” Townsend said.

In contrast, organic and Fair Trade cottons hew to rules for farming and handling throughout the supply that are applied across the board that by their nature have resulted in higher costs and prices. These have contributed to slower market growth.

However, the organic cotton market is growing. Global sales of organic cotton apparel and home textiles in 2009 increased 35 percent to \$4.3 billion, according to the most recent data compiled by the Organic Exchange and released by the Organic Trade Association.

As an aside, Townsend said cotton farmers worldwide have been reducing pesticide use, as the result of better knowledge about their application and the advent of biotechnology creating more pest-resistant cotton. Worldwide, cotton accounts for 6.8 percent of all pesticide sales, down from 15 percent 22 years ago, he said.

Ehile commending Better Cotton’s goals, J. Berrye Worsham, president and chief executive officer of Cotton Incorporated, the research and promotional arm of the U.S. cotton industry, cited challenges

facing the Better Cotton program, such as “costs, manpower required and traceability” through the supply chain. Cotton Inc. is a BCI member.

“The U.S. cotton industry will continue to work with the Better Cotton Initiative to more effectively identify cottons that are produced sustainably, which ultimately, will increase the supply of BCI cotton and minimize costs in the supply chain,” Worsham said.

The screenshot shows the WWD website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with categories like FASHION, RUNWAY, ACCESSORIES, THE MARKETS, BUSINESS, RETAIL, BEAUTY, MEN'S, MEDIA, and EYE. A prominent banner reads "JUST IN" BREAKING NEWS ON EVERY PAGE. Below this, the main content area features a "LATEST ARTICLES FROM THE MARKETS" section with three article thumbnails. The primary article is titled "Levi's, Adidas, H&M Back Better Cotton" by JOANNA RAMEY, dated November 1, 2011. The article text discusses the first apparel containing cotton grown using sustainable farming methods under the Better Cotton Initiative. To the right of the article is a sidebar with an "ARTICLEFINDER" section for "the markets" and a "WWDIRECTORY" advertisement. The website also includes social media sharing options (Like, Tweet, Comments) and a print/E-mail button.

[A Better Way to Make Cotton Better](#)

GreenBiz

By Michael Kobori

November 02, 2011

As global cotton prices continue to fluctuate significantly, and the effects of climate change threaten the 300 million people engaged in cotton farming around the world, a small group of companies is trying to change how one of the world's largest commodities is grown. Mounted against a web of complexities, the Better Cotton Initiative is taking innovative steps to make cotton more sustainable -- without raising costs.

Cotton is the heart and soul of the apparel industry, and the crop is facing challenges. Every day, cotton farmers face the harsh consequences of rising temperatures, drought, flooding, and pest infestation. Extreme weather is destroying entire crops, which not only hurts the cotton supply, but is also devastating farmers, their families and local economies. Precious natural resources like water are used to keep the cotton fields thriving, and farmers are using expensive chemicals to fertilize the soil and prevent pest infestation.

We need a new solution.

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is addressing these critical issues in an effort to make cotton grown around the world more sustainable. BCI is trying to fundamentally shift how cotton is grown by focusing on three objectives:

- decreasing the environmental impact of cotton
- improving labor standards
- increasing the economic livelihood for farmers

BCI's approach is simple. The collaboration works with local organizations on the ground to train cotton farmers about better farming practices, such as integrated pest management, planting border crops and setting up more efficient irrigation systems. Farmers are educated about labor issues, including the devastating effects of child labor. NGOs on the ground work to leverage local customs.

For example, in India, local leaders create songs about BCI farming methods to spread these ideas through their villages, a technique that has been used for generations to pass down important oral histories.

One major hurdle is figuring out how to make Better Cotton mainstream without raising prices. Other commodity programs, such as sugar, coffee and cocoa, have required "certifications" for participants and the result is premium products that are out of reach for most consumers.

BCI's main goal is to make sure Better Cotton products become mainstream, not an expensive, niche commodity. That's why BCI is asking all of its partners not to label products as "Better Cotton" during this start-up phase.

Another important challenge is traceability. Apparel brands are typically three or four steps removed from the cotton growing process. Retailers don't grow cotton or buy cotton directly from farmers; nor do they typically buy yarn or fabric. The apparel industry has struggled for years to find a way to track cotton from farm to gin to better understand the labor and environmental practices associated with each farm.

There can be more than six changes of ownership between when cotton is harvested and when finished products actually arrive in stores. We're focused on a reliable way to trace Better Cotton. Each bale of Better Cotton has a traceable identification number to ensure that sustainable cotton is being incorporated into our products. That said, more still needs to be done to ensure traceability as the bale of raw cotton transforms into a finished product.

Despite the challenges, global apparel companies have a huge opportunity to use their sphere of influence to enact positive change in the supply chain. For example, Levi Strauss & Co. has hosted meetings in India, China and the Americas with mills and spinners to introduce Better Cotton and share why this is such an important initiative for us. These same mills and spinners later demonstrated their commitment by bringing us fabrics that incorporated Better Cotton.

For companies like Levi Strauss & Co., which uses cotton in 95 percent of its products, having a sustainable -- and affordable -- source of cotton is an important element for long-term business growth.

The initial results from the Better Cotton pilot sites are promising. In Pakistan, local farmers using Better Cotton farming methods reduced pesticide and water use by an average of 32 percent, and saw increases in their net profits by up to 69 percent.

Changing how a commodity is grown -- without raising prices -- is a daunting goal. And we still have challenges to overcome to make it a reality. But we are making progress. This year, Levi Strauss & Co. is using a blend of Better Cotton in over two million pairs of jeans.

We're working with other leading brands like H&M, IKEA, Adidas and Marks & Spencer, NGOs like WWF, Solidaridad, and PAN-UK, as well as farmer organizations, cotton traders and mills to make Better Cotton a global reality.

We strongly believe that Better Cotton farming techniques are the long-term solution -- they're better for farmers, better for companies that sell textiles and clothing, and better for the environment. Together, we can truly make cotton "better."

The screenshot shows the GreenBiz.com website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'OUR CHANNELS', 'GreenBiz.com', 'Events', and 'GreenBiz Intelligence'. The main header features the GreenBiz.com logo, a FedEx logo with the text 'Learn more about all of our sustainable solutions', and a 'Get the smart' badge. Below the header is a search bar and a 'Get GreenBuzz E-News Delivered to You' section. The main content area is divided into 'BROWSE' (Business Operations, Energy & Climate, Design & Packaging, Buildings & Facilities, Computing & IT, Marketing & Communications) and 'ENGAGE' (News, Blogs, Careers/Jobs, Events, Newsletters, Webcasts, Videos, Hot Topics, Podcasts). A 'RESEARCH' section is also visible. The featured blog post is 'A Better Way to Make Cotton Better' by Michael Kobori, published on November 02, 2011. The article includes a photo of cotton bolls and discusses the challenges of cotton farming, such as climate change and pest infestation. It lists three objectives: decreasing environmental impact, improving labor standards, and increasing economic livelihood for farmers. To the right of the article is an advertisement for IBM Informix TimeSeries and a 'GREEN & SUSTAINABILITY JOB BOARD' section.

[Levi's Launches Sustainable-Cotton Jeans](#)

California Apparel News

by Deidre Crawford

November 01, 2011

As one of the largest denim producers in the world, Levi Strauss & Co. wanted to make a difference in people's lives that extended beyond fashion. As part of this strategy, the company is releasing 2 million pairs of jeans made with sustainably grown cotton to help reduce the company's environmental impact and improve the lives of cotton farmers.

The new jeans are made of a blend of "Better Cotton," grown as part of the Better Cotton Initiative, and other fabrics. This mission first began in 2007, when the company performed a lifecycle assessment to see what the environmental footprint was for a single pair of jeans—from growing the cotton to the denim to design, production and wear, until the consumer ultimately discards them. Going into the study, the team assumed it would be the continual washing by the owner throughout the life of the jeans that caused

the most environmental harm, but they were surprised to learn it was actually growing the cotton that had the most impact.

Cotton is a “thirsty crop” that accounts for 49 percent of the water used during the lifecycle of the jeans, according to Brianna Wolf, senior specialist for Levi’s Office of Global Environmental Sustainability.

Not only does growing cotton using traditional methods have negative environmental impacts, but there are also harmful social impacts, Wolf said, such as using expensive pesticides, as well as forced labor and child labor.

“When we started paying attention to cotton, we discovered all of the social impacts related to cotton,” she explained.

After realizing the company could extend its influence “way outside the cotton field,” Levi’s joined the Better Cotton Initiative in 2009, Wolf said.

The nonprofit aims to promote improvements in cotton cultivation by working with non-governmental organizations, government agencies and companies such as Levi’s, H&M and IKEA to reduce the negative environmental and social impacts of the crops. Their initiatives focus on teaching farmers crop-growing practices that require less water and fewer pesticides, improving labor standards and increasing financial profit for farmers. Different growing techniques and varieties of cotton seeds are also used to increase the farmers’ yield.

While the cotton in the new jeans is not technically considered organic because some chemicals may be used, Levi’s is focused on holistic sustainability and going beyond just the environment to help people, Wolf said.

Economic viability for small, vulnerable farmers is part of that equation, she explained. The majority of the farmers involved with the initiative hold less than two hectares and reside in Pakistan, India, Mali and Brazil. According to the results of a Better Cotton Initiative pilot study, Better Cotton techniques raised farmers’ profits by up to 69 percent and reduced water consumption and pesticide use by one-third.

“It’s not just good for the Earth, it’s good for the farmers,” Wolf said.

Levi’s and the Better Cotton Initiative are looking at ways to expand the initiative to the United States, but for now, the initiative is only involved with farmers in those four countries.

Initially, the jeans made with the Better Cotton blend will not be marked by individual Better Cotton labeling, so as to avoid creating a niche market that drives the price up and to give time for the supply to meet the demand, Wolf said.

The 2 million pairs of jeans include both Levi’s and the company’s Denizen brand, and they will be released across all regions, including North, South and Central America; Europe; and Asia. They are in stores now and will continue to be rolled out through the end of the year, with the hope of increasing the amount in the coming seasons, Wolf said.

[Levi Strauss Aims To Use Less Water In Jeans-Making Process](#)

Huffington Post
Jessica Misener
November 2, 2011

We all love our favorite pair of worn-in denim, but sadly, there's bad news: your cherished jeans might not be so great for Mother Nature.

Esteemed denim house Levi Strauss is concerned about the environmental impact of their own product, as the New York Times discusses in an article today: the company released a statement saying the typical pair of blue jeans consumes 919 gallons of water during its lifespan, or the equivalent of 15 spa-size bathtubs. That's a lot of H2O going into your skinnies.

To help fight back against the perils of climate change and water shortages, Levi Strauss is instituting a new non-profit curriculum as part of their WaterLess initiative that teaches farmers in India, Brazil and other places where jeans are manufactured how to save water. One tactic they've tried: stonewashing jeans with rocks only, and not with water.

Levi's has produced almost 1.5 million pairs of jeans for its spring line while saving 16 million liters of water in the process, reports Environmental Leader.

Part of the program's initiative is also to develop new irrigation methods. Levi's has introduced a drip system that pumps water directly to each plants' roots, a technique that conserves water and fertilizer and also produces fewer weeds, reducing the need for pesticide. The company says that about 5 percent of the cotton used in the two million pairs of jeans the company shipped to stores this fall was grown with this drip irrigation method, and they're aiming for 20 percent by 2015.

Levi Strauss also recommends that eco-minded consumers wash their jeans "rarely," saying that instead, jeans lovers should put theirs in the freezer, which will kill the germs that cause them to smell.

Hmm...we're wondering if Levi's will organify its ex-girlfriend jeans. Either way, it's great to see such a huge corporation taking practical steps to ameliorate the harmful effects of mass clothing production.

[For Parched Times, a New Water Calculus](#)

New York Times

By LESLIE KAUFMAN

November 2, 2011, 11:32 AM

In my article about efforts by Levi Strauss & Company to adapt to climate change by reducing its water consumption, I mention the company's estimate that each pair of 501 Levi's jeans will consume 919 gallons of water during its life cycle. That includes everything from irrigating the cotton crop, to rinsing the jeans during the manufacturing process, to lots of home launderings.

But do those measurements go far enough?

It turns out that measuring water use is just as tricky as measuring carbon dioxide emissions. Yet the Water Footprint Network, a nonprofit group based in the Netherlands, has developed what it calls a gold standard for water use measurement and is urging that it be embraced by corporations, nations and individuals.

The method involves a calculation of "blue water" – that is, the amount of fresh water a company extracts from, say, a reservoir, a stream or an underground aquifer.

But the group also factors in categories that are less obvious. It counts "green water," for example, or precipitation that falls but does not recharge groundwater or streams because it is absorbed for other purposes like growing cotton. And it measures "gray water," or the water used to dilute pollutants in a manufacturing process so that they do not harm the local water quality when they are discharged from the factory.

Needless to say, this approach significantly increases the water footprint of any product or activity.

For one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of cotton, which is roughly what goes into a pair of jeans, only 33 percent of freshwater use comes from irrigation. Gray water accounts for 13 percent and green water for a stunning 54 percent.

Brian Richter, director of global fresh water strategies for The Nature Conservancy, a global nonprofit group that is trying to disseminate the more comprehensive standard, says the most common measurement simply factors in the blue water. Even federal agencies like the United States Geological Survey only track blue water in measuring water use, he said.

Yet as global awareness grows that a shortage of water resulting from drought and climate change could pose major business risks, he said, corporations are paying more attention to what is used throughout their supply chains.

"Companies are asking, 'is there enough water available for our operations? Will it cause us to be blamed if there is not enough left in local environments?'" Mr. Richter said.

Measuring blue, green and gray water use gives a company a clearer idea of where problems within a watershed could develop, he said. As a result, more companies are beginning to count all three.

Ideally, Mr. Richter said, those numbers should be broken down. "It is really more interesting and most effective to keep those numbers separate, because if you combine them, the agglomerated number is hard to understand," he said.

In the end, the numbers "aren't really the issue," he said. "It's the question of whether or not the use of water is causing problems for other people, or the environment."

[Levi's Gives Us a New Reason to Avoid Washing Machines](#)

Esquire Blog

by Kurt Soller

November 2, 2011

We're used to seeing the Times's stories on Levi's jeans in the Thursday or Sunday Styles sections, so it was nice to get the paper this morning and see the front-page story on "better cotton" — the company's goal to create their much-needed crop (the fabric of our lives) using far less water. Because, as the writer points out in her excellent story, "a typical pair of blue jeans consumes 919 gallons of water during its life cycle — enough to fill about 15 spa-size bathtubs."

Right now, Levi Strauss is helping to underwrite a nonprofit program that helps farmers in India, Pakistan, Brazil, and parts of Africa learn how to conserve and recycle water. As stone-washed denim has yet another moment at Urban Outfitters, they're using that technique to add patina without any H₂O. And, as raw denim enthusiasts have long preached, they're offering now-familiar advice to their customers: Wash your pants less (or never at all), using cold water.

It's good for your denim, sure. It's also good for the environment, it turns out. And good for Levi's, too, which began this initiative after cotton prices surged due to a water shortage. Naturally, they'll save money if they figure out this "better cotton" thing. And, likely, you will too. In the meantime, just stick those funky pairs in the freezer. It really works.

[Levi's, H&M, Adidas Debut Apparel Made With Eco-Friendly "Better Cotton"](#)

Ecouterre

by Lori Zimmer

November 2, 2011

"Better cotton" isn't just the stuff of indeterminate pledges anymore. The first apparel products containing the sustainably farmed fiber can finally be purchased from apparel labels and retailers such as Levi's, H&M, and Adidas, and Marks & Spencer. Momentum for the project has been driven in large part by the Better Cotton Initiative, a nonprofit launched in 2005 to reduce the environmental, social, economic impacts of cotton farming. The Geneva-based organization includes a wide range of stakeholders, from farmers and textile mills to retailers and nonprofits.

BETTER CLOTH

"It really is a big goal and big vision to change the way cotton is grown," Michael Kobori, Levi's vice president of social and environmental sustainability and the BCI's chairman, tells *WWD*. Starting Wednesday, the denim giant will be rolling out two million pairs of Levi's and Denizen brand jeans derived from a blend of Better Cotton and conventional fibers. Adidas, a cofounder of the initiative, has committed itself to using 100 percent Better Cotton by 2018, while H&M expects to do the same by 2020.

By 2015, the BCI plans to rally one million farmers to raise one million metric tons of sustainable cotton.

The first BCI cotton for the 2010-11 crop year was harvested from some 68,000 small farms in India, Pakistan, and Mali. By reducing fertilizers, pesticides, and water, as well as bolstering worker conditions, the farms yielded 38,000 metric tons of the 27 million metric tons of cotton raised worldwide, according to the International Cotton Advisory Committee.

The 2011-12 season is expected to produce almost twice that amount, with 150,000 participating farms from regions of West and Central Africa, Brazil, and China. By 2015, the BCI plans to rally one million farmers to raise one million metric tons of sustainable cotton.

Could the participation of such prominent industry leaders set a new standard for growing and harvesting cotton? We can only hope.

[Freeze your jeans, don't wash them](#)

The Examiner

By Diane Davis

November 2, 2011

Look below the belt to check on your jeans, if you are wearing Levi's you can skip laundry day this week. So says the makers of Levi's, they think you should wear your jeans more and wash them less.

The San Francisco based clothing company plan to launch the Water<Less campaign with a new line of products in January. The Water<Less line will be made using a reduced amount of water, an average of 28% less. Levi's has found that an average pair of jeans uses close to 920 gallons of water during its lifetime. This water consumption includes the watering of cotton crops, putting the jeans together and the many washings that happen at home.

Well, Levi's is doing their part and now they expect you to do your. According to Levi's, you should slide your jeans in the freezer instead of dropping them in the washer. The people of Levi's say that the cold can kill stinky bacteria and it isn't necessary to wash your jeans after every use, or even three or four uses. So, are you going to skip laundry day?

[Better Cotton in our Backyard](#)

The Examiner

By Jennifer Diana

November 2, 2011

An initiative was started back in 2005 to improve cotton production and make it more sustainable. The organization behind this is the Better Cotton Initiative or BCI. They are working to educate farmers on better farming standards that limit the use of pesticides and excess water. A small group of companies is behind this initiative including one in our own backyard.

Adidas Group is helping lead the charge into sustainable cotton. This summer they launched one of the first collections utilizing this development. The products were a blend of Better Cotton and mainstream cotton, as amount of production in this new quality of cotton is still low. Adidas hopes to use this new Better Cotton in 100% of their cotton products by 2018.

This is an exciting initiative! Though because of the limited quantities, it has been kept largely under wraps. The goal is to grow this new process organically, so to speak, so that it becomes a standard in cotton production rather than a fad fueled with heavy marketing.

Social Media Coverage

Notable Tweets

@NYTimes (3,925,614 followers, New York Times)

Changes in the Air: Levi Strauss Tries to Minimize Water Use <http://nyti.ms/veiPR6>

@LEVIS (62,095 followers, Levi's® brand)

An avg pair of jeans consumes 99 gallons of water in its life cycle. Here's what we're doing to reduce that
@NYtimes <http://ctx.ly/r/15qp9>

@greenbiztweets (24,702 followers, Hugh Byrne)

Better Cotton Initiatives focused on improving how cotton is grown <http://grn.bz/uHlefj>

@NYTimesGlobal (19,027 followers, International Herald Tribune)

Levi Strauss sees the efficient use of water as crucial to the future of its blue jeans business.
<http://nyti.ms/t3ylFK>

@unhealthytruth (16,366 followers, Robyn O'Brien)

Levi Strauss to Minimize Water Use, as a typical pair of blue jeans consumes 919 gallons of water during its life cycle <http://nyti.ms/t3ylFK>

@business_design (12,288 followers, Alex Osterwalder, Author)

Water! "@bill_fischer: Bottom of Pyramid #innovation by Levi Strauss to minimize water use:
<http://nyti.ms/t3ylFK> #imd_mit"

@makower (11,120 followers, Joel Makower)

A leg up: Michael Kobori @Levis on "A Better Way to Make Cotton" <http://grn.bz/uHlefj>

@MarcGunther (9,296 followers, Fortune editor and GreenBiz.com writer)

Water-less jeans: How @Levi StraussCo saves H2O. <http://nyti.ms/uFDgdz> #climate adaptation

@motokorich (5,783 followers, NYT Reporter, Motoko Rich)

Don't wash your jeans, freeze them--and other ways Levi Strauss Tries to Minimize Water Use by Leslie Kaufman: <http://nyti.ms/t3ylFK>

@SustainableBiz (3,755 followers, Sustainable Business)

Levi's Launches Sustainable-Cotton Jeans: SUSTAINABLE GROWTH: Levi's has embraced the Better Cotton Initiative a... <http://bit.ly/tNDiYi>

@ClimateNews (3,077 followers, Climate News)

A Better Way to Make Cotton Better - GreenBiz <http://bit.ly/sMLU1Z>

@SaveOurWater (3,401 followers, Save Our Water)

Water-less jeans? Great idea -- Levi Strauss Tries to Minimize Water Use <http://nyti.ms/t3ylFK> #cawater

@PGourevitch (1,477 followers, The New Yorker staff writer)

Filthy thought: Levi's says put dirty jeans in freezer not laundry- it kills smell & conserves water. I feel vindicated <http://nyti.ms/t3ylFK>

@birdsofafaether (930 followers, Bonnie Powers)

Levi's, Adidas, H&M Using Sustainably Farmed Cotton via Better Cotton Initiative
<http://www.wwd.com/markets-news/denim/levis-adidas-hm-back-better-cotton-5346376?full=true>

@SFFAMA (761 followers, San Francisco Fashion And Merchants Alliance)

Levi's Launches Sustainable-Cotton Jeans - Fashion Manufacturing News | California Apparel News | LA Fashion: <http://bit.ly/uEqsel>