

INTRODUCING COTTON EXPERT HOUSE AFRICA

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE AFRICAN COTTON & TEXTILES SECTOR

Rising global awareness of sustainability has transformed the market for the cotton and textile industry in Africa. Cotton Expert House Africa (CHA) is a private sector-driven, non-profit organisation that has recently begun operation in Africa, and which seeks to support these changing market environments by actively promoting sustainability within the industry. We do this by acting as an open platform for all industry participants, facilitating conversations, knowledge-sharing, and learning experiences between diverse stakeholders, as well as distributing international best practice in the areas of agriculture, ICT and manufacturing.

Increasingly, retailers and brands are adjusting their processes in response to consumer expectations that products meet specific standards. With support from governments, private sector organisations and multinational bodies around the world, almost 30% of Africa's cotton production already meets recognised sustainability standards and certifications (e.g. Cotton made in Africa, Better Cotton Initiative, FairTrade, Organic).

A sustainable future relates to social and environmental factors, but it is also critical that any advances made are economically viable for smallholder farmers and the industry. CHA can offer a powerful platform to achieve this, and to provide practical solutions and hands-on support on the road to sustainable production in Africa. Our goal is ambitious: ultimately, to establish an entirely sustainable production chain, "from field to fashion".



FOCUS ON FARMERS

CHA believes in engaging cotton smallholders to secure a sustainable future for the African cotton and textile industry, as they are its backbone in a way that is unique in the world. The small scale of production means that a large number of farmers are involved. Smallholder farmers and cotton companies already have a symbiotic relationship. Our work builds on this by empowering farmers through cotton companies, with access to agricultural advancements and qualification programmes that let them maximise the opportunities offered by the industry, bringing long-term benefits for all stakeholders.

Our strength is in the comprehensive networks that we draw upon. We use up-to-date market data; we hold dialogue with parties along the entire production chain; we can access many specialised consultants across various disciplines; and we have the capacity to approach a broad range of public donors and foundations for funding.

CHA came about in the wake of the COMPACI programme, building on its key experience. The Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) and GFA Consulting Group (GFA) set up CHA in December 2016, and one of their principal functions is to provide basic financing for CHA, enabling us to guarantee basic operations and an attractive basis to attract additional co-funding. Governance is by CHA shareholders and an Advisory Council made up of various representatives from the sector (e.g. public stakeholders, NGOs, standards, cotton companies).





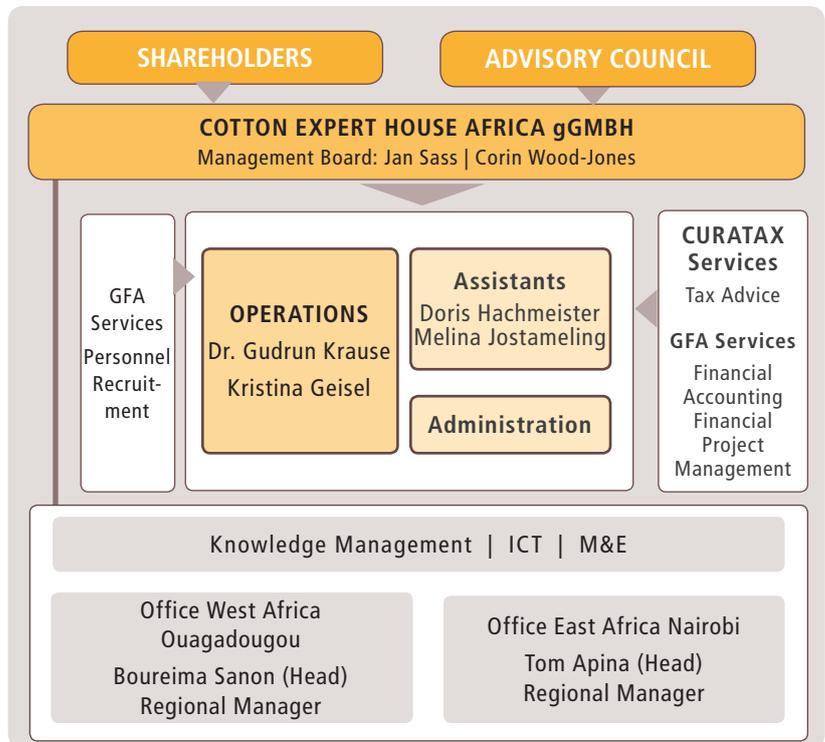
WHAT CHA OFFERS

We work across the whole sector, providing proven resources. The key tool we are developing is an open access, web-based knowledge platform that we will manage and maintain. This will cover successful agricultural practices, industry innovations, information on sustainability frameworks, and educational material relating to standards and training. It will be complemented by regional and Africa-wide workshops and conferences.

CHA is also able to provide specific expertise and specialised advice from our own staff and professional contacts, for instance for developing management plans and frameworks for sustainable production. We can also respond to individual requests to implement project activities such as education, training and piloting of innovations.

Innovation is crucial for the future of our industry. We can offer start-up finance for testing and expanding new approaches, for example in the fields of ICT, soil fertility and bio-pesticides. Furthermore, we can assist cotton companies and textile manufacturers in obtaining co-financing for activities relating to sustainability objectives.

We seek to make the industry stronger by fostering links and exchange between cotton companies as well as sector associations, whether through the knowledge platform or by other means. We also offer valuable advice with respect to policy advocacy, to cotton companies and associations.



OPEN FOR NEW STAKEHOLDERS AND FINANCING PARTNERS

We aim to build a strong exchange network, which means we want to hear from all parties involved in the sector. We manage our activities across the continent from regional offices in Nairobi (Eastern & Southern Africa) and Ouagadougou (Western & Central Africa). You can also contact us at our head office in Hamburg, Germany – see below for details. We will be happy to hear from you with perspectives, requests, and feedback on CHA, and hope to build a productive relationship on the way to a better industry.

We are actively seeking funding to support our activities, and to supplement our basic financing. Individuals, foundations, NGOs, private sector bodies and other organisations are invited to contact us to further discuss the possibilities.

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