

New trends in the world cotton market

26/11/2023

Summary

The most widely used natural fibre in the manufacture of textiles, cotton represents a global market of around 25 million tonnes a year, with an estimated value of over 40 billion dollars in 2022. Although production volumes are still rising only slowly, the OECD and FAO are forecasting an increase in production to 28.1 million tonnes by 2032. Prices have returned to normal after the 2022 surge, although they could rise again as a result of the current drought in the Dekkan plateau in India, linked to the El Niño phenomenon.

Behind this apparent stability, however, new trends are emerging. The three major historical players - China, India and the United States - have to reckon with the emergence of Brazil, which became the world's third largest producer for the first time in the 2023-2024 season. The Latin American giant has taken advantage of cotton's complementarity with other crops (soya, maize), which are grown at the cost of deforestation in the Amazon, while positioning itself in the so-called "sustainable" cotton sector, in which it is by far the world's leading player. China, on the other hand, has seen its production fall steadily, and its position has been complicated by the regulatory measures adopted by the United States - no doubt soon to be followed by the European Union - targeting cotton produced in Xinjiang. The reshaping of the world market can also be explained by marked differences in yield per hectare. While yields in India, the United States and the cotton-growing states of West Africa are stagnating, those in Brazil and China have soared to almost three times the world average.

The downstream sector is also undergoing far-reaching reorganisation: a handful of countries have significantly increased their role in weaving and spinning. Major cotton producers such as India and Uzbekistan have managed to move up the value chain to increase their exports of fabric. Bangladesh and Vietnam have also invested massively in this sector, to better supply their own clothing industries, of which they are respectively the world's second and third largest exporters, behind China.

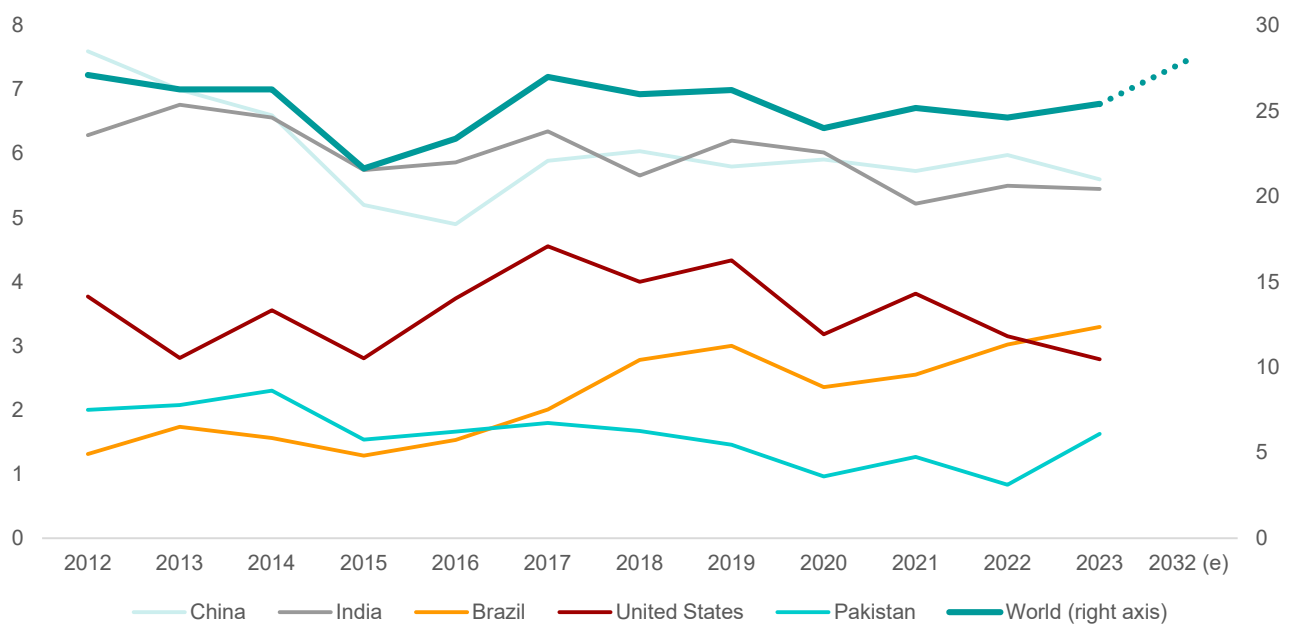
Other players have managed to occupy highly profitable niches: in contrast to almost all other European countries, Austria has seen its cotton fabric exports more than double in a decade, thanks to the positioning of one of its main manufacturers on the West African luxury fabric market.

1. Stable global production masks far-reaching restructuring

1.1. Since the 2000s, volumes have stopped growing

Cotton is by far the **most widely used natural fibre in the manufacture of textile articles**. However, it has gradually been supplanted by synthetic fibres such as polyester and cellulose fibres, **and now accounts for just 27% of the total textile fibre market**, compared with 60% in the 1960s and 1970s. However, as the global market grew, production continued to increase steadily until the early 2000s. Since then, it has remained relatively stable at around **25 million tonnes a year**. However, the OECD and the FAO are forecasting an increase in production to **28.1 million tonnes by 2032¹**.

Graph 1: World cotton production and growth estimates, in millions of tonnes



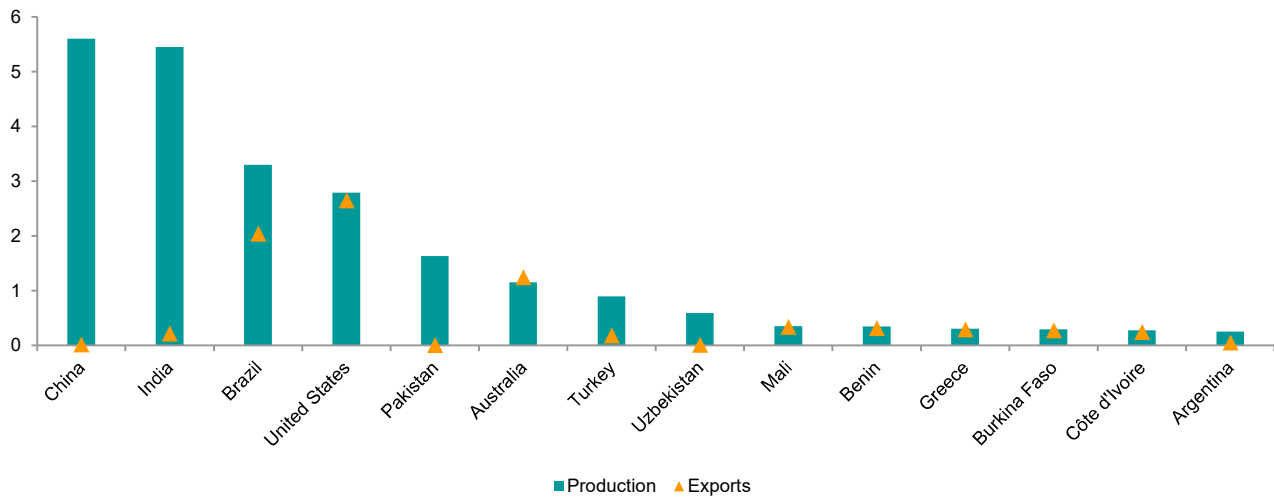
Source: GSA, production data: International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC); estimates (e): OECD-FAO

1.2. A changing market

Behind this apparent stability, **new trends are emerging**: the three main producers - **China, India and the United States** - which still grew 63% of the world's cotton in 2020, have seen their share fall to 54% in 2023, due to strong growth in production in Brazil (chapter 1.4) and a continued fall in production in China (chapter 1.5).

The market is also characterised by the very different positions of the main producers: **while India, China and Pakistan absorb most of their own production, the United States and Australia export almost all of it**. This is also the case for the main cotton-producing countries in Africa. Only Brazil has an intermediate position, consuming around a third of its cotton (Graph 3).

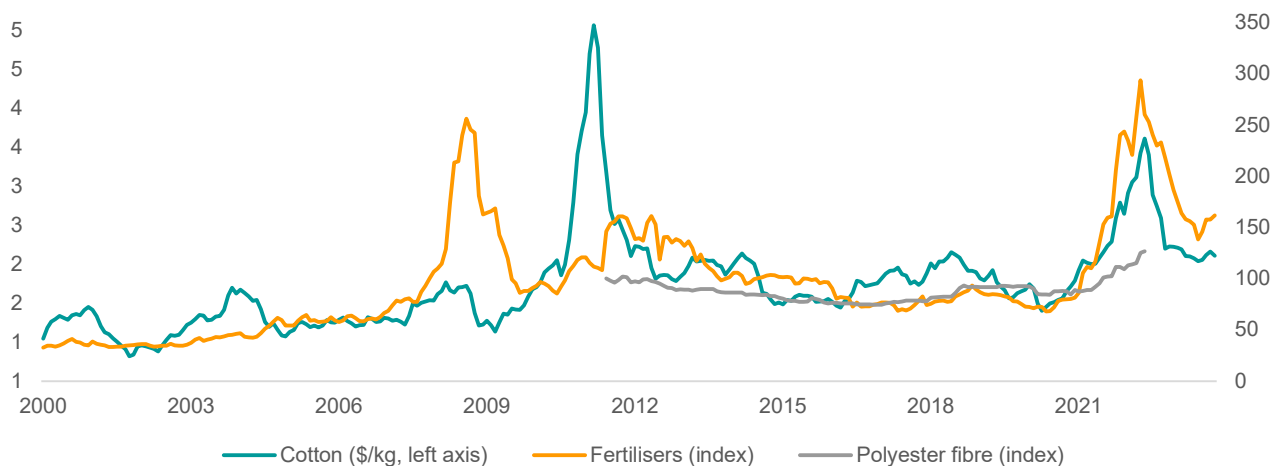
¹OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032, July 2023

Graph 3: Production and exports, 2023-2024 season, in millions of tonnes

Source: GSA; data: International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC)

1.3. After the 2022 price surge, prices are returning to normal

Although more than half of cotton fields are irrigated, and these account for 75% of world production², the **weather continues to weigh heavily on cotton prices**. The last two historic price peaks, in 2011 and May 2022 (the latter period also corresponding to a general rise in agricultural commodities), were caused by droughts in the southern US cotton belt^{3,4,5}, a phenomenon amplified by the over-representation of North American cotton on the world market. **The current drought in India's Dekkan Plateau, linked to the *El Niño* phenomenon, could lead to a further rise in prices in the coming months. Indian production and exports could fall by 2% and 9% respectively for the 2023-2024 season⁶.**

Graph 4: Price indices for cotton, fertilisers and polyester fibres, 2000-2023

Source: GSA, data: cotton, fertiliser: World Bank; polyester: Federal Reserve Bank of St-Louis (index discontinued in 2022)

² [Tropical agricultural sectors: cotton](#), Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement, consulted on 22 November 2023

³ [Cotton sees historically strong and volatile prices for 2022](#), Cotton Farming, December 2022

⁴ [Texas' cotton industry is facing its worst harvest in years - costing the state more than \\$2 billion](#), Texas Tribune, August 2022

⁵ [Cotton prices at their highest for ten years](#), Les Echos, March 2022

⁶ [India's historic droughts drive up sugar and cotton prices](#), Nikkei, 31 October 2023

But there are other factors at work. The **cost of inputs**, mainly fertilisers, comes into play. **The price of cotton is also linked to that of its main competitor**, petrochemical **polyester fibre**⁷ : the two products are relatively substitutable for each other, and both display high price elasticity. Demand for cotton is also highly correlated with the global macroeconomic context. After the Covid-19 pandemic, **the lifting of lockdown and work-from-home measures boosted the clothing market and drove up prices.**

1.4. Brazil shakes up the top of the ranking

The main highlight of the 2023/2024 season is undoubtedly **Brazil's rise, for the first time ever, to the position of third largest cotton producer in the world - ahead of the United States - enabling it to consolidate its status as the world's second largest exporter**, which it has held since the 2018/2019 season. This trend is set to continue, prompting the Brazilian Cotton Producers Association (Abapra) to aim to become the world's leading exporter by 2030⁸ . **The sector would also be one of the major beneficiaries of the free trade agreements that Mercosur (of which Brazil is a member) could sign with China and Vietnam. These two countries are, respectively, the world's largest and second largest importers of cotton.** President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is particularly involved in these negotiations, meeting Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh on the sidelines of the G7 summit in May⁹ .

1.4.1 The knock-on effect of the soya and maize sectors

Although the country has enjoyed a favourable climate in recent years, Brazilian cotton has benefited above all from the knock-on effect of increased production of other crops: it is often **planted as the second crop of the agricultural season, after soya¹⁰ or maize**. Cotton cultivation has therefore benefited mechanically from the increase in land devoted to these crops, which have themselves been able to grow at the cost of intensive deforestation of the Amazon. The return to power at the end of 2022 of President Lula, who has **stated his desire to halt the deforestation process facilitated by his predecessor Jair Bolsonaro, could therefore have a negative impact on future cotton harvests. However, the potential for development appears significant, even without further cuts** to the Amazon green lung: cotton plantations for the 2023/2024 season were estimated at 1.6 million hectares¹¹ compared with 39.6 million hectares for soya¹² and 22.9 million hectares for maize¹³ .

1.4.2 A winning bet on "sustainable" labels

The increase in Brazilian exports has also been facilitated by the industry's decision to focus on "sustainable" cotton: over 80% of its production meets the environmental and social criteria of the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI, see box)¹⁴ . Brazil points out that 92% of its cotton grows without irrigation, thanks to the high rainfall in its production regions.

The Brazilian Cotton Producers Association (Abrapa) embarked on this path almost two decades ago, launching its first pilot programme in 2005, then creating its own label in 2012, ABR (Algodão Brasileiro Responsável, now merged with the BCI label). **The initiative now extends to processing: in 2020, Abrapa launched the ABR-UBA programme, aimed at certifying ginning plants - the first stage of processing after harvesting.**

⁷ Cotton Utilization in Conventional and Non-Conventional Textiles-A Statistical Review, Mourad Krifa, Sara Stewart Stevens, Agricultural Sciences, 2016

⁸ Le coton labélisé "durable" en plein boom au Brésil", AFP via Challenges, August 2022

⁹ Brazil President, Vietnam PM Talk Trade on G7 Sidelines, Vietnam Briefing, 26 May 2023

¹⁰ OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032, July 2023

¹¹ Brazil - Cotton production, Foreign Agricultural Service, US Department of Agriculture, 9 November 2023

¹² Brazil - Soybean production, Foreign Agricultural Service, US Department of Agriculture, 9 November 2023

¹³ Brazil - Corn production, Foreign Agricultural Service, US Department of Agriculture, 9 November 2023

¹⁴ Le coton labélisé "durable" en plein boom au Brésil", AFP via Challenges, August 2022

1.5. China still No. 1, but for how long?

1.5.1 A planned shift towards Xinjiang

China's cotton production has been on a downward trend for the past ten years, to the point where its leadership has been challenged by India (Figure 1). The main reason for this decline is the **gradual abandonment of this crop in the eastern provinces** (Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu Henan, Anhui and Hubei), which accounted for almost all production until the early 2000s, **in favour of the autonomous province of Xinjiang, in the far west of the country, which now produces around 90% of China's cotton**. This switch, planned at the highest level of the central authorities, was intended to allow mechanised cultivation on larger plots - sometimes directly managed by entities linked to the armed forces - and to take advantage of the reduced presence of pests in this arid region. Above all, it had a political objective: **the economic development of this autonomous region was intended to improve its integration to the rest of the country and thus combat the autonomist, or even independentist, demands** of part of the Uighur population.

Paradoxically, however, this "westward shift" in cotton production seems to have had a negative impact on national production. It has **distanced it from the rest of the national textile industry** (weaving, spinning and clothing), which is still mainly located in the coastal regions, contributing to make **Xinjiang cotton less competitive than imported cotton**¹⁵.

1.5.2 The impact of US sanctions

The relocation of China's cotton industry to Xinjiang has also exposed it to **sanctions from the United States**, which has made human rights in the autonomous province a central issue in its relations with Beijing, as well as a lever in its diplomatic and economic confrontation with China. **The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), adopted in December 2021, drastically restricts imports into the United States of goods produced in the region, or made up, even in part, of raw materials originating there**, on the grounds that forced labour - particularly among the Uyghur population - is widespread in Xinjiang. The law applies to all products, but identifies cotton as one of the three "priority" sectors for application.

The direct effect on Chinese exports to the United States is minimal. US customs statistics¹⁶ reveal that, since the text came into force in June 2022, 577 shipments (out of 1014) of textile products, originating equally from China and Vietnam, with a value of USD 13 million, had been blocked by its services, while 139 more, worth USD 5 million, remain under examination. A drop in the ocean compared to the record USD 36.8 billion worth of textiles¹⁷ exported by China to the United States in 2022.

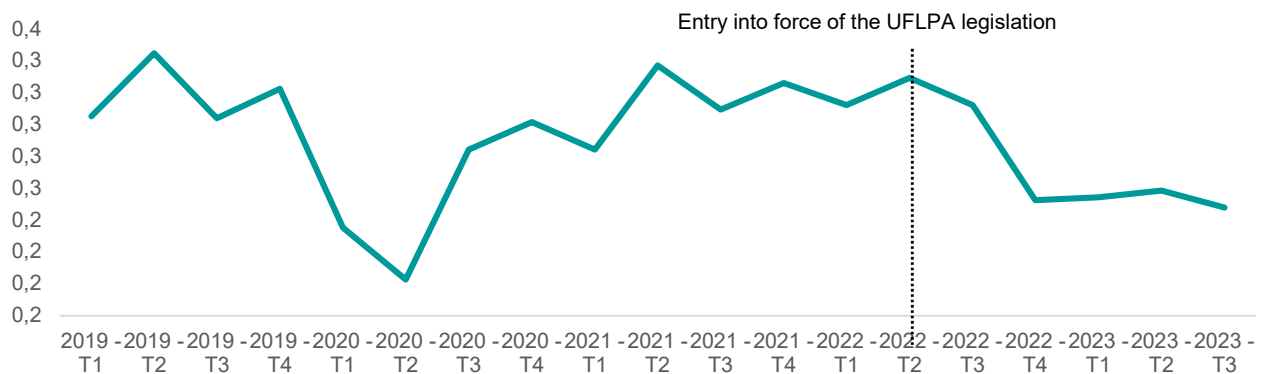
On the other hand, **the UFLPA legislation is likely to have weighed heavily on sales of Chinese fabric to third countries specialising in garments (Bangladesh, Vietnam, etc.), whose manufacturers are keen to retain access to the US market** - the largest in the world - and are therefore encouraged to stop sourcing Chinese fabric, which is likely to contain cotton from Xinjiang. Chinese exports of cotton-based fabric¹⁸ fell sharply from 3rd quarter 2022, immediately after the text came into force (Graph 5). However, this downturn is taking place against a backdrop of the **rise of other Asian countries in the weaving sector** (Chapter 2), in direct competition with China. It therefore seems risky to attribute it solely to the effects of the UFLPA legislation.

¹⁵ [Shift in Geography of China's Cotton Production Reshapes Global Market](#), Economic Research Service, US Department of Agriculture, December 2022

¹⁶ [Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Statistics](#), US Customs and Border Protection, 14 November 2023

¹⁷ TradeMap data - aggregate of HS codes 61 and 62

¹⁸ TradeMap data - aggregate of HS codes 5208 to 5211

Graph 5: Chinese exports of cotton-based fabrics, USD billion

Source: GSA; Data: Trademap (aggregate of HS codes 5208 to 5211)

The effects of these sanctions could soon be multiplied, as **the European Union in turn plans to adopt legislation banning the import of products produced using forced labour**¹⁹. Initiated by the European Commission at the end of 2022, this draft regulation is currently being examined by the European Parliament, which wants to tighten up the initial text. In particular, MEPs want the EU to draw up a list of "*high-risk geographical areas and economic sectors*", where the burden of proof that forced labour has not been used would fall on companies. If the EU decides to target Xinjiang or its cotton industry, this provision would give the text a scope comparable to the American UFLPA²⁰.

1.6. Returns: India and Africa fall back, Brazil and India consolidate their lead

The reshaping of the world cotton market is also being accelerated by the widening gap in yields between the main producers. India is likely to lose its position as the world's second largest producer to Brazil, especially as its yields have been falling for several years. According to the Indian government, the introduction of BT hybrid cultivars in 2002, making the plant more resistant to insects, doubled production²¹, a claim confirmed by statistics from the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC, Figure 6). But **since then, yields per hectare have stagnated at around 500 kg/ha**. Below the world average, this figure is comparable to that of the main West African countries, known as C4+2 (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, plus Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire). **In this West African "cotton club", whose combined production makes it the world's sixth largest source of supply, production has risen in recent years, but at the cost of an increase in the amount of land devoted to cotton**. This trend could eventually have an impact on the region's self-sufficiency in food, even though cotton is partly grown in rotation with other food crops (maize, millet, sorghum).

By contrast, **China and Brazil have made considerable progress, increasing their yields by more than 60% over the last two decades**, and now approaching 2,000 kg/ha, almost three times the world average. Having chosen to develop the sector in an arid region - Xinjiang - China has invested in drip irrigation and developed mechanised harvesting²². In the case of Brazil, this progress has been made possible in particular by a high degree of control over crop rotation - involving rigorous selection of the cotton and soya varieties used - but also by extensive mechanisation of the harvest, as well as the use of no-till cultivation techniques²³.

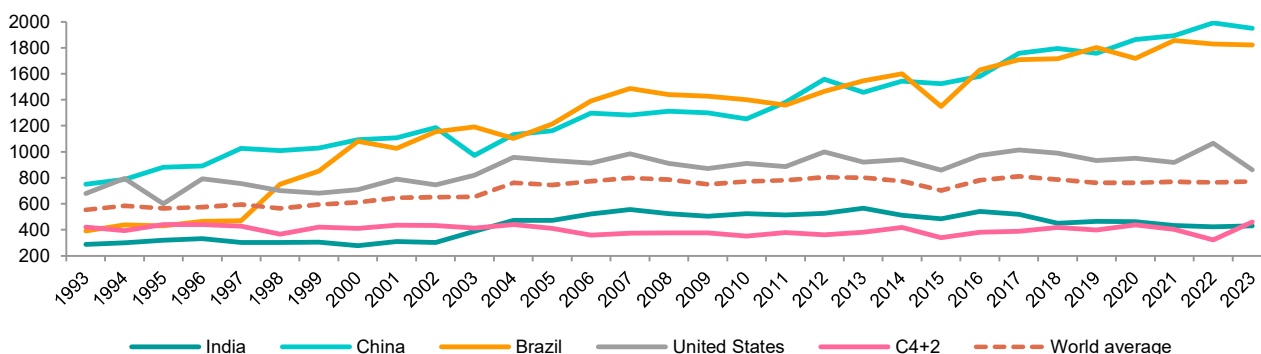
¹⁹ Towards an EU ban on products made using forced labour, European Parliament press release, 16 October 2023

²⁰ Towards an EU ban on products made using forced labour, European Parliament press release, 16 October 2023

²¹ BT cotton doubled production since 2002, minimised harm by pest: Govt, Business Standard, February 2018

²² Cotton cultivation technology with Chinese characteristics has driven the 70-year development of cotton production in China, Lu FENG, Bao-Jie CHI, He-zhong DONG, Journal of Integrative Agriculture, March 2022

²³ Brazilian Cotton Technologies, Cotton Brazil, November 2022

Graph 6: Average annual yields, in kg/ha

Source: GSA; data: ICAC

The "sustainable" sector is no longer marginal

Anecdotal a decade ago - 2.9% of world production in the 2012-2013 season - 'sustainable' and organic sectors now account for **almost a quarter of world cotton production**²⁴. In principle, these certifications enable cotton producers to obtain better selling prices and could, in the future, guarantee access to certain markets subject to compliance with social or environmental criteria.

The main sustainable certification label is that of the **Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)**, a non-profit organisation bringing together NGOs, companies (Louis Dreyfus Company, OLAM, IKEA, Walmart, etc.) and professional organisations. In 2022, **2.2 million farmers produced 5.4 million tonnes of BCI-labelled cotton, i.e. 22% of the world's cotton**²⁵. BCI works with a large number of producing countries - Brazil, the undisputed champion of the 'sustainable' sector, but also Australia, China, India, Mali, etc. Its certification criteria relate to the rational management of water, the protection of soil and biodiversity, decent work (in particular the fight against child labour), and the quality of the fibre²⁶. In this way, BCI is attempting to respond to the many grievances levelled at the cotton industry: forced labour, over-exploitation of water resources (the development of the industry in Central Asia during the Soviet era contributed greatly to the drying up of the Aral Sea), excessive use of inputs, etc. But the label is criticised by some of the world's leading cotton producers. But the label has been criticised by some environmental organisations as greenwashing. Affiliated chains must source at least 10% of their cotton from certified sources, and undertake to increase this proportion to 50% within five years. However, they are authorised to substitute certified cotton with conventional cotton, provided that they also purchase an equivalent volume of BCI cotton. In other words, up to 90% of products labelled BCI may contain 0% "sustainable" cotton.

The organic sector (without chemical inputs) remains in its infancy, with 342,000 tonnes produced by 2020/2021²⁷, or **less than 1.4% of world production**. The main producers are India (38%), Turkey (24%) and China (10%). There are a number of obstacles to the development of this sector. Prices are highly variable, due to the greater uncertainty surrounding production. In addition, **genetically modified seeds, which are not eligible for the organic label, hold a monopoly in some countries**, preventing any substitution. The process of converting to organic farming is also difficult to manage for smaller farms: yields fall during the conversion period, generally three years. Finally, the costs of certification are too high for many farmers. They are obliged to comply with national legislation on organic farming, but can also subscribe to one of the labels awarded by the private sector, the main ones being the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), the Textile Exchange's Organic Content Standard (OCS), or the OEKO-TEX Organic Cotton label.

²⁴ OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032, July 2023

²⁵ Annual Report 2022-2023, Better Cotton Initiative

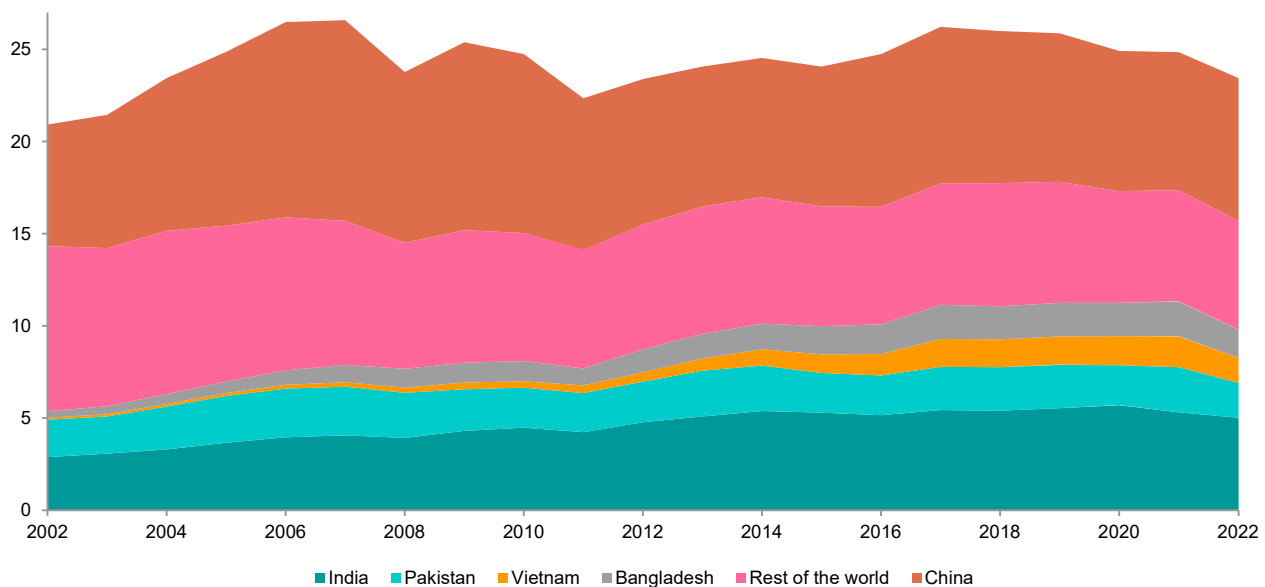
²⁶ Better Cotton Principles and Criteria, version 2.1, Better Cotton Initiative, March 2018

²⁷ Organic Cotton market report, Textile Exchange, October 2022

2. Transformation: the emergence of new champions

Dominated by Asia, the cotton spinning and weaving industry has developed in parallel with the production of the raw material and has not grown significantly in volume terms for nearly two decades. But it too is in the process of restructuring, to the benefit of new players, mainly from Asia.

Graph 7: Cotton spinning capacity, in millions of tonnes per year



Data: OECD/FAO

2.1. China's market share is shrinking

While **China remains by far the world leader in terms of spinning capacity** - the country processed around **a third of the world's cotton in 2022**, or 7.7 million tonnes, compared with 5 million tonnes for India - its relative share has fallen sharply since 2007 (when its share was 41%) and is set to fall to 28% by 2032, according to projections made by the OECD and the FAO²⁸ (Figure 7). Chinese manufacturers are suffering from an unfavourable regulatory environment. US import restrictions on cotton harvested in Xinjiang (Chapter 1.5.2) are having an impact on the entire industry, since Chinese spinning mills almost systematically source their cotton from the autonomous region. They also find it difficult to obtain supplies from abroad - particularly from the United States, the world's leading exporter - because of the import quota on cotton. Theoretically, this is 894,000 tonnes a year, although to meet the needs of its manufacturers, the Chinese authorities have introduced an additional system of sliding tariff rates (750,000 tonnes in 2023, for example), which in total allow **imports to cover around 20% of national consumption**.

Lastly, the sector is facing the same factors driving up costs as the rest of Chinese industry: **wage increases, rising land prices**, etc. The spinning, weaving and finishing stages account for around two-thirds of the total cost of finished fabric²⁹. As in other sectors, **Chinese fabric manufacturers are seeing their market share shrink in favour of more competitive countries**.

2.2. Vietnam, Bangladesh: clothing giants secure their supplies

Bangladesh and Vietnam in particular are benefiting from this shift. **With lower labour costs compared to China, these two countries have risen to second and third place respectively in garment exports. They**

²⁸OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032, July 2023

²⁹Tracing production costs in the primary textile industry, Knitting Industry, June 2022

now intend to develop their upstream sector so as to ensure their own supply of fabric - a better way of capturing the added value in the production cycle, but also of protecting themselves from potential shocks to their supply chain, such as the collateral effects of Western sanctions against China.

Vietnam is experiencing explosive growth in its cotton processing industry: from less than half a million tonnes in 2012, its spinning capacity has risen to 1.35 million tonnes in 2022, and could exceed 2 million tonnes in 2032, according to the OECD and the FAO³⁰. This increase in capacity is not just benefiting Vietnamese garment manufacturers. **The country's exports of cotton fabric have risen by 812% in a decade**, reaching USD 359 million in 2022, against the backdrop of a sharply slowing market.

Particularly dependent on its exports of garments and textile articles - an industry that accounts for almost all of its annual exports of some USD 51 billion - Bangladesh now has more than 400 spinning mills, the vast majority of which process cotton and are capable of covering more than 40% of its industry's needs in terms of woven textiles, and 85% for knitted fabrics³¹. More than 1.5 million tonnes of cotton are processed in Bangladesh every year, and this figure could rise to almost 2.2 million tonnes by 2032, according to the OECD and the FAO. Unlike Vietnam, however, exports of cotton-based fabric from Bangladesh remain anecdotal (USD 32 million in 2022)³².

2.3. India, Uzbekistan: cotton producers move up the value chain

Other countries, such as India and Uzbekistan, are adopting the opposite strategy: as **major cotton producers, they are seeking to develop their raw fibre processing business in order to market intermediate products (yarn and fabric) and develop their own clothing exports**.

Since the early 1990s, India's cotton processing capacity has increased by around one million tonnes each decade, reaching 5 million tonnes in 2022, a figure that should rise to just over 6 million tonnes by 2032. **Most of the fabric produced in India is still consumed by the domestic clothing industry, but there are also export outlets: with USD 2.25 billion in 2022 (+36% in a decade), India accounted for 9.2% of world exports of cotton-based fabrics, compared with just 5.1% ten years earlier**³³.

A number of public initiatives have consolidated synergies in the fabric-clothing sector³⁴, including the establishment of seven regional integrated ecosystems, the creation of some fifty industrial parks dedicated to the textile industries, and the launch of a national continuing training programme for the entire sector. However, the provisions of the PLI (Production-Linked Incentive) programme for textiles are designed to support the synthetic fibre sector alone - a paradox given that the Indian clothing industry is one of the few in the world to favour cotton over its petrochemical-based competitors³⁵.

Ranked as the world's fifth or sixth-largest cotton producer depending on the year, with around a million tonnes a year, **Uzbekistan was still the world's fourth-largest exporter in 2013, with 615,000 tonnes. Today, it exports almost no raw fibre, which it now processes almost entirely into intermediate products, mainly yarn for weaving, for which it is the world's third largest exporter** (USD 2.4 billion in 2022, out of a global market of USD 12.9 billion) behind India and Vietnam. Similarly, **its cotton fabric exports rose by 177% between 2017 - the first year for which statistics are available - and 2022**, to USD 148.9 million³⁶.

This repositioning is the result of far-reaching reforms undertaken by Uzbekistan, which in 2017 wound up the public company **Uzbekyengilsanoat**, which oversaw all processing activities, replacing it with a simple textile industry association, **Uztextil**³⁷. The sector has also been reorganised to encourage vertical integration, with 130 "clusters" of private companies and cooperatives operating along the entire chain, each

³⁰ OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032, July 2023

³¹ An overview of the Bangladesh spinning industry, Textile Today, May 2022

³² Trademap data - aggregate of HS codes 5208 to 5211

³³ Trademap data - aggregate of HS codes 5208 to 5211

³⁴ Schemes launched by the Government in Textile sector for employment generation, Indian Ministry of Textiles, March 2022

³⁵ PLI Scheme for Textile Industry- How It Can Help Spinning Can Industry, Jumac Sliver Handling Systems, July 2021

³⁶ Trademap data - aggregate of HS codes 5208 to 5211

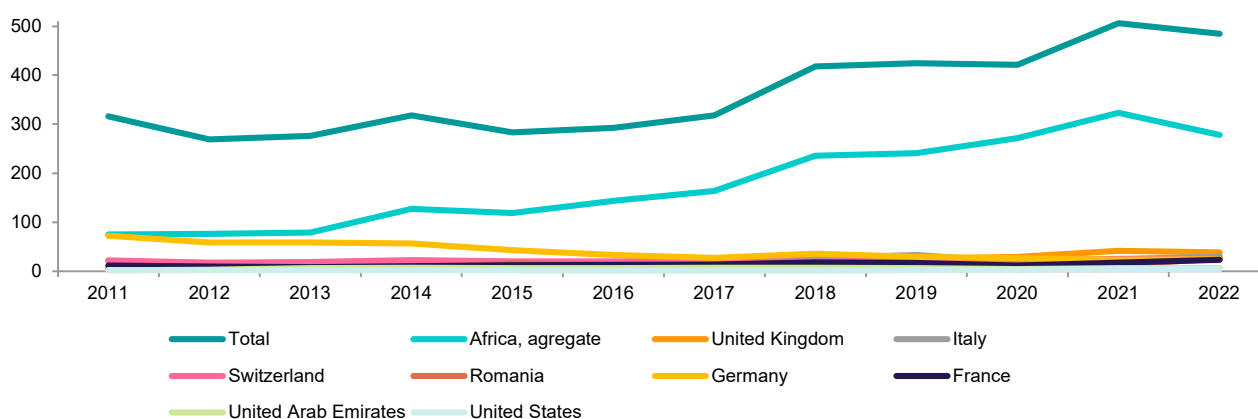
³⁷ Textile industry of Uzbekistan, Investment Promotion Agency of Uzbekistan, consulted on 22 November 2023

responsible for cotton production, ginning and spinning³⁸. These reforms have attracted several billion USD in domestic and foreign investment, not only from China but also from Switzerland, Indonesia and India³⁹. This trend is continuing, with South Korea's Posco International due to set up operations in 2022⁴⁰, and modern spinning mills being built by Uzbek groups such as Bakan Tex⁴¹ and Taxygen Textile⁴².

2.4. Austria, champion of West African luxury fabrics thanks to the Getzner group

Another, more unexpected example of a successful repositioning in the textile sector is that of Austria, which in just a few years has become a major exporter of cotton fabric. Contrary to all the other major European players (Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the Czech Republic), which are recording double-digit declines in their exports (between -18% and -47%) in this segment between 2013 and 2022, **Austria has seen its exports grow by 114%, reaching USD 460 million by 2022**⁴³. Even more counter-intuitive: **more than a third of its sales are destined for Mali (USD 163 million) and Senegal (USD 45 million)**. Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Benin are also among the top fifteen export destinations for Austrian cotton fabric. Growth in Austrian exports is strongly correlated with growth in sales on the African continent (Figure 8):

Figure 8: Main destinations of Austrian exports of cotton fabric, USD million



Source: GSA; TradeMap data (aggregation of HS codes 5208 to 5211)

This performance can be attributed almost entirely to a single Austrian company, the Getzner Group. Founded in 1818 in the heart of the Alpine *länder* of Vorarlberg, the company has become, from its stronghold in Bludenz, a key player in the market for bazin, a shiny damask fabric much appreciated in West Africa, particularly for ceremonial and formal wear. Although the group is also present in other niche markets (automotive and aeronautical fabrics, acoustic materials, technical clothing, etc.), **the African market accounts for the bulk of its €446 million in sales**, 95% of which comes from exports⁴⁴. This situation owes nothing to chance: in 2011, the group chose to make this market its priority⁴⁵, multiplying its collections to best meet the expectations of its African customers and creating a network of approved distributors stretching from Senegal to Chad. Although much more recent, and with no historical link to the colonial trade, Getzner's positioning is not unlike that of the Dutch weavers who, more than a century ago, took control of the West African market for wax fabrics, a cotton fabric with geometric patterns that is also very popular in the region. Some of these players, such as **Visco**, are still active in the high-end fabric segment, but almost 90% of the world's wax is now produced in China.

³⁸ Cotton and products update - Uzbekistan, Foreign Agriculture Service, US Department of Agriculture, December 2022

³⁹ Uzbekistan Textile and Garment Industry, Uzbekistan Textile and Garment Industry Association, consulted on 22 November 2023

⁴⁰ POSCO INTERNATIONAL to Build a Cotton Cluster in Uzbekistan, Posco International press release, March 2022

⁴¹ Capturing Uzbekistan's most modern spinning mill, Innovation in Textiles, February 2019

⁴² Taxygen Textile to Add Spunlace Nonwovens Line, Nonwovens industry, January 2022

⁴³ Trademap data - aggregate of HS codes 5208 to 5211

⁴⁴ Getzner official website

⁴⁵ Getzner-Gruppe feiert 200-jähriges Bestehen, Vorarlberg Online, March 2018