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Cotton Mission: Enhancing Productivity and Farm Income

Authors

Anant Sharma¹, Mukesh Kumar², Priyanshi¹,
Ajay Verma³ and Swapnil Srivastava⁴

Ph.D. Research Scholar, ¹Department of Agronomy,

³Department of Extension Education, Acharya Narendra

Deva University of Agriculture and Technology,

Kumarganj, Ayodhya- 224229 (Uttar Pradesh), India

²Professor, Department of Agronomy, ⁴Ph.D. Research

Scholar, Department of Agricultural Biotechnology,

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and

Technology, Meerut-250110 (Uttar Pradesh), India

INTRODUCTION

1. Why Cotton Matters in India

Cotton is literally “white gold” for Indian agriculture — it ain’t just about clothes and fashion, it’s about millions of livelihoods. India has ~**30% of the world’s cotton area**, making it arguably the global hub of cotton farming. The crop directly supports an estimated **6 million cotton farmers** and roughly **40–50 million people** across farming, processing, trading, and allied jobs. But here’s the kicker: even with massive acreage, **productivity per hectare is lower than many global competitors**. In fact, India’s productivity historically hovered closer to ~400–440 kg lint per hectare, whereas the Mission aims to push that to ~**755 kg/ha by 2031** — that’s a big jump.

So, the Mission for Cotton Productivity isn’t just a cool name — it’s designed to fix **three core bottlenecks**:

1. **Low yields**
2. **Quality inconsistency**
3. **Farmer income stagnation and vulnerability**

Table: State-wise Cotton Performance

State	Area (lakh ha)	2025–26 Yield (kg/ha)	Target Yield (kg/ha)
Maharashtra	55	450	780
Gujarat	60	490	800
Telangana	35	430	750
Madhya Pradesh	40	400	760
Karnataka	20	420	750
Punjab	15	480	780
Others	35	420	740

Source: www.pib.gov.in

2. What the Cotton Mission Actually Is

In May 2026, the **Union Cabinet approved the Mission for Cotton Productivity** with a

₹5,659.22 crore budget for the period **2026–31** — that’s about **\$680M+ USD** in the current exchange.

Core goals:

- Raise cotton lint output from ~440 kg/ha to ~755 kg/ha by 2031.
- Boost total production from ~335 million bales per year to roughly **498 lakh bales**, where 1 bale = 170 kg.
- Benefit ~**32 lakh cotton farmers** with improved tech, seeds, and value chain support.

This is a multi-year, multi-agency push that blends agriculture science and rural development — with the **Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE)** and **Ministry of Textiles** joining forces.

Government Vision — 5F Chain

The Mission doesn’t just stop at farms. It’s part of India’s **5-F value chain mantra**:

- **Farm → Fibre → Factory → Fashion → Foreign**

That’s basically grow locally → make globally competitive clothes → export worldwide. So, productivity isn’t the only KPI — **quality, traceability, exportability, and textile viability** are all in the same equation.

3. How the Mission Will Push Productivity

To unlock higher yields and better incomes, the Mission uses real agricultural science and fodder to drive economic growth. Here’s how:

1. Better Seeds = Better Output

The Mission funds the development and rollout of **climate-resilient, pest-resistant, high-yielding cotton varieties (HYVs)**. For farmers, this means cotton that can handle stress (heat, drought, pests) much better than older hybrids. Why it’s needed: traditional Bt cotton saw huge gains when introduced in the 2000s, but now pests like pink bollworm and stagnating yield plateaus have been cropping up. So, the new seed push is a planned upgrade.

2. Modern Farming Tech + Mechanisation

No more old-school hoe + hope. The Mission funds:

- **Soil testing & precision agriculture**
- **Mechanised sowing and harvesting**
- **Digital advisories & crop monitoring tech**

This reduces input costs (fertiliser, water, labour) and increases output per acre — which straight-up raises income.

3. Value Chain, Traceability & Quality Control

It's not enough to grow cotton — you gotta make money from it.

So, the Mission also pushes:

- **Traceability and certification** (like Kasturi Cotton Bharat)
- Strategies to reduce trash < 2% in lint
- Infrastructure improvements for ginning, pressing, and quality grading.

That increases market value, helping farmers secure better prices and export opportunities.

4. Real Impacts on Farmer Income But Does It Actually Help Farmers?

Good question. A Mission is only worth its outcomes. Here's the deal:

- Traditional cotton yields are somewhere around **~425–440 kg/ha**, which is competitive but not world-leading.
- If India hits **~755 kg/ha by 2031**, that's a **~70–80% increase in yield potential**. That's insane when scaled across millions of acres.

More yield + better quality = farmers are positioned to:

- Command better prices (especially for premium cotton)
- Reduce losses to pests or low fibre quality penalties
- Get into higher tiers of MSP (Minimum Support Price) brackets.

Speaking of MSP — while the govt has bumped MSPs across staple categories recently, critics argue that productivity gains are a more sustainable income driver than just price support alone.

Numbers That Matter (2025–26 baseline)

Let's take a snapshot of where things are before the Mission kicks into high gear:

- India's cotton output was estimated at around **~25 million 480 lb bales** for 2025/26.
- With Mission targets, India looks to push towards **~498 lakh (49.8 million) bales by 2031** — almost double!

That's how productivity translates into massive-scale increases — and that directly boosts **aggregate farmer income**.

5. Sectoral & Economic Impacts

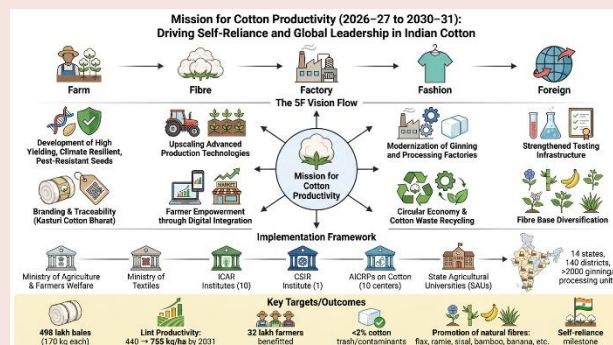
(a) Textile Industry Revamp

Even textile manufacturers agree that raw material productivity beats MSP hikes for long-term sustainability. Better cotton quality makes Indian textiles:

- More globally competitive
- Easier to export
- Less dependent on imported cotton or price arbitrage.

(b) MSME Advantage

Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in textiles — like spinning and garment units — depend on predictable, high-quality cotton. With better productivity and fibre quality, domestic processing clusters can thrive.



(c) Export Potential

The Indian textile sector targets **\$100 billion in exports**, up from ~\$40 billion recently, with productivity schemes like this cotton mission as a core enabler.

6. Challenges & Real-Talk Risks

No policy is entirely smooth sailing:

- Some farmers still struggle to sell cotton at MSP due to logistical issues or poor digital rollout — as reports from Andhra Pradesh show.
- Adoption of new seeds and tech can lag without strong extension support and training.
- Quality improvement is necessary but not sufficient if global prices dip.

Despite these hurdles, the direction is clear: **productivity → quality → income** is the systemic path.

7. Wrapping Up: So What's the Big Picture?

India's **Mission for Cotton Productivity** is less of a slogan and more of a strategic multi-year initiative to transform cotton from a traditional crop to a **competitive, high-yield, high-value engine** for rural earnings and industrial growth.

By combining science (better seeds), tech (modern farming practices), economics (value chain improvements), and policy (outlay + MSP alignment), the Mission aims to:

- Boost farmer incomes sustainably
- Improve cotton yields toward global benchmarks
- Strengthen India's textile exports
- Reduce import dependence for cotton
- Support 30+ lakh farmers across major cotton states.