

Cotton contamination level up from 2016: ITMF survey

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The level of contamination of raw cotton by foreign matters and the appearance of seed-coat fragments have increased compared with 2016, according to ITMF's Cotton Contamination Survey 2019. Also, the level of stickiness has fallen slightly to the lowest level. There are also differences between cotton varieties when it comes to the level of contamination.

These are the main conclusions to be drawn from the Cotton Contamination Survey 2019 which has just been released by the International Textile Manufacturers Federation (ITMF). The 15th edition covers 128 spinning mills located in 25 countries which evaluated 81 different cotton growths, according to a press release by ITMF.

The level of cottons moderately or seriously contaminated as perceived by the spinning mills from around the world grew from 23 per cent in 2016 to 26 per cent in 2019. A closer look at the extent of the contamination shows that 7 per cent (2016: 7 per cent) of all cotton evaluated were seriously contaminated by some sort of foreign matter whereas 18 per cent (2016: 18 per cent) were only moderately contaminated. As the summary data are arithmetic averages of the different contaminants, the extent of contamination is fully illustrated by the results for the individual contaminants. They range from 6 per cent all cottons processed

being moderately or seriously contaminated by tar to 55 per cent of them being moderately or seriously contaminated by organic matter, that is leaves, feathers, paper, leather, etc.

Other serious contaminants are strings made of plastic film (39 per cent), fabrics made of plastic film (39 per cent), strings made of woven plastic (36 per cent) as well as fabrics made of woven plastic (31 per cent). The most contaminated cotton descriptions considered for the survey originated in India (MCU-5, J-34, India- Others, DCH), Pakistan (NAIB, Pakistan Others, MNH93), Tajikistan (Medium Staples) and Mozambique. In contrast, very clean raw cottons were produced in Australia, the USA, (Memphis Territory, California, Pima, South Eastern, Texas H. Plains and Arizona), Argentina, Brazil, and Spain.

The presence of sticky cotton as perceived by the spinning mills is close to constant (that is, 16 per cent in 2016 versus 15.7 per cent in 2019) and remains at the lowest level since 1989. Descriptions that were affected most by stickiness were those from Sudan, the USA (Pima, USA-Others, Memphis Territory, Texas H. Plains, California, South Eastern), Mexico (Juarez) and Turkey (Turkey – Others). On the other end of the range, cottons from South Africa, Tanzania (Mwanza, Coastal), China (Shandong, Xinjiang), Mozambique, Chad, and Pakistan (MNH93, Pakistan – Others, NAIB) were not or hardly affected by stickiness.

With regard to seed-coat fragments, the Cotton Contamination Survey 2019 shows that their appearance in cotton growths remains an issue for spinners around the world. 34 per cent of all cotton growths consumed contained moderate or significant amounts of seed-coat fragments, a slight increase since 2016 (32 per cent). The origins affected most by seed-coat fragments are those from Turkey (Turkey – Others, Cukurova / S.E.), India (India-Others, J-34, MCU-5), Sudan (Sudan – Others), and Pakistan (MNH93, Pakistan - Others). Countries for which the existence of seed- coat fragments were negligible included those from Tanzania (Coastal, Mwanza), India (Shankar-4/6), Australia, the USA (California, Pima, Memphis Territory, USA – Others, Texas H. Plains).

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