

1.1	FDW project code	FDW17109
1.2	Project Name	Water Efficiency in sustainable cotton-based production systems in Maharashtra, India
1.3	Project partners	Partner 1 (Lead): Solidaridad Network Asia Limited Partner 2: Welspun India Limited Partner 3: BioCare Pvt. Ltd. Partner 4: Technische Universiteit Delft (TU Delft)
1.4	Country	India
1.5	In-country locations	Wardha, Yavatmal, Amravati, Nagpur, Nanded - Maharashtra
1.6	Project Start / End Dates	01/08/2018 – 31/12/2023
1.7	Reporting period	01/01/2021 – 31/12/2021
1.8	Project budget and current expenditure	Total project budget: € 3,334,920 Expenditure to date: € 273,539 Cumulative expenditure: € 599,472

1.9**Executive progress summary**

The implementation phase of 'Water efficiency in sustainable cotton-based production systems in Maharashtra, India' began in November 2019, with the first objective being generating willingness among the local farmers to join the project. During this reporting year, the project has completed the identification and mobilisation of **20,000 smallholder farmers** in the region with all of them being trained on good agricultural practices twice in this year as per the developed training curriculum on Good Agriculture Practices aligned with the local agricultural and environmental situation. The training curriculum covers every stage in cotton cultivation - from land preparation, sowing, pest management, irrigation timings till the time for harvest. The mobilisation benefited in initiating water user groups, **10 Water user groups** were initiated in this year, with 4 of the groups officially recognised by the local governing bodies. These groups will be further strengthened, and are expected to champion the cause of water efficiency in agriculture after the project interventions end.

Even though the year 2021 continued with covid related challenges for everyone similar to 2020, the challenges led the project partners to adapt a hybrid mechanism for delivery of training of farmers. Both digital and offline measures are being used to assist the project farmers and realise the goals of the project. The usage of virtual and digital technologies to deliver crop advisories to farmers via WhatsApp video calls, SMS and voice message have been continued this year. The network of 50 demonstration plots with state-of-the-art hardware has been integrated in the training exercises of farmers, which has introduced smart agriculture using IOT-based advisories and brought the project farmers closer to the use of technology. About **1500 existing water structures** have been recorded with our project farmers so far, and training on management of these structures to farmers has been given. Farmers have also been assisted with technological inputs by our experts and field staff in cases where rejuvenation/retro-fitment of such structures was required. In addition, a total of **80 new farm ponds** have been constructed as part of project interventions. A large community water body with about 4 hectares area has also been rejuvenated with the help and support of local panchayats and government, the impacts of which will soon be assessed pre and post monsoon in the year 2022. A hydrological assessment of the project region has been completed by Solidaridad and TU Delft, which is currently utilised for planning and implementations. Due to Covid, TU Delft has not been able to conduct any further work on the ground in 2021, leading to delay. The project has successfully established the linkage between 11 FPOs and brands for procurement of about 900 Metric Tonnes of organic cotton, and about 5200 Metric Tonnes of sustainably produced cotton has already been procured at the rate of 100 INR/kg from 5500 project farmers.

With the current approaches and operation mechanisms, Solidaridad and partners are optimistic that this year will be better suited for generating significant progress towards the realisation of the project's outputs and outcomes. In addition, further exploration of fine-tuning the training delivery to the farmers and adopting conclusions from different learnings through the project will be implemented as and when required. The use of network of smart demonstration plots, farmer training sessions, together with newly constructed farm ponds, existing water harvesting structures, and the community pond will be continued and improved further, leading to emergence of positive impact by numbers in the coming project year 2022.