

# Farm body on mission to boost organic cotton cultivation

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With genetically modified cotton farming and processing value chain labelled exceedingly carcinogenic and toxic for ecology, Trinjan, a farmer organisation, is employing farmers in state to promote organic cultivation and production of handspun and handwoven cotton.

Trinjan is inspired by another farm organisation, Tula, which has given employment to 100 farmers (and supports 200 spinners, weavers, dyers and tailors) for cotton cultivation across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Backed by the Kheti Virasat Mission, Trinjan, which has employed 25 farmers in state, dubs the Punjab part of the initiative “Our answer to the cancer train”.

An eco-friendly solution to the water-guzzling paddy crop, Tula pays its farmers double the market remuneration. Its cotton cultivation is rain-fed and is inspired by the Gandhian ideals of promoting a distributive economy and eco-friendly cotton value chain. As an established principle, they don't export any produce.

Tula was started in 2014. Trinjan started last year with merely four to five farmers. It now has 25 farmers (and 75 weavers and spinners) cultivating cotton in the state.

Ananthoo, one of the founding members of Tula, surveyed the entire cotton industry in the country and labelled it “abusive”.

“Across the cotton industry, I saw one colour — red — the colour of blood. There is so much exploitation and farmers and workers... and all are underpaid. It is not a cash crop but the misery for those who grow and process it. Besides, dyeing is extremely polluting. Every dyeing industry hub ensures everything around it dies — the water, rivers, canals and agriculture. We had to change that,” said Ananthoo.

Rupsi Garg from Trinjan said, “Through Trinjan, people are getting to know about traditional skills of Punjab. Organic cotton employs no chemical fertilisers or pesticides. It is less water intensive and can be grown in the same season as paddy. It is effective to Punjab's depleting and contaminated groundwater crisis.”

“From growing to spinning, weaving, dyeing, and manual tailoring, Tula ensures wonderful distribution of labour. The community profits as a unit. Farmers grow and women spin. Weavers and tailors also provide employment to local community. Farmers are paid double the remuneration, weavers three-four times and weavers two-three times more. All our dyes are natural. Desi cotton is also more resistant to climate change, pest and drought. We have seen three droughts in three states, but still the yield was 30 to 50 per cent,” said Ananthoo.

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