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Mission for Cotton Productivity and India's White Gold Story

21 July 2026 ·

ECONOMY

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Mission for Cotton Productivity and India's White Gold Story

21 July 2026 · 3 min read ·

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*The Government of India has spotlighted India's cotton story, often called , and the **Mission for Cotton Productivity**, a five-year mission running from **2026-27 to 2030-31**. The push aims to raise India's lagging per-hectare yields, promote **extra-long-staple (ELS)** cotton, and strengthen the cotton-to-textile value chain that supports millions of farmers.*

INDIA'S COTTON FOOTPRINT

Cotton is a crucial commercial crop, feeding a textile and apparel industry that is one of India's largest employers and export earners. India occupies a commanding position by area but a weaker one by efficiency.

INDICATOR	INDIA'S POSITION
World rank by cotton area	First
Cotton area	About 114.84 lakh hectares
Share of world cotton area	About 38 per cent
Rank in production and consumption	Among the top two
Farmers supported	About 6 million (60 lakh)
Per-hectare yield	Below the world average

The **paradox** is stark: India grows cotton on the largest area in the world yet trails in **productivity per hectare**. Closing this yield gap is the central logic of the new Mission.

THE MISSION FOR COTTON PRODUCTIVITY

Announced as a **five-year mission (2026-27 to 2030-31)**, the programme targets the structural weaknesses of Indian cotton farming.

Core Objectives

- **Raise yields:** lift per-hectare output closer to the global average through better seeds, agronomy and pest management.
- **Promote extra-long-staple (ELS) cotton:** ELS varieties command a premium and reduce dependence on imports for fine-count yarn.
- **Strengthen the value chain:** connect farm-gate cotton to ginning, spinning and the wider textile industry for higher farmer incomes.

How It Complements Existing Schemes

The Mission does not stand alone. It builds on:

- **Kasturi Cotton Bharat:** a branding and **traceability** initiative that certifies the quality and origin of Indian cotton, aiming to build a global premium brand.
- **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI):** the public-sector body that conducts **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** operations, buying cotton from farmers when market prices fall below MSP, thereby protecting incomes.

KEY CHALLENGES

Even with a dedicated mission, Indian cotton faces persistent hurdles:

- **Pest attacks:** the **pink bollworm** has developed resistance and repeatedly damages the standing crop.
- **Seed technology:** debate continues over access to new genetically improved and higher-yielding seed varieties.
- **Rain dependence:** a large share of cotton is grown under rain-fed conditions, exposing yields to monsoon variability.
- **Fragmented holdings:** small and marginal farmers struggle to adopt costly inputs and mechanisation.

Addressing these will decide whether the Mission converts India's area advantage into a genuine productivity and income gain.

SIGNIFICANCE

For UPSC, cotton links farm productivity, agrarian incomes, industrial policy and self-reliance. A stronger domestic ELS supply cuts the import bill, a robust value chain raises rural incomes, and traceability branding lifts export competitiveness. The Mission is therefore both an **agriculture** intervention and a **textile-industry** enabler.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3: Issues related to cropping patterns, major crops, and the economics of animal-rearing and farming; food processing and related industries; and inclusive growth.

Prelims pointers:

- **Mission for Cotton Productivity** runs **2026-27 to 2030-31** (five years).
- India ranks **first in the world in cotton area** (about **114.84 lakh hectares**, about **38 per cent** of world area).
- Cotton supports about **6 million (60 lakh) farmers**; India's **per-hectare yield is below the world average**.
- **Kasturi Cotton Bharat** = branding and traceability initiative; **CCI** conducts **MSP** operations.
- **ELS** = extra-long-staple cotton; **pink bollworm** is the major pest.

Mains question: India leads the world in cotton acreage but lags in yield. Discuss the factors behind this productivity gap and assess how the Mission for Cotton Productivity can strengthen the cotton-to-textile value chain.

FACTS CORNER

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Cotton is called White Gold for its economic value to farmers and the textile industry.

Extra-long-staple (ELS) cotton has longer fibres, needed for premium, fine-count yarn.

Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) is a public-sector undertaking under the Ministry of Textiles.

Kasturi Cotton Bharat gives Indian cotton a certified brand identity with quality traceability.

The pink bollworm is a major cotton pest that has shown resistance to earlier Bt cotton varieties.

Major cotton-growing states include Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Rajasthan and Haryana.

Sources: Press Information Bureau on cotton, Ministry of Textiles, Cotton Corporation of India

Source: Mission for Cotton Productivity and India's White Gold Story — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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