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Organic Cotton and Field Worker Health

Protect Cotton Field Workers with Organic Cotton Choices

By Maryruth Belsey Priebe

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Have you ever thought about where your cotton comes from and who picks it? In this article we'll discuss potential worker health hazards surrounding cotton production and how you can go about ensuring your money is going towards sustainable, organic cotton farming that is both environmentally friendly and fair.

Cotton and worker health hazards



A recent report published in Environmental Health Perspectives journal is a reminder of the importance of choosing eco-friendly fabrics and clothing pieces. The report, entitled [Biomarkers of Chlorpyrifos Exposure and Effect in Egyptian Cotton Field Workers](#) is just one of many that chronicles the health hazards cotton farm workers face when cultivating conventional cotton for the clothing and textiles industry.

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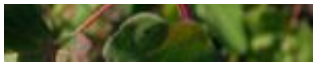
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This report in particular looked at the utilization of **Chlorpyrifos** (CPF), a widely used organophosphorus pesticide (OP) which can cause multiple health problems including headaches, muscle weakness, tremors, nausea, diarrhea, sudden changes in heart rate, coma, and even death.^[1] Workers in the field have much higher exposure levels to this pesticide than others in the cotton production chain, which results in higher levels of disease.

Choosing organic cotton helps protect cotton farmers and field workers

Can you do something to help cotton workers? Yes! The simplest method for indicating your preference for safe, ethical working conditions for cotton farmers is to withdraw your support for conventional cotton and using the power of your dollars to support organic farming operations instead

Cotton can be found in a whole range of textiles you use in your every day life, so there are plenty of opportunities to select eco-friendly organic cotton when shopping. For instance, why not look for **organic cotton fabrics** in:

- T-shirts, underwear, socks, dresses, pants, and any other **eco clothing** you're in the market to buy
- **Cloth baby diapers** and **pajamas**
- **Baby slings** and **swings**
- Kitchen textiles like tea towels, dish cloths, reusable napkins, and tablecloths
- Cleaning rags (especially better than **disposable paper towels**)
- Reusable shopping bags and produce bags

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References

1 *Toxic Substances Portal - Chlorpyrifos* . (1997, September). Retrieved January 30, 2011, from Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=494&tid=88>

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