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Bangladesh lifts fumigation requirements on U.S. Cotton

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A Cotton Council International (CCI)-sponsored Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture Delegation's U.S. visit coupled with indispensable efforts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) office in Dhaka, ultimately convinced the Bangladesh government to relax its nearly-five-decade-long fumigation requirement on U.S. cotton imports.

This shift will remove a significant export barrier for U.S. cotton to Bangladesh, as well as save Bangladeshi mills time and money as they look to the U.S. to fill their cotton fibre import needs. Bangladeshi mills have been paying over a million dollars annually to cover unnecessary fumigation costs imposed on cotton imported from the U.S.

U.S. exporters will continue to use APHIS-generated phytosanitary certificates, but under the new regulation, the certificate will have additional language confirming no live boll weevils are in U.S. baled cotton. APHIS will issue revised instructions for exporters.

Bangladesh's Agricultural and Commerce Ministries' decision to lift the fumigation requirements came after six Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture delegation members joined a CCI-sponsored U.S. cotton tour coordinated with the National Cotton Council (NCC). The delegation learned why U.S. cotton bales do not harbour live boll weevils, including a review of the U.S. cotton industry's successful Boll Weevil Eradication Program and its modern cotton harvesting and standardized ginning techniques.

Bangladesh presently ranks as the No. 2 global importer of cotton, according to the USDA FAS's global market analysis in May 2023. Although there is some domestic cotton produced in Bangladesh, it accounts for 1 per cent or less of the total demand.