



INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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14th CSITC Meeting September 22, 2010 Lubbock, USA 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Report

The 14th meeting of the Task Force on Commercial Standardization of Instrument Testing of Cotton (CSITC) was held on September 22, 2010 in Lubbock, Texas, USA at the Overton Hotel.

Members present:

Andrew Macdonald, AMCON Consulting, Sao Paulo, Chair
Zbigniew Roskwitalski, Vice President and Director of the Gdynia Cotton Association, Rapporteur

Romano Bonadei, Fondazione Industrie Cotone e Lino
Axel Drieling, Faserinstitut Bremen e.V.
Darryl Earnest, Deputy Administrator, Cotton Program, USDA/AMS
Jean-Paul Gourlot, Director, CIRAD PERSYST LTC
Subhash Grover, Chairman and Managing Director, Cotton Corporation of India
James Knowlton, Chief Standardization & Engineering Branch, USDA AMS
João Luiz Ribas Pessa, farm director of Fazenda Nova in Brazil
Manfred Schiefer, President, M. Schiefer Trading Company, USA
Ralph Schulzé, cotton industry consultant, Australia
Aziz S. Ismailov, Head of Business Logistics and Information Systems, SIFAT, Uzbekistan
(representing Hakim H. Umarkhojayev, General Director, SIFAT)
Greg Wakefield, Vice President, Wakefield Inspection Services, USA
(representing Peter Wakefield, President, WIS)
Alan Shirley, SGS North America Inc.
(representing Bruno Widmer, Global Business Manager, Fibres, Agricultural, SGS)

Members Absent:

Urania Kechagia, Former Director, Cotton and Industrial Plants Institute, Greece (retired)
Lau Cheuk-Wai, Quality Control Department of Central Textiles in Hong Kong
Ibrahim Malloum, Cotton Commercial Manager, Somdiaa
Jolly Sabune, Managing Director, Cotton Development Organization, Uganda
M.N. Vijayshankar, Chairman, ITMF International Committee on Cotton Testing Methods

Observers: Dominic Mwakangale, Marco Mtunga, Hossein Ghorashi, James Rodgers, Antonio Esteve, Richard Williamson, Neal Gillen, Frank Groves, Steve Grantham, Sietse van der Werff, Faith Dogan, Henning Hammer, Bill Norman, Gregg Parle, Jan Wellmann, Berti Fabio, Michael Watson, Ed Hughes, Trevor Wicks, Vikki Martin, Atif Dada, Dhiren Sheth, Nayan Mirani, Juan E. Retrepo, Jorge H. Olarte, Jane Byers-Angle.

Next Meeting: Mid-May, 2011, Washington, DC (to be confirmed)

Rafiq Chaudhry served as Secretariat

Background: An Expert Panel on CSITC was formed in December 2003 on the instruction of the 62nd Plenary Meeting in Poland. CSITC is facilitating the adoption of universal instrument testing standards and procedures by all testing centers around the world. CSITC is also working to introduce the use of instrument testing language in the trading of cotton so that traditional descriptions of grade or type are replaced with instrument test values.

The members of the panel represent both exporters and importers and all segments of the world cotton industry. Observers are welcome at all meetings. By tradition, decisions at all ICAC meetings are determined

by consensus with full participation by observers. If it is not possible to reach consensus, decisions could be made by a vote of members present.

The Expert Panel issued **two interim reports in 2004**, including a report to the 63rd Plenary Meeting in India in November that identified seven actions to encourage worldwide testing of cotton with standardized instrument testing methods and procedures. The actions include 1) definition of specifications for cotton trading, 2) definition of international test rules, 3) implementation of test rules, 4) certification of test centers, 5) definition and provision of calibration standards, 6) specification of commercial control limits for trading and 7) the establishment of arbitration procedures. The report from the Expert Panel included specific actions and identified responsible parties for the achievement of each recommendation.

During a small-group meeting in Bremen in April 2005 and during the **3rd Meeting** in Memphis in June 2005, the seven recommendations and status of implementation were reviewed. During the 3rd Meeting, the CSITC determined that the original tasks associated with diagnosis of problems and the development of recommendations had been achieved and that a new phase of work had begun with the implementing of proposals. Therefore, the name of the panel was changed to “Task Force” on CSITC to better describe the new role in facilitating the implementation of proposals.

During the 4th Meeting in Liverpool in September 2005, the CSITC discussed the results of a pilot round trial and considered how best to rate test centers. It was agreed at the 4th Meeting that the world cotton industry **will not seek to establish an international testing center**, and it was agreed that **testing centers should be rated according to their performance** relative to other participating testing centers in a series of CSITC Round Trials.

During the 5th Meeting in Bremen in March 2006, the CSITC considered the results of a Second Pilot Round Trial and agreed to a system of evaluating test centers based on parameters for individual measurements and an overall score.

During the 6th Meeting in Goiania, Brazil in September 2006, the CSITC adopted a formula and set of scale factors to calculate a “**Combined Properties Measurement**” to enable testing centers to gauge their current performance and to track progress over successive Round Trials. It was decided that quarterly Round Trials should begin in 2007, with a nominal cost of US\$75 per Round Trial charged to participating test centers to cover the costs of sample shipment. The CSITC decided to include non-U.S. cotton in the Round Trials as a “fifth sample,” with the understanding that the fifth sample will not be used in the calculation of the Combined Properties Measurement. Results from tests on the “fifth samples” will be used to show the in-laboratory and inter-laboratory variability on cottons from different origins. The Task Force decided that **a summary of results of all participating test centers in each Round Trial would be published** on the ICAC web site. However, the names of participating test centers, the results for each center, and the disaggregated results for each test parameter will be given only to each test center in order to encourage participation. Test centers will also receive detailed reports indicating their performance relative to all other test centers and recommendations for improvement. The Task Force agreed that its current structure should continue through 2007. The CSITC agreed to meet with the leadership of the ITMF International Committee on Cotton Testing Methods (ICCTM) during 2007. Progress on technical matters referred to ICCTM by CSITC (e.g., effect of trash on color readings), will be reviewed, and possible additional tests, e.g., fineness/maturity, will be considered.

During the 7th Meeting in Winterthur, Switzerland in March 2007, the results of the first official Round Trial conducted in December 2006 and January 2007 were reviewed. The Task Force approved the format of a certificate of participation and accompanying tables and charts with detailed examination of results to be provided to each participating testing center. The Task Force confirmed that evaluations of laboratory performance would be **calculated from the mean values** of participating labs rather than using the standard values determined in advance by USDA. The mean values will be presented in comparison to the values established by the USDA. The Task Force decided to **exclude obvious typographical errors** from the calculation of results from each lab, as such errors would skew results to absurd ranges, but it was decided that the reports from the Bremen Fibre Institute would inform labs of such errors so that data-handling procedures can be improved. **Acceptance ranges for each of the 6 parameters were approved.** If results reported by testing centers fall within each range, the results will be used in the evaluation of laboratory performance; results falling outside each range will be excluded. The CSITC agreed that the Bremen Round Trial and USDA check tests are more appropriate vehicles for investigation of methods to develop tests for Short Fiber Index, stickiness and neps. The CSITC asked the ITMF International Committee on Cotton Testing Methods (ICCTM) to study how to improve these tests. It was noted in the 2nd Pilot Round Trial (2006) that there were persistently lower Rd measurements using HVI 900 or HVI Spectrum versus the newer HVI 1000 instruments (all instruments are manufactured by Uster Technologies). The Task Force decided that

participating laboratories should receive a document with recommendations for good incandescent colorimeter performance. The CSITC decided to ask the ICCTM to investigate how best to compensate for trash in color measurements. Regarding the use of instrument values in arbitration of contracts, the CSITC decided to continue to conduct round trials and provide results to participating labs. Those **labs that wish to be certified for arbitration purposes should apply to an arbitral authority for certification.** The CSITC decided that it **will not establish certification procedures**, but each arbitral body will decide their own certification standards, and labs will apply to the arbitral body, not the CSITC, for certification. The Task Force agreed that the results of the CSITC Round Trials, especially the inter-laboratory variations, would be published and given to the cotton associations. The results will help the associations to fix commercial tolerances.

During the 8th Meeting in Izmir, Turkey October 21, 2007, the Task Force reviewed the results of Round Trials 1 through 3, noting that the **overall data and single-lab data for each parameter were consistent** from one round trial to the next, strengthening confidence in the CSITC process. No differences occurred between the inter-laboratory averages reported by participating test centers during the first three CSITC round trials and the USDA Established Results for strength, length uniformity index, Rd and +b. It was reported that work done earlier based on the Bremen Round Trials indicates that instruments from different manufacturers will give results on one common level if operated properly.

The inclusion of a 'fifth' cotton in the CSITC Round Tests was discussed, and the principle endorsed. The Task Force agreed that the fifth sample could be of any origin, but would need to be properly prepared by USDA to minimize variation between samples. To further reduce the risk of distortion of results, it would be assessed separately from the 4 test samples. There was considerable discussion on the need for interactive feedback, especially with participating test centers with results outside the statistically normal range. The ICAC Secretariat presented a 2-page Invitation/Participation form, and this was well received. All agreed that the stage has been reached where greater participation is essential. A concerted promotional effort, led by Andrew Macdonald and Terry Townsend, and covering ICAC, ITMF, all Cotton Associations, instrument manufacturers and all sectors of the trade, should be launched. The Task Force set the participation fee at US\$300 for four tests. The publication of the list of CSITC Round Trial participants was seen as a positive mechanism to encourage uptake. The CSITC effort is seen as 'good for the international industry' and as such, a good thing with which to be associated. The Task Force supported a proposal to publish the list of participating testing centers, with the proviso that those not wishing their names to be included could choose not to be listed. A 'tick box' on the forms presented by the Secretariat would facilitate this. It was emphasized that only the names of participating testing centers, and not confidential information about performance, would be made public. **A proposal to publish a list of testing centers with passing or failing performances in round trials was not supported.**

Romano Bonadei presented 'a spinners view' on neps and stickiness. There was general agreement that **CSITC should expand its focus to these and other relevant fiber quality measurements, once the current system is adopted universally, and once rapid/repeatable measuring equipment becomes available.** The Task Force on CSITC had decided during the 7th Meeting in Winterthur that the International Cotton Association (ICA), as a signatory to the Universal Cotton Standards Agreement, would petition USDA to develop calibration standards for Short Fiber Index at the next Universal Cotton Standards Conference in June 2008 in Memphis. However, Jimmy Knowlton of USDA suggested that a more constructive first step in making progress on the subject of SFI would be to organize a small group of about ten labs with HVI 1000's to evaluate the new SFI cotton calibration. Jimmy suggested that USDA could provide "research" SFI values on special calibration cottons to these labs. The group of labs would be a subset of CSITC labs. The subset of labs would enable the SFI cotton calibration option on their instruments when they test their CSITC round test samples. The SFI data would be collected on the CSITC samples and sent to USDA with the regular CSITC test data. A separate analysis would be performed on the SFI data independent of the normal CSITC round test analysis. It was noted that China is considering the development of their own SFI standards using a different definition (16.5 mm and less) than the definition of SFI in common use elsewhere (12.7 mm or shorter). Neal Gillen observed that USDA should be encouraged to develop a SFI standard for inclusion in the Universal Cotton Standards. The Task Force **agreed that an SFI standard is needed, and there was a consensus to support the proposal by Jimmy Knowlton to use a subset of CSITC participants to evaluate the new SFI cotton calibration standard.** It was decided that the ICA should not petition the Universal Standards Conference in June 2008 to have USDA develop SFI calibration standards at this time, pending additional research.

During the 9th Meeting on April 2, 2008 in Bremen, Germany, the Task Force discussed best practices in encouraging universal participation in CSITC Round Trials. It was agreed that the list of participants should be

published on the ICAC website (and possibly more widely) so that non-participants can be identified and encouraged to join the international effort.

James Knowlton reported that Short Fiber Index (SFI) reliability is being studied as an adjunct to CSITC Round Trials. He reported that under the test conditions, acceptably tight distribution curves for SFI could be achieved (as was the case for Length and Uniformity). The meeting supported further work in this area and encouraged USDA to prepare and provide the necessary calibration cottons. It also suggested to Uster that its newer machines should be enabled to be calibrated for SFI. However, Hossein Ghorashi stated that considerable work needs to be done studying the relevance of Short Fibre data derived by different techniques – HVI, AFIS, Roller Analyzer, Sutter Web Array etc. It was agreed that this should be a prerequisite before progressing too far with adding ‘SFI’ to CSITC measurements. USDA and Uster (and others) were encouraged to collaborate closely in the effort to develop and determine a single worldwide acceptable basis for reliable SFI testing/calibrating/benchmarking. The meeting also discussed the fact that, while most countries and the international trade define ‘short fiber’ as fiber under 12.5mm length, some are now advocating 16mm length as the ceiling. As the correlation between both measurements is high, the meeting saw no difficulty with the use of either, providing that the ceiling was clearly communicated. It was agreed that the world industry should work toward the adoption of one standard rather than have different parameters in parallel use.

Geoff Naylor of CSIRO, Australia, presented an update on the development of ‘Cottonscan’ to measure fiber fineness. He stated that Cottonscan had achieved speeds of 60 seconds per sample. The meeting supported further development of Cottonscan.

Menahem Yogev described Israeli equipment used for rapid testing of cotton for ‘stickiness’ and neps. He demonstrated that it is possible to test high volumes of cotton for stickiness and neps with acceptable levels of accuracy and precision. However, it was noted that the instrument used in Israel is no longer being manufactured, suggesting that the technology may not be economically practical. Menahem encouraged plant breeders to select strains that are low in seed coat fragments, which can contribute to both ‘stickiness’ and ‘nepiness’.

After considerable discussion, CSITC decided that Brazil should be asked to supply a bale to serve as the fifth cotton for the next Round Trial. The importance of Brazil in international cotton trade, the structure of the cotton industry in Brazil with large mechanized operations producing most cotton and the improvement in quality of Brazilian cotton since the start of the decade were factors considered by CSITC in making this decision. On behalf of the Brazilian Cotton Growers, Mr. João Luiz Pessa offered to supply the next fifth international cotton bale. The Task Force gratefully accepted this generous offer. Mr. Greg Parle, chair of the Australian Cotton Classers Association, volunteered to supply the following international fifth cotton for the next season.

Terry Townsend presented results of a survey on the cost of instrument testing. Indicative costs, in US\$, based on 2006-7 data were:

	Developed Countries	Developing Countries
Personnel	49,000	33,000
Repair & Maintenance	12,000	18,000
Other Annual	47,000	14,000
Instrument Depreciation	51,000	36,000
Other Depreciation	6,000	12,000
Total Annual Costs	165,000	113,000

Testing fees ranged from \$1 to \$4 per sample- and the average charge was \$2.25 per sample. Assuming every bale is tested once, this equates to 0.50 cents per pound for a 500-pound bale. Participants from India commented that, as only 2% to 4% of their bales were tested, their costs per pound were correspondingly very low.

Andrew Hursthouse, President of the ICA, submitted a letter to the Task Force. He noted that the Rules Committee is working on comprehensive rules that will protect both buyers and sellers in the case of a dispute over the results of two instruments located in different places over a broad range of mechanical parameters. Zbigniew Roskwitalski reported that Gdynia is adapting its rules to accommodate arbitration procedures for instrument testing parameters.

During the 10th Meeting on November 16, 2008 in Ouagadougou, Axel Drieling reported that the 2008 results were stable across Round Trials, and that the Round Trials are serving as a very good tool to provide

statistically reliable variability information between test results and between laboratories, and to evaluate and rate the performance of test centers based on their accuracy.

A report was given about the results from the "Fifth Cottons" used for research purposes in each Round Trial. In summary, the Indian roller ginned samples yielded higher variations in micronaire and length than the 24 saw ginned samples from U.S. cotton used in the Round Trials 2007-1 to 2008-2. The U.S. Pima saw ginned samples resulted in higher variations in strength and length. Accordingly, Axel suggested that roller ginned cotton and extra-fine cotton samples should not be used when evaluating the performance of testing laboratories (as is done with cottons 1 to 4).

Jimmy Knowlton provided a presentation on the CSITC SFI study. He reported that 10 testing centers with HVI 1000's (5 operated by USDA and 5 operated by non-USDA centers) participated in the SFI study. USDA distributed the SFI calibration cottons with Roller-Analyzer reference values. The results indicated that:

- Between-instrument HVI 1000 SFI levels are relatively close together;
- SFI calibration levels vary more on cottons with higher short fiber content;
- SFI measurement variation increases dramatically as short fiber content increases;
- It is uncertain why some HVI 1000's perform better than others when setups and calibrations were performed similarly.

One of the purposes of CSITC is to provide statistically reliable empirical information on variability of results from instrument testing of cotton that can be used in setting commercial tolerances for trade. In a typical commercial situation, it is not possible to know the mean (average) value of the test results across 50 or 60 laboratories for a given cotton sample. Instead, it is relevant, especially for arbitrations, to know the expected, or normal, difference between two labs chosen by contracting parties for evaluation of cotton parameters.

Axel estimated such difference based on single tests per sample, with different samples provided to each lab, based on the six CSITC Round Trials conducted through mid-2008. 95% of the results between a random laboratory and the reference, or true, result of the tested cotton would be within the following limits:

- Mic: 0.18
- Strength: 2.8
- Length: 0.034
- Length Uniformity: 1.6
- Rd: 2.1
- +b: 0.8

The numbers are stable and statistically sure for US Upland machine-picked cottons. For other origins there might be other values based on variables such as field size and methods of picking and ginning. It was noted that roller ginned and hand-harvested cotton would require separate sets of control limits, and concerns were voiced about variances in test results linked to ranges of moisture levels. **The Task Force agreed that the results should be summarized but not recommended for adoption at this time. It was agreed that Axel's work may be sent to arbitral bodies upon request.**

The Task Force on CSITC welcomed a letter from Mr. Ustyugin of SIFAT in Uzbekistan. SIFAT supports the aims of CSITC. SIFAT operates a modern system of instrument testing of cotton involving 14 testing centers operating according to the Universal Cotton Standards providing evaluation of all cotton produced in Uzbekistan. SIFAT operates a center to train operators in the use of instruments for testing cotton, and SIFAT plays an important role in regional standardization of cotton testing. Over the last twelve years, SIFAT has trained 711 instrument operators, including 338 SIFAT employees and 81 persons from outside Uzbekistan. Mr. Ustyugin pledged that SIFAT is prepared to assume the responsibilities as the regional technical center for Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). **CSITC was very pleased that SIFAT would continue to coordinate with the laboratories in the region. SIFAT may be designated as the Regional Testing Center for Central Asia in the future, when such criteria are approved for use in all regions. However the Task Force emphasized that the Regional Technical Centers will not certify or grade laboratories in place of the CSITC Round Trials.** The Task Force also agreed that similar regional supporting activities are welcome in other regions.

It was noted that the GCA General Assembly endorsed changes to its By-Laws and Rules for arbitration procedures for disputes involving instrument test results at its June 2008 meeting. It was reported that the ICA had also approved a relatively simple procedure for arbitration of instrument values that allow any laboratory agreed by the contracting parties to do the testing. In the ICA procedures, no control limits are specified but may be agreed by the contracting parties. Members of CSITC expressed the hope that arbitral bodies would work toward harmonization of the rules for trade in cotton and arbitration of instrument values.

It was noted that some laboratories have requested to participate in CSITC Round Trials with stand-alone instruments to measure individual parameters. The Task Force was asked if this is to be allowed. **It was agreed that testing centers are evaluated based on testing results, not methods, and therefore the use of stand-alone instruments in CSITC Round Trials is acceptable, but not encouraged.** An indispensable prerequisite is that all participating instruments provide results on the fixed CSITC criteria, mainly the calibration based on Universal Calibration Standards provided by the USDA and a sufficient number of specimens tested from each sample for a sufficiently low variability.

During the 11th Meeting, May 26, 2009 in Washington, DC, Andrew Macdonald noted that a letter had been received from Mr. V.E. Ustyugin of the Uzbek Center for Certification of Cotton Fiber (SIFAT) requesting that SIFAT be identified as a Regional Testing Center (RTC) for Central Asia. (See the Report of the Tenth Meeting.) **With minor modifications, the proposed set of criteria was approved by CSITC.**

A suggestion had been received from Cotton South Africa to grade laboratories based on their performance in the Round Trials. However, members of CSITC were concerned that thresholds chosen for grades would be arbitrary. It was also noted that CSITC evaluates the performance of instruments, not laboratories. It was decided that **CSITC should continue to provide results on an instrument-by-instrument basis.**

Jimmy Knowlton reported that there is still no consensus on the reference method for measuring Short Fiber Index, AFIS 12.7 mm or Roller Analyzer 16.5 mm or 12.7 mm. He said that USDA and the China Fiber Inspection Bureau (CFIB) were conducting a study in 2009 to assign reference values to calibration cottons. CSITC thanked Jimmy for his work and endorsed additional SFI sub-round trials in 2009. Jimmy was urged to work with Uster Technologies to collect SFI and maturity data provided on HVI 1000s during the 2009 Round Trials.

It was noted that the Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology (CIRCOT) has reported that it is producing calibration cotton for use with HVI systems. Members of CSITC recalled the minutes of the Third Meeting of CSITC in June 2005 in Memphis:

“The CSITC agrees that the Universal HVI Calibration Standards for all six measurement parameters (length, length uniformity, strength, micronaire, Rd, +b) are the official standard of the CSITC.

It was reported that Chinese authorities have indicated that they will eventually develop their own domestic calibration cottons, but they agree in principle to the importance of maintaining a single world reference standard for calibration cottons based on the Universal Standards prepared by USDA. USDA plans to establish a standard for value setting of calibration materials under the American Society for Testing Materials International (ASTM) to cover the procedures used by USDA in creating calibration standards. The CSITC agreed that calibration standards must be referenced to the USDA reference material.”

Darryl Earnest reported that the ASTM standard would be developed by the end of 2009.

Axel Drieling reported on a new database for CSITC Round Trial results being developed with support from the Common Fund for Commodities. The new database will be tested from RT 2009-3 on, and Axel plans to implement the new database beginning with RT 2010-1.

CSITC agreed that laboratories registering for participation in Round Trials would be considered registered for each Round Trial until they withdraw.

During the 12th Meeting, September 8, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa, the Chair noted that SIFAT had been acknowledged as a Regional Technical Center. A proposal for the CSITC Structure and Duties drawn up by Jean-Paul and Axel Drieling was accepted. It was confirmed that neither ICAC nor CSITC would, or could, approve or not approve, any labs for cotton testing. It was agreed again that it is up to the individual organizations responsible in each country to set their own standards, and stand by it against any claim or legal action that might occur from such a decision.

Jimmy Knowlton and Axel Drieling made a presentation of the results of SFI and Maturity tests that had been voluntarily included in the results submitted by labs in recent Round Trials. The variation that exists between labs indicates that SFI measurements are insufficiently reliable to be included as an official part of the round tests. As regards maturity, although the results were highly consistent between the participating labs, the scale of measurement was such that overall accuracy created a serious obstacle to utilizing the information on a commercial basis. However as with SFI, the round trials would continue with the option of including the maturity readings so as to permit further analysis during future round trials.

Jimmy Knowlton described the procedures for the production of calibration cottons, and the fact that some countries were in the process of producing their own calibration cottons, but, that to achieve standards compatible with the current Universal Standards (the accepted world standard) adherence to the correct procedures would be required. USDA is documenting its complete calibration cotton production procedures for publication as an ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) standard. The document is currently in draft stage within the ASTM process but should become finalized as an ASTM standard sometime in 2010. Jimmy Knowlton said the current draft is now available for review by CSITC Task Force members.

Axel Drieling reported on the progress in developing a web based database system for the CSITC Round Trials.

The Chair noted that the costs of operating the round trials was increasing and at present the contributions of each lab only covered the cost of preparation and shipment of the samples for the round tests, and that these cost had increased. The current charge was US\$400 per annum and it was proposed to increase this from 2010 to US\$600. This was approved. Axel Drieling explained that he estimated the costs for the fiber institute at US\$500 per year per participating instrument so that further increases must be expected in the future unless the Task Force can convince other labs to participate.

During the 13th Meeting, March 24, 2010, Bremen, Germany, the results of the four Round Trials conducted during 2009 were summarized. Standard deviations among the measurements and variations between inter-laboratory results were stable. Standard deviations among instruments in single tests were: mic, 0.09; strength, 1.33; UHML, 0.017; UI, 0.82; Rd, 1.11 and +b, 0.41. The results from an independent part of the regular CSITC-RTs, including all kinds of instruments, conducted during 2009 showed that inter-laboratory standard deviations and coefficients of variation were too high for use in cotton classification for SFI and Maturity. It was reported that unofficial and developmental calibration cottons for SFI will be available from USDA beginning in April of 2010. There was agreement that without consistent and reliable procedures and standards in place to ensure accurate testing, SFI measurement reliability would always be in question.

It was agreed that Axel will be asked to provide more information on inter-laboratory results in future meetings, while taking care to maintain the confidentiality of individual laboratory results. An earlier decision by the Task Force to not establish commercial tolerances among laboratories was reinforced. It was also agreed that the Task Force would not issue lists of "acceptable" laboratories; market forces will determine which labs are performing to an acceptable commercial standard.

It was reported that ABRAPA is requiring all labs in Brazil to participate in CSITC Round Trials and provide their results to ABRAPA for evaluation.

It was reported that USDA has developed an ASTM standard for production of calibration cotton. It is expected that the standard will be officially adopted later in 2010. The proposed standard was available for review and comment until June 2010. Members of CSITC recalled the minutes of the Third Meeting of CSITC in June 2005 in Memphis:

"The CSITC agrees that the Universal HVI Calibration Standards for all six measurement parameters (length, length uniformity, strength, micronaire, Rd, +b) are the official standard of the CSITC. The CSITC agreed that calibration standards must be referenced to the USDA reference material."

It was recalled that CSITC had decided earlier that each sample set could be used on a maximum of two instruments for participation in CSITC Round Trials. The logic behind this rule was that each sample is tested 30 times per day for five days (150 tests total) and that the samples become ragged and unusable after a certain amount of handling.

However, Jimmy and Axel reported that in tests completed in Memphis and Bremen, CSITC samples had been used for more than 4 instruments per RT, and there had been no observable deterioration in mean values or standard deviations when samples were used on 4 instruments = 120 tests. **CSITC agreed, that while using samples on more than two instruments is not advisable, there was reluctant agreement that the limit for use in Round Trials would be expanded from 2 instruments per sample set to 4 instruments per sample set.**

A proposal had been received to provide a quantity discount to Regional Testing Centers for participation in Round Trials. This proposal was rejected.

Axel reported that CSITC RT 2010-2 will be done with the new database system and web site developed with the support of the CFC. The new system will provide extensive diagnostic information for individual laboratories through secure on-line registration. The web site contains an imbedded training video to enable users to take advantage of the enhanced features.

Jean-Paul summarized progress under the CFC/ICAC/33 project, funded by the CFC and the EU, (see www.csitc.org or www.icac.org).

The Chair reported that there was a consensus that there should be one instrument-testing manual based on a harmonization of the existing ITMF and USDA guidelines. **It was agreed that the task of harmonization will be done in cooperation between the CFC/ICAC project partners, the ITMF ICCTM, the USDA-AMS and with the input of the instrument manufacturers. The new ASTM Standard Test Method for HVI testing will serve as a basis for harmonization of guidelines.**

Report of the 14th Meeting

1. International Instrument Testing of Cotton Best Practices Guide

There was a consensus at the CSITC meeting in Bremen that there should be one instrument-testing manual based on a harmonization of the existing ITMF and USDA guidelines. Jean-Paul Gourlot gave a short presentation on the objective and methods used in this work. He said that the present document is a draft in which the information is categorized as explanation, requirement, recommendation or more information, with the spirit of going through all the items and practices that are necessary to properly run cotton testing activities. Axel Drieling went into the draft document to present the content and the actual formatting to clearly mark the important topics. A second, short document will be created only keeping the requirements that need to be fulfilled by all laboratories. **The Task Force supports this work and asks for its continuation.**

2. Reports on 2010 RTs and efficacy of the new data management system

CSITC RT 2010-2 was done with the new database system and web site developed with the support of the CFC and Generation 10. The new system is intended to provide extensive diagnostic information for individual laboratories through secure on-line registration, and participants are encouraged to use this web site: **www.CSITC.org**. The web site allows participants to upload RT results, thus reducing data errors, and to retrieve confidential diagnostic results.

Axel Drieling made a presentation about the results of recent Round Trials. A significant increase was observed in participation (123 instruments from 77 laboratories for CSITC RT 2010-3). No improvement was observed in the average evaluation results over time. This is partly caused by new laboratories entering into the system. An additional explanation could be that laboratories joining the test, as well as previous laboratories, need to learn and apply the "best practices in testing" which allow better evaluation results and better worldwide harmonization. The inter-laboratory variation is very stable, especially for micronaire. **The variation results could serve as a basis for determining commercial tolerances.** Strength and Uniformity variations are slightly decreasing, but the variations of color Rd and color +b are unfortunately increasing.

No difference was observed between the results gathered in the CSITC Round-test compared to the USDA established values. Only micronaire shows a confirmed deviation of -0.05. The most obvious difference is observed between newer and older instrument types. **Many of the older instruments are using the older International Calibration Cotton Standards (ICCS).** ICCS established values were based heavily on Fibronaire-type instruments rather than HVI-type instruments. CSITC-type instruments should be using only Universal Micronaire Calibration Standards. Jimmy Knowlton mentioned that based on these findings, for **CSITC 2010-4 Universal Micronaire Calibration Cotton reference materials for calibrating the instruments will be provided by USDA** for all participating labs free of charge and will be sent together with the round-test samples. Laboratories will be asked to use these reference materials to calibrate their micronaire instruments within their SITC. CSITC laboratories that are already using Universal Micronaire Calibration Cotton Standards are not called to switch and may continue using their current calibration standards.

Consistency in the data produced by a participant depends on stable atmospheric conditions in the laboratory as well as proper conditioning of the samples. In the previous meeting (Bremen 03/2010), Jimmy Knowlton made a report on the contribution of proper calibration of the instrument for the stability of results. An important point is that **calibration cottons and test cottons should be conditioned in the same manner** so as to ensure that both reach the same moisture equilibrium.

A reminder was made that confidentiality of all results must be guaranteed. (The ICAC Secretariat confirmed that procedures to guaranteed confidentiality of results from each laboratory are in place, and that this feature is a specific component of the new database software developed for CSITC by Gen 10.)

Participation in the 2010 Round Trials is approximately: 10 from research institutions and manufacturers, 41 from classing laboratories and 19 from control laboratories, and only 15 from cotton processing / spinning mills. The Task Force encourages laboratories from traders, spinning industries, as well as from other segments of the industry, to join the Round Trials. Members of the Task Force noted that quality claims, and defense against such claims, will be strengthened considerably by participation in Round Trials.

Axel Drieling demonstrated the CSITC website and the online database [csitc.org]. All information about the Task Force, the CFC/ICAC/33 project, the CSITC Round Trials as well as technical information is given on the website. He reported that starting with RT 2010-2, all data is evaluated on the new database. All laboratories are asked to upload their Round Trial data via the website/database instead of sending results by e-mail. In addition, laboratories can download all general reports and individual laboratory evaluation reports from the database.

3. Interpreting the CSITC Combined Properties Measurement and Measurements for each Parameter:

Based on an idea given in the previous Task Force meeting, Axel Drieling presented a new kind of evaluation, which can be added to the current evaluation. The new evaluation shows where a lab stands in comparison to possible result variation limits. This evaluation will probably be easier to understand than the current evaluation parameters. Results show that the new evaluation offers strong differences / a high selectivity between different instruments. **It was agreed that the evaluation will be calculated in 2010-4, and may be included from 2011 on.**

4. Discussion of Color:

Color is graded exclusively by instruments in the U.S., but in many other countries color grades are determined manually, resulting in the perception of systematic differences in color results. Could instrument results for color be reported in an additional format to complement existing reporting conventions?

A proposal to use only Reflectance (Rd) and Yellowness (+b) in cotton classing was discussed, along with a proposal to assign average Rd and +b values to each cotton lot, together with the range of dispersion for both measurements. For grouping or comparing lots of bales, a bi-dimensional approach is needed requiring research for which a project draft is under development. Ralph mentioned that trash particles might disturb the measurement of these characteristics. M. Stevens said he would be willing to look at the feasibility of linking this information to pricing. G. Parle mentioned that cotton is already traded using Rd and +b in Australia. Romano Bonadei mentioned that his mill has been developing laydowns using Rd and +b for years. Trevor Wicks said that in his view color should not be taken for trading, but should be used by spinners only. It was suggested that the topic of trading based on instrument color results should be addressed to the ICA. It was agreed to investigate the color topic more deeply during the next session.

5. Update on the Brazilian Instrument Testing Initiative:

A. Macdonald described progress in Brazil under the leadership of ABRAPA to use CSITC Round Trial results to motivate laboratories to maintain and improve their testing practices. He encouraged other countries to follow the Brazilian example.

6. Trash Measurement:

Jimmy Knowlton mentioned that the measurement of trash has been improving using newer technologies. The reproducibility of USDA trash area and particle counts have increased from 80.4 to 84.0 and 76.9 to 89.9, respectively, over the past 5 years. USDA envisions a transition from manual to instrument based leaf grade classification, possibly as early as the 2011 season. Based on this finding, J. Knowlton proposed to include trash count and trash area as optional parameters in the CSITC Round Trials, in order to get more information on these parameters. **The Task Force agreed to include trash parameters in the Round Trials without evaluating laboratories based on the results.** Participation with trash results will begin with the 2010-4 CSITC Round Trial, and participation will be voluntarily as is the case with the other optional CSITC measurements (SFI and maturity).

7. Election of the Chair of CSITC:

The task Force first voted that any Chairman would be elected for a two years period, with the possibility of re-election. The Task Force voted unanimously for Andrew Macdonald for a two-year period starting at the next meeting.

Ralph Schulze mentioned that it might be time to reconfirm Task Force membership, and **the Secretariat said that all current members would be canvassed to determine their interest in continuing.** The Secretariat reminded that participation on the CSITC Task Force does not depend on recommendation by a Member Country, but that membership is approved by the ICAC Standing Committee.

8. Next Meeting of the CSITC:

Several opportunities for the next meeting of the Task Force were discussed, but there was insufficient information upon which to reach consensus. It was agreed that the meeting is likely to be held in Washington, DC or Memphis, TN, USA during the first half of 2011.

9. CFC/ICAC Project:

Jean-Paul Gourlot reported that the Regional Technical Centers (RTC) installed in Africa within the CFC/ICAC/33 Project are now operational. They provide expertise in laboratory management, training sessions and technical information. They also run regional round-tests using regionally-grown cottons on a quarterly basis. The RTCs are also starting retest activities in which laboratories send a proportion of their samples to the RTC for re-testing; harmonization can then be implemented in case there are systematic differences in the results. The CSITC encourages laboratories in Africa to participate in the project and to support the RTCs. These activities are being subsidized by the Common Fund for Commodities and the European Commission under the terms of the CSITC project.