

Sustainable Cotton Communiqué

Cotton is the most abundantly produced natural textile in the world. Over 20 million tonnes of cotton¹ is produced in over 100 countries², primarily by smallholder farmers in developing countries, and supports the livelihoods of around 350 million people.³

Although cotton is of immense commercial importance globally, it is a sector that faces many social, economic and environmental challenges. For example, for the cotton market to operate sustainably improvements need to be made to:

- Increase the income of smallholder farmers;
- Eliminate highly hazardous pesticides, and eliminate or reduce the amount of pesticides and synthetic fertilizer used;
- Reduce water use and improve water quality; and
- Improve soil health, including positive carbon impacts as a result of more sustainable practices.

We believe that there is an imperative for cotton to be produced and used more sustainably; not only to reduce its significant burden on the environment, but also as a pathway to lift millions of people out of poverty. Cotton is an important rotation crop for smallholders and the cash income it generates is vital for farmers' livelihoods, contributing to both improved living standards and to food security. Addressing the land, water and social impacts of cotton supply chains will also move the world closer to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

We recognise that practical solutions to making cotton production much more sustainable exist today. These solutions include: Organic, Fairtrade, Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Cotton Made in Africa and recycled cotton certified to an independently verifiable standard such as the Global Recycled Standard (GRS) or the Recycled Claim Standard (RCS). In addition, CottonConnect's REEL programme and code provides a starting point for businesses aiming for greater sustainability in their cotton supply chain.

These solutions have been proven effective and are increasingly being requested by retailers, brands and other users of cotton. However, we believe the pace of their adoption is too slow, that more can be done to accelerate their use and that by doing so significant social and environmental benefit will be achieved.

We, the undersigned, have therefore come together to champion the greater use of more sustainable cotton in marketplaces globally. As a sign of our own support for this goal, we are aiming to ensure that 100% of the cotton we use comes from the most sustainable sources by 2025. We will individually report on our use of more sustainable cotton on an annual basis starting in 2018.

We will also champion the uptake of more sustainable cotton globally by:

- Sharing our lessons learned with other participants in the cotton value chain globally, including, but not limited to, fabric developers and producers;
- Supporting sustainable cotton policies;
- Working with farmers' groups to transition to more sustainable production systems;
- Sending clear market-driven messages to support longer term purchasing agreements;
- Engaging our industry peers;
- Working with existing initiatives to scale current efforts; and,
- Communicating our intentions and progress to stakeholders.

We believe that the scale of the social, economic and environmental benefits that could accrue from concerted action are worth our commitment to work together to drive sustainable change.

¹ ICAC, 2017

² ICAC, 2012

³ Fairtrade Foundation, 2015

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