

Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS): New Version 4.0 Released

New assessment of improved regenerated and synthetic fibers; large 2013 increase of GOTS certified companies in Europe

For Immediate Release

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Washington, D.C. (March 1, 2014) - The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) International Working Group is announcing today Version 4.0 of the worldwide recognized standard for the processing of textiles made from at least 70 percent (label grade "made with organic"), respective 95 percent (label grade "organic") certified organic natural fibers.

GOTS' core provisions such as the 70 percent minimum content of certified organic fibers, the general bans on the use of substances from disputed techniques such as genetic engineering and nanotechnology, as well as carcinogenic substances, have been maintained. There are modified rules on permissible conventional 'additional fiber materials': these now may consist of regenerated, respective synthetic fibers - up to 30 percent - provided they are environmentally-improved and certified. For regenerated fibers this means that the raw material must be from certified organic production, sustainable forestry management, or be certified recycled. For synthetic fibers, the raw material must be recycled and also certified according to recognized standards.

"According to current knowledge through environmental impact assessments the previous focus on natural fibers for the permissible conventional 'additional fiber materials' (up to maximum of 30 percent) is no longer justifiable. In the future, textile manufacturers will have a larger choice of fiber mixes if they also use the environmentally-improved variants of regenerated and synthetic fibers. A wider product selection of GOTS-certified products will be made possible which will also support the increased use of organic fibers," notes Marcus Bruegel, GOTS Technical Director.

In addition, the use of virgin polyester and angora is banned. "Both bans are reasonable. Recycled polyester yarn is already widely available. In the case of angora the ban is a consequence of the mostly unacceptable animal husbandry conditions of angora rabbits," Bruegel continues.

The processing is also regulated more strictly. As in every revision process, the latest insights regarding textile chemistry and residue testing methods were considered and various applicable criteria and limit values were reinforced. The already extensive list of banned substances and strict residue parameters was further extended. This will point out more clearly that all substances criticized by Greenpeace in their "Detox Campaign" naturally remain banned in GOTS.

New criteria were adopted for specific product groups, such as textile personal care products or mattresses.

The GOTS social criteria are based on the International Labor Organization (ILO) key conventions, which include the ban on child labor. The audit areas that need to be covered by the auditors during the on-site inspections were further specified. The GOTS 4.0 now expressly stipulates programs or certifications with the results considered during the GOTS inspection: Fair Wear Foundation (FWF),

Social Accountability 8000 (SA800), Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP) and the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI). Fire prevention training and evacuation drills were added to the existing health and safety training requirements.

The implementation period for GOTS certified entities to comply with the new criteria is one year after the announcement.

GOTS 4.0 is the result of a revision process with multi stakeholder input which is repeated every three years. Stakeholders who operate internationally with expertise in the field of organic production, textile processing, textile chemistry and social criteria and representing the industry, NGOs and consumer interests were invited to participate. This time the participating organizations also included Greenpeace, the Clean Clothes Campaign, Fairtrade, the Fair Wear Foundation, IFOAM and Textile Exchange.

GOTS Annual Report 2013

After the number of facilities becoming certified to GOTS in 62 countries worldwide surpassed the 3,000 mark in 2012, it remained stable in 2013 with an increase to a total of 3,085 certified facilities. A decrease in Asia, which was partially caused by the trend of concentrating the placement of GOTS orders with certain already-certified facilities, was overcompensated by a huge increase in Europe. A total of 109 new facilities were registered in Germany (+66 percent), Austria (+14 percent) and Switzerland (+27 percent). An increase of 73 percent with 33 new facilities was registered in Portugal, 13 percent increase in Italy, and 12 percent in France.

The Top 20 countries in terms of the total number of GOTS-certified facilities were (by rank): India, Turkey, Germany, China, South Korea, Italy, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, Portugal, France, United Kingdom, United States, Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, Greece, Denmark, Belgium and Sri Lanka.

"We see the increase in Europe as a very positive sign. For companies, GOTS certification means an increased competitive advantage in addition to effective supply chain management. It helps them develop their business case for sustainability. First of all, they have a "pull effect" on the worldwide supply chain, and secondly, they have a "push effect" toward end consumers. They are making themselves into real agents of change regarding sustainability in the textile industry, and securing their company's long-term success at the same time," says Claudia Kersten, GOTS Marketing Director.

In North America, certification grew primarily in the United States with the addition of Coyuchi (bed and bath retailer), Saco River Dyehouse (dye house), and Toyoshima (organic fiber importer). In addition, several major retailers including Bed Bath & Beyond, Dillard's, Target, and Whole Foods Market are making GOTS-certified products widely available to consumers.

All GOTS-certified facilities are listed in the organization's public database which has been available on the GOTS website since 2010. There are more than 100,000 search queries every year. There currently are seventeen GOTS accredited independent certification organizations.

GOTS Version 4.0, the corresponding Manual for the Implementation, a list of the relevant changes, region-specific additions to this press release, as well as translations into Japanese and Chinese and further information regarding GOTS can be found on www.global-standard.org.

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