



Organic Cotton Fact Sheet

What is organic cotton?

Organic cotton is grown using methods and materials that have a low impact on the environment. Organic production systems replenish and maintain soil fertility, expand biologically diverse agriculture, and prohibit the use of synthetic toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilizers, as well as genetically engineered seed. Third-party certification organizations verify that organic producers meet strict federal regulations addressing methods and materials allowed in organic production.

Much of the demand for organic cotton currently comes from manufacturers and brands with corporate environmental and social responsibility goals driving them to seek to be responsible stewards. So, too, they are acting in response to consumers increasingly seeking sustainable, chemical-free fiber and finished apparel and home products.

How much organic cotton is grown globally?

Approximately 222,134 farmers grew 1,101,333 bales of organic cotton in 19 countries on 1,035,210 acres of land in 2018/2019, a 31 percent increase over the previous year and the second largest organic cotton harvest on record. In addition, 137,966 acres of cotton-growing land were in-conversion to organic, helping to meet the increasing demand. Organic cotton makes up approximately 0.93 percent of global cotton.

Organic cotton was grown in the following 19 countries: India (51%), China (17%), Kyrgyzstan (10%), Turkey (10%), Tajikistan (5%), Tanzania (2%), USA (2%), (Uganda (1%), Greece (.5%), Benin (0.4%), Peru (0.2%), Burkina Faso (0.19%), Pakistan (0.17%), Egypt (0.12%), Ethiopia (0.05%), Brazil (0.04%), Mali (0.03%), Argentina (0.005%), and Thailand (0.003%). Approximately 0.97 percent of global organic cotton was produced in the top seven countries.¹

Who are the leading players in the global organic cotton marketplace?

The top 10 companies (using a holistic consideration of both management and uptake) using organic cotton in 2019 were (in descending order based on a company's management practices, including risk assessment, transparency, investment, target setting, impact measurement, and adoption rate of "preferred cotton"): H&M, C&A, Inditex, Aldi Group, Tchibo, Nike, AB Lindex, Varner, Bestseller, and Stanley & Stella. The Top 10 organic/Fair Trade companies meeting the same criteria were Boll & Branch, Naturaline, Dibella, Cotonea, Dedicated Sweden, ARMEDANGELS, Knowledge Cotton Apparel, Coyuchi, Veja, and Continental Cloth.²

How much organic cotton is grown in the United States?

In the U.S., organic cotton production increased 1.3 percent from 2017 to 2018, amounting to 23,720 bales harvested from 18,982 acres, with challenging weather conditions including both drought and hail. The U.S. represents 2.16 percent of global organic cotton production (and 0.1 percent of U.S. cotton production³). There were 66 farmers involved in U.S. organic cotton production in Texas, New Mexico, and North Carolina.

Two entities--the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC) and the ProCot Cooperative program managed by Allenberg Cotton Company --continue to dominate U.S. organic cotton production, growing 85 percent of the total fiber in 2018/19. Most organic cottonseed is sold to organic dairies for use as feed, though several farmers catch and reuse their seed.⁴

What is the value of the U.S. organic cotton market?

Organic fiber continues to be the largest and fastest-growing sector in the U.S. organic non-food industry (including organic textiles, household products, personal care products, supplements, pet food and flowers). According to the Organic Trade Association's *2020 Organic Industry Survey*, organic fiber product sales increased 12 percent over 2018 to \$2.04 billion in 2019—with most of those sales in organic cotton. Overall, sales of organic food and non-food products in the U.S. totaled a new record of \$55.1 billion in 2019, up 5 percent from the previous year.⁵ Increasing consumer awareness and the growing knowledge that what we put *on* your body is as important as what we put *in* it are driving growth in the organic textiles and fiber market.

What about processing of organic cotton into finished textiles?

Companies are increasingly becoming certified to traceability standards such as the Textile Exchange [Organic Content Standard \(OCS\)](#), which verifies that the cotton in a final product is certified organic. In 2019, 6,181 facilities in 54 countries were certified to the OCS, including 147 in the U.S.⁶

Thousands of facilities around the world have become certified to the [Global Organic Textile Standard \(GOTS\)](#).⁷ GOTS is a stringent voluntary global standard for the entire postharvest processing (spinning, knitting, weaving, dyeing and manufacturing) of apparel and home textiles made with organic fiber. The standard prohibits the use of toxic inputs during the processing stages and establishes strong labor provisions including a prohibition on child labor. In 2019, there were 7,765 facilities in 70 countries certified to GOTS, including 147 in the U.S. The U.S. ranked ninth in terms of the number of GOTS-certified facilities, and North America ranked second in terms of the largest increase in GOTS certifications.⁸

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a [policy memorandum](#) addressing labeling of textile products containing certified organic fibers including cotton, linen, and wool. According to the memo, products containing organically grown fibers that have been processed according to GOTS may be marketed as organic.⁹

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¹ Textile Exchange, Organic Cotton Market Report, August 10, 2020. <https://store.textileexchange.org/product/2020-organic-cotton-market-report/>

² Textile Exchange, Material Change Insights Report: 2019. May 27, 2020. <https://store.textileexchange.org/product/2019-material-change-insights-report/>

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Crop Production. May 2020. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/crop0520.pdf

⁴ Textile Exchange, Organic Cotton Market Report, August 10, 2020. https://textileexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Textile-Exchange_Organic-Cotton-Market-Report_2020-20200810.pdf

⁵ Organic Trade Association, "COVID-19 will shape organic industry in 2020 after banner year in 2019: Importance of organic continues to rise, as sales hit \$55.1 billion in 2019." June 10, 2020. <https://ota.com/news/press-releases/21328>

⁶ Textile Exchange, Organic Cotton Market Report, August 10, 2020. https://textileexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Textile-Exchange_Organic-Cotton-Market-Report_2020-20200810.pdf

⁷ Global Organic Textile Standard, Global Organic Textile Standard Version 5.0. 2017. https://global-standard.org/images/GOTS_Documents/GOTS_Standard_5.0_EN.pdf

⁸ Global Organic Textile Standard, "Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS): GOTS registers highest growth rate ever in 2019." March 4, 2020. <https://www.global-standard.org/information-centre/press-releases.html>

⁹ US Department of Agriculture, "Labeling of Textiles That Contain Organic Ingredients." May 20, 2011. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/OrganicTextilePolicyMemo.pdf>