

## **Fiber Council Minutes, December 4, 2015**

By Sandra Marquardt, Fiber Council Secretary

### **Draft Agenda:**

1. Introductions
2. Organic Fiber Council (OFC) Work Plan (OTA Website & 2016 Media Event)/- OFC In-person Meeting in Anaheim (March)
3. OFC Member Recruitment / Sector Council Update
4. OTA Website progress/tutorial

**1. Introductions/ On the Call:** Barry Cik, Darin Jones, David Anthony, Dick Siegel, Karlin Warner, Marci Zaroff, Dale Read, Kelly Pepper, Jimmy Wedel, Sandra Marquardt, Ted Major.

OTA Staff: Gwendolyn Wyard, Marni Karlin, Maggie McNeil, Derek Mulhern.

### **2. Update from Expo East Meeting and the 2015 /2016 Work Plan.**

This includes updates to the Textile Exchange MOU, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforcement position, the Fiber Council work plan, and a tutorial of the OTA website for textile and fiber pages updates.

a. Establishing an MOU with Textile Exchange: It is finalized and both organizations have signed the contract. Now developing a communication plan with TE with multi-prong/faceted plan. The plan will include communications such as e-mail blasts to trade, additional updates to website to highlight TE, media release(s) and OTA Newsletter, News Flash, Facebook/LinkedIn Twitter.

b. FTC/USDA enforcement: OTA continues to advocate for FTC to update the Green Guides with guidance for marketers addressing “organic” on textiles and other products that fall outside of USDA NOP’s scope of authority (personal care, dietary supplements, fertilizers, dry cleaner). FTC appears to also be wrestling with the proliferation of the term on products that aren’t organic. GW & Marni had call with FTC – the FTC-USDA survey is completed and now analyzing the data. Shared with FTC re misleading claims to let them know the particular problem areas such as dry cleaners and mattresses.

Sector Councils aren't policy setting group, so when FTC comes out with their response to the survey or any related proposal, GW will convene a Task Force which would help develop a recommendation/position in response. So FTC is still moving forward.

Barry: What is the status of the USDA organic textile policy revision? Why doesn't USDA have the authority? FTC working with USDA on consumer opinion data, analyzing it together. FTC to work with USDA to have a clear position on where each agency's enforcement starts/stops. We're not giving up on USDA. Anyone can now submit misleading claims complaints to either agency or both together.

USDA Policy Updates to 2011 Policy Memo? Gwendolyn had a recent call with Paul Lewis, head of USDA standards division. OTA's requested changes to the policy member are for additional clarifying points to be added that address the "Made With category." This was left out of the policy memo and continues to create confusion. NOP is aware of the requested changes and is looking for the right timing.

#### c. In-person Meeting in Anaheim

In-person meeting will be at [www.ExpoWest.com](http://www.ExpoWest.com) in Anaheim (March 9 at Anabella Hotel Conference Room from 2pm – 5pm). Councils are required to meet once per year, once in person. Quarterly calls in addition to the in-person should be adequate. January call - focus on membership recruitment, March in-person meeting, summer event, and more.

2016: Media event in New York City or similar location that would draw the right people. TBD what kind of event, the message/focus. In NYC because of fashion magazines/bloggers there. OTA events are there also so good editor relationships are in place. Other options?

OTA event Dec. 16 – end of the year Media Breakfast in DC. Will address fiber, too. OTA has done NYC media tours and has some planned in 2016 in other locations. There will be OTA media event at West so OTA can give media a teaser for the fiber media event. Normally OTA has a small media briefing at Expo West. Planning on the same thing at EW 2016, but plans still in the works. New Hope wants to focus on organics more so this may be appropriate.

Dale: Home Textile Show in NYC? Discuss what role does organic play when it comes to fiber? No decision made.

### **3. OFC Member Recruitment / Sector Council Update**

Sector Council operating guidelines were adopted by OTA's Board, and describe purpose, function, eligibility, roles & responsibilities. Gwendolyn is reviewing and making revisions with extra detail given questions that have arisen.

Cost of participation in OFC? No cost, but there is an incentive for Council Members to bring in new members - for each member recruited by a fiber council member, 25% of that companies first year's dues go into the FC funds. Must join OTA and FC.

Funds? How is the stipend used and what about other funds the council raises? Receive \$2500 annually from OTA general stipend for support like meeting room, food/beverages.

Sector Councils can raise their own funds and vote on consensus basis on how to use them.

For companies to join they should contact Gwendolyn – her contact information is on the website. (see “website” below)

To recruit members: Derek (Director of Membership) supports with developing the introductory letter re GOTS/FC/OTA, and share any other information OTA has created. When signing on a member, he handles the logistics. We should direct interested companies to OTA to see current work FC is doing and developing.

The website now includes an overview of GOTS NOP policy memo, work on enforcing claims on fiber and textiles, on-going work for securing an alternative to MEbr, mattresses etc. GW will continue to update and add new information. Good place for current and prospect members to go to learn more about OTA's work as it relates to organic agriculture, fiber and textiles.

### **4. Website updates**

OTA has made numerous changes to its [www.ota.com](http://www.ota.com) website to update and incorporate organic textile information, primarily under the Advocacy tab. As per

the 2015 Work Plan the Organic Cotton Fact Sheet is updated and Barb is now working on the Organic Cotton and the Environment Fact Sheet. OTA will explore with TE the information to link to and what new information to develop to showcase MOU. In general, many improvements have been made and we are looking for feedback from council members on how to improve OTA's Fiber and Textiles webpages. What should be added? What resources are missing and we should create if they don't exist? How can it be more user friendly? Other helpful links? Please forward information to Gwendolyn.

## **5. Next Steps**

Next Doodle Poll to ID next phone call in February. The next meeting will be a prep meeting for our in-person meeting in Anaheim.

# ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION FIBER COUNCIL

## 2015-2016 WORK PLAN

### Current Fiber Council Members

Portico Brands/Under the Canopy, On the Mark PR, Maggie's Organics, MetaWear, Specialty Sleep Association, Naturepedic, UNFI, Richard Siegel Law Offices, MOM's Organic Market, Oregon Tilth Certified Organic (OTCO), Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Association, Control Union and One Cert.

### 2015 Work Plan

- Update OTA website
  - New: Member benefits for fiber companies
  - Update: Existing Fact Sheets
    - Organic Cotton Facts
    - 2013/2014 Organic Cotton Report
    - What is an Organic Mattress
    - What are Organic Fiber Products and How Can you Label Them?
  - New (to create) - Fact Sheet organic cotton t-shirt vs. conventional – (the problem is the data want to be careful about a fact sheet until we have the data)
  - Expand Quick Resources to include many more useful links – examples:
    - Where to buy organic clothes and textiles (soil association)
    - About organic cotton.org
    - GOTS flyer “From Field to Fashion” & flyer on wool

### 2016 Work Plan

- Continue to create Fact Sheets & Infographics to round out a “Resource Toolkit” for a “Downloads” section on website:
  - Fact Sheet for Retailers - FAQ
  - Consumers
  - Manufacturers
  - Media - Did you know?
- Webinar – 2 part series – 101 and 102
- Study – in collaboration with TOC
- Media Event
- Resource guide for certified companies with apparel