



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?

The 2019/20 harvest year saw 229,280 farmers grow 249,153 tonnes of organic cotton fiber on 588,425 hectares (ha) of certified organic land in 21 countries.

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 made up approximately 0.95 percent of global cotton.

Organic cotton was grown in the following 21 countries (in order of ranking): India (49.8%), China (12.3%), Kyrgyzstan (11.8%), Turkey (9.7%), Tanzania (4.5%), Tajikistan (4.2%), U.S. (2.8%), Uganda (1.9%), Pakistan (0.8%), Greece (0.7%), Benin (0.6%), Peru (0.3%), Burkina Faso (0.2%), Egypt (0.1%), Uzbekistan (0.1%), Ethiopia (0.1%), Brazil (0.1%), Mali (0.03%), Myanmar (0.01%), Thailand (0.002%), and Senegal (0.001%).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 amounted to 23,720 bales (5,164 MT) harvested from almost 29,000 acres (11,728 HA), despite challenging weather conditions including both drought and hail. The U.S. represents 2.8 percent of global organic cotton production and 0.2 percent³ of U.S. cotton⁴). There were 83 farmers involved in U.S. organic cotton production in Texas and New Mexico.

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 74

percent of the total fiber in 2019. Most organic cottonseed is sold to organic dairies for use as feed, though several farmers catch and reuse their seed.⁵

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

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 [2021 Organic Industry Survey](#), organic fiber product sales increased five percent over 2019 to \$2.1 billion in 2020--with most of those sales in organic cotton. The category now has a penetration rate into the total U.S. fiber market of 0.9%. Overall, sales of organic food and non-food products in the U.S. totaled a new record of nearly \$62 billion in 2020, up over 12 percent from the previous year.⁶ 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 2020, 8,680 facilities globally were certified to the OCS.

Thousands of facilities around the world also 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 2020, the number of GOTS certified facilities grew to 10,388 globally, a 34 percent growth globally. This includes 167 facilities in the U.S. making the nation rank in 9th place. The 16 GOTS approved certification bodies reported that over three million people in over 72 countries were working in GOTS-certified facilities. By year's end, there were 25,913 GOTS-approved chemical inputs, a 13 percent increase in 2020 indicating that these inputs are increasingly used as a risk management tool by wet processors to satisfy legal and commercial residue requirements.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 in the U.S.⁹

What kinds of products are made using organic cotton?

As a result of consumer interest, organic cotton fiber is used in everything from personal care items (sanitary products, make-up removal pads, cotton puffs, ear swabs), to fabrics, home furnishings (towels, bathrobes, sheets, blankets, bedding, mattresses), children's products (toys, diapers), and apparel of all kinds and styles (whether for lounging, sports, or the workplace).

In addition, approximately two-thirds of cottonseed is used for animal feed, and cottonseed oil is used in a variety of food products, including cookies and chips.¹⁰

-
- ¹ Textile Exchange. Organic Cotton Market Report 2021. 2021. https://textileexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Textile-Exchange_Organic-Cotton-Market-Report_2021.pdf.
- ² Textile Exchange. Material Change Insights Report: 2019. May 27, 2020. <https://store.textileexchange.org/product/2019-material-change-insights-report/>
- ³ Textile Exchange. Organic Cotton Market Report. 2021. https://textileexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Textile-Exchange_Organic-Cotton-Market-Report_2021.pdf
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture. Crop Production. May 2020. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/crop0520.pdf
- ⁵ Textile Exchange. Organic Cotton Market Report. 2021. https://textileexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Textile-Exchange_Organic-Cotton-Market-Report_2021.pdf
- ⁶ Organic Trade Association. “Organic Trade Association survey says swing to home cooking in pandemic ignited sales.” May 25, 2021. <https://ota.com/news/press-releases/21755>
- ⁷ Global Organic Textile Standard GmbH. Global Organic Textile Standard Version 6.0. 2020. https://global-standard.org/images/resource-library/documents/standard-and-manual/gots_version_6_0_en1.pdf
- ⁸ Global Organic Textile Standard GmbH. “GOTS certifications in 2020 reach five figures for the first time.” February 21, 2021. <https://global-standard.org/news/gots-annual-press-release-world-gots-certifications-in-2020-reach-five-figures-for-the-first-time>
- 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> and Organic Trade Association. May 2012. What are organic fiber products and how can you label them? https://ota.com/sites/default/files/indexed_files/What_are_Organic_Fiber_Products.pdf
- ¹⁰ National Cotton Council. ND. The Many Faces of Cotton. <https://www.cotton.org/pubs/cottoncounts/upload/The-Many-Faces-of-Cotton.pdf>