** 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?**

Global production of organic cotton saw impressive growth between 2016/17 and 2017/18, increasing 56 percent to 180,971 metric tons (831,193 bales). Organic cotton was planted on 356,131 hectares (880,018 acres), with total volumes reaching the highest level since 2010/11 when the financial crisis led to a dramatic decline. Organic cotton now makes up 0.7% of global cotton production.

Nineteen countries produced organic cotton in 2017/18 (in order by rank): India (47%), China (21%), Kyrgyzstan (12%), Turkey (6%), Tajikistan (5%), the United States (3%), Tanzania (3%), Greece (0.5%); Uganda (0.4%); Benin (0.4%); Burkina Faso (0.3%); Peru (0.3%); Egypt (0.2%), Mali (0.04%), Ethiopia (0.02%), Brazil (0.01%), Senegal (0.003%), Argentina (0.001%), and Thailand (0.001%). Ninety-eight percent of global production comes from the top seven countries.[[1]](#footnote-1)

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

The top 10 companies by volume of organic cotton in 2017 were (in descending order by rank): C&A, H&M, Tchibo, Inditex, Nike, Aldi South International, Stanley & Stella, Aldi Einkauf, AB Lindex and Boll & Branch.

The top 10 companies by increased use that year were Gucci, Kalani-Home, Aldi Einkauf, REI, MetaWear, Fjällräven International, Stanley & Stella, Outerknown, Timberland, and West Point Home.

The Top 10 organic/Fair Trade companies were Boll & Branch, Coop Switzerland, Dibella, Cotonea, Pact, ARMEDANGELS, prAna, Coyuchi, KnowledgeCotton Apparel and Dedicated.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**How much organic cotton is grown in the United States?**

In 2017, 68 farmers planted 26,302 acres (10,644 hectares) with organic cotton in the U.S. The yield was approximately 23,341 bales (5,082 MT) of organic cotton fiber, a 12 percent increase over the previous year’s production and a 17 percent increase in the number of farmers. Organic cotton – including Pima and colored cotton – was also grown in New Mexico and minor amounts in North Carolina. U.S. farmers produce approximately 2.8 percent of global organic cotton.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**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 2019 [Organic Industry Survey](https://ota.com/news/press-releases/20699), organic fiber product sales increased 15 percent over 2017 to $1.8 billion in 2018 -- 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 $52.5 billion in 2018, up 6 percent from the previous year.[[4]](#footnote-4) 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)](http://textileexchange.org/integrity/), which verifies that the cotton in a final product is certified organic. There were 3,650 companies certified to the OCS in 2017.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Thousands of facilities around the world have become certified to the [Global Organic Textile Standard](http://www.Global-Standard.org) (GOTS).[[6]](#footnote-6) 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 2018, there were 5,760 facilities in 64 countries certified to GOTS, including almost 100 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. [[7]](#footnote-7)

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a [policy memorandum](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/OrganicTextilePolicyMemo.pdf) 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 now be marketed as organic.[[8]](#footnote-8)

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1. Textile Exchange, Organic Cotton Market Report, November 14, 2019. <https://store.textileexchange.org/product/2019-organic-cotton-market-report/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Textile Exchange, Preferred Fiber Benchmark Report 2018. <https://textileexchange.org/downloads/2018-preferred-fiber-materials-benchmark-insights-report/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Textile Exchange, Organic Cotton Market Report, November 14, 2019. <https://store.textileexchange.org/product/2019-organic-cotton-market-report/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Organic Trade Association, “U.S. organic sales break through $50 billion mark in 2018.” May 17, 2019. <https://ota.com/news/press-releases/20699> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Textile Exchange, Organic Cotton Market Report, October 23, 2018. <https://textileexchange.org/downloads/2018-organic-cotton-market-report/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 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> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Global Organic Textile Standard, “**Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS): New Figures Show Continued Significant Growth.” March 7, 2019.** <http://www.global-standard.org/information-centre/press-releases.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. US Department of Agriculture, “Labeling of Textiles That Contain Organic Ingredients,” May 20, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)