



# ORGANIC 101

## THE BENEFITS & BASICS OF ORGANIC FIBER & TEXTILES

Learn more at [OTA.com/organic101](https://OTA.com/organic101)

Published by Organic Trade Association

### What is **ORGANIC**?

Unlike other eco-labels, **only ORGANIC** guarantees:

- ✗ **NO** toxic and synthetic pesticides or fertilizers
- ✗ **NO** GMO ingredients
- ✗ **NO** antibiotics or synthetic growth hormones
- ✗ **NO** toxic chemical processing inputs
- ✗ **NO** sewage sludge or irradiation

Federal production and processing standards provide traceability from the farm to the consumer.

### How is organic fiber **GROWN** or **RAISED**?

Organic farmers and ranchers rely on crop rotation, cover crops and dense planting rather than toxic and persistent pesticides and synthetic nitrogen fertilizers to enrich the soil in which they grow their crops. Fiber from animals must be grown and processed without any chemical treatments of any kind. To earn organic certification, land must be managed without prohibited materials for at least three years.

### What about **ANIMAL** health and welfare?



Organic farmers and ranchers are required to raise animals without the use of antibiotics or synthetic growth hormones. Animals must have 100% organic feed and safe, healthy and natural living conditions.

Organic farmers and ranchers must provide their animals with access to the outdoors and pasture so that they can freely roam about. In fact, the organic standards require that cows and sheep graze on grass for a minimum of one third of their lives.

### What is organic **CERTIFICATION**?

From the land on which the fiber is grown, to the post-harvest facilities preparing the fiber, to the processing and handling facilities transforming the fiber into finished textiles, certifiers are responsible for making sure that USDA organic fiber and finished products meet all organic standards. Once an operation is certified, organic producers and handlers go through annual reviews and inspections. Every certifier also operates under the oversight of USDA.



The USDA Organic label is highly **TRUSTED** by over **75%** of families

ORGANIC  
by the numbers }

### ORGANIC FARMERS

are not exposed to toxic agricultural chemicals



comes from sheep who eat **100% organic feed** and roam outdoors

American consumers spend nearly **\$52.5 Billion** on organic products



**\$1.8 Billion** of which was organic textiles



## What standards are there for making **ORGANIC** clothes, mattresses & linens?

In the US, raw agricultural fiber (e.g. cotton, silk, wool) labeled as "organic" must be certified to the USDA Organic standards. In order to make a claim that a processed fiber product is "certified organic," the product must be certified to the USDA organic food standards, or to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). GOTS certification is designed specifically for textiles and verifies its organic status from harvesting of the USDA organic raw materials through environmentally and socially responsible manufacturing and labeling.



**GOTS** prohibits  
heavy metals,  
formaldehyde  
+ aromatic solvents  
during processing

## How do I **KNOW** if the product is actually organic?

Don't accept self-certification claims or marks! Check to see that the product is 3rd party certified to the USDA Organic standard, the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) or to the Textile Exchange Organic Content Standard (OCS). GOTS is the worldwide leading textile processing standard for organic fibers. The OCS standard is a content standard and guarantees traceability of the raw organic material during all manufacturing stages — it does not address processing restrictions. In all cases, read the label carefully and look for the reference to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party certifier!



## What about organic and **GMOs**?



### **ALL ORGANIC PRODUCTS ARE NON-GMO, AND A WHOLE LOT MORE!**

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are prohibited in organic products. This means an organic farmer can't plant GMO seeds, organic cows or sheep can't eat GMO alfalfa, corn or cottonseed, and an organic manufacturer can't use any GMO ingredients. Organic farmers and manufacturers must show they aren't using GMOs, and that they are protecting their products from contact with prohibited substances from farm to finished product.



## How is organic good for people and the **ENVIRONMENT**?



Organic is based on practices that build soil health and biodiversity and protect the health of workers and the environment. By prohibiting the use of toxic and synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and processing materials, organic helps to build the soil (thereby combatting climate change), reduce water contamination from processing, and protect environmental and worker health.



## Does **SCIENCE** show organic is better?

**YES!** While many labels promise undefined and unverified benefits, science continues to prove why choosing organic is so important. Dozens of studies have associated exposures to agricultural pesticides banned in organic with many serious health concerns.



Organic farming **increases species diversity by about 50%**



Total global warming potential of organic cotton is **46% lower than that of conventional cotton**



Organic farms **sequester 44% more carbon into long-term soil reserves** than conventional soils



ORGANIC  
by the numbers }

More than  
**80%**  
OF U.S.  
HOUSEHOLDS

buy organic food,  
textiles, and personal care products



Certified Organic Seed  
is **ALWAYS NON-GMO**  
and never treated with  
fungicides



Organic textiles  
**do not contain  
allergenic,  
carcinogenic or  
toxic chemicals**



Increasing consumer awareness and the growing knowledge that what we put **ON our body** is as important as **what we put IN it** is driving growth in the organic textiles and fiber market.

**#LiveOrganic**