



The Organic Trade Association's (OTA's) Organic Fiber Council, officially approved by the Board of Directors in April 2015, is growing its company participation and working to strengthen its efforts to promote organic fiber and textiles. The aim of the council is to create a cohesive voice across fiber categories within OTA, advance the promotion and protection of the organic brand, and to grow the organic fiber sector overall. The council has successfully completed several items on its 2016 Work Plan and is looking forward to several more exciting projects slated for 2017.

#### **MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT**

##### **OTA's Fiber Council Grows Organizational Membership**

OTA's Fiber Council is strengthening in numbers. Council members now include representatives from Under the Canopy, On the Mark PR, Maggie's, MetaWear, Specialty Sleep Association, Naturepedic Organic Mattresses, Richard Siegel Law Offices, MOM's Organic Market, Control Union, OTCO, Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC), Textile Exchange, Whole Foods Market, Dhana Inc., Hae Now Inc., Boll & Branch, Coyuchi, PACT and Spiritex.

New members that joined this year include Textile Exchange, Boll & Branch, Dhana Inc., Hae Now Inc., Coyuchi, Whole Foods Market, PACT and Spiritex.

##### **OTA and Textile Exchange MOU**

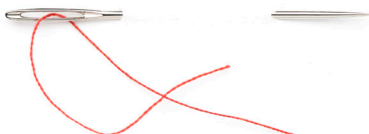
In an effort to support member outreach and recruitment as well as further the aim of the council, OTA and Textile Exchange (TE) joined forces through a formal partnership in January 2016 to strengthen the North American organic textile industry's public policy influence and public relations efforts.

A major goal of this new partnership will be to boost outreach to North American consumers on the benefits of organic fiber and textiles, particularly the environmental and social benefits of growing and processing them. Much of the current demand for organic cotton currently comes from manufacturers and brands. With authenticity and transparency as key goals, brands are trying to position themselves to be responsible stewards –becoming more sustainable in their supply chains and more relevant in their core messaging.

Under the agreement, OTA and TE will work together on legislative advocacy initiatives undertaken by the Fiber Council, advance organic fiber market messaging to consumers, promote awareness and education on both the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and the Organic Content Standard (OCS) and certification, develop and participate in media efforts to facilitate awareness and knowledge related to organic fibers, and develop and participate in various industry initiatives such as workshops, seminars and webinars.

#### **OTA FIBER COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Since its inception, the Fiber Council has met three times in person and twice via phone conference. The first three meetings occurred in 2015, and focused on establishing a



work plan to lead its work through 2016. The council held its 2016 in-person meeting in conjunction with Natural Products Expo West on March 9 to review its progress on the work plan and goals for 2016. The Fiber Council's 2016 work plan includes:

- Updating OTA's website with educational materials and resources (largely completed but on-going)
- Offering a two-part series webinar in conjunction with Textile Exchange
- Coordinating a media event that focuses on organic fiber and textiles
- Developing a resource guide for certified companies selling organic fiber products.

The council currently is focusing its energy on completing the resource guide and raising funds for an OTA fiber media event tentatively scheduled for early spring of 2017.

#### WEBSITE UPDATES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Working in tandem with the establishment of the Organic Fiber Council, OTA updated and reorganized the OTA fiber Web page to make it a more informative and user-friendly site for new and existing members to visit.

Updates include: 1) OTA's Fiber Council now has its own sub-page under the Fiber and Textiles landing page; 2) There is a new landing page that lists the companies serving on OTA's Fiber Council; 3) A "Quick Resources"

landing page was created that includes several new and updated Fact Sheets about organic fiber and textiles along with other related educational resources for download and a list of helpful websites. [OTA.com/advocacy/fiber-and-textiles](http://OTA.com/advocacy/fiber-and-textiles)

#### FIBER COUNCIL MEDIA EVENT

The Fiber Council is in the early stage of planning and fundraising for a media event that will feature a three-day pop-up store in New York City showcasing certified organic fiber products and brands across categories nationwide. The pop-up store will be designed and managed under the direction of the Fiber Council. The purpose of the event is to raise awareness, promote organic fiber and textiles, and educate shoppers and the media on why purchasing organic fiber and textiles matters for people and the environment. The media and public will have the opportunity to meet and talk with brand representatives and leading industry experts, touch and feel products, and learn more about the rapidly growing organic fiber movement. Educational materials, including infographics, will focus on the social and environmental benefits of organic raw fiber farming and processing, covering all aspects from farm to closet to bedroom and beyond. Contingent on funding, the event is scheduled to take place in early spring 2017 in New York City. For more information, visit OTA's Fiber and Textiles Web page.



## ORGANIC FIBER & TEXTILES HIGHLIGHTS

### Fiber Council Member TOCMC receives OTA's Leadership Award

Organic cotton farmers who make up the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC) were selected to receive OTA's prestigious "Organic Farmer of the Year" Leadership Award. Farmers formed the cooperative in 1993 when they realized they were producing more organic cotton than the market could absorb. Banding together, they began efforts to develop markets and to avoid being at the mercy of cotton brokers and merchants. Many of



these early pioneers still are involved in promoting organic farming and educating the public about organic practices. TOCMC produces 80 to 90 percent of the organic cotton grown in the United States, and is an active member of OTA's Organic Fiber Council. The council provides the cooperative with a useful vehicle for directing many of its efforts to further domestic organic cotton production.

### Addressing Misleading Organic Claims on Fiber and Textiles

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has released a study on consumer perceptions of organic claims, and announced it will host a roundtable discussion with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., on October 20 to help the two agencies better understand how consumers perceive "organic" claims made on non-agricultural products such as t-shirts, mattresses, and personal care products. The roundtable is open to the public, and FTC welcomes written comments, including further evidence of consumer perceptions. The comment period for written comments will remain open until December 1. This action comes as a result of OTA and its fiber members participating in numerous meetings with FTC and the National Organic Program to urge FTC to exercise its consumer protection authority and take action against the fraudulent and misleading use of the term "organic" on products that fall outside of NOP's scope of authority. OTA will attend the roundtable event and submit comments. Several fiber council members have joined OTA's newly formed "Organic Claims Task Force" to help shape comments on how to best address consumer deception and education. OTA encourages all fiber members to attend the roundtable meeting and/or join the task force.

### LOOKING AHEAD

We are working together to create a cohesive voice across fiber categories within OTA, and to grow the organic fiber sector overall. If you are interested in joining OTA's Fiber Council please contact Gwendolyn Wyard ([gwyard@ota.com](mailto:gwyard@ota.com)).



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