

ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

**Fiber Council**  
**2019 ANNUAL REPORT**



*Organic*  
SINCE 1985  
trade association

The Organic Trade Association (OTA)'s Fiber Council successfully works to strengthen and grow the organic fiber and textiles sector. The aim of the Council is to create a cohesive voice across fiber categories within the trade association, advance the promotion and protection of the organic brand, and grow the organic fiber sector overall.

The Fiber Council includes representatives from 38 member companies, covering the full supply chain from farmers to manufacturers, certifiers, researchers, retailers, and more. Members also include representatives from the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and Textile Exchange, two leading organizations focusing on organic textiles, which allows for continuous interaction and dialogue between the organizations.

### **FIBER COUNCIL ACTIVITY IN 2018-2019**

In order to elevate its robust work plan, the Council divided its membership into three working subcommittees – Research, Membership Recruitment, and Education and Communication. The Council has completed and is in progress on additional work in the remainder of 2019 and into 2020, such as hosting a booth at Textile Exchange's annual Sustainability Conference, developing additional organic textile fact sheets, and growing its membership.

### **Strengthening Our Organizational Membership**

Since its founding in 2015, the Council has formally met six times in person, in furtherance of Sector Council Operating Guidelines. Most recently, the Fiber Council met during Natural Products Expo West in Anaheim, CA in March 2019. Both formal and informal in-person meetings have been held at industry events, in addition to quarterly conference calls, providing members the opportunity to network and engage with the wide cross-section of our membership and further engage on our work plan items.

Over the last year, ten new organizations joined the Fiber Council, bringing the Council closer to its goal of 40 members. The Council welcomes our newest members from this last year: All Natural Dog Beds, Avocado Green Brands, Delilah Home, Fibershed, James Wedel Farms, Karlin Strategic Consulting, Linda Cabot Designs, Patagonia Works, Sleep on Latex, and Under the Nile. The Council looks forward to collaborating in order to grow the organic sector.

### **Educating Consumers and Industry Partners**

The Council continued with its robust production of fact sheets in 2018-2019, including the revised publication of an Organic Cotton Fact Sheet and an updated Organic Wool Infographic. These informational materials are posted on OTA.com in

addition to other fact sheets and infographics produced by the Organic Trade Association and coalition partners in the organic textile industry. The Council expects to publish an Organic Fiber 101 pamphlet in late 2019.

Members of the Fiber Council continue to engage in panel discussions and presentations around the world in 2018-2019. Presentations and discussions were completed in academic, consumer, and industry spaces, furthering the aim of the Council to advance the promotion and protection of the organic brand. To develop and further support the work that our member organizations are facilitating, the Fiber Council is working to develop a media kit.

Total organic sales in the U.S. totaled \$52.5 billion in 2018, with \$4.6 billion in sales attributed to the non-food sector. Overall sales in the non-food sector continues to increase in the U.S., growing in 2018 at a rate of 10.6 percent, where organic fiber accounted for 39.7 percent of non-food sales. At \$1.8 billion in overall sales, organic fiber continues to be the largest and fastest-growing non-food category. Overall fiber sales were up 13.4 percent in 2018 – with most of those sales in organic cotton.

### **Fundraising for Research on Organic Textiles and Consumer Interests**

#### ***Organic Cotton Scientific Report Series: What the Science Says about the Benefits of Organic Cotton***

Late in 2018, the Council successfully raised more than \$12,000 for Phase 1 of a three-phase research project, in partnership with Dr. Jessica Shade at The Organic Center (TOC). The project looks at what science can inform us about the benefits of organic cotton. Using a three-phase approach, the concept of the study seeks to collect scientifically-accurate data on the benefits of organic cotton, address areas where knowledge gaps exist, such as supply chain issues, and build a scaffolding of trust in the data shared by the organic cotton industry. Phase 1 of the project is quantifying an up-to-date environmental footprint of organic cotton from the field through the supply chain.

On May 16, 2019 the Fiber Council's research subcommittee, Dr. Shade and Dr. Kathleen Delate, of Iowa State University, met

to discuss the status of the organic cotton scientific report. We finalized the organic cotton grower survey to be sent to all organic cotton producers and gins in the US, questions centered on growing practices and marketing strategy. Sixty responses were received from predominately Texan farmers. Dr. Delate and her team are in the process of analyzing the results and preparing their findings. The final report will include a literature review of the current publications covering organic cotton, from seed to first processing steps.

Future work will include a September conference call between TOC, the subcommittee, and Dr. Delate to review the report draft and make any comments on the content. TOC will assist in the layout, printing and dissemination of the final report.

**GRO Organic Consumer Messaging Project: Ensuring Organic Textiles Is a Part of the Conversation.**

Early in 2019, the Fiber Council voted to participate in GRO Organic, and its research, promotion, and education projects. Thirteen member organizations of the Fiber Council collaborated to donate over \$10,000 GRO Organic and avenues for sharing big ideas specifically for the Consumer Messaging Project. By eclipsing \$10,000 in funds pledged to GRO Organic, the Council was able to appoint a representative to the GRO Organic Consumer Messaging Core Committee. The Fiber Council voted on and confirmed Marci Zaroff, of MetaWear, as its representative. In this capacity, Marci speaks to the interests and needs of the organic textile membership as it relates to the Consumer Messaging Project with Natural Marketing Institute (NMI).

**LOOKING FORWARD TO 2020  
A Word from Our Chair, Michael Twer**

2018-2019 was a great year for the Fiber Council. Not only did we increase our membership to a record 38 members, we showed incredible engagement during our conference calls, research projects, and support during our annual meeting. Furthermore, we had over 15 members represented during Organic Week in Washington DC. Kudos to the Organic Trade Association for organizing such an important week including the Member Day sessions, which were fantastic.

As we continue to grow in every aspect of our Council, 2020 will open up incredible opportunities for us all to grow the organic brand. Our Council is pumped and ready to make a difference! Cheers to 2020!

**IN-PERSON COLLABORATIONS**

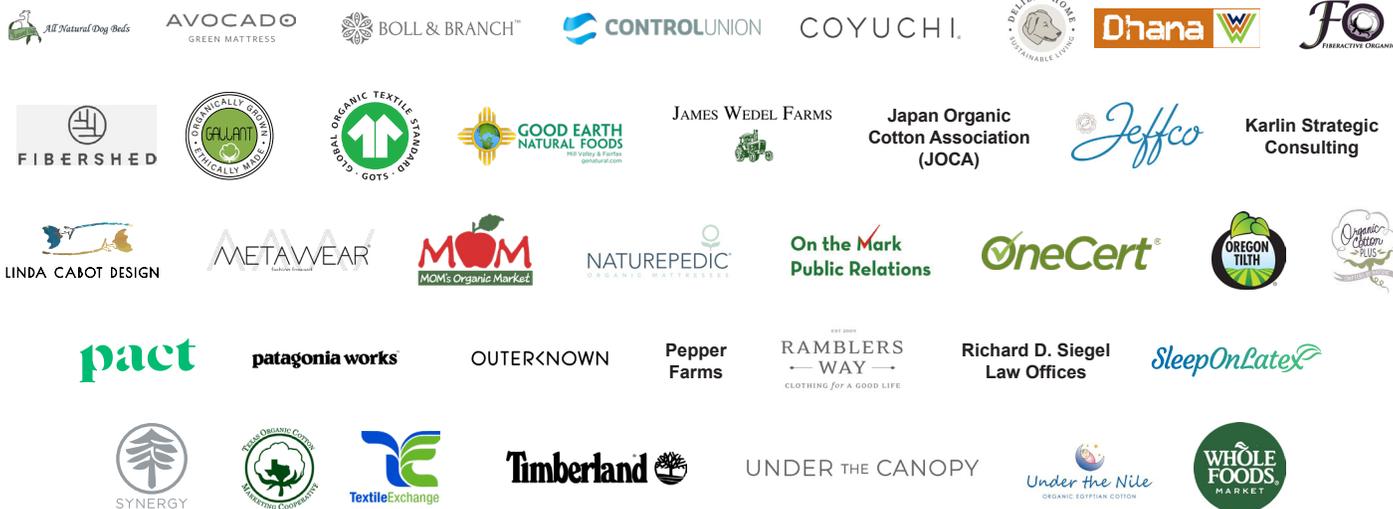
**Natural Products Expo West**

During Natural Products Expo West on March 7, the Council met to share updates on work plan progress and continue to plan for the Council's future. Gwendolyn Wyard presented the Organic Trade Association's recently adopted policy on "Best Labeling



Members of the OTA Fiber Council at its annual meeting. OTA Vice President of Regulatory and Technical Affairs Gwendolyn Wyard is in the foreground. Photo by Sandra Marquardt, On the Mark PR.

**Council Members**



Practices for Textile Products,” which was previously endorsed by the Fiber Council in January 2019.

Lori Wyman (GOTS) and Angela Wartes (OTCO) provided updates about the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) after its most recent annual meetings held in Nuremberg, Germany, and Izmir, Turkey at the end of February.

In addition to its in-person meeting, Fiber Council members Grund (former member) and Naturepedic Organic Mattress, with help from the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative, participated in the Natural Product Expo West’s “Fresh Ideas Tent” and were delightfully inundated by interested attendees!



Photo Credit: Sandra Marquardt, On the Mark PR

Johanna Mirenda (front, OTA Farm Policy Director and GOTS Advisory Committee Member) and Sandra Marquardt (right), Fiber Council Secretary, educate Congress during Organic Week.

### Organic Week DC

More than 250 leaders from organic businesses, farms, and ranches came to Washington, D.C. in May 2019. Of those in attendance, 15 members of the Fiber Council gathered in Washington, D.C. during the Association’s Member Day. The group hosted an informal lunch to network and update each other on work plan items. Later in the day, members of the Council joined other members from the Dietary Supplements and Retailer Sector Councils as Gwendolyn Wyard presented on best labeling practices of non-food products in the retail sector. Over 30 OTA members were in attendance. Later in the day, members participated in a Moonlight Monument Bus Tour around the Capitol.

*The Organic Trade Association’s Fiber Council is chaired by Michael Twer of Delliah Home. Angela Wartes-Kahl of Oregon Tilth Certified Organic serves as Vice Chair, and Sandra Marquardt of On the Mark Public Relations is its Secretary. The Fiber Council is supported by OTA’s Vice President of Regulatory and Technical Affairs, Gwendolyn Wyard.*

### Organic Trade Association Sector Councils

Our Councils provide ongoing opportunities for networking, leadership development, and education. They communicate sector issues, ideas, and concerns to OTA staff and its Board of Directors.

Submit a Sector Council application online at [OTA.com](http://OTA.com) after you’ve met these requirements:

- Identify at least seven OTA members committed to participating in the Council.
- Identify at least one member who will act as the primary contact until officers are elected.
- Review the Sector Council Operating Guidelines and agree to operate within the requirements required by OTA for councils it approves.

If your organization is interested in joining the Fiber Council, please contact OTA’s Vice President of Regulatory and Technical Affairs, Gwendolyn Wyard ([gwyard@ota.com](mailto:gwyard@ota.com)).



Photo Credit: Sandra Marquardt, On the Mark PR

Members of the Fiber Council who attended Natural Products Expo East gathered in Baltimore, MD. From L to R: James Wedel, Susan Wedel, Dale Read, Lori Wyman, Marci Zaroff, David Anthony Bentkowski, Michael Twer, Sandra Marquardt, Richard Siegel.

Cover photo credit: Coyuchi



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### Locations

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Santa Cruz, CA | Corvallis, OR