

ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

**Fiber Council**  
**2017 ANNUAL REPORT**



*Organic*  
SINCE 1985  
trade association

The Organic Trade Association's Fiber Council is successfully working 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.

### **Membership Outreach and Recruitment**

#### **Fiber Council Grows Organizational Membership**

The Fiber Council is strengthening in numbers. Council members now include representatives from 32 Organic Trade Association member companies, 13 of which were new in 2016 and 2017.

#### **Fiber Council Activity 2016-2017**

Since its inception, the Fiber Council has met four times in person in addition to quarterly conference calls. In late 2016, the council updated and reorganized the trade association's fiber web page, making it a more informative and user-friendly site for new and existing members to visit. Activity in 2017 focused on updating fact sheets about organic cotton and textiles, and putting on the first-ever OTA #LiveOrganic From Farm to Home Pop-Up and Media Event that took place in New York City the first weekend of May.

The items from the Fiber Council's 2016-2017 work plan that are still in progress are the development of a resource guide for certified companies selling certified organic fiber products and a webinar on the benefits of organic fiber and textiles. Plans for 2018 include organizing a roundtable educational meeting in Charleston, SC, in late February in conjunction with the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) training on conducting Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) inspections, and the GOTS annual meetings held for the first time ever in the United States.

#### **#LiveOrganic From Farm to Home Pop-Up Media Event**

The majority of Fiber Council activity in 2017 focused on raising sponsorship funds to create an organic "#LiveOrganic from Farm to Home" pop-up shop at the Treehaus organic café and food market in the heart of Manhattan. The Fiber Council hired Lion'esque, a New York City pop-up retail architect group, to work with Fiber Council members to make the event happen. The purpose of the event was 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. At this first-of-its-kind event held on the first weekend of May 2017, 24 top organic-lifestyle Fiber Council members highlighted that what you put on your body matters as much as what you put in it. The all-organic pop-up shop featured organic cotton T-shirts and sportswear, baby clothes, organic wool sweaters and socks, organic sheets and blankets, and even organic mattresses. The intentional setting in an organic food store helped connect the dots between organic food, fiber, fashion and home textiles and the downstream impact they all have on our water and soil. The event drew approximately 30 influencers and members of the media to share the kick-off VIP reception, and foot traffic generated over 50 shoppers and lookers on each pop-up day of the event. Visitors posted hundreds of highlights from the Live Organic from Farm to Home pop-up shop on their social media channels using the #LiveOrganic hashtag. In addition, 180 media channels picked up the press release for the event, potentially reaching 11,400 readers. The media and public had the opportunity to meet and talk with brands and leading industry experts, touch and feel products, and learn more about the rapidly growing organic fiber movement. The Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC) created a video for posting on YouTube set to music by the inspiring eco-conscious performer Cassandra Robertson who provided entertainment for the event.

The sponsoring organic fiber and textile brands were Coyuchi, Dhana, Gallant, Grund, MetaWear, Naturepedic, Organic Cotton Plus, prAna, Ramblers Way, Spiritex, Synergy, Syona Home and Timberland.

Sponsoring brands, farmers, organizations and retailers were Control Union, Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), Horizon Organic, OneCert, Oregon Tilth, MOM's Organic Market, Organic Valley, Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative, Textile Exchange, Whole Foods, and the Richard D. Siegel Law Offices.

The Organic Trade Association plans to continue use of the #LiveOrganic hashtag to educate and inspire consumers to choose organic beyond food.

### Website Updates and Organic Fact Sheets

Working in tandem with the Fiber Council, the Organic Trade Association updated and reorganized its fiber web page, making it a more educational, inspiring and user-friendly site for new and existing members to visit. The Fiber Council updated Informative fact sheets about organic fiber and textiles, which are now available to Organic Trade Association members and the public. The Fiber Council web page now includes the following helpful resources:

- Updated Organic Cotton Fact Sheet
- Updated Organic Cotton and Environment Fact Sheet
- Live Organic From Farm to Home Infographic
- Textile Exchange's Quick Guide to Organic Cotton
- Updated GOTS 5.0 Standard (updated in March 2017)

### Three partner in webinar on organic textile labeling in the U.S.

On April 11, 2017, the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), Organic Trade Association (OTA), and Textile Exchange coordinated a joint webinar to provide the industry with guidance on labeling textiles that contain organic material for sale in the United States. Any company with product sold in the U.S. or with plans to begin sales in the U.S. was invited to attend. The presentations provided in-depth information about U.S. regulations for organic textile labeling, different kinds of organic claims, and how the Organic Content Standard (OCS) and Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) can be used to help support communications on products. OTA's Vice President of Regulatory & Technical Affairs Gwendolyn Wyard covered the state of play in



**Top:** Organic apparel, tote bags, and even mattresses were some of the items on display at the #LiveOrganic event. The store liked the infographic so much, it intends to keep it in its deli seating area. **Bottom:** Organic Trade Association Fiber Council members behind the successful NYC pop-up event, from brands to certification organizations to farmers.

the U.S. regulations for organic labeling with a focus on textiles. Lori Wyman, the GOTS North American Representative, explained what claims can be made for GOTS certified organic products. Textile Exchange's Ashley Gill covered the OCS and raw material content claims. This webinar was the first of two on the council's

### Council Members



## Looking Forward to 2018

### The need for more science about the benefits of organic fiber and textiles

One of the Fiber Council's work plan items for 2018 is to focus on efforts to secure funding for research on the benefits of organic fiber production and processing. Bringing the science to the organic story is a critical aspect to helping consumers and other interested stakeholders understand the true benefits of growing, making, selling and buying organic fiber products. Although there is an impressive body of peer-reviewed science supporting the health and environmental benefits of organic food production, the research examining all aspects of organic fiber production and processing lags behind. The Fiber Council will be working in 2018 to: 1) examine the inventory of available literature; 2) identify the gaps where additional evidence-based science is needed, and 3) explore and pursue avenues of funding and partners for carrying out the research needed to advance our understanding of the environmental and health benefits of organic fiber production and manufacturing.

### GOTS Roundtable Meeting

In late February 2018 in Charleston, South Carolina, the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) will provide training for advanced inspectors on conducting inspections for GOTS certification. In conjunction with the training, GOTS staff will hold its annual business meetings with advisory and technical committee members from around the world. This will be the first time the GOTS Annual Meeting will be held in the United States. In conjunction with these events, the Organic Trade Association's Fiber Council will help organize an educational meeting targeted to textile manufacturers in the region and other stakeholders interested in learning more about GOTS certification and the benefits of the third-party verification. The Fiber Council web page will be updated with detailed information about then event. Stay tuned!

*The Organic Trade Association Fiber Council is Chaired by Organic Trade Association Board of Director and founder of Under the Canopy and Metawear Organic, Marci Zaroff. Barry Cik of Naturepedic serves as Vice Chair, and Sandra Marquardt of On the Mark Public Relations is the Secretary. The Fiber Council is supported by OTA's Vice President of Regulatory and Technical Affairs, Gwendolyn Wyard.*

work plan. The next webinar, to be held in 2018, will focus on how to communicate the benefits of organic fiber and textiles.

### Organic Fiber & Textiles Highlights

#### Getting the facts straight about organic cotton farming

In response to a May 28 article entitled "Your organic cotton t-shirt might be worse for the environment than regular cotton," The Organic Center (TOC) in partnership with the Organic Trade Association took action to clear up inaccurate information released in a Quartz publication. The response pointed out that the Quartz article failed to consider the big picture when comparing the environmental footprint of organically and conventionally grown cotton by leaving out important information about the use of genetically modified cotton varieties and the notorious and increasing use of herbicides such as 2, 4-D and dicamba in conventional cotton production. The response also pointed out that the article did not adequately take into account differences in energy consumption between organically and conventionally managed cotton systems, and that a closer look at the existing science reveals that organic cotton outperforms conventional cotton when it comes to climate change mitigation. Finally, the response provided information on additional key aspects that are typically assessed when considering the overall environmental impacts of farm management, and addressed water quality and impact to biodiversity, both of which were left out of the Quartz article. Correcting misinformation about organic farming and handling practices is a critical action that the organic sector must be ready to respond to. This is one area where the Organic Trade Association's Fiber Council will focus its attention and energy in 2018.



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