

ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

Fiber Council

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



The Organic Trade Association (OTA) 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 Strengthens Organizational Membership

Founded in 2015, the Fiber Council includes representatives from 34 Organic Trade Association member companies covering the entire supply chain and beyond, from farmers to manufacturers, certifiers, researchers, retailers and more. Members also include representatives from the Global Organic Textile Standard and Textile Exchange, the two other leading organizations focusing on organic textiles, allowing for continuous interaction and dialogue among the organizations.

Fiber Council Activity 2017-2018

Since its inception, the Fiber Council has met five times in person, in addition to its quarterly conference calls. This May, the Council created three subcommittees—Research, Membership Recruitment, and Education and Communication—to engage council members and drive its 2018 Work Plan.

Since September 2018, the Council has continued to focus on updates to fact sheets on organic cotton, providing useful information to the industry, media, and the general public. The Council updated the “Organic Cotton,” “Organic Wool” and “Cotton and the Environment” fact sheets now posted on the Organic Trade Association website. Supporting this work were member companies Naturepedic and Ramblers Way.

Organic sales in the U.S. totaled a new record of \$49.4 billion in 2017, up 6.4 percent from the previous year and reflecting new sales of nearly \$3.5 billion. Organic fiber continues to be the largest and fastest-growing sector in the category – up 11 percent to \$1.6 billion in 2017 -- with most of those sales in organic cotton.

The Council also posted to the website the latest information on how to label organic fiber products according to USDA criteria, the most recent version of the GOTS standard, and data from Organic Trade Association’s May 2018 Organic Industry Survey. The latter shows that organic fiber continues to be the largest and fastest-growing sector in the non-food category – up 11 percent to \$1.6 billion in 2017 – with most of those sales in organic cotton.

The items from the Fiber Council’s 2017-2018 work plan that are still in progress include finalizing the development of and funding for a research proposal in collaboration with The Organic Center (TOC), completing an Organic Fiber 101 overview, and growing membership within the Council. The research proposal drafted with TOC is a three-stage study looking at the full supply-chain production process. Plans for the remainder of 2018 include co-hosting two webinars on organic textile standards and how these standards are put into practice.

Developing a Plan to Grow the Organic Textiles Market

The Council hosted a February 26 planning meeting for 2018 in Charleston, SC, in conjunction with a GOTS regional roundtable meeting and an International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) training on conducting GOTS inspections.

The GOTS regional business meeting drew 46 participants and provided an overview for textile professionals and brands on how world-renowned GOTS certification can deliver trust and transparency to consumers.

- Speakers from the Organic Trade Association included Vice President of Regulatory and Technical Affairs Gwendolyn Wyard, former Director of International Trade Monique Marez, and OTA Board Member Marci Zaroff, also CEO of MetaWear and Under the Canopy.
- Other speakers from the Fiber Council included Council Vice Chair Angela Wartes-Kahl, Fiber and Textiles Coordinator with Oregon Tilth Certified Organic (OTCO), who delivered a lively presentation entitled, “Safeguarding your company from ‘Greenwashing’ through third-party certification,” and Council member Eileen Mockus, textile innovator with Coyuchi, who delivered a compelling presentation on, “How GOTS is strengthening the U.S. Home Decor Industry.”
- The event also included a GOTS Training for Textile Industry Professionals on developing an Organic Handling Plan and a short course from IOIA on preparing facilities for a GOTS inspection. The Organic Trade Association, which is one of the owners of GOTS, is represented on the GOTS Advisory

Council and Standards Committee. It was the first time that the GOTS meetings were held in the United States.

Attendees from the Fiber Council included representatives from Control Union Certifications North America LLC, Coyuchi Inc., Fiberactive Organics LLC, Gallant International Inc., GOTS, Grund America, Jeffco Fibres Inc., MetaWear, Naturepedic Organic Mattresses, On the Mark Public Relations, OneCert Inc., OTCO, Ramblers Way, Specialty Sleep Association (SSA), Synergy Organic Clothing, Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC), and Textile Exchange (TE).

succeeded by Angela Wartes-Kahl, Fiber and Textiles Coordinator for Oregon Tilth Certified Organic. Sandra Marquardt, President of On the Mark Public Relations, continues as Secretary.



Participants at Organic Trade Association Fiber Council and GOTS Regional Meeting held in Charleston, SC.

The Fiber Council continues to be supported by Organic Trade Association's Vice President of Regulatory and Technical Affairs Gwendolyn Wyard. OTA and its Fiber Council members thanked both Zaroff and Cik for their important leadership that was instrumental in the Council's formation and work to date.

Researching the Benefits of Organic vs. Conventional Textiles

The research subcommittee collaborated with The Organic Center in drafting a proposal on 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. With out-of-date or unsubstantiated sources and a lack of thorough research and information on the supply chain plaguing the data currently available, the first phase of the research approach will quantify an up-to-date environmental footprint of organic cotton, from the field through the supply chain.



Gwendolyn Wyard of the Organic Trade Association presents at the GOTS regional roundtable.

Council Elections Results

The Fiber Council, which held its election in February, announced the results at its in-person meeting in Charleston, SC, in late February. Outgoing Chair Marci Zaroff, CEO of MetaWear Organic and one of the founders of the Fiber Council, passed the leadership baton to Michael Twer, Vice President of Sales and General Manager for Grund America LLC. Meanwhile, Vice Chair Barry Cik, Co-Founder and Technical Director of Naturepedic, was

Council Members





Left to right: Angela Wartes-Kahl (Vice-Chair), Fiber and Textiles Coordinator for Oregon Tilth Certified Organic, Michael Twer (Chair), Vice President of Sales and General Manager for Grund America LLC, and Sandra Marquardt (Secretary), President of On the Mark Public Relations

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 Board. Submit a Sector Council application online at OTA.com after you've met these basic 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 Council Operating Guidelines and agree to operate within the requirements required by OTA for councils it approves.



Looking Forward to 2019 – A Word from Our Chair, Michael Twer

As we approach the new year, two of our Fiber Council goals is to increase our membership by 50% and encourage 100% engagement from all members. With the global organic business growing exponentially, we have an excellent opportunity to address many important topics. Our research, education & communication, and membership committee involvement will give us a louder “voice” to express our concerns. We are ready, with the Organic Trade Association, to protect the integrity of the organic brand.

In closing, Margaret Mead said it perfectly: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that even has.” Together, we can and will make a difference. #liveorganic

For any members of the OTA who would like to join our council, we welcome your support, bandwidth, and the rolling up of your sleeves.



Organic Trade Association Fiber Council's 2018 annual in-person meeting.



The Organic Trade Association Fiber Council is Chaired by Michael Twer of Grund America. Angela Wartes-Kahl of Oregon Tilth Certified Organic 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.

Headquarters

444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 445A
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 403-8520
OTA.com | info@ota.com | [@OrganicTrade](https://www.instagram.com/OrganicTrade)

Locations

Washington, D.C. | Brattleboro, VT
Santa Cruz, CA | Corvallis, OR