

Project Assignment

Fairtrade Fibre Crops Standard Limited Review (June 2026)

This project assignment contains the most important information about the project. For additional information on the project, please contact the project manager (contact details below).

The project will be carried out according to the Standard Operating Procedures for the Development of Fairtrade Standards/Minimum Prices and Premiums. More information on these procedures can be found on the website: https://www.fairtrade.net/content/dam/fairtrade/global/how-fairtrade-works/how-we-set-standards/development-of-fairtrade-standards/SOP_Development_Fairtrade_Standards.pdf

Rationale for and justification of need for the project:

Recycling and circularity are becoming increasingly relevant, especially in the textile industry, where only 1% of the textiles go into fibre-to-fibre recycling. In the new *ecodesign for sustainable products regulation (ESPR)* by the EU, which mandates circularity, there will be a need to use recycled material from 2027. It is also an environmental goal not to burn old textiles or ship these to landfills e.g. in Ghana or Latin America.

The Fairtrade cotton standard does not allow to use recycled cotton in textiles, as 100% of the cotton must be Fairtrade cotton. As explained above it has become evident that this rule should be revised to keep up with industry developments. The proposal is to enable mixing responsible recycled cotton-fibers with virgin Fairtrade cotton fibre. At the moment, a 20% recycled cotton content is realistic because in the mechanical recycling process the fibre length is shortened when cut, therefore the rest has to remain virgin cotton to reach the same quality in a product as compared to purely virgin cotton content. This should be the goal as we want to reach circularity and not down-cycling.

If we allow to use responsible recycled cotton, we can be part of the solution, and it opens up market potentials. There is an interest in integrating cotton waste from factories and there is also an interest for post-consumer cotton recycling. The legal pressure is coming fast to bring textiles back into the loop.

Risk assessment:

1. Business-risk: by allowing the Fairtrade cotton content to be below 100%, there could be a risk that total sales of Fairtrade certified cotton will drop down.

Mitigation: This risk should be carefully investigated and solutions sought to prevent this from happening. If Fairtrade does not include use of recycled cotton, it may become impossible to sell textiles with Fairtrade cotton at all, if EU-law (85% of actual business goes to the EU) requires recycled components. On the other hand, if existing brands just replace part of Fairtrade cotton through recycled cotton, this could lead to a drop in total sales. Even with a recycled composite of up to 49% of recycled cotton in the product, the total sales volume can be increased strongly thanks to this possibility (in the future *ecomodulation* law in France and in the EU, there could be new supply chains or additional products with Fairtrade cotton in combination with recycled cotton). It should be explored with stakeholders how they judge the potential of this new possibility. There are some positive indications that the potential is high and that the potential will become real business, and this thesis has to be validated.

2. To investigate the recycling process, to better understand any risks for the workers, environment, etc. Mechanical recycling is a polluting and dangerous work.

Mitigation: Only trusted sources of recycled cotton should be considered, considering the materials and the environmental and social impacts of the manufacturing process. Differences between pre-

consumer and post-consumer recycling and investigating the processes (mechanical or chemical recycling) is also necessary in mitigating the risk.

3. To investigate issues with the mark, claims, and communication to ensure recycled cotton can be included into the product composition requirement in the standard.

Mitigation: work together with FI Legal Unit, Brand Integrity Manager and LLI cotton to develop solutions.

Project Start Event:

Draft Project Assignment will be uploaded to the FI website for comments by stakeholders

Project Start Date:

July 2026

Project End Event:

Publication of the revised Standard

Project End Date:

Q4 2026

Project Goal:

The limited revision of the Fairtrade Fibre Crops Standard is a key instrument to align the standard with the market needs and producer realities. The revision will focus on requirement 2.2.1 *Product Sourcing* and explore innovative possibilities.

Objectives

- Review requirement 2.2.1 *Product Sourcing* and explore including concept of reprocessing and/or recycling.

Connection with Theory of Change (ToC):

This project is connected to the Fairtrade Goals which are to foster sustainable livelihoods, make trade fair and build Fairtrade markets.

For more information on Fairtrade's ToC see this [link](#).

Project scope:

The project covers all regions where the Fairtrade Fibre Crops Standard applies. This standard is applicable in countries and regions where freedom of association is possible.

For more information on Fairtrade Standards click this [link](#).

Out of scope:

- Other requirements in the Fairtrade Fibre Crops Standard
- Fairtrade Trader Standard review
- Fairtrade Textile Standard review
- Fairtrade Contract production Standard review
- Fairtrade Minimum Price and Premium reviews

Project timelines and information on opportunities to contribute:

Scoping: June-July 2026

Research: July 2026

Decision making process:

The final decision will be taken by the Director of Standards and Pricing following the standard operating procedure (SOP) for standard setting.

Consultation*: August-September 2026 Analysis of results: September 2026 Drafting final proposal: September 2026 Decision: September 2026 Publication: September 2026 Implementation: Q1 2027 * More information will be provided closer to the consultation period on our website. If you are identified as key stakeholders, you will receive an invitation to participate.									
Project Owner (Unit): Alina Amador, Head of Standards	Project Managers (contact point for the project): Kerstin Cron, Sr. Project Manager Standards								
Project Team (Unit): <table border="1" data-bbox="204 965 783 1397"> <tr> <td>Fairtrade International</td><td>Tobias Meier - GPM Cotton/Textiles Tytti Nahi (Centre of Excellence for HREDD)</td></tr> <tr> <td>PNs</td><td>NAPP Manoj Kumar FTA Dr. Jonathan Lanidune</td></tr> <tr> <td>Fairtrade India NFOs</td><td>Ganapathy Raju Nina Winkler, Fairtrade Germany</td></tr> <tr> <td>FLOCERT</td><td>Neetu Pankaj Singh</td></tr> </table>	Fairtrade International	Tobias Meier - GPM Cotton/Textiles Tytti Nahi (Centre of Excellence for HREDD)	PNs	NAPP Manoj Kumar FTA Dr. Jonathan Lanidune	Fairtrade India NFOs	Ganapathy Raju Nina Winkler, Fairtrade Germany	FLOCERT	Neetu Pankaj Singh	Project Environment (stakeholder groups not part of the project team): - Certified operators under the Fairtrade Fibre Crop Standard - Standards & Pricing team - Senior Advisor Climate and Environment - External experts on cotton and recycling
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