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Companies Collaborate to Improve Sustainability in the Textile Industry

Textile Exchange leads the effort to encourage collaboration for industry-wide changes

Textile Exchange, a global nonprofit organization that works to accelerate sustainable practices in the textile industry, today announced the findings of a comprehensive Benchmarking report that measures the progress of 57 leading textile companies in their effort to become more sustainable.

The Benchmark Program for Organic Cotton and Preferred Materials will be shared with the textile industry; primary goals being collaboration and shared learning amongst companies that regularly compete. The 57 participating companies submitted detailed data about their organic cotton and other “preferred materials” use to Textile Exchange for analysis and comparison across the industry. These companies range in size from small start ups to global brands and share the common goal of improving sustainability efforts across their supply chains.

The Benchmark Program allows companies to track their own progress and also relate it to others’ experience and results in four main areas: Sustainability Strategy, Supply Chain, Materials Usage and Sales and Marketing. Out of the findings, some highlights include:

The Good News

- 93% of companies report to have a vision or mission to be more sustainable.
- The majority (81%) are addressing raw materials use at the strategy level and 74% are setting individual targets for specific materials.
- 70% of companies use a voluntary sustainability standard to help them ensure the integrity of their organic products and 64% are tracking other preferred materials.
- 74% are reporting the amount of organic cotton they consume.
- 81% claim to be communicating the sustainability attributes of their products to their customers.

Areas for Improvement

- Policies on raw materials (69%) and animal welfare (44%) are lagging behind human rights and ethical trade (81%).
- Setting long-term goals for a preferred material portfolio (57%) were less common than setting targets for specific materials (74%).
- While 73% of participants could provide data on organic cotton, the numbers dropped off dramatically for other preferred materials. This is an area for improvement so that companies’ use of preferred materials such as recycled polyester and preferred cellulose (such as lyocell) can be better analyzed.

“Textile Exchange’s Benchmark Program provides a framework for the industry. Companies working to improve their impact on the environment, natural resources, people and animals can compare best practices and results. Our aim is to have these companies learn from each other and even feel a sense of urgency to make improvements similar to those of their colleagues in the industry. As we move beyond the pilot phase we’ll also be encouraging more companies to join in,” explains Liesl Truscott, European and Materials Strategy Director.

Textile Exchange, through the Benchmark Program, gathers data on all aspects of a company’s sustainability performance. TE analyzes this data and determines an overall average for each category. Additionally, each company receives a confidential report that compares reported data from other textile companies in order to identify best practices and encourage more action and investment in key sustainability areas such as materials use, supply chain transparency and more.

In this first (pilot) year of the program, companies will receive a comprehensive baseline analysis of their sustainability performance to compare with the sector average. In subsequent years they will be able to chart their own year-on-year improvements and measure their pace of change against that of their peers.

The Benchmarking results will be featured at TE’s global [Textile Sustainability Conference](#) taking place in October and in a series of Online Workshops for companies that will be launched later in 2015.

“We as Tchibo see it as our duty as a business to take on responsibility and initiate change, for example in the cultivation and processing of our cotton. However, it is important that we all work together to change the sector. Therefore, we are proud to support Textile Exchange’s Benchmark Program because it provides further impulse and peer-to-peer learning for the whole sector,” said Achim Lohrie, Director Corporate Responsibility from Tchibo.

About Textile Exchange

Textile Exchange (TE), founded in 2002, is a global nonprofit organization that works closely with all sectors of the textile supply chain to find the best ways to minimize and even reverse the negative impacts on water, soil, air, and the human population created by this \$1.7 trillion industry. TE accomplishes this by providing the knowledge and tools this industry needs to make significant improvements in three core areas: Materials, Integrity and Supply Chain. A truly global organization, TE is headquartered in the United States with presence also in Europe, Latin America, India, China and Africa. To learn more about Textile Exchange, visit: www.TextileExchange.org. Follow TE on Twitter at @TextileExchange.