GOTS Regional Round Table
GOTS and USDA’s National Organic Program

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Organic Trade Association
The Organic Trade Association is the **LEADING VOICE** for the organic trade in the U.S., representing **9,500 businesses** across **50 states**.

Our **MEMBERS** include growers, shippers, processors, certifiers, farmers' associations, distributors, importers, exporters, consultants, retailers and more.

OTA's mission is to **PROMOTE and PROTECT ORGANIC** with a unifying voice that serves and engages its diverse members from farm to marketplace.
Global Organic Textiles Standard
OTA Involvement

GOTS Advisory Council

GOTS Standards Committee
USDA National Organic Program (NOP)
From Law to Regulation

- **Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA)**
- **National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) – 15 members appointed by the Secretary of Ag**
- **7 CFR 205**
  USDA National Organic Program Regulations
USDA National Organic Program (NOP)
What & Who Has to Be Certified?

A labeling term that applies to **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS** produced in accordance with the organic law and regulations

Any production or handling operation that handles agricultural products represented or sold as:

- **100% Organic**
- **Organic (95% +)**
- **Made With Organic (70% +)**

Products using the USDA seal or making organic certification claims on the principle display panel

Some types of operations are **EXEMPT/EXCLUDED** from certification

**Global program** – products can be produced anywhere in the world but if sold in the US must be certified to the NOP or deemed equivalent
USDA NOP only covers raw agricultural fiber. The regulations do not include standards for processed textiles!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of the organic claim:</th>
<th>USDA Organic Standards</th>
<th>Private Standards</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Cotton</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>*Must be NOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Wool</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>*Must be NOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Silk</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>*Must be NOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarn</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carded Wool</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Fabric</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-Shirt</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattress</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mandatory - NOP regulates and enforces the term organic on all agricultural products*
USDA National Organic Program

May or must be certified organic under NOP?
USDA National Organic Program
May or must be certified organic under NOP?
Labeling of Textiles that Contain Organic Fiber Ingredients

• Clarifies that textile products produced in full compliance with production and handling standards may be NOP certified & use the USDA organic seal

• Textile products produced in accordance with GOTS may be sold as “organic” but must not reference NOP certification or display the USDA organic seal

• Agricultural fibers identified as “organic” in a textile sold in the U.S. must be “certified organic” under the NOP organic regulations

• Labeling requirements are in addition to those required by FTC’s Textile & Wool Act
Textile products labeled as organic may:

• Use label claims that identify specific types of organic fibers
• Use statements identifying the percentage of organic fibers
• Fibers identified as organic must be NOP certified organic

Textile products labeled as organic must not:

• Use the USDA organic seal unless NOP certified
• Imply or lead the consumer to believe that the final product is certified under the NOP regulations unless they are NOP certified
• Use a combination of both organic and non-organic sources for a single fiber that is identified as “organic” in the final product
Textiles and fiber products:

• The NOP’s 2011 memo on textiles says that textiles produced in compliance with the NOP regulation may bear the USDA organic seal.

• The memo does not say that textiles making organic claims must be certified to GOTS.

• The memo does confirm that products produced under the GOTS standard may be sold as certified organic in the US, but again, doesn’t say that organic textiles must be produced under GOTS.
Misleading Organic Claims
The Role of USDA NOP and FTC

Many textile products in the marketplace are advertised as “organic” yet they may only contain some organic content.

**USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP):**
- Regulates and enforces organic claims on agricultural products
- Does not have enforcement jurisdiction over organic claims made on textile products unless they violate the terms of the its policy

**Federal Trade Commission (FTC):**
- The FTC protects consumers by stopping unfair, deceptive or fraudulent practices in the marketplace
- Defers to the National Organic Program when it comes to “organic” claims
Efforts to get FTC to act on misleading organic claims:

- Meeting with FTC over the past 7 years
- Submitted comments urging FTC and NOP to develop a policy on use of the term “organic” on products outside of NOP’s scope of enforcement & update the FTC “Green Guides”
- Prompted FTC & USDA to launch a survey and convene an expert panel exploring consumer perception of organic claims on fiber/textile and other non-food products
- OTA participated in the panel and conducted a consumer survey in preparation (2016)
• 59% of the respondents believe that a non-food product or service that is labeled “organic” must be certified by the USDA or other government agency (59%).

• Nearly 9 in 10 respondents Agreed strongly (60%) or Agreed somewhat (28%) with the statement “A certification process such as is used by the USDA to oversee and enforce the labeling of organic foods should also be used to oversee and enforce the labeling of organic non-food products and services such as shampoo, mattresses, and dry-cleaning.”

OTA conducts consumer survey concerning organic labeling of food and non-food products

“An certification process such as is used by the USDA to oversee and enforce the labeling of organic foods should also be used to oversee and enforce the labeling of organic non-food products and services such as shampoo, mattresses, and dry-cleaning.”

- Agree strongly: 60%
- Agree somewhat: 28%
- Don’t know/not sure: 9%
- Disagree somewhat: 3%
- Disagree strongly: 1%
The consensus sentiment obtained from the open-ended comments is that “Both categories of products affect health & environment [and] therefore they should be be regulated in the same manner. Consumers need to trust that there are standards on the organic label for food & non food products.”
FTC takes FIRST ACTION EVER on misleading organic claim

• FTC files a complaint against company for selling mattresses as “organic” when, in fact, the majority of the mattresses are non-organic
  • Also charged for natural latex claims and use of “Green Safety Shield” award by the company to itself
• Charges were settled and company is now prohibited from making misleading claims and must have reliable evidence to support any claims made in the area
National Organic Standards Board
OTA Takes Action

USDA-NOSB Proposed Rule considers fleece and wool:

Change to the National List: Allows for the use of specific parasiticides used a minimum of 90-days prior to harvest

Comment Deadline: March 19
OTA strongly supports best labeling practices:

- OTA supports organic **product** certification under **GOTS** & organic **content** certification under TE’s Organic Content Standard
  - Organic cotton t-shirt
  - Organic mattress
  - OCS: “Contains 65% organically grown cotton”

- Organic claims made on fiber and textile products that are not certified should be limited to “content” claims only
  - T-shirt: contains 70% organically grown cotton
  - Mattress: contains organically grown cotton batting
Learn More!
OTA Resources on Organic Fiber and Textiles

Global Organic Textile Standard
Policy and Advocacy Updates
Organic Fiber Council
Quick Resources

ota.com/advocacy/fiber-and-textiles
Thanks!

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