



International
Olympic
Committee

SUSTAINABLE SOURCING FACT SHEET - TEXTILES & TEXTILES-BASED PRODUCTS

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In collaboration with



TEXTILES & TEXTILES-BASED PRODUCTS

Background

This Sustainable Sourcing Fact Sheet has been developed to provide core and recommended criteria and guidance to sport organisations on what should be considered in sourcing and procurement decisions related to key categories of products and services.

Individuals responsible for sourcing/ procuring decisions and activities should review this Sustainable Sourcing Fact Sheet alongside the ‘Sustainability Essentials’ guide: [‘Sustainable Sourcing in Sport’](#).

Scope

This Sustainable Sourcing Fact Sheet covers textiles materials/products.

Textiles are flexible materials made up of fibres (yarn or thread) which may be animal-derived, plant-based or synthetic (in origin often plastic-based) and used in a variety of products.

Textiles and textile-based products include but not limited to:

- Apparel and footwear
- Clothing accessories
- Bags and baskets
- Upholstery, homeware furnishings (e.g., furniture, curtains, bedding etc)

The main sources of fibre are animal (e.g., wool, feather/down, leather), plant-based (e.g., cotton, hemp etc) and synthetic (e.g., nylon, polyester, cellulosic etc).

For criteria related to cellulosic fibres (e.g., viscose) refer to the Sustainable Sourcing Fact Sheet on Wood and Wood-Based Products.

Sustainability fundamentals

Our planet’s natural resources are under pressure, and the clothing and textiles industry, although may not appear the most obvious contributor, is a considerable one.

If the global population rises as expected to 8.5 billion people by 2030 and the GDP per capita grows at 2% per year in the developed world and 4% in the developing world, some estimates suggest overall apparel consumption will rise by 63%, from 62

million tonnes today to 102 million tons in 2030 – an equivalent of more than 500 billion T-shirts.

Supply chains are highly globalised, complex and opaque. Subcontracting is commonplace and transparency can be very challenging to achieve.

Textiles production is one of the world’s biggest and most labour-intensive manufacturing industries with estimates of those directly employed ranging from 25 to 60 million people – many of which are in less affluent countries. However, low pay and conditions are standard in global textiles supply chains. In 2021, 50 million people were living in modern slavery, according to the [Global Estimates of Modern Slavery](#) (of these people, 28 million were in forced labour). Further, the 2021 [Global Slavery Index](#) report says that more than \$160 billion worth of garments and textiles at risk of being produced by forced labour are imported annually by G20 countries.



The fashion industry alone is thought to account for 8 – 10% of global carbon emissions, and nearly 20% of wastewater. While the environmental impact of flying is now well known, fashion uses more energy than both aviation and shipping combined.

This is as a result of the energy used to produce fibres, make textile-based products and distribute items globally – and of course the washing of items.

The textiles industry is a major water consumer. Some of the main cotton-producing countries such as China and India for example are in areas already suffering from high levels of water stress. As water scarcity becomes more extreme, cotton-growing nations may face the dilemma of choosing between cotton production and securing clean drinking water for local communities.

Chemicals are used in every part of the textile production for making fibres, bleaching and dyeing fabrics. Through cotton production, the fashion industry is also a large user of fertilisers. Organic and inorganic toxic substances (such as mercury and arsenic) discharged to waterways from processing plants also have an impact on human health and the environment.

Every year, endangered and ancient forests are cut down and replaced by plantations of trees used to make wood-based cellulosic fabrics such as rayon, viscose, and modal.

Globally, most textiles waste ends up in landfills or is incinerated – only around 20% of clothing is collected for reuse or recycling. UK research suggests that on average, clothing lasts for 3.3 years before discarded or passed on.

The release of micro microfibres (= microplastics) from washing synthetic materials such as polyester or nylon is another serious environmental concern. Globally, between 16-35% of microplastics released to oceans are from synthetic textiles ([European Environment Agency, 2023](#)).

More needs to be done to counteract impacts that come with the projected increase in consumption. Big areas of focus include circular economy, use of more sustainable materials, reduced energy footprint, chemical and water optimisation, fair and equal pay of workers and transparency and traceability.



Global policy context

Outside of laws on wages and chemical use, the fashion industry so far has seen little regulatory intervention. This is due partly to a lack of regulation generally in the main producing countries. Some initiatives have emerged from voluntary action, such as [Bangladesh's Accord on Fire and Building Safety](#) which came about as a result of the Rana Plaza disaster, which is legally binding for participating parties.

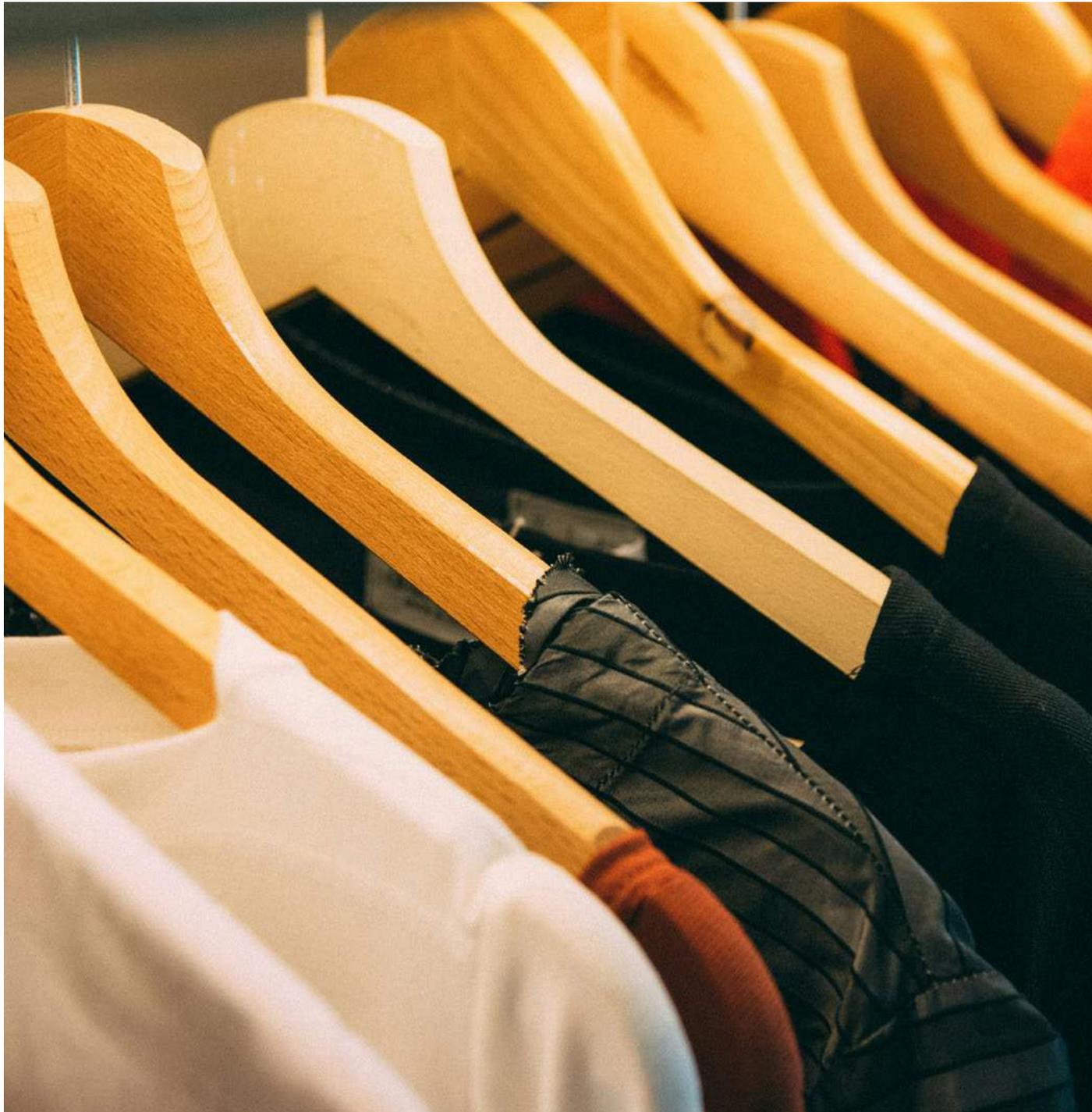
The industry is coming under closer scrutiny and recognises that if it fails to take the proactive, concerted stance needed to boost sustainability, regulators may step in. There have been moves in the EU to take steps to regulate the fashion industry more, such as the [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#) or the [Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#). Initiatives in Germany, The Netherlands and elsewhere have gained momentum in response to what is seen as the industry's lack of sustainability self-governance. As a result, there is an unprecedented level of cross sector collaboration.

[Cascale](#) (formally known as Sustainable Apparel Coalition) is a major cross-sector sustainability collaboration for the sector. The SAC developed the Higg Index, a suite of tools that enables brands, retailers, and facilities to measure and score sustainability performance. It is acknowledged, however, that this initiative has been criticised for greenwashing and lack of transparency.

[Global Fashion Agenda](#) was set up to transcend misconceptions and bridge fragmented sustainability efforts, by setting a unified agenda on key issues for the global fashion industry.

[Fashion for Good](#) is another example which brings together brands, retailers, suppliers, non-profits, innovators and funders to work on innovations and new business models.

Initiatives or campaigns with global reach that are aimed at consumers are relatively scarce compared to initiatives aimed at business.



Certification

There are myriad certifications of relevance to textiles and apparel. Standards exist for specific fibres, chemicals, circular economy and labour rights and working conditions more broadly.

Textiles produced in certified factories account for a small percentage of the market.

With regards fibre standards most cover environmental and social issues as part of their scope. More common examples include: [B Corporation](#), [Global Organic Textiles Standard \(GOTS\)](#), [Fairtrade Certified Cotton](#), [Better Cotton Initiative](#), [Global Recycled Standard](#) and [Responsible Wool Standard](#).

There are some schemes that focus specifically on responsible use of chemicals. These include [OEKO TEX 100](#) and [Bluesign®](#).

Standards relating to labour rights and working conditions can be difficult to certify. Examples are [SA 8000](#) and [Fairtrade Textile Standard](#).

The [Cradle to Cradle](#) standard covers materials, recycling, chemicals usage, energy and water efficiency and social responsibility.

Marketing and labelling

The use of third-party logos (e.g., Organic, Better Cotton, Fairtrade) is strictly controlled so the necessary licenses or permissions must be obtained from the corresponding certification or licensing body prior to their use for communications or promotional purposes.

[The Standards Map database](#) has information on over 300 standards, codes of conduct and audit protocols addressing sustainability issues in global supply chains. It aims to help organisations to review and compare a wide range of standards and their requirements through user-friendly online navigation and searching.

Further guidance on claims and declarations is provided on p.54-55 of the 'Sustainability Essentials' guide: ['Sustainable Sourcing in Sport'](#).

Sustainable Sourcing Criteria and Sustainable Supplier Questionnaire

The core and recommended criteria for Textiles & Textiles-Based Products are set out below. There are two levels of sustainability performance:

- **Core criteria** – refers to minimum sustainability requirements that are advised to be met
- **Recommended criteria** – refers to criteria that goes beyond minimum sustainability requirements to promote higher levels of environmental and social responsibility and advance sports' sustainability vision and goals

Criteria is intended to be jurisdictionally neutral and therefore should be able to be applied in any country or region. In the unlikely event of a conflict with national or regional legislation, the law shall always be complied with and prevail. Individuals tasked with sourcing/procurement should seek to meet the most demanding requirements wherever possible.

Sustainable Supplier Questionnaire

In addition to the Sustainable Sourcing Criteria, a Sustainable Supplier Questionnaire & Scorecard has been developed to be sent to suppliers during the RFP process. [Refer to these within the IOC sustainability library.](#)

This supplementary questionnaire is designed to be launched during tender processes, providing deeper insights into suppliers' sustainability objectives, priorities, and performance. The questions related to the criteria are outlined in the table below. Detailed guidance for each criterion is available to assist in assessing the responses, as part of the evaluation scorecard.

Sustainability Categories

Key: Climate Nature People Pollution

	Core Criteria	Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
	Suppliers of textiles and textile-based products must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> take all reasonable steps to ensure that items are produced in accordance with all International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions (e.g., labour standards, working conditions and the use of child labour) and internationally recognised human rights standards as defined by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; discloses primary or first tier supply chain (production units, Cut Make Trim (CMT) facilities, garment sewing, garment finishing, full package production and packaging and storage); and provide an appropriate level of evidence that such sites meet the standards set out in (a) including its approach to conducting human rights due diligence. 	The 'Sustainability Essentials' guide: 'Sustainable Sourcing in Sport' provides further guidance on this topic (e.g., template Sustainable Sourcing Code and how compliance might be assessed). For example, it might be appropriate to require suppliers to register on the Supplier Ethical Data Exchange (Sedex) and ensure that at least the final finishing and assembly locations are disclosed, all Self-Assessment Questionnaire modules are completed and made accessible/visible. Self-Assessment Questionnaire modules cover the following topics: Labour Standards, Business Integrity, Health and Safety and the Environment.	a) I. Standard Questionnaire: Question 11 (b) III. Textile based products: Question 1 (c) I. Standard Questionnaire: Question 12

	<p>Direct suppliers of textiles and textiles-based products are required to have appropriate independently certified management systems in place which meet internationally recognised standards (e.g., ISO 9001 and ISO 14001) which covers the scope of their service provision.</p>	<p>Independently certified systems are preferred – if suppliers do not have this, they need to demonstrate how they meet the standards. Acceptable standards include ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. Other environmental schemes may be acceptable such as EMAS or industry specific schemes.</p>	<p>I. Standard Questionnaire: Question 10</p>
	<p>Suppliers are asked to describe the steps taken to reduce the use and impact of chemicals which pose a risk to human health and the environment used in connection with production of textiles or textile-based products and prevent such substances being released into the environment.</p>	<p>Evidence may include the presence of Product Restricted Substances Lists and Manufacturing Restricted Substances Lists and signatory of the Zero Discharge Hazardous Substances (ZDHC) initiative.</p> <p>NOTE: Suppliers in the EU or placing products on the EU market should be expected to declare the presence of any REACH Candidate List substances at a concentration of greater than 0.1 % (weight by weight) in finished product</p>	<p>III. Textile based products: Question 2</p>
	<p>No endangered, vulnerable or protected species must be used in any textiles and textiles-based products as defined in CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Appendices I, II and III or IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</p>		<p>III. Textile based products: Question 3</p>
	<p>Suppliers must demonstrate how textiles and textile-based products are durable (tensile strength, colour fastness etc) and if applicable can be washed at 30oC unless there is a technical reason otherwise</p>	<p>Preferentially this includes negating the need for water, dirt or stain repellents and/or flame-retardant treatments applied to textile fabric and make spares available of all parts and accessories (e.g., zips, buttons, fasteners). Quality and garment lifespan should be considered alongside desired aesthetic/style to improve material durability.</p>	<p>III. Textile based products: Question 4</p>
	<p>Branded items including event / sports organisation specific must be designed so that any logos or distinctive identification features can be easily removed or overprinted without damaging the item</p>		<p>III. Textile based products: Question 5</p>

Recommended Criteria		Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
	Suppliers are expected to have measured their full scope Carbon Footprint in accordance with an internationally recognised methodology and provide evidence of this calculation to upon request.	As a minimum a Carbon Footprint is expected to have been completed. However, a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) which meets ISO 14040 is advised.	I. Standard Questionnaire: Question 33
 	Suppliers can demonstrate that they have mapped their full supply chains beyond their first tier supply chain covering processing facilities (e.g., ginning and spinning, knitting, weaving, sub-contractors, dyeing and wet processing, tanneries, embroidering, printing, fabric finishing, dye-houses, laundries, etc.) and suppliers of raw materials such as fibres, hides, rubber, dyes, metals, etc. (e.g., raw material providers, farms, slaughter houses, sewing yarn suppliers, filament and staple, chemical suppliers, etc.).	It may be appropriate to review The Open Apparel Registry (OAR) which is a free, open data tool mapping garment facilities worldwide and whether suppliers refer to and / or contribute to the registry.	III. Textile based products: Question 1
 	Suppliers are able to demonstrate how the processing facilities they use such as the dyehouses, printers, laundries, tanneries, and finishing facilities meet independent standards of environmental and social sustainability.	Appropriate schemes / standards may include: Bluesign® , Sustainable Apparel Coalition Higg Assessments , OEKO TEX® Sustainable Textile Production (STeP) , The Sustainability Consortium THESIS Assessments . For Tanneries or Leather Traders – see sub-section on Animal Products and Animal-Derived Textiles below.	III. Textile based products: Question 6
	Preference should be given to suppliers who have made a commitment to tackle key endemic social challenges in facing the textiles sector such as wages, working hours and forced labour	Examples of commitments may include engagement with industry level initiatives such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition and Act on Living Wages .	III. Textile based products: Question 7
	Preference should be given to suppliers that have or are committed to get carbon reduction targets approved by the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) as being in line with the level of reduction needed to limit global warming to 1.5oC within a realistic timescale and provide evidence of carbon reductions upon request.	Further information on approved Science-based Targets (i.e. a reduction target to cut emissions in line with climate science covering Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions) is here: https://sciencebasedtargets.org/ . There is a streamlined process for smaller businesses.	I. Standard Questionnaire: Question 16
 	Preference should be given to suppliers who have made a commitment to transition to a more circular manufacturing system or solutions within a 2025 – 2030 timeframe.	Examples of commitments may include design strategies for cyclability, increased volume of used textiles collected or resold and proportion made from recycled post-consumer textile fibres. Other strategies include offering repair and maintenance services to increase the lifetime of products.	
 	Suppliers are encouraged to demonstrate their broader commitment to sustainability and the steps they are taking to become more purposeful.	This can be demonstrated in several ways – from being a signatory to the UN Global Compact , Cradle to Cradle certification , through to either holding or working towards becoming a certified B Corporation .	I. Standard Questionnaire: Question 5

Animal Products and Animal-derived Textiles (e.g., Wool, Feather/Down and Leather)

Core Criteria		Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
	Animal products (e.g., leather) and animal-derived textiles (e.g., wool) must be a by-product of the food industry – animals must not be reared or slaughtered specially for the production of non-food products.	Suppliers are expected to provide evidence that an actual animal welfare policy exists. This should include reference to the ‘Five Freedoms’ and cover issues such as husbandry and use of animal derived materials.	III. Textile based products: Question 8
	All suppliers must supply the following information as a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name of the species (Latin and common name) • The country or area from which the animals derive 		III. Textile based products: Question 11
	The following must not be used in non-food products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fur: real fur of any kind including farmed fur (e.g., fox, sable, mink, chinchilla, rabbit) and any synthetic material used to look like fur must be clearly labelled as ‘Fake Fur’ or ‘Faux Fur’ • Angora Rabbit fibre (Angora wool) • Any material obtained from live skinning (e.g., reptiles) or live boiling • Cow hides from animals reared or killed in India and Bangladesh • Any down or feathers from exotic birds, including but not limited to ostrich 	Also refer to General Requirements (above) on CITES and IUCN Red List.	III. Textile based products: Question 9
	Feather and down: must not be obtained from birds that have been live plucked nor force-fed or used in the production of Foie Gras.		III. Textile based products: Question 10
 	Leather: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must come from conventionally farmed animals e.g cow, buffalo, sheep and goat • All hides for use in leather production must not come from locations where virgin rainforest has been cleared to make way for pasture (e.g., Amazon biome) • Finishing tanneries used for all leather production must be able to demonstrate how they are minimising their environmental impacts 	Tanneries which have been assessed to at least minimum traceability requirements of the Leather Working Group Manufacturer Audit or Leather Trader Standard is an acceptable level of evidence. NOTE: Leather is a forest risk commodity – the core criteria set out in the Sustainable Sourcing Sheet: Wood and Wood-Based Products can be used to ensure that there are no deforestation risks.	
	Wool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All wool must come from farms which rear sheep to the highest welfare practices. • Wool must not come from sheep which have not been mulesed. 		III. Textile based products: Question 10

Recommended Criteria		Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
	Use of wool from independently certified sources is encouraged	The Textile Exchange Responsible Wool Standard is an acceptable standard / scheme	
	Use of feather/down from independently certified sources is encouraged	The following standards / schemes are accepted IDFL Down Standard (IDS) , the Textile Exchange Responsible Down Standard (RDS) with accompanying Transaction Certificate (TC) or the Textile Exchange Responsible Down Standard .	
 	Use of reused or recycled leather where possible is encouraged	NOTE: Synthetic leather may also be appropriate – see below on section on Synthetic Materials.	

Plant-based Fibres (e.g., Cotton, Hemp, Jute, Linen etc)

Core Criteria		Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
	<p>With regards cotton:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suppliers must disclose the country of origin of raw materials and location of gin for cotton and cotton products. All cotton yarns, fibres or fabrics must not have been sourced from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan or Xinjiang in China 	<p>Due to concerns over state sponsored forced labour and In some cases, child labour, associated with cotton sourcing and associated product manufacturing</p>	<p>III. Textile based products: Question 11</p>
Recommended Criteria		Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
 	<p>Cotton yarn in the main fabric of the product/material should be sourced from more sustainable sources – preferentially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycled sources; Fairtrade Certified sources; Organic Certified (e.g., Global Organic Textile Standard – GOTS or Organic Content Standard – OCS); and / or Better Cotton Initiative Certified sources 	<p>More sustainable sources is considered to be: Fairtrade certified, independently verified Organic Cotton (such as meets Global Organic Textiles Standard or Organic Content Standard) and Recycled Cotton.</p> <p>Any product claiming organic status must meet legal standards for organic fibres and supported by correct documentation and certificates. The Global Organic Textile Standard or Textile Exchange Organic Content Standard are acceptable schemes for verifying organic cotton content.</p> <p>In the case of recycled cotton, sources must be at least post-consumer in origin and can be independently verified by a suitably qualified third party or through a recognised scheme (e.g., SCS Recycled Content Standard or Textile Exchange Global Recycled Standard). The only exceptions to this are where technical constraints limit the % content or a lower level is considered to be above the marketplace norm.</p> <p>Further information on the Better Cotton Initiative is available here: https://bettercotton.org/</p>	<p>III. Textile based products: Question 12</p>
 	<p>Lower environmental impact materials such as hemp, jute or flax (linen) are encouraged, particularly if they are certified as Organic.</p>	<p>Any product claiming organic status must meet legal standards for organic fibres and supported by correct documentation and certificates. The Global Organic Textile Standard or Textile Exchange Organic Content Standard are acceptable schemes for verifying organic cotton content.</p>	

Cellulosic Items (Including Textiles Materials)

See sub-section on Cellulosic Items (including Textile Materials) in the Sustainable Sourcing Sheet: Wood and Wood-Based Products.

Synthetic Materials (e.g., Polyester, Nylon, PVC)

Core Criteria		Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
 	Polyester and polyamide (nylon) fibre used must be manufactured using a minimum recycled content of 50%.	The only exceptions to this are where technical constraints limit the % content or a lower level is above the marketplace norm. Third party certification of the recycled content (e.g., Global Recycled Standard) and its traceability must be provided for the production lines of the products to be delivered and the recycle feedstock	III. Textile based products: Question 13
	Supplier should set out measures to reduce microplastic pollution including use phase actions.	Microplastics are shed from clothing and other textiles, particularly during laundry and use. These are found in the environment as fragments, fibres, pellets, or beads of different sizes and physico-chemical compositions. Synthetic textiles are a significant source of microplastic pollution.	III. Textile based products: Question 14
	Unless otherwise agreed use/specification of PVC textiles and textile-based componentry/products is not permitted		III. Textile based products: Question 15

Recommended Criteria		Additional Guidance	RFP Question Reference
	<p>Suppliers are encouraged to design measures and features that will facilitate ease of fabric separation for recycling and make a commitment to take-back products for reuse and recycling.</p>		
	<p>Preference is given to textiles or textile-based products/materials that are made of greater than 50% next gen biosynthetic fibres such as plants, waste and algae.</p>	<p>Biosynthetic fibres have the potential to produce fewer greenhouse gases over their lifecycle than products made from fossil fuels. However, there are concerns too and this is very much an emerging area – further advice/information is available here: https://hub.textileexchange.org/textileexchange/learning-center/biosynthetics</p>	
	<p>Use of ocean or social plastics as the recycled feedstock for polyester or nylon materials in a proportion greater than 50% may be considered in partnership with civil society organisations where it supports territories which do not have mature recycling infrastructure.</p>	<p>Steps will need to be taken to verify what the supplier is proposing together with any claims being made.</p>	

NOTE: Although focussed on single-use plastics suppliers should ideally be publicly supportive of the goals of the Global Plastics Pact (or one of its official national networks). It should be noted that as part of its Sustainability Essentials Series the IOC has developed the '[Plastic Game Plan for Sport](#)' which aims to help sports organisations eliminate single-use plastic items, reduce the amount of plastic used in general and recycle as much as possible.