

# Assurance System Report

*Last updated November 2023*

## A1. Standards System

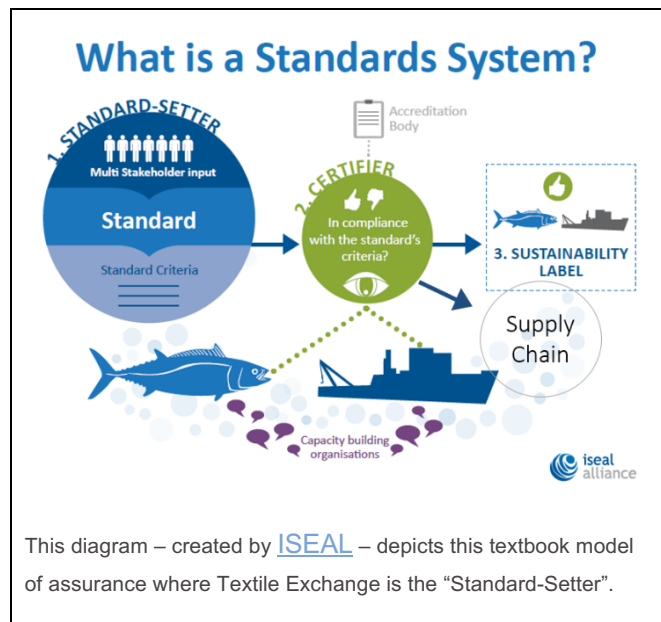
Textile Exchange is a standard-setter that develops a suite of preferred fiber and materials standards. The assurance system managed by Textile Exchange maintains a document management system with the policies, procedures, resources, and guidance to ensure the integrity of the standards. The current Textile Exchange standards are as follows:

- Content Claim Standard (CCS) – chain-of-custody standard
- Organic Content Standard (OCS)
- Recycled Claim Standard (RCS)
- Global Recycled Standard (GRS)
- Responsible Wool Standard (RWS)
- Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS)
- Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS)
- Responsible Down Standard (RDS)

## A2. Assurance System Structure

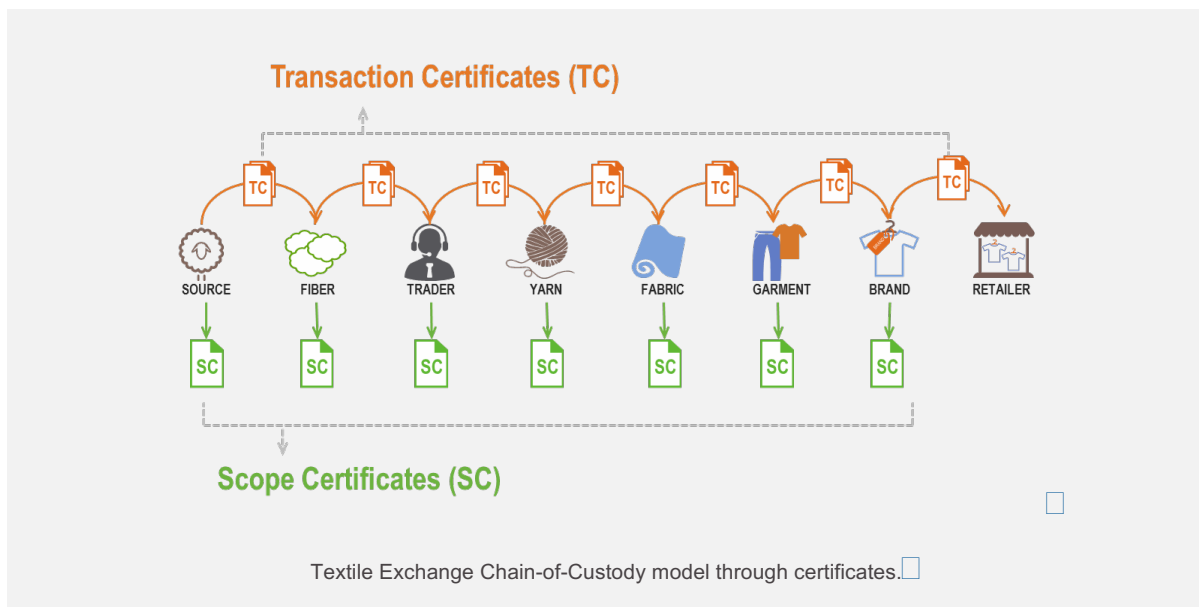
Textile Exchange standards rely on third-party, independent accreditation bodies to assess the competence of 30+ licensed certification bodies. Textile Exchange does not make any accreditation or certification decisions directly. Accreditation bodies are first nominated by the certification body applicant to become authorized to certify in accordance with Textile Exchange standards. Only authorized accreditation bodies that implement an ISO 17011 compliant system may make accreditation decisions.

Only authorized certification bodies that are accredited for the relevant Textile Exchange standard (including evaluation to ISO/IEC 17065) may make certification decisions.



Textile Exchange also provides an additional layer of scheme owner oversight via its monitoring program of certification body and accreditation body performance. Both accreditation and certification require annual assessments and audits. The assurance system risk management plan supports monitoring by identifying and treating top risks to assurance integrity. This approach to system performance enables the prioritization of assurance activities and efficient use of assurance resources where they are most needed across global textile supply chains handling Textile Exchange certified fibers and materials.

Once accredited to a Textile Exchange standard, certification bodies are contracted to certify against that standard in its specific product/industry scope. Companies and brands that wish to be certified to a Textile Exchange standard apply with an authorized certification body to receive an initial audit. Audit teams are made up of at least one auditor. The auditor performs the on-site assessment and reports back to a certification decision maker who makes the final certification decision. Auditors are not allowed to give advice to their clients on how to meet requirements.



If the company or brand passes the first audit, they are awarded a “scope certificate” (SC) for that standard. Sites are re-assessed annually for conformity to the standard(s). In addition to this, for every sale of certified products, the company must apply for a “transaction certificate” (TC) that represents the product certification. The TC is recorded in dTrackit, our digital traceability system. With the transaction certificate, the buyer is then able to continue the chain of custody through the supply chain with each new buyer required to have a TC for their inputs. Brands and retailers are required to have scope and transaction certificates according to the chain of custody (CCS standard) [certification procedures](#). With the launch of the eTrackit system in fall 2023, companies will also have the option to use eTransactions in place of TCs.

Approved accreditation and certification bodies can be found here: [Certification Bodies - Textile Exchange](#).

### A3. Standards Authority

Textile Exchange has ultimate authority over its standards, including guidance and interpretation. However, International Working Groups are formed at each standard's inception or revision to manage major changes to the standard. More information can be found here: [Standards Development - Textile Exchange](#).

Textile Exchange standards are currently in the process of unification under a single standard which will streamline assurance system procedures and policies while providing greater accessibility to sustainability best practices for farms and supply chain sites across our fibers and materials. The unified standard system is planned to be fully operational by 2025. More information can be found here: [Standards Transition - Textile Exchange](#)

### A4. Accreditation and Certification Requirements

The requirements for accreditation and certification bodies are detailed in the [Accreditation and Certification Procedures](#). These procedures were created in alignment with the [ISEAL Assurance Code](#). They include Textile Exchange general requirements for accreditation and certification bodies as well as additional requirements to ISO 17065.

Auditors are required to be trained by their certification bodies. Accreditation bodies assess auditor experience and training during the annual assessments to assess their competence. Minimum requirements for auditor experience beyond those covered by ISO 17065 are defined in the procedures including shadow audits. Textile Exchange is also developing a training program that will become mandatory and intended to supplement existing training provided by the certification bodies.

The accreditation and certification procedures will be comprehensively revised in 2024 as part of the development of the unified standard system. In parallel with this, Textile Exchange's assurance system is planned to undergo significant changes to pivot to a data-driven approach to system management that is anchored in risk management. This next generation assurance system will leverage Textile Exchange's digital traceability platform – Trackit – to centralize data and better inform system improvements and to manage and treat standards and assurance risks.

Certified companies, sites, certification bodies, accreditation bodies, and other system stakeholders are invited to provide inputs on the development of the unified standard and next generation assurance system key documents. Stakeholders can provide inputs on the unified standard drafts through December 2023 using our [online stakeholder feedback form](#). You can also request to join the revision by email using [standards@textileexchange.org](mailto:standards@textileexchange.org) and direct any assurance system queries to [assurance@textileexchange.org](mailto:assurance@textileexchange.org).

### A5. Non-Conformities

Types of non-conformities are described in Appendix B of the [Accreditation and Certification Procedures](#). These are classified into critical, major, and minor. These must be corrected according to the timelines listed in the procedure, with the exception of modifications to these timelines that can be found in the Responsible Animal Fiber Certification Procedures. If the non-conformities are not corrected, the company is either not awarded certification in the first year or they lose their certification and must apply again. If a site knowingly or repeatedly operates with non-conformities or purposely violates the requirements of the standard, the certification body must suspend their certification status.

## A6. Group Certification – RDS and RAF

The Accreditation and Certification Procedures Appendix E covers requirements for the evaluation of groups certification. This includes requirements around the internal control system (ICS) of the group, sampling, and risk assessment. There are currently two standards that allow group certification: the RDS (see Section D) and RAF standards (RWS, RMS, and RAS) (see Section F). In addition to farm group certification, the RDS allows small farm households selling or trading feathers to collectors to be organized into farm areas under the responsibility of groups with requirements detailed in Section E of the RDS. Risk-based on-site audits of a sample of group members and audits of the ICS are carried out by certification bodies.

## A7. Feedback, Complaints, and Fraud

Should any stakeholder wish to provide feedback or file an official complaint in regards to a Textile Exchange standard or scheme participant, the [Complaints Form](#) can be used. Additional information can be found in the [Complaints and Feedback Policy](#).

Reports of fraud against Textile Exchange standards can be sent to [standards@TextileExchange.org](mailto:standards@TextileExchange.org). This includes companies using a standard logo without being certified, whether intentional or unknowingly. All logo use must be approved by the responsible certification body as required under the [Standards Claims Policy](#).

Unauthorized use of a Textile Exchange standard logo or false claim of certification may result in banning from the certification scheme or legal action in order to safeguard the credibility of Textile Exchange standards.