

Quick Guide to the Development of Textile Exchange's Unified Standard

Textile Exchange is a global non-profit helping to drive beneficial outcomes for climate and nature across the fashion, textile, and apparel industry, right from the start of the supply system.

Our goal is to help the industry achieve a 45% reduction in the greenhouse gas emissions that come from producing fibers and raw materials by 2030 (from a 2019 baseline). To get there, we are keeping our focus holistic and interconnected, accelerating the adoption of practices that improve soil health, water, and biodiversity while respecting human livelihoods and animal welfare.

The unified standard aims to meaningfully embed these goals into the production of all raw materials included in the scope of our certification, as well as to facilitate simplified communication at the consumer level through more integrated and aligned claims and labeling.

Key points in the unified standard development

Hybrid approach

To make sure we are achieving our desired outcomes, we are moving to a hybrid approach that combines traditional, practice-based requirements with indicators to measure progress towards beneficial outcomes.

Animal welfare

We are reviewing and testing best practices for the treatment of animals and how their role in agricultural systems can bring beneficial outcomes.

Strengthen communication

We are working to harmonize systems across the full scope of our current material standards to facilitate simplified communication at the consumer level through more integrated and aligned claims and labeling.

Human rights and livelihoods

We are designing a new approach to evaluating the most impactful areas for people and communities that focuses on commitments, due diligence, and appropriate actions based on scale and risk.

Supply chain best practice

We are aiming to drive meaningful change in the environmental impacts of first processing facilities, including chemical management, water resources, air quality, and waste reduction.

New raw materials and feedstocks

We are exploring opportunities to form partnerships with peer organizations offering sustainability systems to expand our certification scope into the most impactful production areas by recognizing new animal-based fibers, fiber crops, and forest/plant-derived materials, such as manmade cellulosic fibers and biosynthetics.

What is changing?

All of Textile Exchange’s current material-specific standards (including the Global Recycled Standard (GRS), Recycled Claim Standard (RCS), Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS), Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS), and Responsible Down Standard (RDS) were developed independently and operate uniquely in terms of structure and reach.

Each standard also incorporates its unique focus areas. While standards like the RWS, RMS, and RAS all contain land management and social criteria, the RDS does not include those attributes. For this reason, the journey towards unifying Textile Exchange’s standards system has focused on exploring where it is relevant and meaningful to incorporate climate and nature impact areas across all materials in scope, addressing how the material is managed on the ground as well as in the first processing stage.

Materials certified to the unified standard as well as future recognized standards will be tracked through the supply chain with our pre-existing chain of custody standard: the Content Claim Standard (CCS).

While the CCS continues to provide the mechanism for tracking and handling the certified inputs through to the finished product, the unified standard impact criteria cover Tier 4, encompassing raw material production and the first processing stage of the supply chain.

What materials are in scope?



Recycled

- Synthetics
- Natural materials
- Recycled MMCF



Animal fibers and materials

- Wool
- Alpaca
- Mohair
- Down
- Skins
- Cashmere*



Fiber crops

- Cotton*



Plant/forest-derived

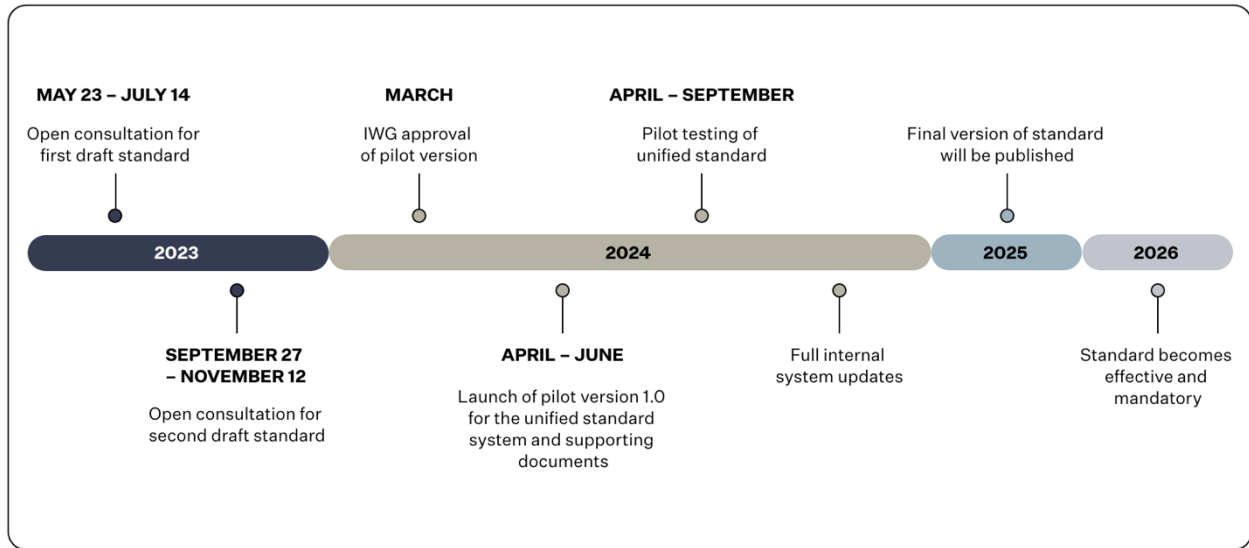
- MMCF*
- Biosynthetics*

*These materials are being explored for opportunities to be included in the unified standard scope through recognition partnerships with organizations that own sustainability systems at the raw material level

How is the standard structured?

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|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Organizational Management | 1.1. General Requirements |
| | 1.2. Shared Responsibilities |
| 2. Human Rights and Livelihoods | 2.1. Policies, Management Systems and Records |
| | 2.2. Labor Rights |
| | 2.3. Social Justice |
| | 2.4. Livelihoods |
| | 2.5. Management of Waste Collection for Recycled Inputs |
| 3. Land Use | 3.1. Management Plan |
| | 3.2. Soil Health |
| | 3.3. Soil Nutrients |
| | 3.4. Pest Management |
| | 3.5. Water Management |
| | 3.6. Conservation of Biodiversity |
| 4. Animal Welfare | 4.1. Health and Welfare Plan |
| | 4.2. Animal Nutrition |
| | 4.3. Living Environment |
| | 4.4. Husbandry Procedures |
| | 4.5. Animal Shearing |
| | 4.6. Herd Management |
| | 4.7. Breeding, Birthing, and Caring for Young Animals |
| | 4.8. Handling and Transport |
| | 4.9. Handling and Transport Managed by the Organization |
| | 4.10. Euthanasia and On-Farm Slaughter |
| | 4.11. Slaughterhouse |
| 5. Processing Facility | 5.1. Environmental Management System |
| | 5.2. Chemical Management and Restrictions |
| | 5.3. Waste Management |
| | 5.4. Water Use and Discharge |
| | 5.5. Air Emissions |
| | 5.6. Energy Use |
| 6. Chain of Custody | 6.1. Material Handling |
| | 6.2. Volume Reconciliation |
| | 6.3. Sale of Certified Materials |
| | 6.4. Logo Use and Claims |
| 7. Group Certification | 7.1. Group Configuration |
| | 7.2. Group Management System |
| | 7.3. Group Member Requirements |
| | 7.4. Inspection of Members |
| | 7.5. Adding and Removing Members |

What is the timeline for the development of the standard?



After review and approval of the public project plan from an International Working Group (IWG), the first draft of the unified standard was made available for public consultation from May to July 2023, with the second draft open for public consultation from October to November 2023. Following invaluable feedback from stakeholders, the Pilot Version V1.0 will be released publicly in early June, 2024, under its new official name.

The rest of our progress in 2024 will then be focused on feasibility testing, the preparation of supplementary documentation, and outreach events to raise awareness among standard users. Learnings from these activities will be used to refine criteria and related policies for the final version of the standard which, following pilot testing and system updates, will be published in mid-2025.

The final published standard will state an effective date and a mandatory date. The effective date is planned for the first quarter of 2026 and means that auditing and certification may begin on a voluntary basis whereby organizations may request an audit to the unified standard from licensed certification bodies. This will remain optional during a transitional period for organizations already certified to current standards superseded by the unified standard, including the Global Recycled Standard (GRS), Recycled Claim Standard (RCS), Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS), Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS), and Responsible Down Standard (RDS).

The mandatory date is planned for mid-2026, 12 months after the final standard publication date. This means that all applicable audits (for both sites that are already certified and new applicants) will be required to be to the new unified standard from that date onwards.

Where can I learn more or get involved?

To learn more, please contact standards@textileexchange.org.