



**Textile
Exchange**

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MATERIALS MATTER
STANDARD PILOT V1.0



MATERIALS MATTER STANDARD RECOGNITION FRAMEWORK

Framework for Recognizing Existing Standards in the Materials Matter Standard

Introduction and background

At Textile Exchange, we believe that sustainability certification systems for raw materials play a key role in driving positive change across the supply chain.¹ We also recognize that duplicative standards often lead to multiple audits and certificates, adding to the burden for organizations along the supply chain and doubling up on market claims.

Some of the materials that we propose to include within the Materials Matter Standard, such as biomaterials and manmade cellulosic fibers, are already covered by standards from other organizations. Instead of creating new criteria, we want to recognize existing standards that align with our climate and nature strategy, reducing the costs and complexities of certification by leveraging partnerships to meet shared sustainability goals.

Our framework for recognizing existing standards will allow us to include materials not previously part of our standard system while streamlining audit processes and sharing assurance data. It will also help to provide a clear and consistent touchpoint for brands looking to source certified materials, and consumers looking to purchase products with verified sustainability values.

The framework for recognizing existing standards uses our revised Preferred Fibers and Materials Matrix (PFMM) as a starting point to assess potential partnerships. Depending on the level of recognition (as outlined in Section B.I), certified materials may be integrated into the Materials Matter Standard system, ensuring traceability through our Content Claim Standard (CCS) and Trackit tools. Organizations can opt to use additional Textile Exchange tools for impact data collection and reporting, traceability, assurance, claims, and more, depending on the partnership.

This draft framework is primarily intended for the owners of sustainability systems and standards. It outlines the levels of recognition we plan to offer and the process of applying and being approved for a recognition partnership. The framework is open for feedback and will be a core part of the Materials Matter Standard development. More details on the assessment process for different raw materials will be shared in an upcoming document.

Section A - Scope

A1. Scope of recognition

- A1.1** Recognition partnerships in the Materials Matter Standard system are optional. External sustainability systems will not be formally assessed for recognition opportunities without the organization's agreement and participation in the recognition process.
- A1.2** Fibers and materials available for recognition are limited to those listed in Annex A. The Annex will be updated over time as more fibers and materials become eligible for recognition.
- A1.3** Verification evidence from eligible sustainability systems covering a subset of criteria for impact areas listed in Annex B may qualify for specified recognition.
- A1.4** Eligible sustainability systems will be initially assessed using a revised version of the Preferred Fibers and Material Matrix (PFMM) (see C2.1), and ultimately assessed against core impact-related criteria connected to Textile Exchange's Climate+ strategy (see C2.3).
- A1.5** The recognition framework includes three overarching recognition models depending on the material, sustainability system, and assessment outcome. Refer to section B1.1 below for descriptions of growth partnerships, specified recognition for specific impact criteria, and full recognition of certified raw materials.

Section B - Recognition

B1. Recognition models

- B1.1** Recognition assessment outcomes include the following:
- B1.1.1** Growth partnership: The sustainability system owner and Textile Exchange commit to developing and implementing a customized growth partnership that aligns the sustainability system with agreed-upon climate and nature outcomes or impact areas relevant to the material in question. Growth partnerships aim to use expertise and solutions between sustainability system owners to drive faster impact through collaboration.
 - B1.1.2** Specified recognition: Materials certified to a sustainability system with specified recognition are accepted to meet specific Materials Matter Standard criteria for a specific impact area, such as human rights and livelihoods. For this type of recognition, the sustainability system is aligned with the PFMM's critical *Governance* indicators, and aligned with (or better than) the Materials Matter Standard criteria for that specific impact area. Certificates (or other forms of verification) can be used as evidence of conformance with the specified Materials Matter Standard criteria, reducing the need for additional audits.
 - B1.1.3** Full recognition: Materials with certification from standards that have full recognition are fully integrated into the Materials Matter Standard. The complete sustainability system, including verification, is assessed as being aligned with (or better than) the Materials Matter Standard. Certified material from the recognized standard system may enter the Materials Matter Standard supply chain as a certified input, reducing audits and enabling consistent claims for final products.

B1.2 All recognition models include the option to adopt certain Textile Exchange standards system tools, summarized in Annex C.

B2. Recognition qualification requirements

The specific criteria that shall be met for a standard to qualify for specified or full recognition will be established as a benchmark following the finalization of the Materials Matter Standard.

B2.1 To qualify for recognition, the following requirements shall be met:

B2.1.1 The sustainability system owner meets all *Governance* criteria of the PFMM at a specified level, and

B2.1.2 The standard includes criteria that are aligned with one or more thematic section(s) of the PFMM¹ or the Materials Matter Standard (such as biodiversity or human rights).

NOTE: The criteria are not required to be expressed using the same language, but must match in their intent, credibility, and desired outcomes.

Section C - Overview of process

This section provides a high-level overview of the assessment process. Details will be provided in a forthcoming procedure document.

C1. Application and agreement

C1.1 The sustainability system owner interested in a recognition partnership completes an application form to initiate the process.

C1.2 Basic requirements of an initial application for assessment include the following:

- The scope of the sustainability system includes one or more materials listed in Annex A or one or more impact areas listed in Annex B;
- The sustainability system owner is committed to aligning its areas of verification (e.g., standard criteria) with Textile Exchange's Climate+ strategy and applicable impact areas for climate, nature, people, or animals;
- The sustainability system owner agrees to collect and share aggregated impact data with Textile Exchange;
- The sustainability system has been operational for at least 12 months, with at least 10 active certificate holders or participants;
- The sustainability system is not undergoing or planning significant changes at the time of application or within the following 6 months.

¹ The PFMM includes several performance levels. A minimum performance level will be determined in the forthcoming procedure document.

- C1.3** Upon internal review and decision to proceed by the designated Textile Exchange committee, the sustainability system owner signs an agreement with Textile Exchange that addresses the following:
- Mutual commitments to the partnership;
 - Mutual trademark rights related to recognition (where applicable);
 - Parameters for data sharing, particularly related to the performance of standard users and measuring impacts;
 - Any applicable fees; and
 - Other terms to be developed.

C2. Assessment, review, and feedback

This phase of the process may be repeated as necessary or as the sustainability system owner aligns its system with Textile Exchange's Climate+ strategy and direction of travel for the applicable impact areas.

- C2.1** For the initial eligibility assessment, the sustainability system owner completes an online self-assessment of its standard system and criteria with the Textile Exchange PFMM following the defined requirements for this process including verification by an independent third party.
- C2.2** The independently verified PFMM self-assessment is submitted to a Textile Exchange-designated technical reviewer. Feedback is provided to the standard owner and a virtual meeting is coordinated to discuss the preliminary results and any open questions or uncertainties.
- C2.3** Once the standard owner has demonstrated conformity with the defined performance level within the PFMM, an alignment assessment² is conducted between the standard system and criteria with the material-specific Materials Matter Standard criteria.³
- C2.4** The assessment results are reviewed and verified by a Textile Exchange-designated technical reviewer. Feedback is provided to the standard owner and a virtual meeting is coordinated to discuss the preliminary results and any open questions or uncertainties.

C3. Provisional decision and public comment period

- C3.1** Based on the results of the final assessment and technical review, a provisional decision is made regarding the applicable recognition model (see B1.1).
- C3.2** For sustainability system owners seeking full or specified recognition for their standard, the assessment report is shared for public comment for a period of time (30-60 calendar days) and any comments received are reviewed by the technical reviewer and discussed with the standard owner (respecting requests for anonymity by commentators).
- C3.3** Sustainability system owners not seeking or not currently eligible for specified or full recognition of their standard may work with Textile Exchange to develop a customized growth partnership model to align their system and standard, as necessary, with the applicable impact area(s). The growth partnership may include the adoption of Textile Exchange standards system tools (see Annex C).

C4. Recognition decision

This phase of the process is applicable for sustainability system owners seeking and eligible for recognition.

- C4.1** The results of the recognition assessment and public comment period are reviewed by a designated Textile Exchange committee and a final decision is made based on the conformity of the sustainability system and standard with specified or full recognition requirements.

C5. Monitoring and continued alignment

- C5.1** To maintain the recognition partnership, organizations are monitored annually for continued or progressing alignment with applicable criteria and the Climate+ goal, including collection, monitoring, and evaluation of aggregated impact data.
- C5.2** At any time, in the event that an organization is found to be no longer aligned with applicable criteria and/or the Climate+ goal, depending on the severity of misalignment, one or more of the following actions will be taken: corrective actions issued with three-to-six-month timelines, or the suspension or termination of recognition status or partnership.

NOTE: This will be further developed and elaborated on in the forthcoming procedure document.

Annex A - Eligible fibers and materials

The following fibers and materials are considered for different recognition partnerships.

Raw material candidates for recognition (Tier 4 practices)	Recognition model
Fiber crops: Cotton	<i>Full recognition</i> for material to be accepted as certified input in the Materials Matter Standard; or <i>Specified recognition</i> for a subset of program criteria, such as soil health or ecosystem management.
Forest-derived materials: Manmade Cellulosic Fiber (MMCF)	<i>Full recognition</i> for related material to be accepted as certified input in the Materials Matter Standard.
Biomaterials: Agriculture inputs for biosynthetics, MMCF	<i>Full recognition</i> for related material to be accepted as certified input in the Materials Matter Standard.
Animal-derived materials: Cashmere	<i>Full recognition</i> for material to be accepted as certified input in the Materials Matter Standard; or <i>Specified recognition</i> for a subset of program criteria, such as animal welfare health or land use management.

NOTE: Leather is currently not in the scope of the Materials Matter Standard in its current development phase but will be considered for a future version.

Annex B - Climate+ impact areas for specified recognition

The following impact areas are considered as options for specified recognition.

Impact area	Recognition model
Human rights & livelihoods	Specified recognition for a subset of Materials Matter Standard criteria covering the human rights and livelihoods impact area required for Tier 4 raw material and first processing organizations;*
Animal welfare	Specified recognition for a subset of Materials Matter Standard criteria covering the animal welfare impact area required for Tier 4 raw material organizations;*
Land management	Specified recognition for a subset of Materials Matter Standard criteria covering the land management impact area required for Tier 4 raw material organizations;*
Chemical management	Specified recognition for a subset of Materials Matter Standard criteria covering chemical use and management required for Tier 4 first processing organizations;*
Environmental	Specified recognition for a subset of Materials Matter Standard criteria covering waste management, water use, air emissions, and/or energy use required for Tier 4 first processing organizations;
Niche or leadership areas	Specified recognition may be captured for areas outside of conformance-related criteria in the Materials Matter Standard as a means to record related verification data that supplements Materials Matter Standard scope, such as wildlife management.

*There is the potential for Tier 1-3 supply chain sites certified to the Content Claim Standard (CCS) to record independent verification data in Textile Exchange's traceability system, Trackit. This will enable the use of Textile Exchange's Shared Measurement System (SMS) to include additional data and information about certified materials as they pass through the supply chain.

Annex C - Standard system tools

Available system tools for recognition partners

A comprehensive sustainability system drives outcomes more effectively through the creation and implementation of related tools, alongside criteria evaluation and audit checklists. Growth partners and owners of recognized standards may have the option to participate in Textile Exchange's standard system tools, including:

- **Climate and nature monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework**
 - Definition of key impact areas (such as soil health, human rights) and related outcomes.
 - Climate and nature targets and related impact data relevant to the textile industry
 - Regenerative outcome framework bolt-on for standards.
 - Climate and nature impact monitoring, evaluation, and learning; related reporting.
- **Traceability for certified material**
 - Content Claim Standard (CCS) chain of custody certification for supply chain sites.
 - Transaction certificates through dTrackit.
 - Eventual eTrackit digital traceability.
 - Dashboards for brands.
 - Shared Measurement System for consolidated certificate data: scope certificate details, impact data, performance indicators, ability to store information across different verification systems.
- **Assurance system**
 - Accreditation body (AB)/ certification body (CB)/ qualified auditors – integrity system for conducting audits, issuing certificates, and facilitating impact data collection/validation.
 - Farm and facility questionnaire (including polygon GIS data) to collect data/indicators by site.
 - Performance indicators – data and information collected during audits to monitor the performance and effectiveness of standards over time.
- **Claims and labeling**
 - In the future, a consolidated set of claims and visual identity for making certified material claims.⁴

Annex D - Fees

This section is a placeholder. At this time it is not confirmed whether, or to what level, fees may apply.

Endnotes

¹ “Sustainability systems” as defined by ISEAL are market-based tools designed to address the most pressing social and environmental challenges of our time. In this document we refer to “standards” or “areas of verification,” which include certification, verification, guidelines, capacity building and other related programs/initiatives.

² This assessment may be conducted by the standard owner or a designated Textile Exchange assessor.

³ This phase of assessment for recognition is pending specific development for each recognition opportunity as it develops.

⁴ We are reviewing our claims and labeling guidelines, terms, and formatting to consider co-labeling with peer standard systems to ensure acknowledgment of the program attributed to certification on the ground.