



Corporate Fiber & Materials Benchmark

Insights. Action. Impact.

Frequently Asked Questions



TextileExchange
Creating Material Change

The purpose of this document

This document provides a quick guide to some of the most frequently asked questions about the Corporate Fiber and Materials Benchmark (CFMB) program.

It is designed as a quick FAQ-style read for:

- Practitioners wanting to get started and requiring general knowledge of the CFMB or wishing to share key aspects of the program with colleagues, senior management or their boards.
- Executives and company board members wanting to understand the general aspects of benchmarking.
- External stakeholders wanting insight into the CFMB.
- NGOs, investors, industry experts, and others with an interest in benchmarking.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Why is the sustainability of fiber and materials so important?

Textile companies, with the roots of their businesses in nature (the fields, forests, and underground) and increasingly the waste streams, have an important role to play in the transition to a more resilient, regenerative and circular economy. Millions of people - fiber farmers, foresters, waste collectors, polymer engineers and other textile feedstock providers - form the base of the textile supply network and are impacted by the decisions brands and retailers make every day. Influencing fiber and material production, use and disposal is one of the greatest opportunity's textile companies have to securing a sustainable future.

Q2. Why has Textile Exchange created a corporate benchmark?

One of Textile Exchange's key organizational objectives is to accelerate the uptake of preferred fiber and materials. This objective is built on the urgency to respond to key risks for the textile industry and the huge potential to make improvements in areas such as water, land, air - and the lives of people everywhere. These risks and opportunities are most likely to occur during the production of raw materials. By creating a benchmark program for companies, Textile Exchange not only measures and reports company and industry progress but provides strategic direction for the companies that participate. Through program engagement alone, companies embark on a "bench learning" journey, with the support of Textile Exchange staff and fellow participants. The contributing to and receiving of knowledge creates a virtuous circle of learning and improving. View a [3-minute video](#) of stakeholders and experts explaining Textile Exchange's benchmark.

Q3. What is the Corporate Fiber and Materials Benchmark program?

The Corporate Fiber and Materials Benchmark (CFMB) program is THE place to measure, track and compare a company's sustainability progress related to fibers and materials.

The CFMB provides a robust structure to help companies systematically measure, manage and integrate a preferred fiber and materials strategy into mainstream business operations, to compare progress, and to transparently communicate performance and progress to stakeholders. The CFMB offers a quantified index ranking including a company's position in relation to peers and the overall industry (universe of participants). It provides an indicator of progress, helps companies identify strengths and gaps, and encourages year-on-year improvement and a "race to the top." Company participants see a lot of detail about their performance, and industry averages are reported for public consumption. Participants receive a comprehensive "scorecard" comparing their own progress year-on-year and how they rank alongside their peers. Customized scorecards are confidential to the participant. The wider industry and interested stakeholders receive the annual [Material Change Index](#) results alongside the [Material Change Insights Report](#) which includes the benchmark leaderboards and sector analysis and is shared in the public domain.

Q4. What are the benefits of benchmarking?

Benchmarks work for five core reasons:

1. They help companies track progress.
2. They clarify where and how companies can contribute to sustainability agendas.
3. They promote dialogue and are a proven and effective engagement tool for companies.
4. They clarify what societies expect from industries.
5. They promote a race to the top.

[The above five benefits of benchmarking are from the World Benchmarking Alliance, of which Textile Exchange is a proud ally. For further details visit the World Benchmarking Alliance [here](#).]

Q5. Who is eligible to participate?

All brands and retailers of textile products are eligible to participate in the Corporate Fiber & Materials Benchmark (CFMB). In fact, the more companies taking part, the more meaningful the results for all involved. Due to popular demand, we are opening the 2020 benchmark program for manufacturers of textile products as well, starting with a pilot this year. While participation is open to all interested manufacturers, we plan to cap numbers during the pilot - and give priority to Textile Exchange members.

Q6. What has been the response to the CFMB so far?

In 2015, Textile Exchange launched the “Preferred” Fiber & Materials Benchmark (PFMB) Program for measuring how a company systematically integrates a preferred fiber and materials strategy into mainstream business operations. Industry-led, voluntary and self-assessed, within five years the benchmark program broadened to become the Corporate Fiber & Materials Benchmark (CFMB), to include circularity and the Sustainable Development Goals, and establish itself as a leading global benchmark for the textile industry.

In 2019, 173 companies (including subsidiaries) participated in the CFMB. Of these, 53 percent of participants were from the apparel and footwear sector, 25 percent from the outdoor/sports sector, 12 percent were multi-sector retailers, and 10 percent from the home and hospitality sector. The retention rate was 77 percent over 2018, with the few that did not participate, planning to return in future years. The program welcomed 27 new participants between 2018 to 2019 and enjoyed a growth of 220 percent since the pilot in 2015 (which attracted 54 companies).

Furthermore, benchmark scores have been improving steadily year on year despite the growth in participation numbers. The Index average moved up 3 points, from 53 out of 100 in 2017, to 56 in 2018. Since 2016, the Index average improved by 14.2 percent. For more information, see the [2019 Material Change Insights Report](#).

Q7. Can you provide a concise overview of the benchmark survey?

The CFMB comprises of three sections: Section I: Strategy and Integration, Section II; Fiber and Materials Portfolio, and Section III: Circularity. The sections act as cornerstones to the framework. Progressive companies may be able to demonstrate good practice within one or two of the sections, while leading companies will be able to show good practice across the board.

Each of the three sections consists of six key themes. Within each theme are elements (or sub-themes). There are 35 elements in total. Responses to the question sets form the indicators of progress. Indicators include both qualitative (management based) and quantitative (performance based) metrics.

The Portfolio Section (Section II) is composed of seven materials modules (cotton, wool, manmade cellulose, polyester, nylon, leather and down). Within each module, participants select their materials portfolio, i.e. conventional (if used) and the sustainability programs they are sourcing from. Sustainability programs include both renewable and recycled material options. See Appendix 3 for a closer look at the benchmark framework and the methodology for specifics on scoring.

This year, the CFMB program pilots a Biodiversity Index. The aim of this Index is to support companies on a biodiversity strategy, evaluate the management and performance of sourcing practices, and track improvements and impact over time.

Q8. How different is the 2020 survey from the earlier version?

The good news (especially for returnees) is that the 2020 survey has not changed significantly in terms of survey structure and questions. This is because the survey went through a major overhaul last year. For 2019 participants, the 2020 survey will be auto populated with 2019 responses and the company will only have to

check responses and update where appropriate, except for materials uptake data that will require a fresh calculation each year.

Other changes include the transition of the leather module out of pilot and into a scored module option and the (optional) piloting of Biodiversity this year.

Q9. Do we have to complete the whole survey?

Not necessarily, since the survey has built-in flexibility. At the start of each section and materials module is a prompt asking for a decision to proceed or not. However, for a holistic overview of your efforts, a complete scorecard, and to qualify for the overall Material Change Index (MCI), companies have to provide answers in all three sections of the survey: strategy, materials portfolio, and circularity (even if the answer to a question is “no” or “don’t know.”). This means you are completing the “Full survey”. Note, only scores for “priority” materials will count towards your overall MCI result.

For companies that do not feel ready to take on the entire survey, or for those that prefer to focus on a limited number of material modules (for instance), the option is there for you to pick and choose your survey sections and modules. This is called the “Modular” approach”.

The third option is the “Materials tracker” which offers the option to submit material uptake targets and volumetric data only. This option allows for progress tracking against targets and specifically accommodates those companies signed up to various fiber challenges or commitments which require annual reporting of uptake volumes, such as the 2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge.

Q10. How do companies benefit from taking part?

We have designed the Corporate Fiber & Materials Benchmark (CFMB) Program to be much more than a benchmark. Here’s a reminder of how companies benefit from taking part.

The CFMB Program provides a:

- Roadmap to building and implementing a robust materials strategy, now incorporating materials circularity.
- Digital scorecard that summarizes your performance, and helps you communicate results to team members, your board, and external stakeholders.
- Externally verified reporting framework for tracking progress against targets year on year.
- Focal point for alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Placement in the Material Change Index and visibility of your company’s good work among other frontrunners.
- Sector progress tracker - by aggregating data and building a community of companies willing to voluntarily disclose information and share learnings with the wider industry.

Q11. How does Textile Exchange manage program quality?

- **Program credentials:** Textile Exchange has ensured its benchmarking program has been on par with best practice from the very start. In the beginning, the CFMB was designed in line with the Business In The Community’s (BITC) Corporate Responsibility Index (CRI). The CRI benchmarked the FTSE 100 companies (i.e. those listed on the London Stock Exchange) and was published in the Financial Times each year. Knowledge transfer from BITC to Textile Exchange ensured a credible program was built at inception. We partner with a trusted technology partner, [73bit](#), to run the online benchmark platform (Probench). Textile Exchange and 73bit have worked together since the beginning of the CFMB. 73bit has

a growing list of clients, including the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI), Access to Nutrition Index, and the Business Benchmark on Animal Welfare.

- **Survey submission review:** Textile Exchange undertakes a systematic review of all company submissions and checks for consistency, completeness, and accuracy. Note that this is NOT an audit – submissions are considered self-assessment. However, there are checks in place to strengthen program quality. For example, the participating company submits a sign-off from a senior member of staff declaring that all answers have been provided in good faith and, to the best of the company’s knowledge, are valid and complete. Once a company has submitted its survey, the CFMB review team completes a desk top review and corresponds with the company’s lead practitioner to close out any points for clarification. This validation process is carried out in full transparency with the company. Once all outstanding issues have been resolved and agreed between the reviewer and the company, updates (if any) are made online and the survey is formally closed out.
- **Ongoing improvement:** To ensure the CFMB is fit for purpose and continuously improving, Textile Exchange collaborates and consults with a wide range of stakeholders. First and foremost, our participants: each year an open consultation is held to review the entire program and priority areas (e.g. fiber calculations). For peer-to-peer learning and collaboration we have become an ally of the World Benchmarking Alliance, and we are involved in the recent developments of the ISEAL benchmarking best practice guidelines (see Appendix 5 for an overview of the ISEAL draft guidelines and links to further information).

Q12. How does Textile Exchange assure the accuracy of fiber usage data?

Calculating fiber usage volumes is a valuable exercise for companies – especially for those who have never done such a calculation before. As more and more companies set targets for use of specific fibers (such as recycled, organic, and use of sustainability standards) they will need to understand their starting place and progress rate.

Textile Exchange strives to constantly improve the quality of data reported through the CFMB. We have worked hard to develop tools, in collaboration with industry, such as the [Fiber Uptake Calculation Guide](#), uptake calculators, and a [Fiber Conversion Rates Methodology](#). We also request all participants to complete a “metadata form” which provides an overview of data quality and origins. In the past, companies have needed to significantly amend their reported volumes for many reasons (e.g. staff turnover, errors in Excel, and “more sustainable” products converted to conventional towards the end of range planning). The program guides (and accompanying metadata form) will help companies identify the most accurate data in their systems, document their calculation approach, and, hopefully, decrease the frequency of errors occurring.

Q13. What is Textile Exchange doing to harmonize with other reporting initiatives?

Knowing how much work is involved in survey submissions (by companies), Textile Exchange works very intentionally to align or consolidate our systems with others. For example, we partner with the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) to produce our annual [Materials Impact Dashboard](#) drawing on the Higg Materials Sustainability Index (Higg MSI) for impact modeling. Last year, we collaborated with the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, WRAP UK’s Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP), Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) and the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) to encourage convergence in fiber usage calculations and data reporting approaches. This year we began conversations with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to explore synergies between our circularity module and the Make Fashion Circular initiative.

Harmonization is happening! For instance, the German Partnership has adjusted the geographic scope of data submissions (from national level to global, reducing the need for additional calculations). The SAC Brand and Retail Module (BRM) and the CFMB have aligned on definitions concerning fibers and materials and the BRM is following the CFMB approach for fiber and materials reporting.

Q14. How much does it cost to take part?

There is no fee to participate. The priority is to grow participation rates by making the CFMB accessible for all. Thanks to the generous financial support over the years from C&A and Tchibo, costs associated with the early developments of the program and the technology platform were covered.

However, as the program continues to grow, Textile Exchange is looking for partners (and other ways) to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the program and ensure we have the resources required to deliver a high-quality benchmarking product.

Today, financial compensation comes from (1) a voluntary participation fee (donation) and (2) differentiated scorecard contents (see more about company scorecards in Q15 below).

Q15. Can you tell me more about the scorecards?

All participants receive digitalized, customized and confidential company scorecards. Company scorecards offer a useful reporting tool for each participating company to share with important internal and external stakeholders, including the investment community.

In response to popular demand, and improvements in the technology, scorecards were made digital last year. This means they are more graphic, and less text based, allowing for interactive displays of data driven information.

We have three levels of scorecards available:

1. Standard Scorecard
 - a. Benchmark results and basic gap analysis.
 - b. Free of charge
2. Advanced Scorecard
 - a. All information in the Standard
 - b. "Traffic light" visualization to support action planning
 - c. Modeling of environmental outcomes and impacts (in partnership with the SAC)
 - d. Complimentary for Textile Exchange
 - e. USD 3000 for non-Textile Exchange Members
3. Premium Scorecard (new this year!)
 - a. All details of Standard and Advanced
 - b. A customized infographic for companies to share easily with stakeholders ranging from customers, investors, and media.
 - c. Complimentary for Textile Exchange partner-level members
 - d. USD 2000 for Textile Exchange supporter and friend level member
 - e. USD 5000 for Textile Exchange non-members

Participants make their scorecard selection in the benchmark survey.

Q16. Are the results made public?

Individual company scorecards are confidential to the participants.

The Material Change Index (MCI) and the family of indices results are published on our [website](#) and in our annual Material Change [Insights Report](#). The annual MCI and Insights Report is released at the end of each benchmarking cycle. Textile Exchange requests permission from all participants and shares the leaderboard results and a communications toolkit before publishing.

Q17. Which Index will our company be eligible for?

The survey framework provides a holistic approach to fiber and materials reporting. Companies submitting a full survey response are eligible for the MCI (including the leaders circle). Companies reporting on specific fiber and materials or sections of the survey (e.g. circularity) are still eligible for Index results and “Best in Class” leaderboards. An important change is that Best in Class leaderboards replace the volume-based leaderboards of the past and require companies to provide management as well as uptake data. A driver for the change in the leaderboard came from the Textile Exchange Board who made a decision in 2018 that going forward, the leaderboards should not only focus on how much of a specific preferred fiber is being used, but how well it is being managed.

Q18. Why the name changed to “corporate” benchmark and less mention of “preferred”?

The benchmark name change, from “preferred” to “corporate”, reflects a shift from asking questions primarily about specific “Preferred Fiber and Materials” to covering a company’s overall fiber and materials portfolio. This shift allows us to assess the overall management and performance of a company’s fiber and materials portfolio in a holistic way. Furthermore, the name change reflects the need to differentiate our benchmark, which compares companies, from other types of benchmarks, which compare fibers or standards. Textile Exchange still maintains a definition of “preferred.” This definition is regularly reviewed, and the current status of the definition and review process can be found in Appendix 1.

In the benchmark survey companies can now select and report on a much wider set of fiber or materials “programs” than were previously offered. Fiber and material programs have been defined as specific initiatives, standards and processes distinguished by the company to have a higher sustainability performance than its conventional option.

Q19. Why is there a whole section dedicated to circularity?

Circularity is playing an ever increasing and critical role in reducing the industry’s dependence on natural virgin resources. In addition, textile waste will increasingly serve as a feedstock to displace some of the virgin materials it currently relies upon. Addressing textile waste and its “re-invention” as a valuable resource has become a critical part of a fiber and materials strategy.

We are delighted to commence alignment of our circularity module with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s Make Fashion Circular initiative this year. We anticipate further integration over the next few years.

Q20. Why are the Sustainable Development Goals such a big part of the benchmark?

The 17 Global Goals (SDGs) are an overarching set of goals that can connect the textile industry to the world’s most important agenda. The SDGs cover environmental, social and economic themes that will be critical to the health and prosperity of people and planet - and the long-term viability of business. The CFMB helps companies make this connection. See Appendix 3 for an overview of SDG and CFMB mapping, and the SDG Companion Guide for further guidance.

Q21. Why is Textile Exchange introducing a Biodiversity Index this year?

Textile Exchange recognizes that climate change and biodiversity loss are inextricably linked and are best considered within an integrated strategy. The textile industry with its inextricable links to agriculture and forestry is well placed to support regenerative and restorative approaches to materials production.

At this stage, the focus on biodiversity in the textile industry – as with many others - is nascent. The Biodiversity Module and associated Index has been developed to prepare the textile industry for action. The module will go through an initial pilot phase to track the level of engagement and effort that companies are starting to put into biodiversity.

The methodology for companies to set targets and track their contribution to the global goals for nature are being developed now through the Science Based Targets Network Biodiversity (SBTN). The CFMB Biodiversity module will support and develop alongside in order to reinforce consistency in language, frameworks, and measurements. Additionally, use of this module – and its future iterations – will help companies prepare for stakeholder (including investor) [questions around “nature-related risk”](#).

Q22. How long will it take us to complete the survey, and how much evidence do we need to provide?

This depends upon a company's starting position and its size and the answer will differ from company to company. If a company has all the information to hand, the survey can be completed in a matter of hours. However, most participants gather information as they go, so the process takes longer. For smaller companies it should be easier to report since there is usually less complexity in organizational structure. For larger companies, time involved will depend upon their internal systems and data availability. Please be reassured that while there are text boxes frequently placed throughout the survey, we expect you to use them at your discretion. Further, for companies that had completed the survey last year, this year's survey is auto populated with 2019 responses and the company will only have to check responses and update where appropriate for this year. It will be the annual consumption data that will need a new entry each year. Annual reporting of consumption data is the main area for fresh calculations and input.

For companies new to the survey, there is some work involved in organizing data streams. There will also need to be determination of which staff needs to be involved and who will lead on the coordination of the survey submission. Please see Appendix 4 for the timeline and steps involved along the way. Textile Exchange is here to guide participants every step of the way. We have developed various resources, including a suite of Guides, webinars and presentations. The CFMB team is available by email, telephone, or, potentially, to meet in person.

Q23. In some questions there is space for five years of data, do we need to provide backdated figures?

Five-year data tables are visible in questions where the survey has, indeed, been collecting data year-on-year. If you are a returnee company and provided fiber uptake or financial turnover data each year, this data will be pre-filled. This provides easy visibility of trends, and also allows companies to review and adjust should this be necessary. For new companies, and those with no data history, you can choose to ignore or add historical data. Most important will be data aligning with the current reporting period.

Q24. How long do we have to complete the survey?

The survey opens in July and companies have 12-week period to make their submissions and the CFMB team is always on hand and happy to support this process.

Once the survey closes, Textile Exchange undertakes a systematic review of all submissions and checks for consistency, completeness, and accuracy. Note that this is NOT an audit – submissions are considered self-assessment. However, we do expect a sign-off from a senior member of staff declaring that all information is truthful.

In order to provide extra support to companies, this year the CFMB team will – provide more practitioner training, more program updates through webinars, more interactive support through benchmark clinics, and more feedback and consulting services. Please contact us to know more about our consulting services.

Q25. How flexible is the deadline, and what's required of us after we submit our survey?

The submission window is 12 weeks, this year the dates are July 23rd to October 16th. This year, to accommodate a more flexible survey completion period for those that need it, we will structure our reviews on

rolling basis. This means we will be reviewing surveys as they come in rather than waiting till after the deadline (which is the more standard way to approach reviews).

Any overflow after that, impacts the review team's ability to meet the review deadline, which shortens the time for analysis and report development. In the past, we have allowed companies to submit surveys post deadline which has had a knock-on effect for us. As the program grows, it has become increasingly important to keep to the submission date. Please keep us informed of your progress and any issues you may have with meeting the deadline.

Q26. How do we get started and where do we go for support?

Registration to the CFMB portal

To register (as a new participating organization) or to sign back (if you are a returnee) go directly to <https://cfmb.textileexchange.org>.

Join the CFMB Hub community

For companies benchmarking with us, we have a new online home at the Textile Exchange Hub. Please follow the link [here](#), and make sure you join the **Companies Creating Material Change** - CFMB Hub community, which you will find under "My communities". This is your new go-to place for receiving frequent updates, participating in discussion posts, creating community dialogues and for exploring the resource library which holds CFMB-related webinar recordings, reports, guides and more.

Explore the CFMB [Suite of Guides](#)

- FAQs (this document)
- Survey Guide
- CFMB Portal User's Guide
- Fiber Uptake Calculation Guide
- SDG Companion Guide
- Circularity Companion Guide
- Fiber Conversion Methodology

CFMB Website

To find out more about the program, visit our website - <https://mci.textileexchange.org/>

CFMB Team

For any questions or concerns that you may have, do not hesitate to contact the CFMB team by writing to us at CFMB@TextileExchange.org.

The CFMB team is happy to arrange a conference call to talk you through the benchmarking process and answer your questions directly. Please take some time exploring the survey and the guidance documents first. If you continue to have questions, we would be pleased to discuss engagement options with you and your team to ensure you get off to the best start!

For any inquire please write us to CFMB@TextileExchange.org

Common Terminologies used

Corporate Fiber & Materials Benchmark (CFMB) program: The CFMB program is THE place to measure, track and compare a company's sustainability progress related to fibers and materials. The CFMB provides a robust structure to help companies systematically measure, manage and integrate a preferred fiber and materials strategy into mainstream business operations, to compare progress, and to transparently communicate performance and progress to stakeholders.

Material Change Index and family of indices are a product of the CFMB program and offers a quantified index ranking including a company's position in relation to peers and the overall industry.

Material Change Index: The [Material Change Index](#) (MCI) is the cornerstone of the MCI family of indices. The MCI incorporates scores achieved across the full benchmark framework: strategy and integration, circularity, and the portfolio of materials.

Performance bands: Company results are assigned to one of four performance bands.



Leaderboard: The new Material Change Leaderboard includes Level 4 Leading companies across the Material Change Index (MCI) and family of indices. As a result of the benchmark program review carried out over Q4 2018 and Q1 2019, Textile Exchange has introduced the Material Change Leaderboard in 2019 to provide a more holistic and contemporary assessment of leadership than the volume-based focus of the past.

The Leaderboard is based on a company's management practices (including risk assessment, transparency, investment, target setting, and impact measurement) as well as the adoption rate of preferred fibers and materials. In this way it reflects both intention and action. See full listing on next page.

Leaders Circle: The companies included in the annual Leaders Circle have achieved a "Level 4 – Leading" performance band which means they have robust materials sustainability strategies, comprehensive integration and implementation systems in place, including circularity, and are making good progress in transitioning their materials portfolio to preferred options.

Appendix 1. Describing a Preferred Fiber or Material

Textile Exchange describes a preferred¹ fiber or material as one that is environmentally and/or socially² progressive and has been selected because it has more sustainable properties in comparison to other options.

Ways to recognize or achieve a preferred status

To be considered preferred, a fiber or material program should meet at least the first two criteria below. Ideally, criteria 3-5 are planned for, and measurement of performance indicators in place.

- | | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>1. Feedstock Production. The fiber or material is derived from a renewable or reclaimed material produced according to at least one recognized³ industry sustainability standard.</p> |
|  | <p>2. Feedstock Processing. The fiber or material is processed or recycled (to a “spin-ready” filament or staple fiber or to an otherwise prepared / cleaned material state) according to a recognized industry standard or results of a risk assessment. Processing could include pulping, shredding, cleaning, tanning, etc., depending on risks associated with the fiber or material, geography and/or country-level regulations.</p> |
|  | <p>3. Transparency and Product Integrity. The fiber or material is identified and preserved (e.g. using a Chain of Custody standard) and can potentially be traced through the supply chain back to origin. If the fiber or material is managed via a mass-balance system, as a minimum country of origin is identified.</p> |
|  | <p>4. Impact Monitoring and Evaluation. The sustainability outcomes, impacts or benefits associated with the fiber or material are relevant, scientifically proven and peer reviewed (e.g. LCA). Improvements need to be sustainable over time and the positive impact achieved should not cause any (unintended) negative impacts somewhere else.</p> |
|  | <p>5. Design for Circularity. The material has a good potential for circularity. This should be considered at the product design stage for end-of-life and cover durability, disassembly, resource use (including embedded impacts such as water, chemicals, non- renewable fossil fuels), technical and/or biological recyclability. (under development)</p> |

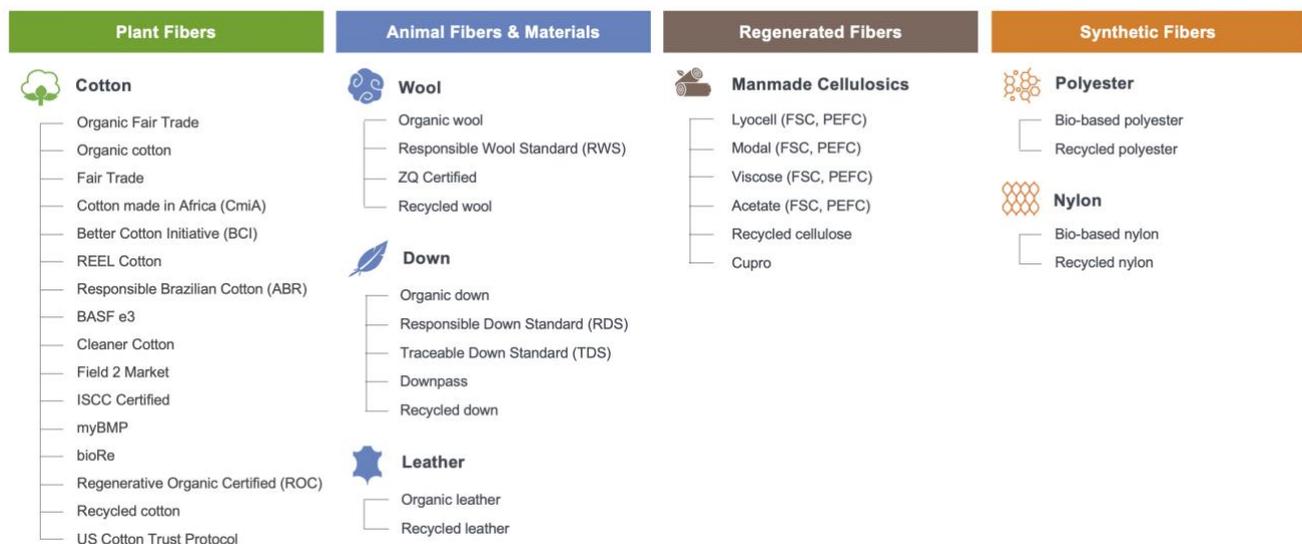
¹ also referred to as “more sustainable”

² includes animal welfare

³ a recognized industry standard is one that has been developed according to ISEAL Principles (or equivalent)

A “portfolio” approach

Portfolio of preferred materials



Taking a portfolio approach means recognizing that there might not be one single fiber, material, or program that works for your business, and that your selection might change over time. It can be achieved by:

- Building a suite or mix of preferred fibers and materials, based on the consideration of impacts and organizational priorities.
- Embedding a strategy that leads to preferred options replacing unsustainable or less sustainable options over time - including target setting to align commercial and sustainability teams and drive progress.
- Having a commitment to integrity and the principles of continuous improvement thus ensuring the options selected result in a positive change.

The Corporate Fiber and Materials Benchmark recognizes that “one size does not fit all” and allows for participants to build their own portfolio based on the fiber and materials options and programs that their company is implementing.

An evolving landscape

No single fiber or material is fully sustainable; there are strengths, weaknesses, and trade-offs with all sustainability programs or options. There are, however, practices that should not be accepted, such as sheep mulesing, use of toxic and persistent chemicals, and deforestation. Best practices, thresholds, expectations and ambitions are constantly evolving - alongside technology, connectivity and ever-increasing transparency.

Different programs and schemes may have different strengths and product offerings, but generally there is a shared vision and some common ground. There is also an agreement on constantly striving to improve and a mounting urgency to move along the continuum from minimizing the harmful impacts to maximizing the positive.

Ultimately, the goal is to decouple the industry’s growth and success from the consumption of natural resources, and secure a regenerative, circular textile production system that benefits the world now and into the future.

Areas the benchmark does not compromise on concern human rights, the rights of animals, and the rights of the environment. We need to accelerate and normalize positive sourcing practices, supply chain integrity, and fair returns for environmental stewardship. Most of all, we all need the courage to take on new and innovative business models that will move us towards a regenerative and circular industry.

Definition Review Cycle

Definition status of “preferred”.

- Materials sustainability is a constantly moving topic, with more and more ways to invest and improve, and an increasing number of programs for companies to choose from. Considering this fluidity, Textile Exchange needs to regularly reviews our positioning of a preferred status. We have begun the review process internally and arrived at the slightly modified version as outlined above. The next step is to widen the conversation to a broader group of stakeholders.

What is a preferred manmade cellulosic fiber?

- Over the past months, Textile Exchange has been consulting with forestry, pulp, and manmade cellulosic fiber experts on what constitutes a preferred MMCF. The review is considering three key pre-spin phases of forestry and feedstock production, dissolving pulp making, fiber and filament manufacturing. The outputs of the consultation and other stakeholder input, data and analysis drive the definition improvement process.

Use of “programs” in the CFMB.

- There has been a deliberate move to broaden the portfolio reporting options. This means that within each module, companies select and report on a set of fiber and material “programs”. There is also the option to self-select according to a company’s priorities, activities and program use (if not part of the existing list).
- Fiber and material programs have been defined as specific initiatives, standards and processes distinguished by the company to have a higher sustainability performance than its conventional option.

Appendix 2. The CFMB Deconstructed

Benchmark framework

I. Materials Integration 	II. Materials Portfolio						III. Materials Circularity 
	Plant Fibers  Cotton	Animal Fibers & Materials  Wool		 Down	 Leather	Regenerated Fibers  MMCF	
Corporate Strategy*	Risk Management						Circularity Strategy*
Leadership*	Investment						Business Models
Internal Engagement*	Transparency						Resource Efficiency*
Materiality*	Targets*						Design for Circularity
Customer Engagement*	Uptake*						Textile Collection*
Reporting*	Impact Monitoring*						Recycled Content*

*  Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Table A: CFMB Themes and Descriptors

Section I. Strategy	
Corporate Strategy	Integrating fibers and materials into company strategy and aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Leadership	Bold and visionary leadership sets the tone from the top, signing up to important global goals and industry commitments.
Internal Engagement	Equipping people and building team, rewarding achievement, and creating opportunities for personal development.
Materiality	Fiber and materials integrated into corporate risk assessment and stakeholder engagement.
Customer Engagement	An opportunity to educate and influence customers.
Reporting	Public disclosure of activities, key data, and progress tracking.
Section II. Materials Portfolio	
Risk Management	Risk and opportunity identification, policy setting and intervention.
Investment	Financial and/or in-kind contributions to improvement and growth.
Transparency	Mapping of supply regions and Tier 4 supplier/producer base.
Targets	Setting SMART targets (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and bound) for the uptake of fibers/materials from sustainability programs.
Uptake	Calculating uptake, measuring progress towards targets, and verification of content claims.
Impact	Ensuring interventions and investments have a positive impact.
Section III. Circularity	
Circularity Strategy	Vision and commitment for steps towards a circular system. Including, decoupling resource use from revenue growth.
Business Models	Business model innovation to extend product life through repair, reuse, resell services.
Resource Efficiency	Building in efficiencies and managing pre-consumer (post-industrial) waste.
Design for Circularity	Building capacity and using design principles to improve durability and to create safe products for perpetual cycling.
Textile Collection	Customer engagement and participation in a circular system.
Recycled Content	Use of recycled fibers and materials instead of virgin.

Table B: CFMB Themes and Elements

Theme	Element
Section I: Strategy	
S-1. Corporate Strategy	S-1a. Integration
	S-1b. Commitments
S-2. Leadership	S-2a. Accountability
	S-2b. Leadership Example
S-3. Internal Engagement	S-3a. Capacity Building
S-4. Materiality	S-4a. Risk and Opportunity Assessment
	S-4b. Stakeholder Engagement
S-5. Customer Engagement	S-5a. Connecting Customers
S-6. Reporting	S-6a. Sustainability Reporting
	S-6b. Assurance
Section II. Materials Portfolio*	
FM-1: Risk Management	FM-1a. Feedstock Production
	FM-1b. Feedstock Processing
FM-2: Investment	FM-2a. Sustainability Investment
FM-3: Transparency	FM-3a. Country of Origin
	FM-3b. Supply Chain Mapping
	FM-3c. Supplier Listings
FM-4: Targets	FM-4a. Target Setting
	FM-4b. Public Commitments
FM-5: Uptake	FM-5a. Verification Models
	FM-5b. Uptake Reporting
	FM-5c. Recycled Details
FM-6: Impact	FM-6a. Impact Measurement
	FM-6b. Impact Improvement
Section III. Circularity	
CR-1. Circularity Strategy	CR-1a. Strategy
	CR-1b. Business Integration
	CR-1c. Investment
	CR-1d. Reporting
CR-2. Business Models	CR-2a. Service Provision
CR-3. Resource Efficiency	CR-3a. Pre-consumer Waste
	CR-3b. Unsold Pre-Consumer Goods
CR-4. Design for Circularity	CR-4a. Capacity Building
	CR-4b. Design Factors
CR-5. Textile Collection	CR-5a. Collected Post-Consumer Textiles
CR-6. Recycled Content	CR-6a. Recycled Inputs

Appendix 3. Timeline and Steps 2020

	Company	Textile Exchange
Development March - July	Feedback and input through consultation.	Survey, guidance notes, technical notes, “getting started” webinars and other supporting tools prepared.
Participation July- Oct	Register and set up company details to access online portal and 2020 survey.	Registration begins in July. Previous participants contacted and invitations sent to potential participants.
	Survey lead established to coordinate responses from all relevant data owners.	
	Survey is completed. Online is the most efficient approach (word format available).	CFMB team available to field questions and support companies during the submission period.
	Survey lead together with senior staff reviews final submission.	
	Senior staff member completes sign-off form. Completed survey is submitted.	Receives notification of submitted survey and runs a high-level completion check.
Validation Aug - Oct		Reviews submission for completion, consistency, accuracy and checks evidence provided.
	Reviews comments and responds, providing additional evidence where requested.	Emails the completed review to the company, along with queries, requests for further information, and other points raised.
	If necessary, the company and CFMB validation team arrange a conference call to discuss and close out the review.	Makes updates to the survey online (based on the validation process outcomes). Documentation is sent to the company for their records.
Analysis Nov - Dec		Generates company, sub-sector and sector scores. Undertakes analysis of the data.
		Prepares companies confidential scorecards.
		Prepares Insights Report and Material Change Index (MCI) - notifies companies of Index placement.
Peer Learning November	CFMB dialogues during Textile Exchange Conference.	CFMB dialogues during Textile Exchange Conference.
MCI and Insights Report (Jan 2021)	Communications of results e.g. use of CFMB “badge” and social media clips.	Releases scorecards to companies. Publishes MCI results and launches Insights Report

Appendix 4. ISEAL Benchmarking Good Practice Checklist

Textile Exchange will be ensuring the CFMB methodology aligns with the ISEAL new guidance for benchmarking good practice (currently under development). The checklist below distils key steps in the draft ISEAL guidance for setting up and implementing a sustainability benchmarking program. Visit the ISEAL website for more information on the draft benchmarking good practice consultation and further resources [here](#).

Develop the framework

- **Audience:** identify who is the intended audience and what are their needs; speak with potential users to understand more deeply their expectations (8.1.1).
- **Purpose:** define the goal or purpose of the benchmarking program and ensure this is explicit and included in all communication about the benchmarking program (8.1.2).
- **Strategy:** assess whether a benchmarking program is the most effective strategy to achieve their purpose (8.1.2).
- **Needs assessment:** assess whether existing benchmarks already meet all or part of the articulated goal (use Annex 1 as a starting point) (8.1.2).
- **Scope:** decide who or what is being benchmarked, including the sector or commodity, geography, type of entity, supply chain scope, and market presence (8.2).
- **Openness:** decide whether to target specific companies or initiatives with the benchmark and which ones, or to allow any qualifying entity to be evaluated (8.2.3).
- **Management:** determine who will manage the benchmarking program (8.3).
- **Claims:** develop a publicly available claims policy that ensures claims are grounded in, and consistent with the actual results and do not misrepresent the conclusions that can be drawn from the evaluation (8.7).

Determine the benchmark

- **Process:** set the process for determining the content of the benchmark (8.4).
- **Stakeholders:** determine whether and how to engage stakeholders in the content development and, where appropriate, follow good practices in the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code for how to engage stakeholders (8.4.1.1).
- **Technical experts:** define the role for technical experts in content development, including their role in decision-making (8.4.1.2).
- **Commonalities:** identify all the characteristics that entities that fall within the scope of the program have in common, as a starting point for determining what is relevant to include in the benchmark (8.4.4).
- **References:** use international reference documents to inform content and encourage consistency (8.4.3).
- **Definitions:** include definitions of key terms in the benchmark to support consistent interpretation (8.4.1.4).
- **Content:** for sustainability standards, include in the benchmark at least standards content criteria and criteria to assess the assurance mechanisms. Also, strongly consider criteria on governance, traceability and sustainability claims (8.4.2 and Annex 3).
- **Alternative models:** for sustainability standards and related tools, consider how to accommodate different standards models, including those with different scoring models, different assurance models, and different strategies for incentivizing uptake of more sustainable practices (8.4.4.1, 8.4.4.2).
- **Evaluation:** determine the evaluation structure of the benchmark (8.5).

Develop the benchmarking process

- **Effectiveness:** find a balance in the benchmarking process that achieves credible results in an accessible and cost-effective way (8.8.2).
- **Application:** determine the application process where benchmarking programs are open to qualifying entities (8.6.1).
- **Desk review:** carry out a review of detailed documentation about the entity's procedures and practices (8.6.1).
- **Additional data collection:** consider whether and how to gather additional information, such as an office visit or witness audit, to inform potential performance (8.6.1).
- **Benchmarking committee:** determine whether to put in place a benchmarking committee or some other mechanism (e.g. evaluator peer review) to support consistency of interpretation (8.6.1).
- **Public consultation:** consider a public consultation on draft evaluations and put in place the steps to do so where relevant (8.6.1).
- **Decision-making:** determine how decisions on benchmarked entities will be made (8.6.1).
- **Dispute resolution:** put in place a dispute resolution mechanism (8.6.1).
- **Alignment:** establish a process for monitoring continued alignment between the benchmark and the benchmarked entity over time (8.6.2).
- **Competence:** ensure that evaluators, decision-makers and others involved in the benchmarking process are competent for their work (8.8.1).

Additional considerations

- **Transparency:** make information about the benchmarking program, including how it works, governance, policies, decision-making and results publicly available and accessible (various clauses).
- **Impartiality:** manage for potential conflicts of interest in setting of the benchmark and implementation of the benchmarking program (8.3, 8.4.1.3, 8.6.1, 8.8.4).
- **Improvement:** capture insights and learning from implementation of the benchmarking program to inform its regular revision and improvement (8.8.3).



Corporate Fiber & Materials Benchmark

Insights. Action. Impact.

Find out more about the CFMB here:
textileexchange.org/cfmb



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