Sustainable methods of production have taken flight tremendously over the past 5 years, although they remain only a small proportion of the total amount of textiles produced globally. Brands are increasingly aware of the environmental and social challenges in the production of the textiles they use. One of the most noteworthy initiatives within the sustainable textile industry is the increasing use of certified organic raw materials. The world has seen the organic textile industry grow from a niche market to a mainstream activity. Textile Exchange has made a crucial contribution to the success of this movement.

The increasing popularity of organic textiles, and specifically organic cotton, has brought about an increasing professionalization of the organic value chain. Brands, factories and farmers are now communicating and using each other’s strengths and experiences to further improve the use and availability of organic cotton.

This increasing popularity does, however, create challenges for all who work in the industry. Having organic cotton certified throughout the value chain may seem a daunting task, but this traceability is crucial to knowing that final products actually contain organic fibre. Companies in the organic textile industry must remain vigilant about risks such as contamination with non-organic fibre. For this reason certification is an important element in making sure that consumers retain confidence in the concept of buying organic fibre.

The last years have seen a tremendous growth in the volume of organic cotton produced. This means that for organic cotton the future is bright, and it will become a stable element in the array of sustainable initiatives of which there are so many in the textile industry. Having said that, the industry is also looking at factors other than certified organic raw materials, including the general environmental impact of production, processing and recycling. Organic certification will remain the most important assurance of high quality and sustainable production methods for natural fibres such as cotton, but will share its place with initiatives that focus on reducing carbon footprints, environmental and social impact and recycling initiatives.

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