



Textile Exchange Organic Cotton Round Table

Briefing document: Consumer Engagement

The Organic Cotton Market

The 2012 Textile Exchange Market Report found that the organic cotton retail market grew approximately 24 percent between 2011 and 2012, showing clearly that the market is gaining ground.

Key Factors for Consumer Buy-in:

Research for the report identified the following key factors for gaining consumer buy in:

- **Integrity:** Consumers need to be confident of product's sustainability claims. At the same time, brands and retailers are looking for fact-based information to make verifiable claims. Robust standards and certification will continue to be a top priority.
- **Marketing Tools and Messages:** Brands and retailers told us in the survey that marketing sustainable products provides benefits and challenges. Benefits include: increased sales, social media chatter, more positive reviews and a "halo effect" to other products. Challenges centered on concern for conventional product comparisons, the need for facts and the crafting of simple, compelling messages. The top three marketing initiatives were done through hangtags, online through social media and direct marketing and catalogs.
- **Product on the Shelf:** Merchandise must be on the shelf for customers to see it, want it and buy it. Products have to feel and look good.

The Multi Stakeholder Initiative: Consumer buy-in needs persistence

The findings from the Market Report were supported by the Textile Exchange Multi Stakeholder¹ Interviews which identified consumer engagement as a key issue. The common theme that emerged was that Consumer buy-in needs persistence. Consumers are difficult to convert but when they do understand the benefits are great. We need to share best practice marketing and communications, while recognising some consumer make a passive choice.

¹The Textile Exchange Multi Stakeholder Interviews originated in the successful use of the technique by the research and consulting firm Change Agency in a range of commodities. The technique is to find organisations which are successful in a particular endeavour – in this case, bringing organic cotton to the retail market – and ask them all the same set of questions in structured telephone interviews. 25 interviews were carried out and transcripts of interviewed were analysed and common themes identified.

Organic Cotton Roundtable Open Forum

The Organic Cotton Roundtable Open Forum event in Istanbul will showcase successful organic cotton marketing campaigns and host a panel discussion covering local and global markets, consumer pricing models, awareness raising campaigns and much more. Confirmed speakers include:

- Vijayalakshmi Nachia, Ethicus, India
- Ingrid Zeegers, C&A, Europe/Global
- Candice Reffe, Eileen Fisher US/Global
- Sarah Compton, Soil Association
- Stefan Dierks, Tchibo Germany/Europe

The panel Q&A will be followed by a breakout session exploring the following questions:

1. What sort of marketing / consumer outreach is needed for organic cotton?
2. How could we work together to improve consumer awareness about organic cotton?
3. How could TE help?