TEXTILE SOURCING

Environmental and Social Sustainable Development
China - India - Bangladesh - Ethiopia

Elise Luring
A textile fair as shown on the frontpage is sometimes overwhelming. The amount of quality labels and certifications can be confusing and misleading. Quality labels and certificates are a good tool to source environmental and social sustainable textiles, but it should be used in the right way. All labels provide development because the requirements are above the minimums. Still, there are several aspects that influence the impact of this development.

It is easier to measure the influences of environmental development because this is shown with exact numbers of for example chemical use or water waste. Social development is harder to measure. It is important to gain trust and build a good relationship with the supplier to ensure continuous development.

While sourcing, it is important to use first degree certification based on international standards to increase the reliability. Besides, fashion brands should request all documents and collaborate with suppliers. For high-risk countries as China, India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia this is even more important. In some cases the requirements are accepted by their local laws, but are not well implemented at the factories.

For suppliers it requires a lot of time and money to obtain certifications depending the standard, location, complexity, initial compliance and number of transaction certificates. However, it gives them a good position within the market. The costs translated in the buying prices of textile for fashion brands are low and not a reason to choose for fabrics without certifications.

Unreliable certificates can cause reputational, compliance and supply chain risks for fashion brands. This manual supports sourcing managers to make the right sourcing decisions in China, India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia according to the right certificates. Of course the decision should be based on the company values.

Elise Luring
CONTENTS

Textile Sourcing Tips ................................................................. 5
Sourcing Challenges China .......................................................... 7
Sourcing Challenges India ............................................................ 9
Sourcing Challenges Bangladesh .................................................. 11
Sourcing Challenges Ethiopia ...................................................... 13
Certificates Environmental .......................................................... 15
Certificates Social ........................................................................ 19
Certificates Environmental & Social ............................................ 21
Contact ........................................................................................ 28
References ................................................................................... 29

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Fashion and Management
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This manual is made in January 2015. New (reliable) certifications may have been added and challenges in the production countries may have been improved or are different. For updates: please contact (see page 26)

Elise Luring
TEXTILE SOURCING TIPS

Understanding the whole supply chain
- What: It is important to know all subcontractors because environmental and social problems can be everywhere within the supply chain.
- How: Request all documents of the specific material. Transaction Certificates are really important in this case because they show that other subcontractors are also certified. These documents should be checked accurately on validity and product descriptions.

Sourcing products with first-degree certificates according to international standards
- What: It ensures independent control with equal standards.
- How: Check the control system of the particular certification at the certification body.

Identify risks and prepare a risk management plan
- What: Identify possible risks before starting a new collaboration with a supplier and make a risk management plan before something happens.
- How: Ask critical questions before doing business with a new supplier. Are you prepared for all risks?

Check if all European requirements are implemented correctly
- What: Certificates should be related to International/European requirements.
- How: Check if the local laws of the production country are corresponding with the certification requirements and if they are implemented correctly in the textile factory.
TEXTILE SOURCING TIPS

Build relationships

- **What:** Auditing is very important, but this does not generally provide development. The supplier should be willing to develop together with you.
- **How:** Audits should not be just checklist. It is about building trust and getting the right information to find the underlying issue and solve it together. Most important is to be transparent with the supplier and have open and clear communication.

Cooperate

- **What:** Creating a bigger community gives the opportunity to develop together.
- **How:** Cooperate with business associations, trade unions and multi-stakeholder initiatives.

 предусматривает создание большего сообщества, что дает возможность развиваться вместе.
- **Как:** Социализируйтесь с бизнес-ассоциациями, профсоюзами и многосторонними инициативами.

Première Vision Paris in February 2012 (TEXDATA, Denim by Première Vision continues its expedition in Asia, and launches: DENIM BY PREMIÈRE VISION ASIA, 2012)
Environmental

Waste and pollution
- **What**: Due to the fast growth of the textile industry in China, waste and pollution is not yet well managed. Nevertheless, currently China is one of the production countries where sustainability is a high focus point on the agenda.
- **How to prevent**: Use first-degree environmental certificates that covers these issues and collaborate with the supplier to improve this together.
SOURCING CHALLENGES CHINA

Social

Subcontractors in prisons
- *What:* Due to labour shortage there are textile factories in prisons, used for subcontracting. It is hard to control these circumstances.
- *How to prevent:* The subcontractors of suppliers in China need to be controlled to ensure freely chosen employment by requesting Transaction Certificates.

Child labour in small sized factories
- *What:* Labour shortage cause some child labour in small sized factories.
- *How to prevent:* It is better to source at medium to large factories, because small factories cause higher risks. It is also good to join trade unions to solve this problem.

No freedom of association and incomplete contracts
- *What:* The only association in China, All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), is from the state itself and therefore not independent. Besides, some factories have workers that are provided by staffing agencies to avoid legal responsibilities.
- *How to prevent:* Educate the workers about their rights by cooperating with unions.

Excessive overtime to earn a living wage
- *What:* Workers are often paid per piece and earn a living wage by working overtime.
- *How to prevent:* Check the working hours and contract documents. And, collaborate with association to improve the minimum wages and over-time hours payment.

A lot of small accidents in small factories
- *What:* Due to long working hours a lot of small accidents are reported. Cotton dust, chemical use and noise is also a problem at the textile factories in China.
- *How to prevent:* Use the right certificates against health and safety in the textile factory and prevent last minute changes to minimize working hours.
Environmental regulations are not well implemented

- **What:** The regulations of India regarding environmental protection are good, but they are not well imposed in textile factories. They should also implement this in the production of fibres and during spinning, weaving and finishing of textiles.
- **How to prevent:** The textile certificates for India should include all processes.

“Most mills in Tamil Nadu are like guarded fortresses with high walls and fencing” (SOMO & ICN, Flawed Fabrics: The abuse of girls and women workers in the South Indian textile industry, 2014, p. 30)
SOURCING CHALLENGES INDIA

Social

No awareness of worker rights
- What: Often there are no contracts to avoid that workers claim their rights. Most of the time, they do not have enough time to read the contract or do not understand it and do not receive a copy. Participating in trade unions will be punished.
- How to prevent: Raising awareness of trade unions by cooperating with business associations.

Child labour
- What: The phenomenon called ‘Sumangali’, stands for unmarried girls of 14-15 working in spinning mills. They sleep in dirty rooms, undergo excessive work pressure and harassment. A lot of desperate families still agree with this arrangement.
- How to prevent: Trade unions can improve this, so cooperate with them.

‘Un-skilled’ minimum wage
- What: Commonly, the Indian minimum wage uses conservative figures and is often based on skills. Most factory workers remain in the category ‘un-skilled’, which is the lowest.
- How to prevent: Cooperate with trade unions and business associations for improvement.

Long working hours
- What: Workers often work from 7pm until 10pm and are not aware of their rights.
- How to prevent: Cooperate with trade unions and business associations to raise awareness, prevent last-minute changes and have a good time-schedule with the supplier.

Lack of training in health and safety for workers
- What: Often, the mills are hot and with a high level of humidity. Most workers do not have had training about health and safety.
- How to prevent: Raise awareness about the training by cooperating with trade unions.
Environmental

Water waste

- **What**: The rivers in Bangladesh tell you what colours are in fashion. Many rice fields are polluted and fish die.
- **How to prevent**: Using first-degree controlled certificates for eco-friendly dyeing.
SOURCING CHALLENGES BANGLADESH

Social

*Excessive overtime*
- **What:** Some workers work 180 hours per week.
- **How to prevent:** Fashion brands could support less working hours by preventing last-minute changes and work on a good time-schedule with the supplier.

*Discrimination in work*
- **What:** The law of Bangladesh prohibits discrimination, but it is reported that it is still seen a lot in textile production factories in Bangladesh.
- **How to prevent:** Cooperate with trade unions to raise awareness and educate.

*Child labour*
- **What:** No workers birth certificates or false ones, makes reducing child labour hard.
- **How to prevent:** Check the birth certificates accurately.

*No support to join trade unions and lack of knowledge about workers rights*
- **What:** Factories do not support to join trade unions.
- **How to prevent:** The workers need to be educated in their rights. This can be supported by cooperating with business associations.

*Low minimum wages*
- **What:** Legal minimum wages are far below living wages. They tried to increase this, but often only with a bonus payment system that is not enough.
- **How to prevent:** Cooperate with business associations and trade unions.

*Unsafe workingplaces*
- **What:** Bangladesh has one of the largest textile factories. Factories are often built fast as demand is growing fast. This lead to unsafe structures and bad electric systems.
- **How to prevent:** Join business associations and prepare a risk management plan.
Environmental
No or bad water containing system

What: Ethiopia has good access to water from their lakes, rivers and rainy seasons, but they have issues in containing this water. This is a big problem as the production of cotton, that is one of their main products, uses a lot of water.

How to prevent: Use certificates that covers this problem and collaborate with the supplier to improve this.

Cotton market in Konso. (National Parks Worldwide, Ethiopia people, n.d.)
SOURCING CHALLENGES ETHIOPIA

Social

*Discrimination in work*
- **What:** Violence and societal discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, based on sexual orientation and against persons with HIV/AIDS is reported. Besides, there are clashes between ethnic minorities.
- **How to prevent:** Cooperate with trade unions to raise awareness and educate.

*Child labour*
- **What:** The minimum age is 14 year according to the local law. Children between age 14 and 18 are not allowed to do hazardous or night work. However, it is reported that child labour consists in Ethiopia.
- **How to prevent:** Trade unions can prevent this, so cooperate with them.

*No support to join trade unions*
- **What:** The local law prohibits anonymous donations to NGO’s and there should be a minimum of 10 workers to form a union. Joining a union can be punished with arrests or harassment.
- **How to prevent:** The workers need to be educated in their rights. This can be supported by cooperating with business associations.

*Lowest wages*
- **What:** Minimum wages do not exist in the local law for the private sector. Workers in the textile industry earn € 36 - € 50, less than Bangladesh, which makes Ethiopia an interesting country for fashion brands. It is not enough for a living wage.
- **How to prevent:** Cooperate with business associations and trade unions.

*Fast growing demand*
- **What:** Building construction is a focus point because Ethiopia could grow too fast, which will lead to the same unsafe building constructions as in Bangladesh.
- **How to prevent:** Business associations are trying to prevent this already.
Natural dyes. (One small stitch, Colour experiments, 2011)

Elise Luring
### China - India - Bangladesh - Ethiopia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Certification body</th>
<th>Covers</th>
<th>Gaps &amp; Solutions</th>
<th>Extra</th>
<th>Applied for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organic 100 Content Standard</td>
<td>95% or more needs to be organic fibres (cotton, wool, linen, hemp, silk)</td>
<td>Control Union, IMO, Ecocert, ETKO, ICEA, CERET Cert, LETIS</td>
<td>Farm level</td>
<td>Does not cover all processes and 5% could still be any other fibre. Ask all product descriptions!</td>
<td>This is the new ‘OE 100 standard’. In case of the old one, check validity date!</td>
<td>Ethiopia’s cotton farms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Certification body</th>
<th>Covers</th>
<th>Gaps &amp; Solutions</th>
<th>Extra</th>
<th>Applied for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OEKO-Tex Standard 100</td>
<td>Natural and man-made textiles</td>
<td>Hohenstein and Testex (China)</td>
<td>Use of harmfull substances in the whole supply chain</td>
<td>It test the harmfull substances in textiles. It does not say anything about other environmental issues as waste and water/energy use.</td>
<td>Valid for one year: check validity date!</td>
<td>Textiles used directly on the body and baby and childrens clothes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### China - India - Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Certification body</th>
<th>Covers</th>
<th>Gaps &amp; Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organic Blended Content Standard</td>
<td>Minimum 5 percent organic cotton blended with other raw materials (percentage in label)</td>
<td>Control Union, IMO, Ecocert, ETKO, ICEA, CERET Cert, LETIS</td>
<td>Farm level</td>
<td>The other 95% raw material is not clear at this certification. It is important to request the product description. Besides, it is only tested on farm level. Other processes are not included. Combining labels could cover all. Partly biologic textiles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Certification body</th>
<th>Covers</th>
<th>Gaps &amp; Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU Ecolabel</td>
<td>Natural and man-made textiles</td>
<td>SMK</td>
<td></td>
<td>Valid for three to five year. Please check! And, please check product description to see what especially is less harmful. All textiles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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17

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>OEKO-Tex Standard 100 plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Natural and man-made textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification body</td>
<td>Testex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers</td>
<td>Production level and harmful substances in finished products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps &amp; Solutions</td>
<td>Valid for one year. Please check validity date!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for</td>
<td>OEKO-Tex Standard 100 including OEKO-Tex Standard 1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CERTIFICATES

SOCIAL

Grassroots. (Humanitees, Change, n.d.)

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### China - India - Bangladesh - Ethiopia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name</strong></th>
<th>SA 8000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material</strong></td>
<td>Natural and man-made textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certification body</strong></td>
<td>SAAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covers</strong></td>
<td>Production Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gaps &amp; Solutions</strong></td>
<td>Does not include any environmental aspects. A product may have more quality labels. So, this can be combined to have both environmental and social aspects covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applied for</strong></td>
<td>Suppliers that focus on social responsible production of textiles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organic Cotton. (Coroflot, ATHANGUDI - contemporary saris in organic cotton, n.d.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Global Organic Textile Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Natural textiles (cotton, wool, silk, flax, hemp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification body</td>
<td>Soil Association Certification, OTCO, OneCert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers</td>
<td>Whole supply chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps &amp; Solutions</td>
<td>Stronger in environmental aspects as this is easier to test. But, this quality label is one of the best and complete labels there is at the moment. But, at the moment only available for natural textiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for</td>
<td>Natural textiles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elise Luring
### China - India - Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Global Recycle Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Recycled textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification body</td>
<td>IFOAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers</td>
<td>Recycled raw materials processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps &amp; Solutions</td>
<td>Please check the percentage of recycled materials on the Recycled Materials Document that the manufacturer should have. This is not necessarily 100 percent. Use of waste from the manufacturing process is seen as efficient working, not recycling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Applied for**

- Recycled textiles

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Oeko-Tex Sustainable Textile Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Natural and man-made textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification body</td>
<td>Hohenstein and Testex (China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers</td>
<td>Production level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps &amp; Solutions</td>
<td>Valid for three years, please check validity date! This certification is in an early stage. Not many manufacturers are certified with this label yet. A lot of manufacturers are in the certification process for this label.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Applied for**

- All materials. Next higher step for OEKO-Tex
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Better Cotton Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification body</td>
<td>ISEAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers</td>
<td>Farm level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps &amp; Solutions</td>
<td>Does not cover all processes, but only at farm level. Can be combined with other quality labels to certify the whole process. Besides, valid for one year: check validity date!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for</td>
<td>Cotton from China and India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td>Fair Trade Certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material</strong></td>
<td>Cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certification body</strong></td>
<td>FLOCERT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covers</strong></td>
<td>Whole supply chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gaps &amp; Solutions</strong></td>
<td>Stronger in social aspects, so better to combine with another environmental quality label.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applied for</strong></td>
<td>Cotton from India and Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td>Cotton Made in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material</strong></td>
<td>Cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certification body</strong></td>
<td>EcoCert, AfriCert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covers</strong></td>
<td>Farm level (Slavery, Human Trafficking, Child Labour, Hazardous Pesticides)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gaps &amp; Solutions</strong></td>
<td>New in Ethiopia. Still needs to be developed for this country, but is well recognized by other countries in Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applied for</strong></td>
<td>Ethiopia’s cotton farmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If anything is unclear or more information is needed to make the right environmental and social sustainable sourcing decisions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly!

luring.elise@gmail.com
0031 (0)623049509
Elise Luring
REFERENCES

Certificates

☐ *Goede Waar, Kleding Keurmerken.* From: https://www.goedewaar.nl/keurmerken-etc/kleding-keurmerken-etc [retrieved 27 September 2014].
Photos

- Theuws, M., Overeem, P., 2014, Flawed Fabrics: The abuse of girls and women workers in the South Indian textile industry, Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, Amsterdam & India Committee of the Netherlands, Utrecht

Other information

- Own research document (Textile Sourcing, To What Extent Does Sourcing Certified Textile Suppliers, Provide Reliable Environmental and Social Sustainable Development?, 2015)