



Soil Association

healthy soil, healthy people, healthy planet



A joint Soil Association and Global Organic Textile Standard campaign

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Cutting through eco-confusion: World's first global organic cotton campaign launches at Hong Kong textiles conference

Major players in the international textiles industry are today challenged to sign up to organic – the most reliable and trustworthy standard of sustainable textiles production.

Speaking at the Sustainable Textiles Conference in Hong Kong, Lord Peter Melchett – Policy Director of the UK's Soil Association – asked textile industry leaders: "Have you cottoned on yet?"

Echoing the slogan of the campaign and website launched today (www.cottonedon.org), Lord Melchett called on the industry to put a halt to the global environmental damage and threats to cotton farmers' livelihoods caused by conventional cotton farming and processing.



Up to 80% of world cotton production currently comes from Genetically Modified (GM) crops (with 95% of the seed in India controlled by one company: Monsanto). In addition, more than U.S. \$3 billion worth of pesticides that can cause a variety of risks to humans and the environment were used on conventional cotton in 2010.

At the same time, worldwide demand for organic cotton is set to grow by at least 10% in 2011-2012.

But some brands are failing to commit to organic standards, opting instead for easier, lower-level schemes or worse – nothing at all. Without commitment from brands, it is the farmers and the environment that bear the social, environmental and economic risks associated with cotton production:



"Organic cotton is proven to deliver positive benefits for people and the environment. When it comes to making sustainability claims you can trust, nothing beats it." Lord Peter Melchett, Policy Director, Soil Association

The campaign is launched by the Soil Association and the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), the leading standard for organic textile processing.

The campaign asks brands as well as consumers and NGOs to "cotton on" to organic cotton production and processing, by signing up on the new micro-site www.cottonedon.org, uniting supporters of sustainable cotton across the globe.



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The campaign is detailed in a briefing paper released today, "Have You Cottoned On Yet?", which spells out the 5 unique benefits of organic production

1. Give control to farmers, not GM companies

Organic farmers don't have their choices controlled by GM companies

2. Eliminate hazardous synthetic pesticides

Organic cotton doesn't use dangerous pesticides, protecting farmers' lives and the environment

3. Help farmers feed their families

Organic cotton enables farmers to grow other crops for food and income

4. Save precious water

Organic cotton uses less water, preserving a scarce and precious resource for the future

5. Combat climate change

Organic cotton farming uses less energy and healthy organic soils store more CO²

Moreover the processing aspect is pointed out. "Consumers can be sure that a product carrying the GOTS symbol is not only produced with a minimum of 95% organic fibre content but is also processed to strict environmental and social criteria", says Claudia Kersten, GOTS Marketing Director.

To download the briefing paper and/or sign on to the "Cotton On" campaign, visit www.cottonedon.org.

ENDS

For all enquiries + pictures contact: Josh Stride | Press & e-Communications Officer | Soil Association | JStride@soilassociation.org
+44 (0)117 314 5170 | (0)7717 802 183

Notes for Editors:

About GOTS:

The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) was developed by the Organic Trade Association (USA), IVN (Germany), Soil Association (UK) and Japan Organic Cotton Association -JOCA (Japan) and launched in 2006. The aim was to define globally recognised standards for processing organic fibre, in order to provide credible assurance to consumers. Today GOTS is recognised as the gold standard for organic textiles, ensuring both social and environmental responsibility. There are approximately 3000 businesses certified to GOTS in 55 countries by 15 certification bodies.
www.global-standard.org

About the Sustainable Textiles Conference, Hong Kong 4th-5th Oct 2012:

The Sustainable Textiles Conference is hosted by Textile Exchange, EcoTextile News, Messe Frankfurt, and Planet Textiles and is the global gathering of industry leaders representing the entire value chain from fibre to fashion, discussing sustainability challenges and solutions. The conference marks the 10th anniversary of Textile Exchange which will also be hosting the inaugural meeting of the Organic Cotton Round Table in Hong Kong on **October 3rd**. www.textileexchange.org



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About the Soil Association:

The Soil Association was founded in the UK in 1946 as a charity concerned with researching and promoting agricultural, environmental and human health. Today the Soil Association is a membership charity and NGO, working alongside its subsidiary, Soil Association Certification Ltd, which since 1973 has been certifying organic farms and businesses. The Soil Association has been involved in the organic textiles industry for over 10 years and played a leading role in the development of the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), and is a 25% stakeholder in the standard. www.soilassociation.org.

Photos: Cotton - Jorg Bothling, provided by Remei AG. Organic jeans - Monkee Genes.