Successes, Challenges and Demands on Identity Cottons: Where Are We, and Where Are We Headed?

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A brief history of the modern sustainability movement

Let’s go back to the 19th century. The Industrial Revolution brought great advances in technology like railroads, modern cities, and factories which all relied on energy sources like oil and coal. Textiles in Europe, started the process.

Of course, these advancements all came with a price: overpopulation, pollution, climate change. In reaction to these negative effects, a movement focused on sustainability and environmental protection grew.

Here’s where our timeline begins.

1892

John Muir is often called “the Father of National Parks.” Muir is often known for his work co-founding the Sierra Club in 1892.

At the time, the Sierra Club was meant for lovers of the outdoors. Some of their early work focused on protecting Yosemite National Park.
What caused this?

1901
In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt became president. Amongst other things, Roosevelt became well-known for his passion for nature and conservation. He was heavily influenced by John Muir.

During his presidency, he created the United States Forest Service and established 150 national forests, 51 federal bird reserves, 4 national game reserves, 5 national parks, and 81 national monuments.

1949
After World War II, the U.N. held the very first conservation conference. The U.N. Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources took place in 1949.

Hundreds of experts from around the world gathered to discuss how to conserve resources like land, water, wildlife, and energy.

1955
Congress enacted the Air Pollution Act in 1955. This act simply focused on researching the effects of air pollution and didn’t include other items for the government or companies to act upon.
What Caused This?

1969

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was established in 1969, as a result of the growing sustainability movement.

NEPA requires all executive federal agencies to perform environmental assessments and environmental impact statements.

1970

In 1970, we celebrated the very first “Earth Day” which took place on April 22nd.

In the same year, the U.S. government created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and passed the Clean Air Act.

The EPA was formed by executive order to drive environmental research and education, as well as enforcing environmental standards and laws.
What Caused This?

In 1970, the EPA administered a wide expansion to the Clean Air Act first passed into law in 1963. The 1970 amendments expanded the Clean Air Act’s power and required federal and state regulations for pollutants.

1972

The Clean Water Act, administered by the EPA, was passed in 1972. Its focuses are on preventing water pollution, improving wastewater treatment, and protecting the wetlands.

In the same year, the U.N. held their Conference on the Human Environment. After the 1949 U.N. Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources, this 1972 conference was one of the earliest global meetings to discuss the environment, conservation, and sustainability.

As a result of the conference, the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) was formed. UNEP’s purpose to assist developing countries in creating sustainable and environmentally-friendly policies.
What Caused This?

1987

In 1987, the U.N. published *Our Common Future*, a well-known paper also known as the *Brundtland Report*. The paper’s goal was to encourage countries to work together on sustainable development.

1993

The evolution of “green brands” begin. Businesses started using their environmental focus as a selling point. *Fortune* publishes a list of “Top 10 Companies in Environmental Management.”

1994

John Elkington coined the term “Triple Bottom Line” to clarify sustainability as the integration of social, economic and environmental value.

1999

The Dow Jones Sustainability World Index, or DJSI World, is a global index consisting of the top 10% of the largest 2,500 stocks in the S&P Global Broad Market Index based on their sustainability and environmental practices.

2002

The European Food Safety Authority was created, primarily to monitor GMO’s.

2015

The U.N. General Assembly published their Sustainable Development Goals. The goals are set to be achieved by the year 2030. Several of the 17 goals, like “Goal #6: Clean Water and Sanitation” and “Goal #7: Affordable and Clean Energy” focus on environmental sustainability issues.

*And lest we forget…*

A growing sentiment and demand from the consumers for products that are traceable, environmentally friendly, ethically produced and economically sound.
And so for cotton...

Initiatives have evolved...!!!
What are Identity Cottons?

- World cotton production is increasingly identified in marketing channels by the program or initiative under which it is produced. Therefore, these programs or initiatives are called **identity programs**.

- **Preferred Cotton** (pCotton) is **cotton** that is ecologically and/or socially progressive because it has more sustainable properties in comparison to other conventional options. **Cottons** currently defined by Textile Exchange as **preferred** include: Organic Fair Trade, Organic, Fair Trade, Better **Cotton** Initiative (BCI) and its equivalencies (myBMP and ABRAPA), **Cotton** made in Africa (CmiA), the REEL **Cotton** Program (REEL) and recycled **cotton**.
Successes..

- Although in competition in many ways, these initiatives defend and hopefully increase global market share of cotton.
  - Cotton’s actual impacts are more accurately reported.
  - Potential opportunities for carbon sequestration.
- Continuous improvement has been accelerated.
  - On farm technologies and adoptions to be more efficient with inputs and data collection.
    - Ex: Field Print Calculator, MyFarms, Cool Farms, John Deere Program, etc....
  - Opportunities to take cotton out of the commodity stigma
  - Traceability demands and improvements to supply chain communication and abilities
Challenges...

- Confusion to the brands, retailers and consumers
  - What initiatives are for me?
  - What are the differences?
- “Greenwashing”
- Traceability??
Some help to the challenges

- S.A.C. (Sustainable Apparel Coalition)
- “Forum for The Future”
  - Cotton 2040
  - CottonUp Guide
- Textile Exchange
  - Association of “Sustainable Cotton Initiatives”.. Vancouver meeting
  - Preferred Cotton Matrix
  - Sustainable Cotton 2025 Challenge
Cotton 2040
The Cotton 2040 initiative exists to integrate and accelerate action on critical issues to mainstream sustainably grown cotton. We do this by:

**Driving the uptake of sustainable cotton with brands and retailers**, by helping apparel industry professionals develop and implement sourcing strategies, in particular across multiple sustainable cotton standards such as organic, Fairtrade, the Better Cotton Initiative, amongst others. In June 2018, we launched the CottonUP guide to support brands and retailers take the key steps to sourcing sustainable cotton and fast track progress.

**Making traceability of cotton easier** and more comparable for brands and retailers looking to source across the different sustainable cotton standards, by working with the standards on identifying areas where collaboration can have the most impact.

**Building resilience for millions of smallholder cotton farmers** by working with brands, retailers, NGOs, standards and others to equip farmers with the skills, practices and enabling structures to adapt, increase levels of independence and grow cotton sustainably. We are currently identifying the areas where greater alignment of existing activities could make a real difference to smallholders.
What is Textile Exchange?

- **Textile Exchange** is a global non-profit that works closely with our members to drive industry transformation in preferred fibers, integrity and standards and responsible supply networks.

- Textile Exchange identifies and shares best practices regarding farming, materials, processing, traceability, and product end-of-life in order to create positive impacts on water, soil, air, animals, and the human population created around the world by the textile industry.

- Members include 210 companies and organizations from more than 25 countries. Incorporated in 2002, Textile Exchange has staff and ambassadors based in 11 countries.

- Our members include textile suppliers, service providers, manufacturers, brands and retailers, and farmers.

- We focus on three core areas: Fiber and Materials, Integrity and Standards, and Supply Network.
Our Standards


The Organic Content Standard tracks certified organic material from the farm to the final product.

The Recycled Claim Standard verifies recycled input material and tracks it from input to the final product.

The Global Recycled Standard verified recycled input material, tracks it from input to the final product, and also ensures responsible social, environmental practices and chemical use through production.

The Content Claim Standard is the chain of custody verification used in all TE standards. On its own, the CCS can be used to verify any claimed material through any supply chain.
Preferred Cotton Matrix

Overview

The Dual Bottom Line: The social and environmental benefits of conventional cotton production are outweighed by the negative environmental and economic impacts of Conventional cotton. The Conventional Cotton project aims to reduce the environmental impact of cotton production and to improve the living conditions of cotton farmers.

Objectives

- To increase the area of sustainable and environmentally friendly cotton production.
- To improve the living conditions of cotton farmers.
- To increase the profitability of cotton production.
- To reduce the environmental impact of cotton production.

Positioning Countries (2016/17 unless otherwise stated)

Table 1

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>AERAPPA</th>
<th>BASF G3</th>
<th>Better Cotton Initiative</th>
<th>Cleaner Cotton</th>
<th>CoCoA</th>
<th>Fairtrade</th>
<th>Field to Market</th>
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Growth in production (2016/17 - 2018/19)

- Projected growth in production: 10%
- Projected stable yield: 40.7 bales
- Projected stable yield: 0.75 US cents

Rainfed Irrigated

- 50% irrigated, 50% rainfed
- Conversion: 50% irrigated to 50% rainfed

Water Management

- Conserve limited water resources and improve irrigation efficiency
- Use water wisely and efficiently
- Implement water-saving technologies
- Promote efficient and sustainable water use
- Participate in water management and conservation activities
- Promote water conservation and efficiency
- Promote water sustainability

References

- MySMP certification is a standard for sustainable and environmentally friendly cotton production.
- Conventional cotton production is projected to account for 50% of the world's cotton production.
- ISCC (International Sustainability and Carbon Certification) is a standard for sustainable cotton production.
WHAT IS THE 2025 SUSTAINABLE COTTON CHALLENGE?

The 2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge serves as a cornerstone for change in the apparel and textile industry by encouraging businesses to transition to sustainable cotton practices.
2025 SCC Participating Initiatives

- Brands and retailers joining the challenge and committing to source more sustainable cotton, can choose from sources that are included on Textile Exchange’s list of recognized organic and sustainable cotton initiatives. These initiatives include,

  - ABRAPA, BASF e3, Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Cleaner Cotton, Cotton made in Africa (CmiA), Fairtrade, Cleaner Cotton, Organic, Fairtrade Organic, Field to Market, ISCC, myBMP, Organic, Recycled cotton (that is certified to an independently verifiable standard such as the Global Recycled Standard (GRS) or the Recycled Claim Standard (RCS)), REEL Cotton, Regenerative Cotton and Transitional Cotton. *Denotes initiatives being Benchmarked starting in 2019.*
Is that have accepted the 2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge are:

[Logos of various companies]
Where are we headed?
What brands are looking for...

A story with direct relationships and transparency

Content Claims with data

“Sleep well” Sustainable Inventory with due diligence
Where are we headed?

What are the “asks”?

- More traceability and transparency
- More demand for sustainable to regenerative practices
- Carbon and other “Impact Credits”
- More direct links from “field to fashion”
- More direct education to the consumer
Opportunities...

- More direct business relationships with brands/retailers
  - CSR, Data, KPI’s, SDG’s... “stories to tell”
- Communication
  - Cross collaboration between initiatives
    - Delta Project
    - Textile Exchange Initiative Association
    - Forum For The Future
    - ICAC
- Supply Chain Improvement
  - Share knowledge and systems
  - Communicate transparency to the brands/retailers/consumers
- Most importantly... *A better future for cotton and the industry.*
Thank you for your attention!