

Advances in the traceability of organic cotton

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Over the past years, the number of cotton garments with “organic cotton” label have seen a significant increase as part of the growing sustainability trend in the fashion industry. Brands aiming to make a positive impact on the environment and committed to social responsibility are creating and promoting new organic cotton lines.

Consumers are increasingly making choices to ensure the well-being of our planet and are willing to pay more for an organic cotton item which guarantees sustainable and ethical production. But the journey of cotton from field to store is highly complex and transparency in the cotton supply chain has become a major challenge to sustainability governance for brands. Current methods relying on certifications and external labels cannot guarantee full traceability, making it a challenge to reliably trace the origin of cotton and determine the livelihoods of the cotton farmers. “Awareness of where and how products are made is a crucial first step towards embracing sustainable and ethical standards” says Michela Puddu, CEO and co-founder at Haelixa.



But how can one be sure that the organic cotton label on a T-shirt is truly representing what we buy? With the goal of ensuring organic cotton supply chain transparency and integrity, Haelixa has developed a solution to trace cotton fibers along the entire supply chain. Among the various initiatives that Haelixa is joining to foster transparency in the industry, the company took part in a pioneering new project, called the Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot. The pilot is testing the combination of cutting-edge technologies including physical in-product markers and blockchain to trace organic cotton through its value chain. The pilot was created through a partnership between Fashion for Good, C&A Foundation, the Organic Cotton Accelerator (OCA), and lead technical partner Bext360. The first phase of the project was made possible with the support of Pratibha Syntex, Kering, Zalando, PVH Corp., C&A and other technical partners (Tailorlux, IN-Code Technologies), a unique mix of technology providers, philanthropic partners, multi-brand platforms, as well as brands, retailers and manufacturers all working in a collaborative manner to drive traceability in the organic cotton industry.



Haelixa and Bext360 were present on the field for the execution of this pilot project in India. The project involved applying Haelixa DNA tracers at different stages of organic cotton procurement. Distinct and unique DNA markers were used to distinguish individual farmers and locations. With the joint effort of the involved partners a complete tracing solution is being build, to serve all stakeholders in the textile industry. "Our technology is not only able to identify genuine organic cotton products, but also their farm of provenance as well as each manufacturer involved in the garment supply chain, ensuring true traceability" says Punit Mehra, Product Manager at Haelixa.



Punit Mehra, Product Manager at Haelixa during the pilot project with the local partners at a gin facility in India.

The second phase of the project will allow to trace organic cotton until the retail level, ensuring end-to-end supply chain control. "Now that we have successfully traced organic cotton from farm to gin, we are confident that in the next phase will be able to make the leap from gin to consumer, eventually making it possible to swiftly and efficiently trace organic cotton straight from the farm to the consumer. This is good for farmers, good for consumers, and good for the entire industry," indicates Daniel Jones, founder and CEO of Bext360.

The Haelixa cotton traceability kit is just one of a series of solutions dedicated to ensuring greater supply chain transparency. "Initiatives like this hold the promise to transform the apparel and textile industry by providing reliable, effective tools to take action and introduce sustainable supply chain management practices. We invite all industry stakeholders to join us so that we can turn transparency into a standard industry practice" adds Michela Puddu.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.haelixa.com/product-identification.html>

Transparency is in our DNA!