

Textiles - an update from the organic market report 2011

Report highlights organic textile boom

UK retail sales of organic textiles grew by an estimated 7.8% in 2010 according to the Soil Association, the UK's leading certifier of organic textiles and one of the world's foremost certifiers to Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS).

The latest data for the UK organic market, including textile sales, will be published in the Soil Association's Organic Market Report 2011 at the end of March 2011. It reports that:

- New research by Soil Association Certification reveals the turnover of certified operators grew a whopping 35% in 2010, reaching £12 million and defying the recession
- Sales of certified, uncertified and blended organic textiles are up 7.8%
- Organic cotton accounts for around 91% of UK organic textile sales. The remainder consists of wool, linen and other fibres
- Worldwide, GOTS licensees are up from 27 just five years ago, to 2,750 across five continents

// organic textile retail sales up 7.8% //

// last year organic turnover of our licensees increased 35% //

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Our thanks to Martin Cottingham and all our licensees who've helped with case studies.



Soil Association

Company profile – Organics for Kids

Organics for Kids has been producing organic babywear since 2004. Its entire range is manufactured in the UK, using organic cotton from Turkey. Turnover increased by 40% in the year to September 2010, and further growth of 20-40% is anticipated in 2011.

“A growing awareness of issues around ethical purchasing in the UK has been important to our growth,” says chief executive Jane Shepherd. “It’s clear that consumers won’t buy something unless they like the style, but there are many wonderful brands out there and for those consumers who also want to be able to make positive ethical purchasing decisions, we help them to do that.”

Products

Organics for Kids came into being as a result of a long-held passion for textiles, combined with a keen interest in environmental solutions. “Given some of the serious environmental and human problems associated with non-organic cotton growing, organic cotton seemed like a really good place to start,” explains Jane Shepherd:

“Our entire supply chain is certified organic to Global Organic Textile Standard, which gives consumers the confidence to know that from field to finished product, the garment they buy has been ethically sourced and produced.”

Organics for Kids products consist mainly of garments such as romper suits, sleepsuits, jackets and trousers – with additional accessories such as bibs, bonnets and blankets. Romper suits are the biggest-selling line and ‘Spotty’ the most popular design in a range that also includes floral and animal prints.

“We launched our Spotty range two-and-a-half years ago and we can hardly make enough of it. It represents about 30% of sales.”

Plans for 2011 include the company’s first range of woven gingham products.





Markets

In 2010 56% of turnover came from UK wholesale, 4% from website retail sales, and 40% from exports. Exports are the fastest-growing area of the business, with Germany the most important market. UK sales outlets include hundreds of smaller independent retailers and 11 John Lewis stores. Organics for Kids has supplied John Lewis since 2007, and this partnership accounts for around 10% of turnover. John Lewis stocks six Organics for Kids designs in five product ranges.

“We continue to see a high level of concern from our customers about environmental and ethical issues,” says Lucy Shaw, Responsible Sourcing Manager at John Lewis. “They want reassurance that the product they buy meets high standards in these areas, but also offers great value for money. To achieve this, we aim to offer the best quality products sourced from the best suppliers – which includes a range of organic textiles.”

Suppliers

Organics for Kids has two cotton suppliers. One is Lichtschatz Projekte, a German company with 15 years’ experience in sourcing organic cotton. The other is a Turkish agent who has worked with the company for the past three years. All the cotton used in Organics for Kids products is grown by organic farmers in Turkey and processed at a Turkish factory that is compliant with Global Organic Textiles Standards (GOTS).

Manufacture

Organics for Kids entrusts its manufacturing to Poppetwear – a family-run company in Annersley, Nottingham. “Their factory was on the verge of closing a few years ago when they lost most of their large customers to off-shore manufacturing – mainly in China,” says Jane Shepherd:

“We decided to make a commitment to them, and their commitment to us means that they produce a quality that we would find it hard to achieve elsewhere. Our margins may be lower than brands that manufacture overseas, but what we forego in profits, we gain in quality, flexibility, a great relationship and peace of mind.”

The Organics for Kids range now accounts for 95% of Poppetwear’s business, which employs 20 people.

Boost in non-apparel - Macdonald & Taylor



Specialist suppliers of health and beauty products to wholesalers, multiple retailers and cash and carries, one of Macdonald & Taylors' two branded ranges of organic cotton wool products were the first in the UK to gain Soil Association status. Despite financial turmoil and rising cotton prices during 2010 the company reports buoyant sales and has moved to launch four new organic products. Market testing has provided very positive interest in these new additions to their Simply Gentle Organic family.

// 2010 saw four new products launched and buoyant sales //

www.macdonaldandtaylor.com

No rest for mattress manufacturer – Abaca

Launched in 2004, Abaca have led the way in organic mattress manufacturer in the UK. The company was started by Rhiannon Rowley, who had spotted a growing trend in the market for textile products with impeccable green credentials. When it came to understanding or awareness of such a product, it was important to Abaca that wholesale customers should have a similar ethical approach to business. Being choosy who they sell to has given Abaca real credibility.

Abaca believe that this year's 37% growth in turnover demonstrates that even in a recession that discerning customers will seek out goods which have a value for them, and whether this value comes in terms of sustainability, organic, health or quality.

www.abacaorganic.co.uk



Market report highlights organic textile boom

**“Organic cotton
is definitely
better than
non-organic”**

Hannah Jones, vice president for sustainable business and innovation at Nike - the Sunday Times - 27 February 2011.

Nike is the world's second largest user of organic cotton behind C&A.

“Organic cotton now accounts for 1% of total cotton production and is on the increase. India accounts for most of the growth with a 37% increase over last year. We're looking forward to further growth as the global economy recovers in 2011”

La Rhea Pepper, Senior Director and Co-founder of Textile Exchange.

Find out more on our website: www.soilassociation.org



Celebrity support

The highest-profile company in the market is People Tree, thanks in part to its association with actress Emma Watson. The 'Love from Emma' range is made largely with organic cotton and is entirely Fairtrade certified. People Tree's turnover increased by 17% in 2010. Most sales come from the UK market but it also exports to 15 countries. Half of its products are made from organic cotton, and 90% of these are certified to Global Organic Textiles Standards (GOTS).

www.peopletree.co.uk

It's got to be GOTS

Maintaining the integrity of organic fibres from farm gate to final product, the Global Organic Textile Standards are the most recognised international benchmark by which organic textiles standards are assessed.

By ensuring full product traceability, strictly limiting the use of synthetic accessories and chemicals inputs and by setting tough quality standards and social criteria, GOTS aims to ensure that the expectations of the most demanding organic textile consumers are met.

Global Organic Textile Standards are a partnership between the Soil Association, the Japanese Organic Cotton Association, the Organic Trade Association (US) and the International Association of Natural Textile industry (Germany).



www.global-standard.org

Leading the way – Seasalt



Seasalt is the Soil Association's leading organic textile licensee in terms of turnover. It has its own range of coastal-inspired fashion which is available through its website and 12 stores in Cornwall, Devon, Guernsey and the Scilly Isles. Turnover increased by 49% in 2010, with organic cotton accounting for around 41% of sales.

www.seasaltcornwall.co.uk

Growing fast – Continental Clothing

The fastest-growing Soil Association licensee is Continental Clothing, which specialises in designing and manufacturing t-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies and other items to sell wholesale to the imprintables industry. The company doubled its product lines and enjoyed a twelvefold increase in its turnover in Soil Association certified products in 2010. It is experiencing significant demand for high-fashion items such as lightweight jerseys, vintage-wash products and melange-effect sportswear. Recent contracts have included leisurewear for Tesco, tour merchandise for the band Pearl Jam and promotional wear for the EDF Birmingham Marathon.



www.continentalclothing.com

Contact us

Are you a consumer?

If interested in finding out more about organic textiles or the work of the Soil Association? you can find out more on our website:

www.soilassociation.org

Are you a business?

Are you a brand, manufacturer, farmer or processor working with textile products? Contact us to apply the Soil Association symbol on your products.

There are just 3 steps to become Soil Association certified:

Application:

We can talk you through the process and send you an application pack which includes a guide to certification, details of our fees and an example of our contract.

Inspection:

When we've received your application, we'll arrange an inspection of your operation. You'll be given an inspection report which will include any areas where standards have yet to be met.

Certification:

Once we have agreed the corrective actions needed to meet the standards, you will be issued your first organic certificate.

Fees:

Our fees are highly competitive, contact us to find out more.



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Abaca Organic Living Wales

Page 5: Andrea Carter-Bowman/People Tree

Page 6: Seasalt

Continental Clothing



We certify to *the Global Organic Textile standards (GOTS).*