



Our Policy on Cotton

Cotton is the most widespread profitable non-food crop in the world. Its production provides income for more than 250 million people worldwide and employs almost 7% of all labour in developing countries. Approximately half of all textiles are made of cotton¹. Every year, around 20 million tonnes of cotton is produced in 90 countries, including the United States, China, India, Pakistan and across West Africa².

There are sustainability challenges with growing cotton; it is a thirsty crop, accounting for more than 3% of the world's water consumption in agriculture³, 6% of global pesticide use⁴ and the sector relies heavily on smallholder farmers. Higher temperatures and changing rainfall patterns caused by climate change are likely to cause severe water shortages in some areas and increase the prevalence of pests and diseases, in turn negatively affecting yields. Social challenges include volatile market prices, rising costs of production, low wages, health and safety, child labour, forced labour and informal employment⁵.

We're committed to increasing our sourcing of more sustainable cotton to help address these global challenges and this policy outlines our expectations for suppliers to work together towards this aim.



¹ World Wildlife Fund: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/cotton>

² UL: <https://www.ulehssustainability.com/blog/sustainability/the-trouble-with-cotton-sustainability/#sthash.zNWPZPRY.dpbs>

³ UL: <https://www.ulehssustainability.com/blog/sustainability/the-trouble-with-cotton-sustainability/#sthash.zNWPZPRY.dpbs>

⁴ Textile Exchange: <https://textileexchange.org/2025-sustainable-cotton-challenge/>

⁵ Ergon Associates: <https://ergonassociates.net/publication/social-impacts-of-cotton-production/>

Our Introduction

At Sainsbury's, our core values are integral to how we do business and they enable us to drive lasting, positive change in communities across the UK and overseas. Our value, Sourcing with Integrity, means we seek to build resilient supply chains by sourcing products sustainably.

Cotton is the most used fibre in our Tu clothing range and represents critical value to our business. We recognise the challenges involved in sourcing cotton from an environmental, economic and social sustainability perspective and this policy is designed to communicate our expectations and standards to suppliers.

Our Commitment

- We are committed to sourcing 100% of our cotton from the most sustainable sources by 2025, in line with the [2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge](#)
- We will engage with relevant industry initiatives and suppliers to drive standards and adopt more sustainable practices
- We will engage with suppliers who can demonstrate the use of verified standards or certifications outlined below

Our Scope

In scope: Non-food grocery, clothing and general merchandise own-brand and licensed products

Out of scope: Products with under 5% cotton content by weight, care labels and swing tags, cotton threads and trims including embroidery and appliques, accessories, decorative items and footwear

Our Approach

All cotton used in Sainsbury's, Sainsbury's Argos and Habitat own-brand and licensed products must be sourced to one of our accepted independent standards by 2025:

- Better Cotton Standard, through the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)
 - Responsible Brazilian Cotton (ABR) through the Brazilian Cotton Growers Association (ABRAPA), which can be sold as Better Cotton through BCI
 - myBMP (My Best Management Practice) through Cotton Australia, which can be sold as Better Cotton through BCI
- Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) through the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF)
- Organic – Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) is preferred but we will accept the Organic Content Standard (OCS). Other organic certifications are not accepted
- Recycled – Global Recycled Standard (GRS) is preferred but we will accept the Recycled Claim Standard (RCS) by exception. Other recycled certifications are not accepted
- Fairtrade
- International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC)

For more information on how to demonstrate the use of these standards to us, please refer to our Supplier Manual.

There are ongoing concerns around the use of government-sponsored forced and child labour in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and the Xinjiang region in China. Suppliers must not knowingly use any cotton fibre sourced from Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan. The BCI licensing scheme is currently not operational in Xinjiang, China, and we are closely monitoring the situation whilst focusing on greater traceability of our cotton sourcing.

Supply chain traceability

Suppliers shall make all reasonable efforts to declare to us on an ongoing basis, the origin and route of cotton through the supply chain. If the information is unknown at the time of declaration, suppliers should work towards understanding their supply chain so they can declare this to us as soon as possible. Suppliers should use our *Cotton Reporting Template* to gather this information and submit to us on relevant platforms. This includes, but is not limited to, information on:

- Country and region of cotton field
- Company, country and address of ginner, spinning mill, fabric supplier and wet processing supplier



Document Reference	Sainsbury's Document Specialist	Amendment History	Date
P008-V2	Stephanie Velez	More detailed added Traceability requirement added	October 2020
P008-V1	Joanne Clarke	New document	July 2016

Our Document Details

The requirements outlined in this document are supported by other Sainsbury's documents, where reference to this subject matter may be made. For example, any specific labelling requirements will be outlined in Our Reference Guide to Labelling.

The policy statements outlined in this document are in addition to all applicable UK and EU legislation.

Sainsbury's suppliers must ensure they meet all requirements laid down in law at the point of manufacture and where the products are finally sold to the customer.

Whilst this Policy is intended to help suppliers provide products suitable for Sainsbury's Brand, they do not absolve you of your responsibility to understand and comply with all the quality, legal and safety requirements for your products.

For the purposes of this document Sainsbury's means Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited, Argos Limited and Habitat Retail Limited only.

Sainsbury's Argos is the trading name of both:

- 1) Argos Limited, Registered office: 489-499 Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom, MK9 2NW, registered number: 01081551 (England and Wales); and
- 2) Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited, Registered office: 33 Holborn, London, EC1N 2HT, registered number: 03261722 (England and Wales).