



Press Release

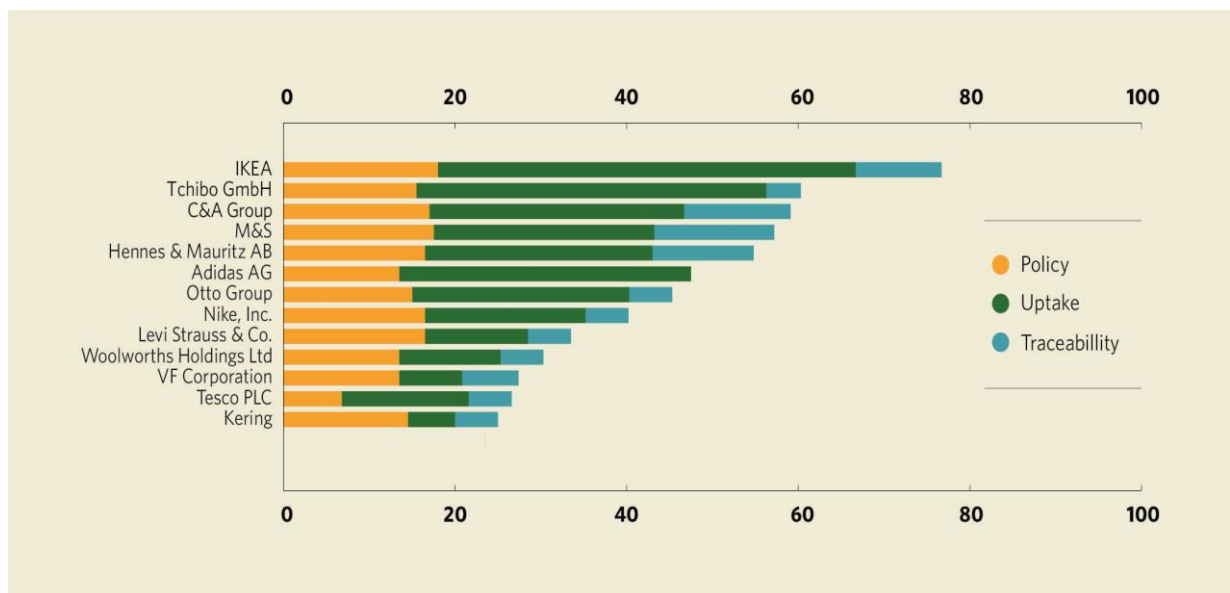
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Leading brands improve performance on sustainable cotton but many still fall short

Brighton/Utrecht/Gland – Leading international retailers C&A, H&M, M&S and Tchibo GmbH have joined IKEA as ‘frontrunners’ in 2017’s Sustainable Cotton Ranking (sustainablecottonranking.org) but overall, big brand progress on cotton sustainability is insufficient according to Pesticide Action Network (PAN) UK, Solidaridad and WWF.

Assessing the performance of 75 of the largest cotton-using companies, up from 37 in 2016, and including several of the largest in emerging markets in Brazil, China, India and South Africa, the research suggests sustainability efforts are driven by five companies ‘leading the way’ who score 50-100 points.

A further eight companies are ranked as ‘well on the way’, scoring 25-50 points, and 18 more as ‘starting the journey’, scoring 5-25 points, with the remaining 44 scoring less than 5 points.



The top 13 companies using sustainable cotton. Download the [full list here](#) or see individual company scores [here](#).

Proportionately more companies have sourcing commitments compared to 2016 but only 11 have time-bound targets to source 100% sustainable cotton by 2020 or earlier and overall uptake of sustainable cotton remains relatively low.

While cotton produced through sustainable practices is expected to make up 15% of global supply for the 2016/17 season and 20% in 2017/18, up from 12% in 2015/16, only just over a fifth (21%) of this is actually sourced by companies as sustainable. The rest is sold as conventional cotton with brands and retailers citing low consumer demand, complexity of supply chains and additional cost as blocks to sourcing.

“There is no reason why all large companies can’t match C&A, H&M, M&S, Tchibo GmbH and IKEA on cotton sustainability”, said Richard Holland, WWF International. “There is now lots of information, experience and advice about sourcing more sustainable cotton available through credible programmes such as the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI).”

Used in hundreds of everyday items, cotton is a vital cash crop for around 100 million households in 80 countries but conventional production is characterised by environmental, social and economic challenges such as excessive water and pesticide use, child labour and farmer debt.

Commissioned by PAN UK, Solidaridad and WWF in order to highlight opportunities for companies to accelerate transformation of the cotton market to sustainability through sourcing, research was conducted independently by Aidenvironment, who scored company performance across three areas: policy, uptake, and traceability.

Of 25 companies assessed in both 2016 and 2017, 18 improved their performance with most increasing their sourcing of more sustainable cotton. The top five companies from 2016 (IKEA, C&A, H&M, Adidas and Nike) all increased uptake as a percentage of total volumes used by approximately 20% in 2017, with C&A making the biggest advance and almost doubling its score.

In addition, 13 companies significantly strengthened their policies compared with 2016, with GAP Inc, IKEA and M&S making the biggest advances.

"Uptake of more sustainable cotton is our best chance of protecting worker health and the environment from pesticide pollution", said Keith Tyrell, Executive Director, Pesticides Action Network UK. "Despite overall policy progress, it's disappointing that none of the companies have adopted policies to completely eliminate highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) in the cultivation of the cotton they use."

Nine companies improved traceability with Marks & Spencer, C&A and H&M all expanding their public lists of suppliers.

“There are still too many companies doing little or nothing about sustainable cotton”, said Isabelle Roger, Global Cotton Programme Manager, Solidaridad. “Public commitments by CEOs to sourcing are critical to sector change and making sustainable cotton the norm.”

PAN UK, Solidaridad and WWF are calling on all companies using large volumes of cotton to set time-bound targets to source 100% sustainable cotton by 2020, progressively increase the volumes of more sustainable cotton used in their products, and report publicly on progress to stakeholders.

- end of release -

Notes for the Editor:

You can download - free of rights - **photos, infographics and the full report** [from this public press folder](#).

The Cotton Ranking 2017 has a dedicated website <http://www.sustainablecottonranking.org/> which will go live on October 2 where you can find:

- The full 2017 Cotton Ranking report (pdf)

- Individual company profiles
- Social, ecological and economic aspects of cotton production
- Recommendations for companies
- Interviews with H&M and M&S about their policy and practices
- Market update 2017 and an overview of sustainable cotton standards

About the Research

The Ranking research was conducted independently by Aidenvironment aidenvironment.org, a consultancy specialised in sustainable production and trade, on behalf of PAN UK, Solidaridad and WWF. The ranking focuses on consumer-facing companies with significant cotton use. The research scored company performance across three areas: policy, sourcing and use, and traceability. Most points were available for sourcing with companies assessed according to volumes used from Better Cotton, Cotton made in Africa, Organic, and Fairtrade – the four standards judged to be more sustainable by PAN UK, Solidaridad and WWF for this research.

About the NGOs publishing the Report

Pesticide Action Network UK

Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) is the only UK charity focused on tackling the problems caused by pesticides and promoting safe and sustainable alternatives to pesticides in agriculture, urban areas, homes and gardens. Web: www.pan-uk.org

Solidaridad network

Solidaridad is an international solution-oriented civil society organization working through nine regional expertise centres on transforming markets to make them more inclusive and sustainable. We bring together supply chain players and engage them with innovative solutions to improve production, ensuring the transition to a sustainable and inclusive economy that maximizes the benefit for all. Web: www.solidaridadnetwork.org

WWF International

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organisations with over five million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries. Web: www.panda.org

PAN UK, Solidaridad and WWF offer companies hands-on support and advice on improving their supply chains, and organise support for farmers (and groups of) to improve their production and to access higher value markets.

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