

# CAN FOCUSING ON ORGANIC TEXTILES REALLY MEET THE INDUSTRY'S OBJECTIVE FOR MASS SUSTAINABILITY?

**The fact that organically grown cotton is in such short supply demands a rethink and new solutions until such time as the level of supply and the price make it realistic to base large-scale operations on organic textiles.**

Going forward, there is widespread desire in the industry for greater sustainability in textile production and laundry operations. That's why, increasingly, the spotlight is on organic textiles. It seems an obvious solution, but it could also slow down development:

Peter Beirholm, Managing Director of Beirholms Væverier, says: "We need a major rethink if sustainable textiles are ever to become more than niche solutions." He continues: "The quantity of organically grown cotton is still so limited that other choices should be made to ensure mass sustainability.

"This is why we recommend alternatives where there is wider choice – for example, BCI cotton – from the Better Cotton Initiative. Here, cotton cultivation is sustainable, with a focus on minimising the use of water, insecticides and pesticides, and ensuring good cultivation methods by giving farmers thorough training. Better Cotton's strategy is specifically to develop Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity. This provides much

greater accessibility, so the industry can choose sustainable textiles in quantities that really make a difference – especially in the laundry."

## **Achieving holistic sustainability in the laundry**

"It's vital to think in terms of holistic sustainability. We know that laundry operations account for 80% of the environmental footprint of a textile, and that energy consumption can be significantly reduced if you work with more industrial fibres rather than 100% cotton," Peter Beirholm explains.

"What sensible choices are open to us if we're to make production more sustainable, going forward? Thinking in terms of mass laundry operations, you have to consider a certain proportion of synthetic fibres such as polyester. These fibres significantly lengthen product service life, while ensuring a much more sustainable laundry operation with far less consumption of resources and significantly reduced emissions as a result. This minimises the overall environmental footprint of the laundry."



**Beirholm**  
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Another sensible choice is to consider other sustainable cotton that is more widely available than organic cotton – such as BCI cotton – and combine this with synthetic fibres.

Opting for recycled polyester could further enhance sustainability here, giving the industry a realistic way to choose large-scale sustainability!

#### **Will organic textiles curb or boost development?**

Society as a whole is moving towards greater sustainability, and consumers reflect this more and more by choosing organic products. How many people realise there's more to sustainability than going organic, though? Surely this merits some debate?



“Our industry needs to think and act more holistically, if sustainability is to be about anything other than niche solutions,” Peter Beirholm predicts. “We need to look constructively at the different choices open to the whole industry by navigating around the limitations that stand in the way of development today.”

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