

Cotton report on the Horizon

Cotton Horizons is a complete guide to cotton standards, sustainability initiatives and regional programmes, written by **Simon Ferrigno** and edited by *Ecotextile News* editor **John Mowbray**. The 56-page report, to be published in September 2014, will give an overview and case studies of major cotton standards and programs, one by one, and discuss how the cotton sector needs to pull together and have a common vision and approach to sustainability and its promotion.

Key focuses of Cotton Horizons include the sustainable cotton map in 2014, environmental issues, social compliance, and major issues ahead such as greenhouse gases, water, and labour. It will also highlight the 'triumphs and tragedies' of current cotton sustainability initiatives, and provide data on consumption and production in 2014.

"The sustainable cotton landscape is beginning to resemble an infant's playground full of unruly and competing kids making claim and counter-claim. What is the reality of these standards, and more importantly, which one should you choose? There is a real need to cut through the claims and examine the facts," said Simon Ferrigno, ahead of the report being published.

"Cotton Horizons will not outline the global context of cotton – this is outlined in other reports, including this author's *An Insider's Guide to Cotton and Sustainability*, while up-to-date statistics on world cotton production and trade are available from multiple sources."

In 2012, the publishers of *Ecotextile News* introduced *An Insider's Guide to Cotton and Sustainability* – a 136-page handbook which covered the ecological impact of cotton production, its future challenges and is still available to purchase now. Conversely, Cotton



Horizons will provide an in-depth expert analysis of today's cotton sector, and will cover six main subjects:

- The sustainable cotton map in 2014
- Cotton standards and programs
- Environment
- Social compliance
- Organisational models
- Evaluation

Cotton Leads, the standard to promote awareness of responsible cotton production practices, is among several other standards – such as Fairtrade and Cotton Connect – due to be mentioned in the report's overview of standards and programs.

The goal of Cotton Leads is to raise awareness about the already good practices existing in the USA and now also Australia. But is it really a sustainability standard in its own right?

"Many, especially from the conventional side of the industry, try to link

identity cottons (types of fibre or geographical schemes, for example) with sustainable cotton. However, it is the opinion of this author that these are separate things," says Simon Ferrigno. "Sustainable cotton should both have a definition of sustainability that is widely recognised, a baseline against which progress can be compared, and requirements for progress against certain criteria and so on.

In terms of the wider report, Cotton Horizons' take on the environmental impacts associated with the industry, sections on pesticides, 'ecotoxicity', biotechnology and greenhouse gases are included. The latter, and probably the most important environmental issue in the cotton sector, raises questions on cotton's CO₂ reduction claims and the lack of knowledge surrounding the topic.

Ferrigno notes: "Carbon Trust [an NGO formed to help reduce carbon emissions] suggests many ways cotton can reduce emissions, but there is no mechanism to label garments and textiles for CO₂ footprint, although some retailers have tried. The lack of consistency is a real problem – CO₂ reporting needs a binding framework!"

For more information on Cotton Horizons, or to pre-order your printed copy, see: <http://bit.ly/1jr2uEr> or email info@mclglobal.net. ■