

Frequently Asked Questions for the *YESS: Yarn Ethically & Sustainably Sourced Cotton Lint Standard*

1. What is the objective of YESS?

To create an industry-wide approach for yarn spinning mills to eliminate from their supply chains cotton produced with forced labor, which is based on the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development's (OECD's) [Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector](#). More information can be found at [YESS: Yarn Ethically & Sustainably Sourced](#).

2. Who is creating YESS?

YESS is being created by staff at [Responsible Sourcing Network](#) (RSN), a project of [As You Sow](#), and the YESS Working Group, which is comprised of representatives from international apparel brands and experts in the areas of cotton, human rights, and ethical and sustainable clothing. Assistance with the drafting of the standard is being provided by [Liz Muller & Partners](#). Extensive outreach to brands, yarn spinners, and other stakeholders has occurred and will continue to happen throughout the development and piloting of the YESS standard.

3. Who is funding YESS and what will be the ongoing funding model for YESS?

Currently, the creation and piloting of the YESS standard is funded with grants from Humanity United, The Moriah Fund, and The Walt Disney Company's Supply Chain Investment Program. Additional financial and in-kind support has been provided by members of the YESS Working Group. RSN's intention is that soon after successfully piloting the YESS standard, it would be consistently implemented, adequately resourced, and effectively managed with widespread support by the cotton apparel industry. RSN and the YESS Working Group are open to and actively exploring options to further develop, implement, and fund YESS either as a stand-alone initiative or integrated into an existing initiative.

4. Would YESS assess for forced labor inside spinning mills?

No. The aim of the YESS standard is to eliminate forced labor at cotton farms by helping spinners develop and implement strong management systems to support responsible sourcing policies and practices. A spinner that meets the YESS standard should be in a better position to deliver and manage expectations set by other initiatives to assess and verify factory labor conditions. For example, RSN is a signatory to the Social & Labor Convergence Project (SLCP), and has been contributing to the development of the SLCP data tool. Since the SLCP data tool focuses on the labor conditions within a facility, the two assessments complement one another.

5. Does YESS capture environmental data on the cotton that spinners are using?

No, YESS is designed to eliminate cotton harvested with forced labor from entering a spinning facility. It is not focused on capturing environmental information about the cotton.

6. Would YESS help international brands comply by national and international legislation?

Most of the modern slavery legislation that exists or is being introduced includes a reference to "duty of care." This means that companies have to disclose the actions they are taking to identify and address forced labor. YESS is the only initiative that addresses forced labor in the production of conventional cotton. If YESS moves into an implementation

phase, and brands and retailers participate with YESS, in their mandatory disclosures they would be able to demonstrate their support and contributions to this industry-wide effort to eradicate forced labor from their cotton supply chains.

7. How are "high-risk countries" defined?

High-risk countries are those mentioned specifically in regards to forced labor being present in their cotton production in reports and databases by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (such as in its annual report on the Application of Standards, and specific country observances) and the US Department of Labor (DOL) (such as in the List of Goods Produced with Child and Forced Labor). Determination of high-risk countries will be updated annually. The current nine countries included in the high-risk category are: Benin, Burkina Faso, China, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

8. Would YESS apply to spinners that create yarn made of cotton and non-cotton materials?

As long as the yarn spinners use at least some virgin cotton lint (newly harvested), the YESS standard would be applicable.

9. What are the incentives for spinners to meet and undergo an assessment using the YESS standard?

As legislation to address forced labor increases in consumer markets, brands will respond by dictating requirements to actors along their entire supply chains. The YESS standard outlines the elements of a strong due diligence management system that aligns with OECD's internationally recognized framework. YESS would not only build off of and strengthen systems commonly implemented at spinning mills, it would allow spinners to meet brands' requirements through one standard that would be recognized industry-wide. YESS would help build stronger relationships between different supply chain actors and encourage continuous improvement for the industry.

10. Is there duplication of work between BCI, CottonConnect, Cotton Made in Africa, Fairtrade, and others, and YESS?

There is not duplication of work because the main focus of the above initiatives is on engaging farmers, while YESS is focused on engaging yarn spinners. The approach of YESS is to keep cotton produced with forced labor out of the supply chain by assessing spinners for the implementation of due diligence. One component of implementing due diligence is when cotton originates in a high-risk country, the physical cotton being shipped must meet YESS' forced-labor-free requirements, which may be accomplished through the various farm-focused cotton initiatives. Therefore, YESS and the farm-focused initiatives complement one another.