



Policy Memorandum

To: Stakeholders and Interested Parties

From: Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator

Subject: Labeling of Textiles That Contain Organic Ingredients

Date: Original Issue Date – May 20, 2011

The USDA regulates the term “organic” as it applies to agricultural products through the National Organic Program (NOP) Regulation, 7 CFR Part 205. Raw natural fibers, such as cotton, wool, and flax are agricultural products and are covered under the NOP crop and livestock production standards. The NOP regulations do not include specific processing or manufacturing standards for textile products. However, in keeping with NOP’s inclusive scope policy, any textile product produced in full compliance with the NOP regulations may be labeled as NOP certified organic and display the USDA organic seal.

The NOP does not restrict the use of the term “organic” in the labeling of textile products that are certified under third-party certification bodies as long as all of the fibers identified as “organic” in these textile products are produced and certified under the NOP regulations. Textile products that are produced in accordance with the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) may be sold as organic in the U.S. but may not refer to NOP certification or display the USDA organic seal.

Textile products that are labeled as “organic” may:

- Use label claims that identify specific types of organic fibers
- Use statements identifying the percentage of organic fibers

Textile products that are labeled as “organic” must not:

- Use the USDA organic seal unless they are certified in accordance with the NOP regulations.
- Imply or lead the consumer to believe that the final product is certified under the NOP regulations unless they are certified in accordance with the NOP regulations.
- Use a combination of both organic and non-organic sources for a single fiber that is identified as “organic” in the final product.

These policies do not supersede requirements of other Federal and State laws. The NOP labeling requirements are in addition to those required by the Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) Textile and Wool Acts.

Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.



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References:

Other Laws and Regulations

Information on FTC labeling requirements for textiles can be found at the following website:

<http://www.ftc.gov/os/statutes/textilejump.shtm>

Document Control:

This document supersedes the NOP fact sheet titled “Labeling of Textiles Under National Organic Program (NOP) Regulations” dated July 2008, which is now obsolete.