



Responsible Animal Fibers (RAF) Brand Sourcing Guide



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Introduction



Introduction

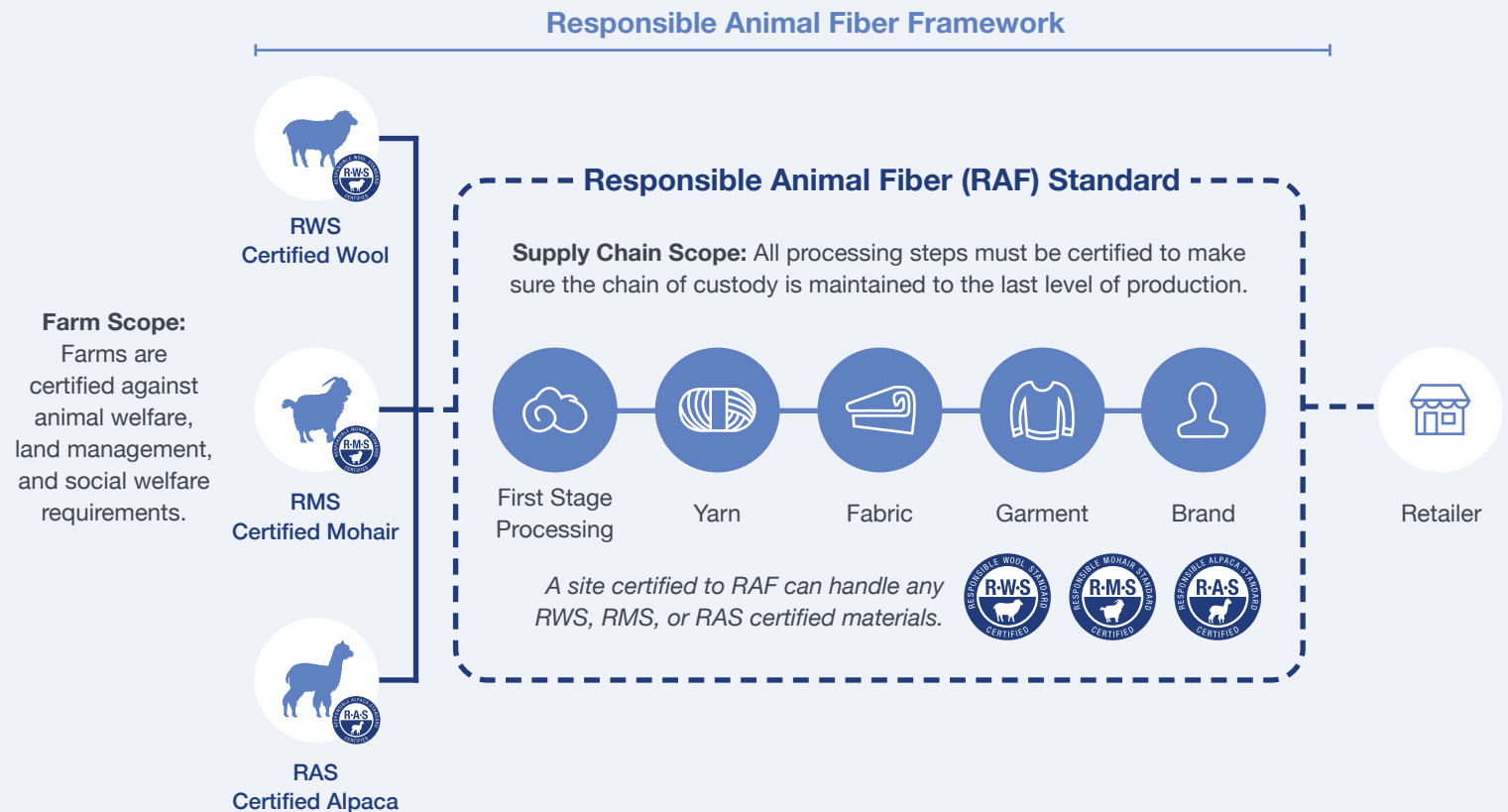
RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

About the Responsible Animal Fibers Standards Framework

The Responsible Animal Fibers (RAF) Standards Framework, formalized in early 2020, is an umbrella term for multiple standards related to animal fibers and is a means to simplify both farm and supply chain certification.

Currently, the RAF standard is made up of the [Responsible Wool Standard \(RWS\)](#), [Responsible Mohair Standard \(RMS\)](#), and the [Responsible Alpaca Standard \(RAS\)](#). At the farm level, each standard addresses animal welfare, land management and social welfare, and through the supply chain, the identity of the certified material is preserved through a robust chain of custody system.

In the RAF, a single farm may be certified to the RWS, RMS, and/or RAS (depending on which species are kept at the farm) and separate scope certificates are issued; for the supply chain, a single scope certificate (SC) is issued for the “RAF” and RWS, RMS, and RAS products may all be added to it.



Introduction

RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

About this Guide

The Responsible Animal Fibers (RAF) Brand Sourcing Guide has been developed to provide practical support for companies wishing to set up new or enter existing RAF certified supply chains.

It provides guidance and recommendations, case studies from brands and suppliers, as well as links to further guidance and support on specific topics.

About Textile Exchange

[Textile Exchange](#) is a global nonprofit that creates leaders in the sustainable fiber and materials industry. The organization develops, manages, and promotes a suite of leading industry standards as well as collects and publishes vital industry data and insights that enable brands and retailers to measure, manage, and track their use of preferred fiber and materials.

With a membership that represents leading brands, retailers, and suppliers, Textile Exchange has, for years, been positively impacting climate through accelerating the use of preferred fibers across the global textile industry and is now making it an imperative goal through its 2030 Strategy: Climate+. Under the Climate+ strategic direction, Textile Exchange will be the driving force

for urgent climate action with a goal of 45% reduced CO2 emissions from textile fiber and material production by 2030.

About Textile Exchange Standards

For more than 10 years, Textile Exchange has owned and managed a suite of chain of custody standards that work to support the integrity of product claims by providing verification from an independent third-party. Over time, we have grown from covering the gap in verification for products made with organically grown textiles to covering recycled content verification, animal welfare, and land health, and combining facility level requirements for a more complete product standard.

All of our standards have been developed by a multi-stakeholder approach to address gaps in current industry standards. Textile Exchange Standards require yearly inspections and certification renewal.

Textile Exchange's mission has always been focused on the impacts at the beginning the supply chain and the inherent gaps between raw material producers and brands, retailers, and the consumers. We continuously expand our vision of sustainability and – alongside the industry –work to address a broad range of sustainability issues at the material level through our standards.



Why Animal Fibers?



Why Animal Fibers?

RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

The Environmental Impact of Animal Fibers

Accurately assessing the environmental impact of animal fibers is a complex topic that requires a holistic perspective across impact categories as well as across the full life cycle. A common misconception is that land use in fiber production is always bad for the environment. This is true in some cases but responsibly sourcing animal fibers through programs that promote healthy land use actually has huge impact potential for positive outcomes.

Life Cycle Analysis and Wool

Life Cycle Analysis is commonly used a tool for measuring environmental impact. However, there are some limitations in the application of LCA to agricultural products such as wool. This is due to a number of factors including:

- The diversity of sheep farming systems producing the greasy wool raw material,
- The complexity of allocating the environmental burden between co-products such as fibre and sheep meat,
- The range of wool products from high value apparel to interior textiles and industrial insulation.

There has been a lot of work in recent years on adapting the methodology of

LCA to for example, explore how to allocate the burden between the different products. To learn more about this and the application of LCA to wool visit: <https://www.iwto.org/work/wool-LCA>.

Grazing for Carbon?

Recent research offers evidence that properly managed grazing lands can have positive land use impacts through improved soil health and drainage and may actually mitigate GHG emissions through carbon sequestration.¹

Use and End of Life

The use phase is not commonly considered in environmental rating tools (e.g. the Higg Index or the MADE-BY benchmark). However, the fiber content of a garment has an impact on the use and disposal stages of the life cycle. Recent studies have found that wool has got significant potential benefits both during the use phase as well as the end of life stage.¹

¹ Laitala, Kirsi; Klepp, Ingun Grimstad; Henry, Beverley (2018): Does Use Matter? Comparison of Environmental Impacts of Clothing Based on Fiber Type. Source: <https://oda.hioa.no/en/item/does-use-matter-comparison-of-environmental-impacts-of-clothing-based-on-fiber-type>

Laitala, Kirsi; Klepp, Ingun Grimstad (2017): Clothing Reuse: The Potential in Informal Exchange <https://oda.hioa.no/en/item/clothing-reuse-the-potential-in-informal-exchange>



Why Animal Fibers?

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Assessing the use of animal fibers in your materials portfolio can seem daunting or risky, but it doesn't have to be with the right approach. Similar to other materials assessments, there are many factors at play including life cycle environmental impact, animal welfare, and land-based impacts such as grazing and biodiversity. Below are some facts and figures about these topics in relation to the RAF scopes that can help provide a framework for your assessment.

Animal Welfare and Animal Fibers

When using any animal derived material animal welfare must be taken into consideration in addition to the environmental life cycle impacts. Animal welfare refers to the well-being of the individual animal. It includes animal health and encompasses both the physical and psychological state of the animal.

Many people will be familiar with the Five Freedoms of animal welfare that were developed in the 1960s to underpin the fundamentals of animal welfare. The Five Freedoms list things that must be avoided in order to deliver animal welfare. In recent years, further developments in the field of animal welfare have moved on from simply avoiding negative experiences to promoting and measuring positive welfare outcomes. This is known as the Five Provisions model, on which

the Responsible Animal Fiber Standards are based. The Five Provisions recognise the interaction between the physical provisions of nutrition, living environment, health and behaviour and their impact on the fifth mental provision. The overall welfare outcome comes from the balance of experiences across all these provisions in the animal's life.

Different farming systems offer different welfare potentials. Farming systems with high animal welfare potential are those that:

- Have husbandry systems that can meet the animals' needs
- Provide for behavioral freedoms
- Deliver good animal health

Wool, mohair, and alpaca fiber is typically produced in extensive grazing and free ranging farming systems that meet the potential for high animal welfare. It is requirement of the RWS, RMS, and RAS that fiber can only be certified if animals are raised in a pasture-based, free-ranging system.

The aim of the RWS, RMS, and RAS is to ensure that the potential for high animal welfare is realised through audited standards covering all aspects of the animal's life to ensure best practice from the farmers and to deliver good welfare for the animals. Each module of the

standards has been developed to deliver the desired outcome shown below:

Module	Desired Outcome
Nutrition	Animals have access to sufficient feed and water suited to their age and needs to maintain normal health and to prevent prolonged hunger, thirst, malnutrition or dehydration.
Environment	Animals are kept in an environment that provides the conditions and facilities needed for health, safety, comfort and normal behavior.
Health	Animals are managed in a way that promotes good health and prevents disease. Sick or injured animals are treated. Husbandry operations are carried in a way that minimises pain and distress.
Handling	Positive human-animal relationships are in place and animals are handled and transported around the farm and off the farm in a way that protects welfare.
Management, Plans and Procedures	Farmers have a clear strategy and set of protocols to safeguard the welfare of their animal.

Regenerative Livestock Management

The management of fiber producing animals can also have significant potential for positive impact on the farm's ecosystem. The practices that lead to these positive impacts are often described under the umbrella of regenerative management.

The land management section of the RWS, RMS, and RAS cover soil management,

biodiversity and water and the management of inputs such as fertilizers and pesticide. Deforestation is prohibited. Developing the plans and techniques required to meet the standards provides a baseline for good management. Farmers can build on this for regenerative outcomes. Grazing management for example can degrade or help improve soil. The diversity of species in the sward, timing of grazing, stocking rates, use of manures and other inputs all have an impact.

Regenerative agriculture has the potential to help sequester carbon and mitigate the greenhouse gas emissions and therefore the carbon footprint of animal fibers.

Livestock Management and Biodiversity

As a further benefit of regenerative livestock management, biodiversity on the farm can be enhanced. Examples include livestock management that allows wild animals access to grazing and water as well as non-lethal techniques to deter predators. Identifying and protecting important habitat areas, using wildlife friendly fencing, and conserving riparian areas all serve to support the co-existence of livestock with wildlife. As with soil and grazing management noted above, the RWS, RMS, and RAS all require biodiversity planning and mapping to identify key habitats and species on the farm and the requirements for their protection.



Why Responsible Animal Fiber Standards?

Why Responsible Animal Fiber Standards?

RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

Based on the above impact areas and standards as a support tool, many companies agree that sourcing animal fibers can have a positive impact on their supply chain when done responsibly. If your company has decided to source animal fibers, it is recommended to first set an internal animal fiber policy. This policy can be straightforward and simple with a list of values and ethics you aim to promote with your sourcing strategy, and practices that would not be accepted when working with producers.

Depending on where you are at in the sustainability journey, this policy can be written to strive towards industry tools and benchmarks, be aligned with the industry tools and benchmarks, or go above and beyond them depending on your goals and farm-level programming efforts. Check out the tools and resources at the end of this document for a guide to writing animal welfare policies.

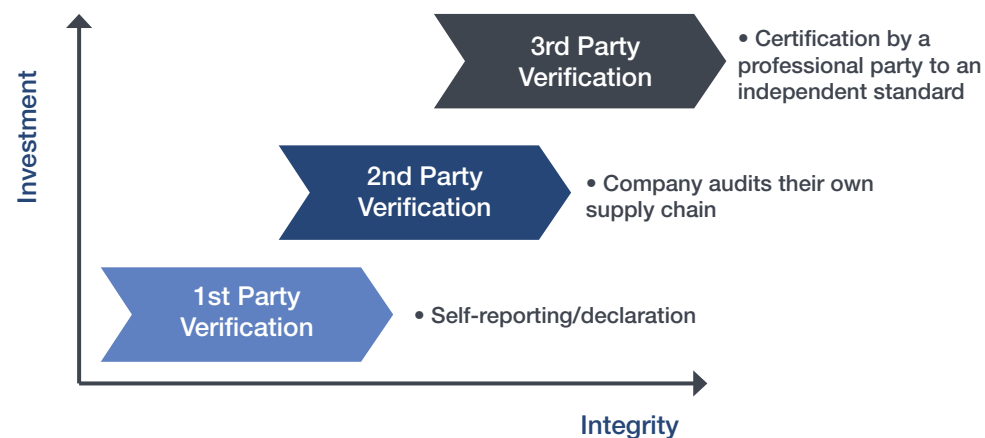
Once this policy has been enacted, it is important to map out the available tools that can help assure that your company is working in the direction of your animal fiber policy goals. For example, if your policy denounces mulesing, the RWS would be a great tool to utilize since mulesing is prohibited in the requirements. Or, if your policy promotes better rangeland management for herders in Mongolia you can support one

of the projects in the UNDP's [Mongolian Sustainable Cashmere Platform](#). Setting a company-wide goal for working with various tools in the industry is very important since standards and sustainability programs can deliver various benefits for brands and retailers depending on how they engage with them. Knowing why you are choosing to use a tool or resource will help guide you through the process and act as a north star when decision making is needed.

A quick note on the assurance side of staying aligned with your animal fiber policy. There are a number of programs and tools out there in the marketplace, and sometimes it may be hard to differentiate between them and know which will help you stay on track with the promises of your policy. One way to compare is based on degrees, or methods of verification (see image to the right). The first level of verification is self-reporting – this could be a supplier affidavit from the group that they are complying with a set of requirements but there is no system for checking this. Second party verification is when a company or an initiative conducts internal audits of their farms or operations additional assurance is provided but there is no external oversight of the process. The third degree of verification is third party certification. This is the system used for all Textile Exchange Standards,

including the Responsible Animal Fiber Standards. Here audits are conducted by an independent third-party certification body whose activities are overseen by an accreditation body. Different degrees of verification come with different degrees of assurance as well as different costs. Self-reporting is the lowest cost option and may be sufficient in low-risk materials or low risk supply chains whereas third party certification provides the highest degree of verification and assurance but will also entail additional [costs](#).

METHODS OF VERIFICATION



Any type of verification may use testing to verify material content.

Why Responsible Animal Fiber Standards?

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Another factor to consider is chain of custody and different approaches to traceability. Here there are also several approaches ranging from mass-balance to identify preservation. As with the different levels of verification, the approach depends on the context. As the consumer interest in farm animal welfare grows, the need for identify preservation of certified material and product labelling to identify products containing responsibly produced animal fibers is expected to grow. The RAF, as well as all the Textile Exchange Standards, uses a physical chain of custody system with book and claim paperwork at each site. This ensures the integrity of the certified good and allows you to make assured claims about the certified material you are selling

Once you have decided on a portfolio of standards, tools, and/or programs to engage in, the next step is to do your homework! Set up calls with the organizations who own these resources. Read all of the available material, participate in webinars, reach out with questions. Textile Exchange is here to support if you do choose to engage with the RAF. Our goal is to help more supply chains become certified to the RAF and increase our animal welfare impact across sectors.

Based on your learnings, you can now decide what the best use of the standard or tool is to help you achieve your goal. Maybe your customers are receptive to your animal welfare policy and company sustainability mission - your end goal for standards use could be making on-product claims about the materials. Maybe you are just starting out with all things sustainability and mapping your supply chain is a large endeavor - your end goal for engagement could be to simply start developing deeper relationships with your suppliers and implementing verification systems by collecting scope certificates and transaction certificates. Maybe your company is really interested in reducing animal welfare risk in the supply chain with certain fibers and materials- you could focus on simply verifying input level certifications. Knowing the purpose for engaging will help guide you as you digest a lot of information related to the tool or program.

When you're ready to start sourcing animal fibers, in particular RAF certified fibers, read on. We have included lots of practical information for sourcing across the various platforms and industry specifics that can help you navigate the process.



Essentials of Working with RAF Standards



Essentials of Working with RAF Standards

RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

If your planning and strategizing has led you to the RAF, welcome! There are a number of ways to engage with our standards and we have some best practice from brands and retailers who have successfully implemented sustainability programs and sourced RAF material.



1 Make a Commitment and Set a Target

Work with both your internal and external stakeholders to make a firm commitment to the RAF standards.

The benefits are:

- Internal buy-in from all parts of your organization is a key factor to success: educate your colleagues about the standard: use the tools available on the website, attend webinars or training events, ask Textile Exchange for support.
- Having a public commitment for where you are going will give you a level of defense against any activism.
- Your supply chain will be better able to meet your needs when they clearly understand your expectations, and are part of setting realistic timelines.

A commitment may be made by a company that is working towards sourcing certified RAF fibers, and or building a supply chain that is certified to RAF Standards.

In many cases, committed companies are not at the point in their sourcing programs where they can buy and sell fully certified products and therefore do not yet qualify to make an assured product-related claim. Therefore, through

registering a commitment to one of the RAF Standards, they may make other claims about the work they are doing.

Companies making commitments to RAF Standards are responsible for outlining clear goals and timelines for achieving them, with accountability to Textile Exchange through annual reporting on progress.

Before getting started, we recommend downloading the [Standards Commitment Guide](#) to learn more about making commitments and setting targets, registering details in the form, and communicating about them.

Register your commitment through the link below:

TextileExchange.org/Standards/Commitment-Registration-Form/



1 Make a Commitment and Set a Target

Targets need to be:

Realistic

Take into account the lead times to get farms certified, and for certified animal fibers to move through the supply chain.

Relevant

Demonstrate how responsible animal fibers connects to the broader sustainability targets of your company (connect back to the “why” sections).

Meaningful

Volume is how you can drive change in the industry and demonstrate to farmers and consumers that you are serious about animal welfare and land health.

Tip #1:

Unless you are only using very small volumes, it will take time to convert all your products to RWS, RMS, or RAS. Therefore, it's a good idea to set a timeline for reaching your conversion target, e.g. 25% in year 1, 50% in year 2, 75% in year 3, and 100% in year 4.

Factors to consider when setting targets:

- When do you want RAF standard certified fibers to be in your products?
- What amounts and qualities of RAF standard certified fibers does your supplier believe they can realistically deliver for your timeframe? Think about the buffer stocks you will need.
- Do you want individual products or product lines to be RAF certified? Be sure that the qualities and quantities are well understood by your supplier so that they can give you realistic expectations on delivery and price.
- Is your goal to convert a percentage of your total animal fiber use to RAF? If so, you may want to consider incorporating some RAF blended products into your mix, as that will give your supplier more flexibility to obtain certified material that will meet your quality, quantity, and price needs.
- What are your communications goals? Do you want to label on-product with the RWS, RMS, or RAS logo and add details about your certification to product pages? Or is communicating about your use of RAF fiber in your general marketing or in reports enough?



Define Qualities & Quantities

Creating a strategy for RWS, RMS, and RAS use will require input from internal and external partners.

Work with your internal team and your suppliers and ask for support from your certification body or Textile Exchange as needed. The internal groups that may have input on your RWS, RMS and RAS strategy are top management, sourcing, design, marketing, and your CSR department.

Expect to work back and forth with your supply chain partners until you have your strategy finalized. You will need to communicate about proposed timelines.

Tip #2:

While you cannot label products containing a blend of e.g RAS and non-RAS fiber, blending allows you to build volume with less risk while getting your supply chain organized. When blending this way, the overall use of RAS fiber can still be tracked and counted towards company goals and targets for RAS use and a general marketing claim may be made IF the material is verifiable through certification documents.

Choose Products or Categories and Set Volumes

Step 1

Look at the animal fibers that you use, and identify the types, qualities, and if possible the rough quantities of each.

Step 2

Identify key products that will be attractive for a supply chain in consideration of:

- **Volume:** Look for a product with a significant volume that will allow the processors to meet their economic minimum lot sizes, blending requirements and segregation needs.
- **Yarn Type:** If possible, it is advised to start with a commonly used yarn size, to leverage what is happening with other brands. If you are not aware of the yarn sizes you use, you can ask your suppliers, or contact Textile Exchange for further support.
- Be flexible to adapt the qualities and quantities to match the delivery capacity of your suppliers.

Timelines & Demand Signal

It is important to recognise that until certified material is stocked in the supply chain, it will take longer to bring certified fiber into your products. Each step will take some time.

You must communicate your volume and timing expectations down through the supply chain. The demand signal will have to make its way to the farms, so be sure to allow time for this to happen. Send clear communications to your suppliers so they know to send the demand for the certified wool, mohair, or alpaca fiber down the chain.

Tip #3:

Time your brand certification! If you start brand certification too early, you may receive your scope certificate and be waiting for certified material to flow through the supply chain. If you wait until all your suppliers are already certified, you may miss production deadlines while you schedule an audit. Timing will vary but it normally takes between 6-8 weeks from when you apply with a certification body to receiving a decision. Start planning your audit once your direct supplier is getting ready to be certified (or the last site in your full chain of custody).

Consider that there are several factors that have an impact on timing. For example, shearing is seasonal and can take place over a period of time. How the fiber is traded can also impact on the timing and availability and lastly, the certification process itself can take time – especially in the early stages as new farm groups are becoming established as well as through the supply chain if suppliers are not already certified.



Map your Supply Chain and Identify Gaps

Choose Partners

Look at your current supply chain and identify which suppliers you know and evaluate their willingness and potential to work with the RAF.

Work with your existing supply chain:

As the numbers of sites certified to the RAF or other Textile Exchange Standards grows you may find that your current supply chain is already certified and able to handle certified material.

If your supplier is certified to the RAF, they can work with either the RWS, RMS, or RAS. If they are certified to another Textile Exchange Standard, they will need to add the RAF to their scope. If your suppliers need to become certified, there are several resources available to assist them with this including the [Supplier Certification Toolkit](#), and for more general information, you can guide them to [ResponsibleWool.org](#), [ResponsibleMohair.org](#), or [ResponsibleAlpaca.org](#) where they can access more information and resources.

Find new suppliers:

If you need new suppliers that are already certified, please visit: [TextileExchange.org/Standards/](#) or contact: ResponsibleWool@TextileExchange.org.

There are several options for where in the supply chain to work with, and you can choose just one, or several. The following provides more details on each.

Manufacturers

In some cases, you may be able to find a finished goods manufacturer that can handle the sourcing of RWS, RMS, and RAS materials through the supply chain. This will be most common with accessories, such as gloves and hats or vertical operations.

- In most cases, you will want to reach further back in the supply chain (to fabric or even yarn) to drive the use of RWS, RMS, and RAS material.
- The manufacturer will need to be certified for chain of custody for the RAF and collect transaction certificates (TCs) from their suppliers.

Scourer/Topmaker

The scourer/top makers take ownership of the wool after shearing. They may buy greasy wool directly from farms, or through the auction system. In some instances, top makers are taking on the role of managing a certified farm group and can organize for additional supply in response to demand.

Fabric Mill

Set clear expectations for RWS, RMS, and RAS material in your products and send your mill to [TextileExchange.org/Standards/](#) and advise them to read up on the chain of custody requirements. The [Supplier Certification Toolkit](#) is a useful resource. They should take the necessary steps to ensure that the yarn is certified, and the garment maker (who will also have to be certified for chain of custody) will need to collect TCs from them.

Spinning Mill

This is a good stage to work with, as they will be sourcing the fiber and some have connections through to farms. Like the fabric mill, they will be responsible to bring the RWS/RMS/RAS fiber into their operation. You can give support by sending a clear request for RWS/RMS/RAS fiber and working with them to establish yarn types and volumes that will meet their needs, setting quality parameters, and linking them with your nominated fabric mill. You may need to be prepared for longer timelines while the standards are becoming established. They will need to run the certified fiber through in segregated batches, so higher volumes will make this more economical.

Wool Broker

May also be known as a wool “grower representative.” They do not take ownership of the wool, and like the suppliers, have the capacity to organize for certification of farms needed to supply your qualities and quantities. In some instances, brokers facilitate the sale of certified material on behalf of individually certified farmers and in other wool brokers have also set up certified farm groups.

Tip #4:

The Textile Exchange chain of custody system guarantees the forward path of the certified material, but it does not automatically provide backward traceability through the supply chain. A brand may take the decision to do this investigation, but it is not included as part of the RAF Standards. If you are interested in doing the work of identifying all of these sites, you will need to work directly with your suppliers and request that this information is disclosed to you – the TCs can be used for carrying farm information forward through the supply chain.



Map your Supply Chain and Identify Gaps

Collaborate with your Suppliers

Making the RWS, RMS, and RAS a success is going to take effort from everyone in the industry, but the outcomes will be worth it. Take a long term and holistic look at this challenge and collaborate with your suppliers: they are making real investments to bring certified fiber into the production chain.

- An early purchase agreement helps both sides to plan ahead.
- Build long term partnerships to bring certified fiber through the supply chain.
- Communicate early and often.
- Understand their realities and needs; explain yours.
- Be flexible to adapt the qualities and quantities to match the delivery capacity of your suppliers.
- A price differential reflects and compensates for the additional efforts that certified farmers and suppliers have invested in the RAF Standards. Be realistic on setting price and timelines.
- Help to build volume of certified material: through your own products, and through encouraging other brands.
- Build in flexibility where you can.
- Honor your commitments.



Being RWS certified means we're aligned with brands and customers who recognize the value of good agricultural practices. It is an important step in deepening the connections and relationships from the origins of wool fibers to the array of amazing products those fibers become."

– Jeanne Carver, Imperial Stock Ranch



4 Certify the Supply Chain

Farms are certified to the Animal Welfare, Land Management, and Social modules of the RWS, RMS, and RAS. Subsequent stages of the supply chain are certified to the [Content Claim Standard \(CCS\)](#) requirements.

In order for products to be labelled as RWS, RMS, or RAS certified, the supply chain must be certified at every stage before the final retailer, including the brand. Retailers (business-to-consumers) are not required to be certified. Certification requirements are different at the farm, processing, and brand levels.

Tip #5:

CCS 3.0 now now requires certification up to the brand, regardless of if the brand is the seller in the final business to business transaction or sells direct to consumers only.

The Cost of Certification

It is impossible to say what the certification costs will be, as each site is individual. When you apply with a certification body, however, they will give you an offer that includes the expected costs.

Keep in mind the following:

- Your supply chain will be making a considerable investment in time and resources to get your wool supply certified. It is reasonable for them to expect a strong purchase commitment from you before they sign the contracts for certification. Consider long term, fair pricing.
- It is always best to drive higher volume through a smaller number of suppliers, so that the certification costs are spread more widely
- Understand the factors affecting cost along the supply chain and work together to find opportunities to reduce them.





Communicate

Look for every opportunity to talk about the RAF Standards and your work with them. You deserve recognition for your efforts, and your work will inspire others to work towards similar meaningful goals.

Use the RAF Standards to form a closer relationship with your customers, and even with the farmers in your supply chain. It is an excellent chance to tell compelling stories about the positive impact that RWS, RMS, and RAS products have on animals, land, and people.

General Marketing Claims

As you work towards completed chain of custody, or prepare for certified supply to build up, you may make claims about your [registered commitment](#) to the standard(s) and talk about them in your marketing.

Commitment Claims: Registering your public commitment to an RAF Standard not only gives you permission to communicate about the standard, it's a simple and effective way to stay accountable, report progress, and be recognized as an industry leader. Commitment claims should communicate clear goals and realistic timelines for achieving them, such as *"We commit to source 100% of our wool from RWS certified sources by 2025."*

Progress Claims: It's important to always be transparent about where you are at in your journey, and how long it will take to achieve the targets you've set. When communicating about the progress you have made, you may make statements such as *"We have achieved 50% of our goal to source 100% of our alpaca fiber from RAS certified sources by 2030."* These claims should be both quantifiable and verifiable through information that is easy to access.

Agreement-Based Claims

Registering as an international working group (IWG) member for the development or revision of any standard permits you to make claims about your participation. Likewise, if your company commits funds to support the implementation of a standard – for example, financially supporting farmers in Peru to become certified to the RAS – then you are allowed to talk about your support for the farmers and the standard. The allowed language for these statements may be tailored to your specific case, and we are always happy to work with you on the best way to communicate your work with us!

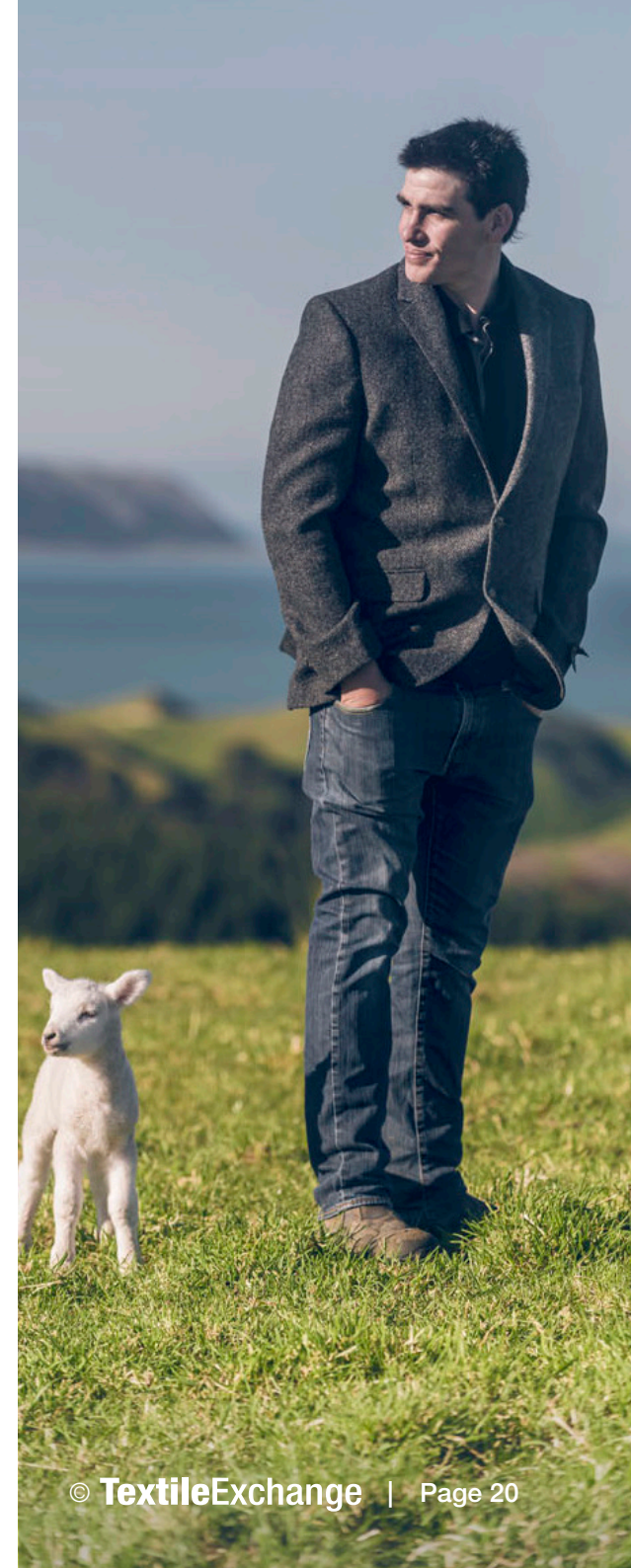
Tip #6: Always reference the most recent version of the [Standards Claims Policy](#) when planning your communications; the type of claim you make will depend on the level of certification achieved, among other things.

Product-Related Claims

For products that are fully certified – meaning they are certified up to the brand level – claims directly related to the product are allowed.

Product-related claims may be in the form of online product descriptions where you mention the standard or on a product's hangtag or label. Always refer to the [Standards Claims Policy](#) and work with your certification body to get your claim and any artwork approved.

Note: Blending of certified RAF fiber with conventional material of the same type (e.g. RAS certified alpaca fiber and conventional alpaca fiber) in a product is not allowed; in order for a product-related claim to be made, all of the fiber in a product must be certified to the applicable standard. For products that are made of any combination of RWS, RMS, or RAS fibers, a combined claim that mentions the applicable standards may be made as long as all the general requirements for making product-related claims are met.





Ten Reasons to Source RAF Fibers

Ten Reasons to Source RAF Fibers

RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

1

Protect Animal Welfare

Animals are treated with respect to their Five Provisions of welfare: 1. Good Nutrition; 2. Good Environment; 3. Good Health; 4. Appropriate Behavior; 5. Positive Mental Experiences.

3

Provide Consistency

RAF standards provides a means for brands to communicate their fiber and traceability expectations clearly and consistently to any and all points in their supply networks. Multiple brands working with a single standard means economies of scale can be more quickly reached.

5

Reduce Risk

RAF standards reduces the risk to brands, the supply chain and fiber growers.

2

Preserve Land Health

Progressive methods of land management are practiced on RAF farms, protecting soil health, biodiversity, and native species.

4

Protection from Activist or Media Attacks

Let the RAF standards and all their users provide a united response to any claims against member of your supply chain or the fiber industry in general.

Ten Reasons to Source RAF Fibers

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6

Connect to Farmers

RAF standards provides an opportunity for brands and farmers to better understand each other's realities and to meet each other's needs.

8

Credible Certification

A professional, third party certification body audits each stage in the supply chain.

10

Drive Industry Change

Support the development of an industry benchmark that will drive improvements in animal care and land management where needed.

7

Messaging and Story-Telling

RAF standards bring the story of farming to consumers, presenting an opportunity to learn about the farmers, the incredible work that they do, and the good care that they take of their land and their animals.

9

Delivery Traceability

The identity of RAF fibers are maintained at all times: from the farm to the final product, through a robust chain of custody.

A herd of alpacas of various colors (brown, white, grey) is gathered in a grassy, hilly landscape. The text 'RAF Supply Chains' is overlaid in white, centered across the middle of the image. A small white horizontal line is positioned below the 'A' in 'Supply'.

RAF Supply Chains

RAF Supply Chains

RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

The RWS Supply Chain

The Responsible Wool Standard was released mid 2016 and has since the release seen strong adoption across several key apparel producing countries. By the end of 2020 there were almost 1500 farms, 6.8 million sheep and over 12 million hectares of land certified to the RWS in South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Uruguay, New Zealand, and USA. Most certification at the farm level is through the Farm Group model. As farm groups are now well established, most are in a position to very quickly scale production in response to brand demand. In countries where the RWS is not yet established additional timeline to establish farm groups still needs to be considered.

The RWS is applicable to all breeds of sheep but currently merino sheep account for approximately 75% of the sheep certified to the RWS. RWS wool is available in microns ranging from 14.5 μ to 26 μ . The bulk of production is in the range 18.5-20.5 μ followed by 20.5-22.5 μ .

The RWS has also seen very strong adoption in the supply chain with the number of supply chain certifications doubling between 2019 and 2020. Particularly strong growth have been seen in key processing countries for wool such as China and Italy.

The RMS Supply Chain

South Africa is the leading global producer of mohair, responsible for about half of global production as well as being a key processing hub for mohair. Lesotho is the second largest production country with the bulk of the remainder produced by Argentina, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand and USA.

The Responsible Mohair Standard was released in March 2019 and despite the challenges brought by the pandemic the mohair industry has made great progress in farm level adoption of the standard. At the close of 2020, almost 500 000 goats were certified to the Responsible Mohair Standard.

The RAS Supply Chain

The modern-day alpaca supply chain reflects indigenous traditions revolved around the 'fiber of the gods'. Alpaca, a South American camelid, is native to Peru. Historically, alpaca fiber was reserved for royalty due to its fine micron range of from 12 μ to 40 μ . Today, the majority of alpaca still live in the highlands, or altiplano, of Peru at an average of 11,000 – 16,000 feet (3,500 to 5,000 meters). About 4 million alpacas live in Peru, with the other small percentage residing in Bolivia, Australia, the UK, and the US. The vast majority of alpaca are classified under the Huacayo breed, while the remaining are classified

as Suri. Huacayo fleece is the main variation used in textile and knitwear production.

The current supply chain is centralized in Peru, where 88% of the production is condensed through two main suppliers who have vertically integrated processing operations. There are a number of smaller producer groups that operate independently but only one has a processing facility and a notable member base of producers. 92% of all fiber produced in Peru comes from small holder farmers, or alpaqueros. These farmers have on average 45 animals and the vast majority are economically disadvantaged, using alpaca farming as their main source of income. They live all across the country, but the majority of alpaca are raised in Arequipa and Puno, two of the high-altitude regions near Bolivia. This fiber is collected and sold by middlemen and then moves through the two large processors. There is very little visibility from 1st stage processor back to the small holder source.

All players in the industry have committed to implementing the RAS and work together to help the smallholder farmers adopt the standard. The implementation requires on-the-ground support and capacity building from everyone involved, including brands and retailers.





A Final Note

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RAF Brand Sourcing Guide

Textile Exchange is pleased to offer assistance when needed with questions or concerns about sourcing RAF Standard certified fibers.

Along with a series of additional resources designed to help navigate your path to responsible sourcing, we are available to answer any questions you may have.

Find Us Online

Websites: ResponsibleWool.org | ResponsibleMohair.org | ResponsibleAlpaca.org

Email:

ResponsibleWool@TextileExchange.org

Resources & Tools

[Responsible Wool Standard \(RWS\)](#) | [RWS User Manual](#) | [Quick Guide to the RWS](#)

[Responsible Mohair Standard \(RMS\)](#) | [RMS User Manual](#) | [Quick Guide to the RMS](#)

[Responsible Alpaca Standard \(RAS\)](#) | [RAS User Manual](#)

[Intro to Supply Chain Certification](#)

[Standards Claims Policy](#)

[Standards Logo Use Specifications](#)

[Find RWS/RMS/RAS Suppliers](#)

