



Policy for a Moratorium on Farm Area Certification in the Responsible Down Standard

Textile Exchange is currently in the process of updating and enhancing its standards system to create a more comprehensive and outcome-focused framework. The aim is to streamline existing standards: the current Responsible Animal Fiber standards (for sheep wool, mohair, and alpaca), the Responsible Down Standard (RDS), and the Global Recycled Standard are being brought together under a single, overarching standard; plus the Organic Content Standard for cotton and the Content Claim Standard. The forthcoming unified standard is set to be effective in 2025 and will be mandatory beginning in 2026.

Amidst these developments, the current RDS serves as an international, voluntary standard that was first introduced in 2014 to protect against down and feathers coming from supply chains where ducks and geese have been subjected to unnecessary harm. The RDS seeks to incentivize animal welfare best practices and drive continuous improvement throughout the supply chain by setting related standard criteria and through education. Independent third-party certification bodies perform annual audits of each stage in the supply chain. Additionally, material is tracked from the farm to the final product using transaction certificates, following the requirements of Textile Exchange's Content Claim Standard (CCS).

In the course of Textile Exchange's standards review process, several challenges in the on-ground implementation of the Responsible Down Standard (RDS 3.0) have been encountered, specifically with the Farm Area Certification module and small slaughter site requirements. Textile Exchange introduced these options for certification with the intention to extend the reach of sustainability standards to smallholders located in the same geographic area, facilitating their access, and bringing them along in the journey toward promoting positive outcomes in animal welfare. However, Textile Exchange acknowledges there are certain weaknesses that need to be addressed, particularly in implementing improved oversight and support mechanisms for these farmers and slaughter sites. In response to the evolving landscape and the need for more effective certification models, these challenges are being specifically addressed in the short term as described in this moratorium policy and in conjunction with our preparation for the unified standard roll-out. Adaptation of requirements for certification and related criteria drafted in the unified standard will be part of pilot testing in 2024, with down and feathers as a key focus for ground-truthing the proposed changes.

Recognizing the need for adaptability, **Textile Exchange has opted to implement a moratorium on the Responsible Down Standard Farm Area Certification.** This measure serves as a strategic approach to address the identified issues with the RDS while facilitating a smooth transition to the unified standard.



As part of the unified standard piloting and transition process, Textile Exchange plans to explore alternative certification models to provide a path to certification for farms currently included in Farm Area Certification.

Section A – General Information

A1. Implementation

A1.1 Scope

A1.1.1 This moratorium applies to organizations certified against the *RDS-101-V3.0 Responsible Down Standard* (RDS 3.0) as well as new organizations applying for certification and shall be applied together with the *RDS-102-V3.3 RDS Certification Procedures* and other applicable reference documents listed in section A2.

A1.2 Applicability and Timelines

A1.2.1 This policy is effective **March 1, 2024**, and may be used immediately.

A1.2.2 Effective **March 1, 2024**, the certification body shall not accept any new RDS Farm Area applications for organizations that wish to become certified to the RDS 3.0, Section E- Farm Area Certification.

A1.2.3 Effective **March 1, 2024**, certified organizations that currently hold or previously held Farm Area Certification in the past year (2023) may renew certified Farm Areas. However, new Farm Areas shall not be added.

A1.2.4 All audits and assessments conducted on or after **April 1, 2024**, shall adhere to the conditions stipulated in this policy. The moratorium shall remain in effect until further notice. Textile Exchange shall continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as needed.

A1.2.5 Slaughter sites, including small slaughter sites, shall conform with all the requirements of the RDS 3.0, Section B4- Slaughter Certification (also note the definition of slaughter site in *RDS-102-V3.3 Certification Procedures*, D2.2.1).

A1.2.6 The certification body shall perform annual audits for all small slaughter sites (also note the definition of slaughter site in *RDS-102-V3.3 Certification Procedures*, D2.2.1).



A2. References

The following documents are key documents for conducting RDS certification. It is essential that they are used alongside this document.

1. *RDS-101 Responsible Down Standard*
2. *RDS-102-V3.3 RDS Certification Procedures*
3. *RDS-201 RDS User Manual*
4. *ASR-101 Accreditation and Certification Procedures for Textile Exchange Standards* (“ACP”)
5. *CCS-101 Content Claim Standard*
6. *TE-101 Terms and Definitions for Textile Exchange Standards*
7. *TE-301 Standards Claims Policy*
8. *TE-302 Standards Logo Use Specifications*

References to “ACP” refer to criteria in *ASR-101-V2.1 Accreditation and Certification Procedures for Textile Exchange Standards*, references to “AW” refer to animal welfare criteria in *RDS-101-V3.0 Responsible Down Standard*, and references to “RDS” refer to the *Responsible Down Standard 3.0*.