

Factsheet

STeP by OEKO-TEX®

SUSTAINABLE TEXTILE PRODUCTION

STeP (Sustainable Textile Production) by OEKO-TEX® is an independent certification system for companies of the textile chain (brands, manufacturers and retailers) who want to analyse, certify and optimise their production facilities with regard to sustainable and socially responsible manufacturing conditions.



PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Where it can be used:

Production facilities of all processing stages from fibre production, spinning mills, weaving mills, knitting mills to finishing facilities, manufacturers of ready-made textile items, and producers of accessories, foams and mattresses can apply for a STeP certification.

CONCEPT

The objective of STeP certification is the permanent implementation of environmentally friendly production processes, optimum health and safety and socially acceptable working conditions. In contrast to other certification systems, which mostly only take into account certain individual aspects of sustainability, STeP certification allows comprehensive analysis and evaluation with regard to sustainable production conditions.

VALIDITY

A STeP certificate is valid for a three year period and can subsequently be renewed by the certificate holder any number of times. For this, the production facility has to comply with the requested criteria within the framework of a new assessment and audit by the OEKO-TEX® institute in charge.

CRITERIA

To ensure the required transparency and comparability, the STeP criteria are standardized around the world. Based on a dynamic further development, the criteria are regularly analysed, evaluated and updated, if required, e.g. in view of new market developments, legal regulations and scientific findings.

MODULAR STRUCTURE

The STeP certification requires a holistic analysis of all company areas that are relevant for a robust assessment regarding sustainability. The six STeP modules include chemical management, environmental performance, environmental management, health and safety, social responsibility and quality management.

REQUIREMENTS

The prerequisite for STeP certification is the compliance with certain minimum requirements in the individual company areas. Based on this, the following aspects are relevant:

› CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT

- Compliance with the Manufacturing Restricted Substance List (MRSL)
- Introduction of a suitable harmful substances management
- Compliance with the principles of 'green chemistry'
- Periodical training and further education regarding the handling of chemicals
- Obligation for appropriate designation regarding chemicals and their risks
- Monitoring the use of chemicals

› ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

- Compliance with the stipulated limit values
- Optimisation of production processes
- Efficient use of resources
- Responsible handling of waste, waste water, sludge, air emissions etc.
- Reduction of the carbon footprint

› ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

- Proof of a suitable environmental management system for targeted coordination and systematic implementation of all environmental protection measures
- Commitment to environmental targets
- Periodic creation of environmental reports
- Nomination of an environmental representative
- Periodic training regarding the implementation of environmental targets and measures
- Implementation of existing environmental management systems (e.g. ISO 14001)

› SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Ensuring socially acceptable working conditions in accordance with the United Nations (UN) and International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions
- Execution of performance appraisals for employees
- Implementation of existing social standards (e.g. SA 8000)
- Guaranteed training for employees regarding social aspects of an operation
- Internal communication and distribution of responsibilities
- Commitment to paying fair wages
- Mandatory implementation of an effective social policy
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining agreements

› QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- Implementation of a suitable quality management system, e.g. in line with ISO 9001 or operational approaches to quality control
- Guaranteed traceability, responsibility and appropriate documentation regarding the flow of goods and manufactured products
- Advanced management aspects such as risk management or corporate governance
- Enhance the PDCA principles and follow a continuous improvement process

› HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Proof of suitable measures to ensure the required health and safety at the workplace (e.g. filter systems, ear protection etc.)
- Guaranteed safety of buildings and production plants (e.g. through constructive measures, escape plans, separation of production areas etc.)
- Risk prevention, health and safety inspections, and periodic training for employees
- Implementation of existing health and safety standards (e.g. OHSAS 18001)

ASSESSMENT

To allow an adequate evaluation of the sustainability of production facilities OEKO-TEX® requires numerous data from the companies. Data collection is paperless and uses a web-based assessment tool. Companies have to answer a comprehensive online questionnaire and need to verify their statements by means of relevant documents.

AUDITS

The information and data provided by the company within the framework of the assessment are analysed and evaluated by OEKO-TEX®. Data verification and document validation is carried out in form of an audit at the production facility by the OEKO-TEX® institute in charge.

SCORING

STeP certification comprises three different levels describing the extent to which the company has achieved sustainable production and working conditions:

- › **Level 1** = entry level
- › **Level 2** = good implementation with further optimization potential
- › **Level 3** = exemplary implementation in the sense of a best practice example

The STeP certificate shows the following scoring results:

- › the sustainability level achieved
- › an overall evaluation
- › an individual evaluation of the analysed company areas

CONTROLS

In addition to the on-site audit within the framework of the initial STeP certification or a renewal process, the OEKO-TEX® Association will conduct compliance and unannounced on-site audits to verify compliance with all STeP process requirements within the three years validity period of the STeP certificate.