**YESSION Action Plan**

*Empowering brands, retailers, and their suppliers to develop and implement due diligence programs to prevent cotton and cotton products produced with forced labor from entering their supply chains.*

**YESSION: Yarn Ethically & Sustainably Sourced** (YESSION) helps to eliminate forced labor from the textile supply chain by training and assessing the ability of spinning mills and textile mills to identify, address, and prevent sourcing cotton that was produced with forced labor. YESSION applies the OECD [Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector](https://www.oecd.org/gov/sourcing/Responsible-Sourcing-Network-due-diligence-guidance-2019.pdf) (OEC Guidance), which has wide industry and government support and is a proven method for companies to identify and address risks over time.

Responsible Sourcing Network (RSN) released the [YESSION Standard and Workbook Version 1.0](https://www.responsiblesourcingnetwork.org) in 2019 with a focus on preventing any high-risk cotton from entering spinning mills (since they are the first global mixing point for cotton lint from multiple sources and therefore the key control point for identifying a cotton’s origin). **However, these documents can be modified for application at textile mills, where there is a growing interest from global brands.** YESSION can help textile mills avoid cotton lint or yarn originating in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Uyghur Region) where upwards of one million Muslims are being detained and forced to work.

YESSION due diligence data could be made available to a variety of production management platforms, technology interfaces, or blockchain-enabled solutions. RSN is open to coordinating implementation of YESSION assessments with Higg.co, Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Social Labor Convergence Program (SLCP), or others.

RSN believes it is time for the industry to come together to assist spinning mills and textile mills develop effective due diligence programs throughout the supply chain to prevent sourcing cotton produced with forced labor, beginning with cotton and cotton yarn produced in the Uyghur Region.

**Company Benefits of Supporting the YESSION Standard**

1. **Eliminate forced labor from cotton yarn and textile supply chains.** Participating in YESSION represents the beginning of the end of forced labor in cotton textile production. Spinners and textile mills are key control points for identifying cotton lint and yarn origins. YESSION will ensure yarn spinners and textile mills have internal systems in place to prevent cotton or cotton yarn produced with forced labor from entering their supply chains.

2. **Enable compliance with anti-slavery legislation, regulations, and goals.** Anti-slavery legislation requires companies doing business in California, the UK, and Australia to disclose their anti-slavery due diligence activities. The U.S. has a [Withhold Release Order](https://www.ustreas.gov/press/2015/02/13-withhold-release-order-cotton-turkmenistan-house-reps) against cotton from Turkmenistan and the House of Representatives just passed the [Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2352/text) to block cotton produced with forced labor in Xinjiang, China from entering the U.S. The UN’s Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and several national laws call for corporate supply chain due diligence. UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 and Indicator 8.7 focus on achieving decent work for all and eliminating forced labor. Joining YESSION will assist participating companies—and the industry—to comply with anti-slavery and due diligence laws and contribute to the UN SDGs.

3. **Reduce potential and actual legal, financial, and reputational risks.** Participating in YESSION demonstrates to customers, investors, and stakeholders strong, clear leadership in eliminating forced labor from the company’s own and the global cotton industry’s supply chains.

4. **Support an effective due diligence approach.** YESSION applies the OECD [Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector](https://www.oecd.org/gov/sourcing/Responsible-Sourcing-Network-due-diligence-guidance-2019.pdf), which has wide industry and government support and is a proven method for companies to identify and address risks over time.
Modifying and Testing YESS for Textile Mills

RSN wholeheartedly supports OECD’s risk-based due diligence approach as a way to help companies take important steps to understand, identify, assess, and appropriately address prioritized risks of harm associated with their operations, suppliers, inputs, or raw materials. RSN welcomes the opportunity to assist the global fashion industry as well as human rights defenders identify and address risks of forced labor. Modifying and testing the YESS Standard and Assessment Workbook to apply to textile mills, developing tools, and delivering trainings will assist the industry to minimize its risk exposure to cotton lint and yarn produced in high-risk regions.

Phase 1 Tasks

RSN proposes the following activities to assist the industry develop effective due diligence systems to avoid sourcing cotton or cotton products that originate in the Uyghur Region or other countries that pose a high-risk of involving forced labor in cotton production.

1. RSN would modify the YESS Standard and Assessment Workbook to apply it to textile mills. The set of standards and assessment workbooks for spinners and textile mills would enable the industry to achieve more transparency and drive due diligence in the middle of the supply chain where participation is needed to achieve the industry’s goals.

2. RSN would develop resources and tools to enable yarn spinners and textile mills to develop a responsible due diligence system (e.g. policy; supplier and material due diligence procedures; procedures to identify and assess risks; tools to monitor and report on progress).

3. RSN would train participating brands and suppliers on the OECD Guidance. RSN would develop a series of five sequential one-hour online modules to offer a complete suite that introduces the overarching concepts of due diligence before presenting more detailed explanations, guidance, and examples of the various components of a due diligence management system.

RSN would develop the training presentations and talking points for use during each module, which will provide context and examples of the underlying principles and intended outcomes The trainings will include a glossary of terms, explanations, descriptions of key concepts, components of due diligence, a series of interactive exercises, and quizzes to assess the attendees’ understanding of the material and reinforce information provided throughout the trainings (see Annex II for an outline of the five-module online training).

4. RSN would assist and advise four nominated spinning or textile mills on how they can:
   - Map supply chains
   - Integrate the due diligence system into sourcing and material management operations as well as strategy development
   - Communicate publicly on the due diligence process, including how potential and actual harms are addressed
   - Train internal business partners and suppliers
   - Communicate with affected stakeholders
   - Monitor the effectiveness of the due diligence system

5. Once Task 4 is accomplished, RSN would conduct desktop (remote) YESS feasibility assessments of up to four participating spinning and/or textile mills’ due diligence systems and report on the remote assessment findings, including a list of corrective actions for identified non-conformances.

6. Upon completion of the desktop YESS feasibility assessments, RSN would incorporate edits into the YESS Standard for Textile Mills, accompanying Assessment Workbook, resources, tools, and training as appropriate based on what was learned during the feasibility assessments.
Phase 2 Tasks

7. Once international travel is allowed, RSN would conduct follow up on-site feasibility assessments of the four spinning or textile mills. These would include assessing any corrective actions identified in the desktop feasibility assessments. The feasibility assessment would include a refresher training prior to the 2-day on-site feasibility assessment.

8. In conjunction with the on-site feasibility assessments, RSN would train two third-party auditors on the YESS Standards and Workbooks. The trained auditors would be able to serve as support auditors during the feasibility assessments. Additional training may be required to ensure these auditors would qualify as lead auditors for future assessments (not included in this proposal).

Conclusion

RSN invites proactive brands, business associations, and multi-stakeholder initiatives to join us in developing effective due diligence programs with yarn spinners and textile mills to identify and prevent sourcing cotton produced with forced labor.

RSN is seeking immediate financial support from 3 – 5 business associations for the development of the YESS Standard for Textile Mills. RSN is inviting 3 – 5 brands and retailers to contribute financially to support training and piloting of the YESS Standard at spinning or textile mills in 2021. The cost for brands and retailers will depend on the number of brands and suppliers that will be participating. We anticipate the two phases could be completed in two sequential six-month periods. Upon request, a breakdown of the estimated level of effort and cost (in USD) needed to complete all of the above-stated tasks is available.

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