

# 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:

Certification is possible for production facilities of all processing stages from fibre production, spinning mills, weaving mills, knitting mills to finishing facilities and manufacturers of ready-made textile items.

### 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 allows comprehensive analysis and evaluation with regard to sustainable production conditions.

### VALIDITY

A STeP certificate is valid for a duration of three years and can subsequently be extended any number of times. For this, the production facility has to comply with the requested criteria within the framework of a new assessment and compliance audit by one of the OEKO-TEX® institutes.

### 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

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

## REQUIREMENTS

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

### › CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT

- Compliance with the guidelines of a restricted substances list (RSL)
- Introduction of a suitable harmful substances management
- Compliance with the principles of 'green chemicals'
- Periodical training and further education regarding the handling of the chemicals used
- Obligation for appropriate communication regarding the chemicals used and their risks
- Monitoring the use of chemicals

### › ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

- Compliance with the stipulated limit values
- Use of best available production technologies
- Optimisation of production processes
- Efficient use of resources
- Responsible handling of waste, waste water, emissions etc.
- Reduction of the CO<sup>2</sup> 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
- Appointment of an environmental representative
- Periodic training regarding the implementation of environmental targets and measures
- Implementation of existing environmental protection systems (e.g. ISO 14001)

### › SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Ensuring socially acceptable working conditions in the sense of the UN and ILO conventions
- Execution of performance appraisals for employees
- Implementation of existing social standards (e.g. SA 8000)
- Guaranteed training for employees regarding the social issues of an operation

## › QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- Implementation of a suitable QM system, e.g. in line with ISO 9001 or operational approaches
- Guaranteed traceability, responsibility and appropriate documentation regarding the flow of goods and manufactured products
- Advanced management aspects such as risk management or corporate governance

## › HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Proof of suitable measures to ensure the required health and safety in 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
- Implementation of existing 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 in the framework of the assessment are analysed and evaluated by OEKO-TEX®. Verification is carried out in the form of an audit of the production facility by the OEKO-TEX® institute in charge.

## SCORING

STeP certification encompasses 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 routine audits in the framework of the initial STeP certification and extension, OEKO-TEX® carries out intermediate audits (compliance audits) as well as unannounced company audits at the production facilities to verify compliance with the required criteria after the certificate has been issued.