

Responsible Sourcing Manual for Fashion Brands and Their Partners

Legal Notice and Intended Use: *This Responsible Sourcing Manual is a customizable document developed by Global Fashion Directory LLC (“GFD”) to help fashion brands communicate clear ethical, social, and environmental expectations across their supply chains — from raw materials to finished goods. It is intended for general guidance only and does not constitute legal advice or certification. Brands are responsible for adapting the contents to reflect their legal obligations, operational risks, and sourcing practices. Public or commercial use requires proper attribution to GFD.*

This Manual aligns with internationally recognized frameworks, including:

- *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)*
- *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*
- *ILO Core Conventions*
- *UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*
- *ZDHC Roadmap to Zero, Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), and others*

Brands must customize this Manual by:

- *Replacing placeholders (e.g., [Brand Name], [Insert: Modern Slavery Policy], [Brand Name Email])*
- *Linking to internal documents (e.g., PRSL, MRSL, grievance policies)*
- *Aligning content with legal requirements, regional risk, and organizational structure*
- *Reviewing annually and consulting legal counsel prior to external release*

This Manual is designed to:

- *Communicate minimum expectations and aspirational goals to suppliers*
- *Guide onboarding, performance management, and continuous improvement*
- *Serve as a foundation for audits, risk assessments, and remediation*
- *Advance transparency, accountability, and leadership in ethical sourcing*

Use and Licensing: *This document may be adapted, reproduced, or distributed internally by brands. Public or third-party use requires appropriate attribution to GFD. For licensing questions, contact: info@globalfashiondirectory.com*

Responsible Sourcing Manual for Fashion Brands and Their Partners

How to Use This Manual

This Responsible Sourcing Manual is designed to help suppliers, subcontractors, and material producers understand and meet [Brand Name]'s social, environmental, and ethical expectations. It is both a compliance tool and a roadmap for continuous improvement and leadership in responsible sourcing.

This Manual applies to all facilities, service providers, and entities involved in the design, development, sourcing, manufacture, finishing, packaging, or delivery of goods and materials for [Brand Name].

Suppliers must ensure this Manual is:

- Distributed to all relevant personnel and subcontractors;
- Translated into local languages if necessary;
- Posted visibly within workplaces, where appropriate;
- Used as the basis for regular internal training and management systems.

When to Apply This Manual

The principles outlined here must be applied:

- During new supplier onboarding;
- Before beginning any new production run or material order;
- When selecting new raw material sources or intermediaries;
- During audits, assessments, and performance reviews;
- In the event of supply chain risk events, grievances, or compliance escalations.

Supporting Documents

This Manual is intended to be used in conjunction with other [Brand Name] policies and materials, including but not limited to:

- [Insert: Code of Conduct Summary Poster]
- [Insert: Modern Slavery Policy]

- [Insert: Subcontracting and Homework Policy]
- [Insert: Restricted Substances List (PRSL) and Manufacturing RSL (MRSL)]
- [Insert: Audit Preparation Guidelines]

Where local laws differ from the requirements in this Manual, the higher standard must always apply.

This document is a living tool and will be reviewed and revised regularly to reflect evolving industry practices, global frameworks, and brand commitments.

1. Executive Summary

At [Brand Name], we believe that fashion must be a force for good. Responsible sourcing is not a peripheral activity; it is a central pillar of our business. This Manual provides a clear framework for building supply chains that protect human rights, promote environmental stewardship, respect animal welfare, and foster transparency from fiber to finished product.

We expect all suppliers, subcontractors, and raw material providers to adopt not only the minimum standards outlined in this Manual but also to demonstrate leadership in ethical and sustainable innovation. Compliance is the foundation, but excellence demands active engagement, transparency, and collaboration.

This Manual is designed to evolve with emerging best practices and global standards. It is a living document that will be updated regularly to reflect new knowledge, technologies, and expectations from consumers, regulators, and society at large.

2. Introduction

At [Brand Name], we believe that the future of fashion must be fundamentally different from its past. We recognize that the way we source, produce, and deliver our products has far-reaching impacts on people, animals, and the planet. As such, responsible sourcing is not simply a compliance obligation — it is central to who we are and how we define success.

This Responsible Sourcing Manual serves as a critical tool for building a resilient, ethical, and regenerative supply chain. It outlines both the minimum requirements that all suppliers must meet and the aspirational targets that will drive continuous innovation and leadership across our network.

We draw our sourcing philosophy from internationally recognized frameworks, including:

- The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;
- The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises;
- The ILO Core Labor Standards;
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, our ambitions go beyond compliance. We seek to work with suppliers who share our vision for a fashion system that:

- Respects and promotes human rights at every level;
- Protects and restores ecosystems and biodiversity;
- Upholds the highest standards of animal welfare;
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions and supports climate resilience;
- Fosters innovation, equity, and empowerment across supply chains.

[Brand Name] has made public commitments to [insert examples: 100% certified raw materials by 2025, carbon neutrality by 2030, zero deforestation impact]. These goals can only be achieved through deep collaboration with our suppliers and partners.

Suppliers are expected to integrate the principles outlined here into their policies, management systems, and daily operations. They are also expected to cascade these requirements to their subcontractors, raw material providers, and service intermediaries.

Where national laws differ from the expectations in this Manual, suppliers must always apply the higher standard.

This Manual is a living document. It will be updated regularly to reflect new scientific findings, policy developments, technological innovations, and stakeholder expectations. Suppliers are responsible for staying informed about updates and ensuring continued compliance.

Together, we can drive systemic change, advance a more equitable fashion industry, and contribute meaningfully to the global sustainability agenda.

3. Code of Conduct and Zero Tolerance

At the foundation of [Brand Name]'s Responsible Sourcing expectations is a non-negotiable Code of Conduct. This Code defines the minimum social, environmental, and ethical standards that must be respected by all suppliers, subcontractors, and raw material providers in our supply chain. It reflects our core values of integrity, transparency, dignity, and stewardship.

Suppliers must integrate this Code into their management systems and ensure that it is:

- Communicated to all workers, subcontractors, and business partners;
- Displayed prominently at production facilities, in languages understood by workers;
- Embedded into internal policies, onboarding processes, and subcontractor agreements.

Training on the Code's principles must be provided regularly to all relevant personnel.

Zero Tolerance Issues

Certain violations represent critical breaches of trust, human rights, and environmental protection. These are considered Zero Tolerance issues and will result in immediate escalation, investigation, and may lead to suspension or termination of the supplier relationship.

Zero Tolerance issues include:

- Use of forced, bonded, trafficked, or child labor;
- Physical abuse, sexual harassment, or other forms of violence against workers;
- Retention of workers' identity documents;
- Unauthorized subcontracting or undisclosed homeworking arrangements;
- Critical breaches of environmental law (e.g., illegal waste discharge, destruction of protected ecosystems);
- Use of banned materials (e.g., real fur, exotic skins, angora, mohair, leather);
- Corruption, bribery, falsification of records, or other acts of business misconduct.

Supplier Responsibilities

Suppliers must take immediate corrective action if any violation of this Code is identified. They are responsible for cascading these standards to all subcontractors, agents, and intermediaries.

Suppliers must also maintain accessible grievance mechanisms that allow workers to report violations confidentially and without fear of retaliation.

Failure to act swiftly on any Zero Tolerance issue — or to demonstrate transparent cooperation during investigations — will result in contract review and possible termination.

Commitment to Leadership

Beyond compliance, [Brand Name] encourages suppliers to internalize the principles of this Code as part of their organizational culture, striving not just to meet but to exceed these expectations.

4. Core Labor Rights

At [Brand Name], ensuring respect for the fundamental rights of all workers is central to our Responsible Sourcing commitments. Every individual involved in the creation of our products must be treated with dignity, fairness, and equality.

Respecting labor rights strengthens not only the communities where we operate but also the long-term resilience, productivity, and reputation of our supply chain partners. Upholding these principles is a shared responsibility that demands leadership, transparency, and continuous improvement.

This section defines the non-negotiable expectations regarding forced labor, child labor, and freedom of association — core human rights recognized by international law.

4.1 Forced Labor and Modern Slavery

Forced labor is a serious violation of human rights and is categorically prohibited across [Brand Name]'s supply chains. Suppliers must take all necessary steps to ensure that no worker is subjected to forced, bonded, indentured, or involuntary prison labor, or to conditions resembling human trafficking.

Supplier Requirements:

- Workers must enter employment voluntarily and must not be subjected to coercion, intimidation, threats, deception, or the withholding of personal documents or wages.
- Workers must retain full control of their passports, identity documents, and work permits at all times.
- No recruitment fees or placement charges may be imposed on workers. All costs related to recruitment — including travel, visas, medical exams, and agency fees — must be borne by the employer.

Ethical Recruitment Practices:

- Contracts must be provided in a language the worker understands, detailing the terms and conditions of employment, prior to departure from their home region.
- Suppliers must perform thorough due diligence on recruitment agencies and labor brokers. Agencies must comply with ethical recruitment principles such as the Employer Pays Principle.

- Suppliers must monitor recruitment processes directly where risks of forced labor are elevated, particularly for migrant workers.

Remediation Expectations: If any form of forced labor is discovered:

- Immediate measures must be taken to protect affected workers, including providing options for safe exit, restitution of fees paid, and access to grievance mechanisms.
- A Corrective Action Plan must be submitted and implemented swiftly in collaboration with [Brand Name], prioritizing worker welfare and systemic prevention measures.

4.2 Child Labor and Young Workers

Child labor deprives children of their childhood, potential, and dignity and is unacceptable under all circumstances.

Minimum Age for Employment:

- Suppliers must ensure that no worker under the age of 15 is employed, or higher if stipulated by national law.
- Young workers aged 15–18 may only perform non-hazardous work that does not interfere with their education, health, or development.

Age Verification Requirements:

- Suppliers must establish formal, documented age-verification procedures during recruitment.
- Acceptable proof of age documents include birth certificates, national IDs, or school enrollment records.
- Visual assessments, verbal affirmations, or assumptions based on appearance are not sufficient.

Special Protection for Young Workers:

- Young workers must not work night shifts or excessive hours.
- Tasks assigned to young workers must be assessed for health and safety risks to ensure they are appropriate.

Child Labor Remediation Procedure: If child labor is identified:

- The child must be removed from hazardous conditions immediately.

- Suppliers must collaborate with [Brand Name] to provide access to education, vocational training, and, if needed, financial family support to prevent the recurrence of child labor.
- Suppliers must conduct thorough internal investigations to identify root causes and adjust policies and procedures accordingly.

Focus on Supply Chain Risks:

- Special attention must be paid to outsourced processes, homeworking, and agricultural production where risks of child labor are significantly higher.
- Suppliers must map and monitor subcontractors and raw material sources to prevent child labor deeper in their supply chains.

4.3 Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

Freedom of association and collective bargaining are basic rights enshrined in international conventions, including ILO Conventions 87 and 98. Workers must have the right to form and join trade unions of their choice and to bargain collectively without interference or fear of retaliation.

Supplier Responsibilities:

- Respect and facilitate workers' rights to form, join, and participate in unions or worker organizations of their own choosing.
- Not interfere with the establishment, functioning, or activities of worker organizations in any way.
- Ensure that no worker faces discrimination, dismissal, harassment, demotion, or threats because of union activities or membership.

Alternative Representation Mechanisms: In countries where freedom of association is legally restricted:

- Suppliers must establish parallel means of independent and effective worker representation, such as elected worker committees.
- These bodies must have the autonomy to raise concerns, negotiate conditions, and seek redress.

Meaningful Engagement:

- Suppliers must engage in genuine, good-faith dialogue with worker representatives or unions.
- Minutes of meetings with worker representatives must be recorded and available for review during audits.

Encouragement of Collective Bargaining:

- Where worker organizations exist, suppliers are encouraged to support the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) that improve working conditions, wages, benefits, and grievance procedures.
- CBAs must be honored in full and without retaliation or circumvention.

Promoting a Culture of Respect:

- Suppliers must foster an environment in which workers feel safe exercising their rights to organize, advocate, and voice concerns collectively.
- Proactive training for management teams on respecting workers' rights to organize is strongly encouraged.

4.4 Employment Relationship Transparency

A clear, transparent employment relationship is fundamental to protecting workers' rights and ensuring compliance with applicable laws. Workers must be fully aware of the terms and conditions under which they are employed.

Supplier Requirements:

- Provide every worker with a written contract in a language the worker understands, prior to commencing employment.
- Contracts must clearly outline:
 - Job title and job description;
 - Wage rates, payment frequency, and overtime compensation;
 - Hours of work, rest periods, and leave entitlements;
 - Details on social security, health insurance, and other benefits;
 - Procedures for resignation, grievance reporting, and termination.

Protection Against Unfair Practices:

- Contracts must not be altered unilaterally by the employer without the worker’s informed consent.
- Terms must be consistent with national labor laws and international standards.

Prohibition of Misclassification:

- Workers must not be misclassified as “independent contractors” when they meet the criteria of regular employment.
- Apprenticeship, probationary, seasonal, or casual contracts must not be used to undermine labor rights or avoid obligations relating to permanent employment.

Documentation:

- Suppliers must maintain accurate and comprehensive employment records for all employees, including subcontracted and homeworker labor.
- Records must be readily available during compliance audits.

Worker Awareness:

- Orientation programs must ensure that workers fully understand their contracts and rights upon hiring.

4.5 Workplace Conditions

Protecting workers' physical, psychological, and economic well-being is fundamental to responsible business practices. Suppliers must ensure that workplace conditions meet or exceed all applicable health, safety, and welfare standards.

Essential Principles:

- Workplaces must be free from hazards, discrimination, harassment, and intimidation.
- Facilities must promote dignity, respect, and equal opportunity for all workers.

Safe and Healthy Environment:

- Suppliers must proactively identify, assess, and control occupational health and safety (OHS) risks through formal management systems (ISO 45001 or equivalent recommended).
- Workers must have access to clean drinking water, hygienic sanitation facilities, and safe food storage and preparation areas.

Mental Health and Well-Being:

- Suppliers must recognize that mental health is as important as physical health.
- Efforts must be made to reduce workplace stress, prevent harassment, and support worker resilience through appropriate policies and programs.

Dormitories (if provided):

- Must meet standards of hygiene, security, ventilation, and privacy.
- Workers must not be housed in overcrowded or unsafe conditions.

Continuous Improvement:

- Suppliers are encouraged to implement workplace wellness programs, mental health initiatives, and worker feedback surveys to promote a culture of continuous well-being.

4.6 Working Hours and Wages

Fair working hours and living wages are cornerstones of decent work. Suppliers must manage working time responsibly and ensure that all workers are fairly compensated.

Working Hours Standards:

- Regular working hours must not exceed 48 hours per week, excluding overtime.
- Overtime must be voluntary and must not exceed 12 hours per week, unless otherwise specified by law.
- Workers must receive at least one full rest day for every seven consecutive working days.

Fair Compensation:

- Wages must meet or exceed applicable minimum wage laws or collective bargaining agreements, whichever are higher.
- Where possible, suppliers are encouraged to work toward living wage benchmarks that provide workers and their families with a decent standard of living.

Payment Practices:

- Wages must be paid regularly (at least monthly) through traceable methods (e.g., bank transfer, payslip-based cash payments).
- Payslips must clearly detail:

- Hours worked (regular and overtime);
- Wage rate and gross pay;
- Overtime premiums;
- Deductions (if any) and reasons for deductions;
- Net pay received.

Prohibition of Abusive Deductions:

- Wage deductions for disciplinary reasons are prohibited unless permitted by law and with the worker’s informed consent.

Piece-Rate Work:

- Workers paid by the piece must be able to earn at least the equivalent of the minimum wage during regular working hours without needing to work excessive overtime.

Transparent Systems:

- All workers, including casual, seasonal, homeworkers, and subcontracted workers, must be included in fair wage and working hour systems.
- Records of working hours must be maintained and available for audit.

4.7 Health, Safety, and Well-Being

A healthy and safe working environment is non-negotiable. Suppliers must identify, prevent, and mitigate all workplace hazards to ensure the safety and welfare of their employees.

Occupational Health and Safety Management:

- Suppliers must implement OHS management systems aligned with recognized standards (e.g., ISO 45001) and conduct regular risk assessments.
- Appoint a qualified OHS officer responsible for overseeing workplace safety programs.

Training and Worker Awareness:

- Provide regular OHS training to all workers and supervisors, covering:
 - Machinery safety;
 - Chemical handling;

- Emergency evacuation procedures;
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Protective Measures:

- Provide appropriate, well-maintained PPE at no cost to workers.
- Ensure proper machine guarding, maintenance, and lockout/tagout procedures to prevent accidents.
- Keep all emergency exits unlocked, well-lit, and unobstructed during working hours.
- Conduct fire drills at least twice per year for all shifts.

Facility Requirements:

- Maintain adequate lighting, ventilation, and temperature control in workspaces.
- Provide sufficient sanitary facilities proportionate to the number of workers.

Emergency Response Systems:

- Suppliers must have written emergency plans addressing fire, chemical spills, natural disasters, and medical emergencies.
- First aid supplies and trained first-aiders must be readily available on all shifts.

Monitoring and Incident Reporting:

- Suppliers must track occupational incidents and near-misses, analyze root causes, and implement corrective actions to prevent recurrence.
- Workers must be able to report safety hazards confidentially and without fear of reprisal.

Mental Health Integration:

- Recognize mental health risks related to overwork, stress, harassment, and workplace violence.
- Establish policies and practices that promote respectful workplace culture and worker resilience.

4.8 Harassment, Abuse, and Discrimination

[Brand Name] maintains a zero-tolerance policy toward all forms of harassment, abuse, intimidation, and discrimination within its supply chains. Workers must be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness at all times, without exception.

Supplier Requirements:

- Prohibit all forms of physical punishment, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, psychological coercion, bullying, and threats of violence.
- Ensure that no worker faces harassment or discrimination based on race, color, gender, gender identity, age, nationality, religion, disability, marital status, pregnancy, union membership, political opinion, sexual orientation, or any other protected status.

Anti-Harassment Policies:

- Suppliers must adopt written anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies.
- Policies must be communicated clearly to all workers in appropriate languages.
- Managers and supervisors must receive specialized training on respectful behavior, inclusive leadership, and anti-harassment principles.

Complaint Investigation and Resolution:

- All complaints of harassment or discrimination must be taken seriously, investigated confidentially and promptly by trained personnel.
- Corrective action must be taken against perpetrators, which may include counseling, retraining, disciplinary action, or termination depending on the severity of the case.

Protection Against Retaliation:

- Suppliers must guarantee that workers who raise complaints — or who participate in investigations — are protected from retaliation, including termination, demotion, or harassment.

Promotion of Inclusive Workplaces:

- Suppliers are encouraged to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives aimed at promoting representation, advancement, and leadership opportunities for marginalized groups.
- DEI training, mentorship programs, and employee resource groups are considered best practices.

4.9 Grievance Mechanisms

An effective grievance mechanism is a cornerstone of worker protection, continuous improvement, and early conflict resolution. Workers must be able to voice concerns safely and confidently.

Supplier Requirements:

- Establish accessible, confidential grievance channels that allow all workers — including subcontracted and homeworker labor — to raise concerns anonymously if desired.
- Provide multiple grievance options to accommodate diverse workforces, including:
 - Locked suggestion boxes placed discreetly in facilities;
 - Anonymous telephone hotlines;
 - Designated grievance officers;
 - Worker committees trained in grievance handling.

Procedural Requirements:

- Grievance procedures must be clearly communicated to all workers during onboarding and periodically thereafter.
- Workers must be trained on how to use grievance systems safely and effectively.
- Grievances must be logged, acknowledged promptly, investigated thoroughly, and resolved in a timely manner.

Record Keeping and Monitoring:

- Suppliers must maintain confidential records of grievances received, actions taken, and outcomes achieved.
- Regular analysis of grievance data must be conducted to identify systemic issues and inform corrective actions.

Protection Against Retaliation:

- Workers raising grievances must be protected from retaliation or adverse consequences.
- Suppliers must foster a workplace culture that encourages open communication, continuous feedback, and mutual trust.

Example Best Practice:

- Establish third-party operated hotlines that allow workers to report concerns independently and in their native languages, ensuring higher participation rates and more transparent grievance resolution.

4.10 Subcontracting and Homeworkers

Transparency, oversight, and ethical treatment of subcontracted and homeworke labor are critical to ensuring that [Brand Name]'s standards are upheld across all tiers of production.

Supplier Responsibilities:

- Disclose all subcontractors, intermediaries, and homeworkers to [Brand Name] for prior approval before production begins.
- Unauthorized subcontracting — including the use of unregistered or unapproved subcontractors or homeworkers — is strictly prohibited and constitutes a serious violation of this Manual.

Standards for Subcontractors and Homeworkers:

- All subcontractors and homeworkers must comply fully with the labor, health and safety, environmental, and ethical standards outlined in this Manual.
- Homeworkers must receive fair compensation equivalent to at least the minimum wage applicable in their jurisdiction, not solely piece-rate pay.

Oversight and Monitoring:

- Suppliers must establish formal oversight mechanisms for subcontracted operations and homeworke activities, including:
 - Regular internal and third-party audits;
 - Grievance access for subcontracted and home-based workers;
 - Worker interviews conducted confidentially.

Health and Safety for Homeworkers:

- Homeworkers must work in safe and healthy conditions appropriate to the nature of their tasks.
- Suppliers must ensure that homeworkers are provided with necessary information, training, and materials to protect their health and safety (e.g., safe lighting, ergonomic seating, protection from hazardous substances).

Traceability and Record Keeping:

- Suppliers must maintain updated and accurate records of all subcontractors and homeworkers, including locations, scope of work, payment terms, and compliance documentation.
- Homeworkers must not be hidden within informal networks that obscure their identity, compensation, or working conditions.

Accountability:

- Suppliers retain full responsibility for the compliance of their entire subcontracting and homemaker network.
- Ethical obligations extend across the entire value chain and cannot be outsourced or delegated.

5. Environmental Responsibility

At [Brand Name], environmental stewardship is integral to our mission. Our products and supply chain operations must not only minimize harm but also contribute to the restoration of ecosystems and the protection of global resources.

Environmental responsibility requires leadership, investment, transparency, and a commitment to continuous improvement. This section outlines the critical environmental expectations that suppliers must meet — and where possible, exceed — in collaboration with [Brand Name].

We expect suppliers to approach environmental performance with the same rigor and ambition as human rights, embedding sustainability into every business decision.

5.1 Environmental Management Systems

An Environmental Management System (EMS) provides the foundation for systematically identifying, managing, and improving environmental impacts. All suppliers must implement effective EMS practices to ensure consistent compliance and measurable performance improvements.

Supplier Requirements:

- Develop, implement, and maintain an EMS aligned with ISO 14001, the Bluesign System, or an equivalent internationally recognized standard.

- Create a formal environmental policy, endorsed by senior leadership, that is communicated throughout the organization.
- Identify and assess all significant environmental aspects and impacts related to operations, including emissions, water use, chemical use, energy consumption, and waste generation.

Operational Best Practices:

- Set measurable environmental objectives and targets, and track progress through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Provide regular environmental training for workers at all levels, especially those involved in production processes with significant environmental impacts.
- Conduct internal audits at least annually to verify compliance with applicable environmental regulations and corporate policies.

Senior Accountability:

- Assign a senior manager responsible for environmental compliance and performance.
- Maintain and report environmental data transparently to [Brand Name] upon request.

Continuous Improvement Expectation: Suppliers must treat compliance as a starting point — not an endpoint — and work toward ambitious reduction goals across emissions, water, chemicals, and waste.

5.2 Chemical Management

Chemicals used in manufacturing — particularly textiles, tanning, and dyeing — can cause severe harm to workers, consumers, and ecosystems if improperly managed. Suppliers must handle chemicals responsibly throughout their lifecycle.

Restricted Substances Compliance:

- Comply with [Brand Name]’s Product Restricted Substances List (PRSL) and Manufacturing Restricted Substances List (MRSL), aligned with the ZDHC Roadmap to Zero Programme.
- Maintain an up-to-date chemical inventory covering all substances used in production processes.

- Ensure that all incoming chemicals are accompanied by a valid Safety Data Sheet (SDS) in the local language.
- Implement safe chemical storage, handling, and disposal procedures according to applicable laws and best practices.

Hazardous Chemical Phaseout: Suppliers must actively phase out the use of:

- Phthalates;
- Azo dyes releasing carcinogenic amines;
- Alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEOs);
- Perfluorinated compounds (PFCs);
- Heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, and mercury.

Priority chemicals must be eliminated according to ZDHC guidance, and safer alternatives must be adopted whenever feasible.

Wastewater Management:

- Suppliers must treat all wastewater in onsite or centralized Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) before discharge.
- Effluent testing must demonstrate compliance with applicable discharge regulations and the ZDHC Wastewater Guidelines where relevant.
- Untreated discharge into waterways is strictly prohibited.

Worker Protection:

- Train workers on chemical hazards, safe handling practices, and emergency spill response procedures.
- Provide appropriate PPE, such as gloves, eye protection, and respirators, at no cost to workers.

Innovation Encouragement: Suppliers are encouraged to engage with programs like CleanChain, BHive, and Bluesign Input Stream Management to further enhance chemical transparency and performance.

5.3 Water Stewardship

Water is a finite, shared resource critical to both local communities and global supply chain resilience. Suppliers must adopt water stewardship practices that prioritize conservation, efficiency, pollution prevention, and collective action.

Supplier Requirements:

- Measure and monitor total water withdrawal and discharge annually.
- Set site-specific water reduction targets based on local context and material risks.
- Prioritize investment in water-saving technologies, including:
 - Low-liquor-ratio dyeing machines;
 - Waterless finishing techniques;
 - Closed-loop water recycling systems.

Effluent Management:

- All wastewater must be treated to remove harmful contaminants before discharge.
- Effluent quality must meet or exceed local legal requirements — and where possible, align with the ZDHC Wastewater Guidelines.
- Regular water testing must monitor key parameters such as pH, Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD), Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD), Total Suspended Solids (TSS), and heavy metals.

High-Risk Water Regions: In regions experiencing water scarcity or high water risk:

- Suppliers must conduct a formal Water Risk Assessment using credible tools such as the WWF Water Risk Filter or WRI Aqueduct.
- Water stewardship plans must address site-level risks, community impacts, and shared basin-level responsibilities.

Best Practice Examples:

- Rainwater harvesting for non-potable uses;
- Participation in collective action projects with local stakeholders;
- Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) systems in high-risk watersheds.

5.4 Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Climate change poses a direct threat to ecosystems, economies, and communities worldwide. [Brand Name] recognizes the urgent need to decarbonize the fashion industry and expects suppliers to take decisive action to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Supplier Requirements:

- Measure and report Scope 1 (direct) and Scope 2 (purchased energy) emissions annually.
- Where possible, begin to account for Scope 3 emissions related to upstream and downstream activities.

Energy Management:

- Conduct regular energy audits to identify inefficiencies.
- Implement energy-saving measures, such as:
 - LED lighting;
 - High-efficiency boilers and motors;
 - Process optimization technologies;
 - Building insulation improvements.

Transition to Renewable Energy:

- Suppliers are strongly encouraged to:
 - Install onsite renewable energy systems (solar panels, biogas digesters);
 - Purchase certified Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) or enter into long-term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with renewable energy providers.

Emissions Reduction Targets:

- Set clear, time-bound emissions reduction targets aligned with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) or equivalent frameworks.
- Prioritize absolute emissions reductions over offsetting.

Best Practice Example:

- Facilities achieving 100% renewable energy for production will be considered for preferred supplier status within [Brand Name]'s sourcing program.

5.5 Raw Material Impacts

The choice of raw materials significantly influences the environmental and social footprint of fashion products. Suppliers must prioritize materials that minimize harm, support biodiversity, respect animal welfare, and contribute to circular economy models.

Cotton

- Source organic cotton certified to GOTS, OCS, or Fair Trade standards.
- Prohibit sourcing cotton from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
- Support regenerative cotton initiatives that promote soil health and carbon sequestration.
- Ensure farm-level traceability where feasible.

Wool and Animal Fibers

- Use wool certified under the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) or equivalent animal welfare certifications.
- Prohibit mulesed wool and prioritize suppliers practicing regenerative grazing.
- Recycled wool is strongly encouraged to reduce land and resource pressures.

Cellulosic Fibers (Viscose, Modal, Lyocell)

- Only source fibers produced by mills verified by Canopy's Hot Button Report as low risk for ancient and endangered forest sourcing.
- Prefer FSC-certified viscose, modal, and lyocell.
- Support mills implementing closed-loop chemical recovery systems.

Synthetic Fibers

- Prioritize Global Recycled Standard (GRS) certified recycled polyester and nylon.
- Phase out virgin fossil-based synthetics over time.
- Explore bio-based synthetics where they offer genuine environmental advantages.

Leather Alternatives

- [Brand Name] does not use animal-based leather.

- Suppliers must prioritize innovative alternatives such as plant-based leathers (pineapple, mushroom, cactus) or recycled polyurethane (PU) with minimal chemical impact.
- PVC-based “vegan leathers” are prohibited.

5.6 Biodiversity and Land Use

Biodiversity loss is a growing global crisis. [Brand Name] expects suppliers to actively prevent ecosystem degradation and to support conservation initiatives where possible.

Supplier Responsibilities:

- Avoid sourcing from operations that contribute to deforestation, habitat destruction, or illegal land conversion.
- Conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for any new facility construction, expansion, or raw material sourcing initiatives that could affect natural ecosystems.

High Conservation Value (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) Areas:

- Suppliers must not operate in or source from lands identified as High Conservation Value or High Carbon Stock without full, independent verification that operations will not harm these critical areas.

Agroecological Practices:

- Agricultural suppliers must implement regenerative practices such as:
 - No-till farming;
 - Rotational grazing;
 - Agroforestry;
 - Soil carbon management.

Support for Conservation Initiatives:

- Suppliers are encouraged to participate in local biodiversity restoration projects, reforestation efforts, and waterway protection programs.

Example:

- Cotton suppliers engaging in regenerative agriculture programs that increase soil organic matter will receive recognition within [Brand Name]’s sustainability sourcing tiers.

5.7 Waste Management and Circular Economy

The traditional linear “take-make-waste” model of production is no longer viable. [Brand Name] is committed to accelerating the shift to a circular economy where products, materials, and resources are kept in use for as long as possible.

Supplier Requirements:

- Measure and categorize all types of waste generated, including production scrap, packaging waste, hazardous waste, and wastewater sludge.
- Implement waste management systems that prioritize:
 - Reduction at source;
 - Reuse and recycling;
 - Safe and compliant disposal where necessary.

Waste Reduction Targets:

- Set annual waste diversion targets with the aim of achieving zero-waste-to-landfill status wherever feasible.
- Report waste performance to [Brand Name] annually.

Hazardous Waste Management:

- Store hazardous waste securely, label it clearly, and dispose of it through licensed, accredited handlers.
- Maintain records of hazardous waste generation, storage, transport, and disposal.

Circular Economy Initiatives:

- Support closed-loop manufacturing models, including textile-to-textile recycling.
- Design products and components for durability, repairability, and recyclability.
- Integrate recycled inputs into production wherever possible.

Packaging Expectations:

- Eliminate unnecessary packaging materials.
- Use 100% recycled, recyclable, or compostable packaging certified by credible standards (e.g., FSC, Recycled Content Certification).

- Ban the use of single-use plastics unless no viable alternative exists.

Innovation Encouragement:

- Suppliers demonstrating leadership in waste elimination and circularity innovation will be prioritized in sourcing decisions.

5.8 Emergency Preparedness and Incident Management

Suppliers must maintain robust systems to prevent, prepare for, and respond to environmental emergencies. Effective emergency management protects workers, communities, and ecosystems and is a fundamental component of responsible sourcing.

Emergency Preparedness Requirements:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan (ERP) tailored to site-specific risks, including but not limited to:
 - Fire outbreaks;
 - Chemical spills or leaks;
 - Natural disasters (e.g., floods, earthquakes);
 - Equipment failures with environmental impact (e.g., wastewater treatment plant malfunctions).
- Train workers regularly on emergency procedures relevant to their roles.
- Conduct emergency drills at least annually, involving workers from all shifts.

Critical Controls:

- Install proper containment systems for hazardous materials, such as secondary containment bunds for chemical storage areas.
- Ensure fire detection, alarm, and suppression systems are in place and maintained.
- Equip facilities with appropriate spill response materials and first-aid equipment.

Incident Management and Reporting:

- All environmental incidents (e.g., chemical spills, unauthorized discharges, fire-related pollution) must be reported to [Brand Name] within 24 hours.

- Suppliers must conduct root cause analyses for all significant incidents and develop Corrective and Preventive Action Plans (CAPAs).
- Lessons learned from incidents must be integrated into operational updates and worker training.

Best Practice Example:

- Establish emergency response teams trained in spill containment, first aid, and fire suppression, with clear escalation procedures linked to local authorities.

5.9 Continuous Improvement and Leadership Aspirations

At [Brand Name], we recognize that true environmental leadership is not achieved through compliance alone but through continuous innovation and proactive stewardship. We encourage suppliers to go beyond minimum standards and to pioneer practices that drive systemic change in the fashion industry.

Continuous Improvement Expectations:

- Suppliers must review their environmental, social, and chemical management systems regularly to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Annual self-assessments should be conducted to evaluate progress toward environmental targets, worker well-being goals, and ethical sourcing commitments.

Leadership Areas: Suppliers demonstrating leadership may focus on:

- Achieving third-party certifications beyond baseline expectations (e.g., Bluesign certification, Cradle to Cradle Certified™ materials).
- Implementing closed-loop manufacturing systems and zero-emissions factories.
- Leading regenerative agriculture initiatives at the raw material sourcing level.
- Setting validated Science Based Targets for climate action.
- Launching circular economy pilots, such as fiber-to-fiber recycling collaborations.

Recognition and Strategic Collaboration:

- Suppliers that show exceptional commitment to sustainability and responsible innovation may receive preferred supplier status, long-term sourcing agreements, and opportunities to participate in [Brand Name]’s pilot programs and capacity-building projects.

Partnership Approach:

- [Brand Name] is committed to working collaboratively with suppliers who share our vision for a regenerative, equitable, and transparent global fashion system. Together, we can build a future that respects people, protects nature, and empowers communities worldwide.

6. Material-Specific Standards

The raw materials used in fashion products account for a substantial share of environmental, social, and animal welfare impacts. At [Brand Name], we believe that material selection is one of the most powerful levers for reducing the overall footprint of our products.

We expect suppliers to understand the impacts associated with each material category and to adhere strictly to specific requirements for responsible sourcing, full traceability, and credible certification. In addition, suppliers are encouraged to pursue innovative solutions that drive sustainability leadership in the industry.

This section outlines detailed sourcing standards by material type, reflecting the highest levels of environmental and ethical stewardship.

6.1 Cotton

Cotton is one of the most widely used fibers in the fashion industry but also among the most environmentally and socially intensive. Improper cotton sourcing can contribute to water depletion, pesticide pollution, biodiversity loss, and systemic labor rights violations.

Supplier Requirements:

- **Prohibited Sources:** Suppliers must not source cotton from regions associated with systemic human rights abuses or forced labor, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.
- **Preferred Sources:**
 - Organic cotton certified to the **Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)** or the **Organic Content Standard (OCS)**.
 - Fair Trade-certified cotton that ensures fair prices and community investment for farmers.

- Regenerative cotton programs that promote soil health, carbon sequestration, water conservation, and biodiversity recovery.
- **Traceability Obligations:** Suppliers must demonstrate traceability to the country of origin and, where feasible, to the farm, cooperative, or producer group level.
- **Certification Requirements:** Blended or recycled cotton claims must be accurately declared and substantiated with credible third-party certification (e.g., GOTS, OCS, GRS).

Innovation Encouragement:

- Suppliers are encouraged to participate in initiatives that support organic transition, regenerative agriculture, and blockchain-based traceability solutions to ensure fiber authenticity.

Best Practice Example:

- Sourcing cotton from projects that apply rotational cropping, cover crops, and soil microbiome regeneration to boost climate resilience.

6.2 Wool and Animal-Derived Fibers

Animal-derived materials must be sourced with the utmost attention to ethical treatment of animals, land stewardship, and traceability. [Brand Name] expects suppliers to uphold the **Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare** and to work only with producers meeting internationally recognized animal welfare standards.

Wool Sourcing Requirements:

- **Mulesing Ban:** Mulesing of sheep — whether surgical or chemical — is strictly prohibited.
- **Certification Preference:** Wool must be sourced from suppliers certified under the **Responsible Wool Standard (RWS)** or an equivalent certification system that verifies animal welfare and responsible land management.
- **Regenerative Grazing:** Suppliers are encouraged to prioritize wool from regenerative grazing operations that restore soil health, sequester carbon, and prevent desertification.
- **Recycled Wool Use:** The use of recycled wool is highly encouraged to reduce the impacts associated with virgin wool production.

Alpaca, Mohair, and Other Animal Fibers:

- **Certification Requirements:** Suppliers must source only from farms certified under the **Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS)**, **Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS)**, or similar schemes.
- **Land Stewardship:** Animal fiber sourcing must avoid contributing to overgrazing, biodiversity loss, or land degradation.
- **Traceability:** Full supply chain traceability must be maintained to farm level wherever feasible.

Prohibited Materials:

- Angora, fur, exotic skins (e.g., alligator, snake, ostrich), and feathers are **strictly prohibited** from use in any product supplied to [Brand Name].
- Down and feather alternatives must be plant-based or synthetic and verified for cruelty-free sourcing.

Animal Welfare Best Practices:

- Regular farm audits by qualified third-party certifiers;
- Transparent supply chain documentation linking each fiber to its farm or cooperative origin;
- Supplier participation in animal welfare training and continuous improvement programs.

Environmental and Social Impact Focus:

- Animal fibers must contribute positively to landscape regeneration, rural community stability, and indigenous farming traditions where applicable.

6.3 Cellulosic Fibers (Viscose, Modal, Lyocell)

Cellulosic fibers such as viscose, modal, and lyocell can have severe environmental impacts if sourced irresponsibly, particularly relating to deforestation of ancient and endangered forests. [Brand Name] requires suppliers to source these fibers with the utmost diligence to avoid biodiversity loss and promote closed-loop production technologies.

Supplier Requirements:

- **Forest Protection:** Suppliers must ensure that cellulosic fibers are not sourced from:
 - Ancient or endangered forests;

- High Conservation Value (HCV) or High Carbon Stock (HCS) areas;
- Intact forest landscapes or peatlands.
- **Preferred Sources:**
 - Producers rated “green shirt” or equivalent in the latest **Canopy Hot Button Report**;
 - Fibers certified under the **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** or **PEFC** standards.
- **Production Technology Preference:**
 - Favor fibers manufactured using closed-loop processes that recycle chemicals and minimize emissions (e.g., lyocell, EcoVero modal).
- **Traceability:** Suppliers must maintain full traceability back to the fiber producer and provide evidence of environmental due diligence upon request.

Innovation Encouragement:

- Support the adoption of next-generation fibers made from agricultural waste, recycled textiles, or low-impact biorefineries.

Best Practice Example:

- Prioritize fiber producers that transparently report water use, chemical recovery rates, and forest protection initiatives.

6.4 Synthetics and Recycled Materials

Virgin fossil-fuel-based synthetics (e.g., polyester, nylon) have major carbon, microplastic, and end-of-life pollution impacts. [Brand Name] expects suppliers to actively reduce reliance on virgin synthetics and transition toward recycled and bio-based alternatives.

Supplier Requirements:

- **Preferred Materials:**
 - Recycled polyester, nylon, and elastane certified to **Global Recycled Standard (GRS)** or **Recycled Claim Standard (RCS)**.
- **Recycled Content Documentation:**
 - Suppliers must declare and verify recycled content percentages, supported by chain-of-custody documentation from accredited certifiers.

- **Material Transition:**
 - Phase out virgin fossil-based synthetics over time, replacing them with recycled or bio-based alternatives.
 - Avoid synthetics when viable natural or circular materials are available.

Restrictions and Considerations:

- Bio-based synthetics are acceptable only if:
 - They do not compete with food crops;
 - They do not contribute to deforestation or biodiversity loss;
 - They avoid toxic chemical processing.
- Suppliers must evaluate the full lifecycle impact of any alternative material before introduction into production.

Microfiber Shedding Mitigation:

- Encourage the use of yarn technologies and textile treatments that minimize microfiber release during washing and wearing.
- Partner with washing technology solutions that capture microplastics at the source.

Best Practice Example:

- Engage with industry initiatives such as the Microfibre Consortium or Textile Exchange's Recycled Polyester Challenge.

6.5 Leather, PU, and Alternative Materials

[Brand Name] has made a clear commitment to move away from traditional animal-based leather and toxic synthetic substitutes toward safer, more sustainable alternatives.

Supplier Requirements:

- **Animal-Based Leather Ban:** Suppliers must not source or use any animal-derived leather, hides, or skins in products for [Brand Name].
- **Acceptable Alternative Materials:**
 - Plant-based leathers derived from renewable sources such as:
 - Mycelium (fungi);

- Pineapple leaves (Piñatex);
- Cactus (Desserto);
- Apple peels and agricultural byproducts.
- Recycled polyurethane (PU) alternatives that comply with stringent chemical and environmental standards.
- Water-based PU systems that eliminate harmful solvents during production.

Prohibited Materials:

- Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is strictly prohibited due to its toxicity, lifecycle impact, and lack of recyclability.
- Coated materials involving phthalates, heavy metals, or other hazardous substances are also banned.

Material Performance Standards:

- Alternative materials must meet durability, safety, and performance standards appropriate for their intended product use (e.g., footwear, accessories, ready-to-wear garments).

Certification and Testing:

- Suppliers must provide documentation verifying that alternative materials meet relevant environmental, chemical safety, and biodegradability criteria.

Innovation Encouragement:

- Suppliers are encouraged to collaborate with material innovation startups, participate in pilot projects, and lead industry shifts away from animal-derived and petrochemical-intensive products.

Best Practice Example:

- Participating in verified plant-based leather pilot programs and transparently disclosing full material composition and environmental impacts to [Brand Name].

6.6 Denim and Finishing Techniques

Denim production is resource-intensive and often involves hazardous practices, particularly during the finishing stage. [Brand Name] prohibits the use of harmful techniques and expects

suppliers to implement technologies that reduce water use, chemical exposure, and energy consumption.

Prohibited Techniques:

- **Sandblasting** is strictly prohibited under all circumstances due to its severe health risks, including silicosis.
- Use of potassium permanganate, chlorine bleach, or other corrosive substances for creating vintage effects must be phased out in favor of safer alternatives.

Preferred Finishing Techniques:

- **Laser Finishing:** Use digital laser systems to create fade patterns without chemical or manual abrasion.
- **Ozone Washing:** Apply ozone gas in finishing chambers to reduce chemical and water use while creating authentic worn effects.
- **Foam and Enzyme Finishing:** Replace water-heavy processes with enzyme or foam-based techniques that reduce effluent loads and chemical impact.

Water Stewardship in Denim Laundries:

- Suppliers must:
 - Use closed-loop water systems to recover, filter, and reuse water in processing;
 - Treat all wastewater to remove indigo dyes, heavy metals, and finishing agents;
 - Regularly test effluent to meet [Brand Name] and local standards.

Best Practice Example:

- Suppliers using Jeanologia® or comparable systems that quantify environmental savings (e.g., water, energy, chemicals) are preferred partners.

6.7 Metal Trims and Hardware

Buttons, zippers, studs, and other metal trims often contain hazardous coatings or are made from non-recycled virgin materials. [Brand Name] expects all trims and hardware to meet both safety and circularity criteria.

Chemical Safety Compliance:

- All hardware must be free of:

- **Nickel**, unless legally allowed and certified as non-sensitizing;
- **Lead, cadmium, mercury, and hexavalent chromium**;
- Any coating or plating processes involving hazardous substances.
- Suppliers must comply with the **EU REACH regulation**, California Proposition 65, and [Brand Name]’s restricted substances list for trims.

Material Requirements:

- **Recycled Content:** Where feasible, trims must be made from recycled brass, aluminum, stainless steel, or other metals sourced from post-consumer or industrial scrap.
- **Traceability:** Suppliers must provide documentation of recycled content percentages and responsible sourcing certifications.

Circular Design Standards:

- Prioritize hardware that can be easily removed and recycled at the garment’s end-of-life.
- Avoid complex lamination or plating combinations that hinder recyclability.

Innovation Encouragement:

- Explore biodegradable or bio-based alternatives to traditional hardware where performance and durability can be maintained.

Best Practice Example:

- Using trims that are mono-material, screw-fastened (not glued), and part of take-back or recycling partnerships.

6.8 Plastics and Packaging

Packaging plays a critical role in the environmental footprint of products and supply chains. Suppliers must actively reduce reliance on virgin plastics and transition to sustainable, recyclable, or reusable materials.

Material Requirements:

- **Prohibited Materials:**
 - **Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)** and **polystyrene foam** are strictly banned across all packaging applications.

- **Preferred Packaging Inputs:**
 - **FSC-certified paper and board** for swing tags, shipping cartons, and wrapping;
 - **Recycled cardboard** and **corrugated fiberboard**;
 - **Bioplastics** only if compostable and certified by third-party standards (e.g., TÜV Austria, BPI);
 - **Recycled LDPE or HDPE** for protective polybags — where no viable alternatives exist.

Design for Reuse and Recovery:

- Eliminate unnecessary packaging layers (e.g., duplicate polybags, excessive shrink-wrap).
- Design packaging to be mono-material and clearly labeled with disposal or recycling instructions.
- Use compostable adhesives, inks, and labels where possible.

Circular Logistics Initiatives:

- Suppliers are encouraged to:
 - Join packaging take-back schemes;
 - Pilot returnable shipping container programs;
 - Track packaging intensity (grams/unit shipped) and set reduction targets.

Transparency and Performance Monitoring:

- Suppliers must maintain records of all packaging materials used (type, weight, source, certifications).
- Packaging data must be shared with [Brand Name] upon request, and progress toward packaging waste reduction targets will be monitored annually.

Best Practice Example:

- Implementing QR-coded garment bags made from recycled film that customers can return or reuse, and that feed into a closed-loop recycling program.

7. Transparency and Traceability

Transparency is the foundation of accountability and continuous improvement in sustainable fashion. At [Brand Name], we believe that all supply chain actors — from raw material producers to finished goods manufacturers — have a responsibility to disclose, document, and improve the conditions under which our products are made.

Traceability enables brands to verify claims, mitigate risk, uphold human rights, prevent illegal practices, and respond quickly to emerging issues. It also empowers consumers to make informed choices and fosters trust across the value chain.

Suppliers must treat transparency not as a compliance burden but as a shared ethical obligation. This section outlines the traceability standards and mapping expectations required by [Brand Name].

7.1 Supply Chain Mapping: Tiers 1 to 4

To identify and address social and environmental risks, suppliers must map and disclose their complete upstream supply chain — including all direct and indirect production partners.

Tier Definitions:

- **Tier 1:** Final product manufacturers (cut, sew, finish) with direct business relationships with [Brand Name].
- **Tier 2:** Material processing units (e.g., dyehouses, tanneries, printing facilities).
- **Tier 3:** Yarn spinners, textile mills, chemical suppliers, and tanning agents.
- **Tier 4:** Raw material producers (e.g., farms, herders, forest operations, synthetic feedstock processors).

Supplier Requirements:

- **Complete Mapping Obligation:** All Tier 1 suppliers must submit a full list of their Tier 2 partners. For materials designated as high-risk, Tier 3 and Tier 4 information is also mandatory.
- **Disclosure Format:** Data must be submitted in the format provided by [Brand Name], including facility name, location (address and country), parent company, subcontracted operations, and production roles.
- **Updates:** Mapping data must be reviewed and updated annually or upon any major sourcing change.

High-Risk Materials:

- Materials such as cotton, leather alternatives, wool, viscose, down, and recycled synthetics require full Tier 4 disclosure due to heightened risk of labor abuse, animal welfare violations, or deforestation.

Subcontractor Mapping:

- Any use of subcontractors for primary or secondary processes (e.g., embroidery, washing, printing, finishing) must be declared and approved prior to production.

Homeworker Identification:

- If homeworkers are involved in any stage of the production process (e.g., embellishment, hand-sewing, weaving), suppliers must provide a registry of names, regions, and working conditions — along with measures taken to ensure labor rights protections.

7.2 Traceability Expectations by Material Category

Different material categories require different levels of documentation and traceability. [Brand Name] expects suppliers to meet the following minimum traceability thresholds and to pursue full chain-of-custody verification wherever feasible.

Natural Fibers (e.g., cotton, wool, flax, hemp):

- Trace to country of origin is mandatory.
- Trace to producer group, cooperative, or farm level is preferred and required for organic or regenerative claims.
- Documentation must include volume reconciliation to prevent false sustainability claims.

Animal-Derived Materials (e.g., wool, alpaca, mohair):

- Trace to farm level is required for all animal-based materials.
- For certified materials (e.g., RWS, RMS, RAS), chain-of-custody documentation must be maintained from farm to finished product.

Cellulosic Fibers (e.g., viscose, modal, lyocell):

- Traceability to the fiber producer is required, including evidence that wood pulp sourcing avoids ancient and endangered forests.
- Suppliers must retain records of Canopy Hot Button ranking and FSC certification status.

Recycled Materials (e.g., polyester, nylon, cotton):

- Traceability must extend to the recycling facility.
- Suppliers must submit Global Recycled Standard (GRS) or Recycled Claim Standard (RCS) transaction certificates for each batch of recycled inputs used.

Leather Alternatives and Bio-Based Materials:

- Full disclosure of chemical inputs, source crops, and production location is required.
- For mycelium or fruit-based leather inputs, suppliers must provide documentation regarding feedstock origin, solvent use, and waste management practices.

7.3 Minimum Verification Standards

Suppliers must retain, organize, and provide access to traceability documentation upon request from [Brand Name], third-party auditors, or brand partners.

Documentation Must Include:

- Purchase orders, invoices, and shipping documents;
- Supplier declarations and material data sheets;
- Third-party certifications and audit reports;
- Chain-of-custody tracking documents (e.g., scope and transaction certificates).

All documentation must be in English or accompanied by a certified translation and must be kept on file for a minimum of five years.

Verification Mechanisms:

- [Brand Name] may verify claims via physical audits, transaction testing, or material volume reconciliation (comparing certified inputs to output claims).
- Unsubstantiated claims will be treated as non-compliance and subject to immediate investigation.

7.4 Chain of Custody and Material Verification

Chain of custody (CoC) is the documented pathway a material follows from source to finished product. CoC systems ensure that certified, sustainable, or ethical materials are not diluted, mixed, or misrepresented at any stage.

[Brand Name] requires suppliers to uphold rigorous CoC standards for all certified or high-risk materials.

Requirements by Material Type:

- **Certified Organic or Fair Trade Materials:** Require scope and transaction certificates for every processing stage, including spinning, dyeing, and finishing.
- **Recycled Materials (e.g., GRS, RCS):** Require batch-level transaction certificates from certified facilities. Input/output volume must be traceable.
- **Animal Fibers (RWS, RMS, RAS):** Require verified tracking from farm to mill to manufacturer, with no substitution.
- **Forest-Based Materials (FSC):** Require CoC documentation showing compliance with FSC's sourcing requirements and Canopy guidelines.
- **Leather Alternatives:** Require documentation of raw input sourcing, solvent use, and chemical footprint at every manufacturing step.

Models of Chain of Custody:

- [Brand Name] accepts CoC verification through the following models:
 - **Identity Preservation (IP) or Segregation** — required for organic, regenerative, or high-integrity raw material claims.
 - **Mass Balance** — only accepted where justified and pre-approved by [Brand Name].

Verification and Auditability:

- Suppliers must maintain organized records that clearly demonstrate custody transitions between tiers.
- Spot audits and volume reconciliation checks will be conducted to detect greenwashing or certification misuse.

7.5 Subcontracting and Homeworkers

Transparency around subcontracting and homeworking is essential to ensure that labor standards are upheld across the full supply chain.

Subcontracting Requirements:

- All subcontracting relationships must be declared in advance and approved by [Brand Name].
- Subcontracted facilities must be audited and meet the same social, environmental, and safety standards as Tier 1 suppliers.
- Suppliers remain fully responsible for the performance and compliance of subcontracted sites.

Unauthorized Subcontracting:

- Any subcontracting not disclosed and approved in writing is considered a major violation of this Manual and may result in termination of the supplier relationship.

Homeworker Disclosure and Standards:

- If homeworkers are used for handcraft, embroidery, finishing, or other off-site tasks, suppliers must:
 - Provide a full registry of homeworkers (names, location, tasks);
 - Ensure fair compensation at or above local minimum wages;
 - Monitor health and safety conditions and provide training and support;
 - Include homeworkers in grievance mechanisms and worker rights programs.

Documentation Requirements:

- Maintain contracts or agreements outlining expectations and protections for all subcontractors and homeworkers.
- Include all subcontracted units and homeworker hubs in mapping and risk assessment documentation.

7.6 Data Sharing and Confidentiality

Traceability is only possible through timely, accurate, and comprehensive data sharing. Suppliers must commit to transparent data exchange and to participating in digital traceability platforms as required.

Data Requirements:

- Suppliers must share the following upon request:
 - Supply chain maps from Tier 1–4;

- Certification records;
- Volume tracking logs;
- Traceability declarations;
- Worker data and facility conditions (aggregated and anonymized if needed).

Frequency:

- Data must be updated:
 - At the start of each new season;
 - Whenever a new supplier, facility, or material is added;
 - Immediately following any non-compliance issue or audit finding.

Digital Tools:

- Suppliers may be required to onboard digital traceability platforms approved by [Brand Name] (e.g., TrusTrace, TextileGenesis, Sourcemap).
- Suppliers must ensure designated staff are trained and responsive on digital traceability tasks.

Confidentiality:

- All shared data will be treated in accordance with applicable data protection laws and [Brand Name]'s confidentiality policies.
- Suppliers may request that commercially sensitive data be anonymized in external communications, provided that legal and due diligence obligations can still be met.

7.7 Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Traceability is not a one-time exercise but a continuous process of improvement, risk management, and supply chain evolution.

Ongoing Expectations:

- Suppliers must demonstrate consistent progress in expanding upstream visibility, improving data quality, and reducing sourcing from unknown or unverified origins.
- Facilities that fail to provide traceability data or cooperate with transparency initiatives will be reviewed for corrective action or de-selection.

Incentivizing Transparency:

- Suppliers that demonstrate leadership in traceability — including digital integration, full chain disclosure, and credible certifications — may qualify for:
 - Preferred supplier status;
 - Longer-term sourcing agreements;
 - Inclusion in [Brand Name]’s sustainability recognition programs.

8. Monitoring, Auditing, and Remediation

To uphold the standards outlined in this Manual, [Brand Name] conducts rigorous and ongoing monitoring of all suppliers. This is achieved through independent audits, internal evaluations, data reviews, and direct engagement. These systems are not intended to punish, but to drive transparency, identify risks, and promote measurable improvement across all areas of responsible sourcing.

Suppliers are expected to treat monitoring and remediation not as administrative obligations, but as strategic opportunities for long-term partnership and performance enhancement.

8.1 Risk-Based Monitoring Approach

[Brand Name] applies a risk-based approach to determine the frequency, depth, and nature of supplier monitoring activities.

Risk Indicators Include:

- Geographic location (e.g., conflict zones, regions with weak labor enforcement);
- Material type (e.g., animal fibers, cotton, leather alternatives, recycled inputs);
- Facility function (e.g., dyeing, finishing, subcontracting, homeworking);
- Historical non-compliance or audit performance;
- Lack of traceability, grievance mechanisms, or management systems.

Monitoring Tools May Include:

- Scheduled or unannounced third-party audits;
- Desktop assessments and document reviews;

- Worker interviews (onsite or offsite);
- Stakeholder engagement with unions, NGOs, or community representatives;
- Digital traceability and compliance tracking platforms.

Suppliers must cooperate fully with all monitoring requests and ensure that relevant staff are available during assessments. Falsification of documents or obstruction of audits is grounds for immediate review and potential termination.

8.2 Social and Environmental Audits

Audits are a core component of our due diligence framework. They are used to assess compliance with labor standards, occupational health and safety (OHS), environmental performance, chemical management, and ethical business conduct.

Audit Scope Includes:

- Worker contracts and wages;
- Working hours and overtime practices;
- Health and safety procedures and infrastructure;
- Use of hazardous chemicals and waste management;
- Environmental discharge data and permits;
- Anti-harassment, grievance, and freedom of association protections.

Audits must be conducted by [Brand Name] or one of our approved third-party auditing partners. They may be announced or unannounced, depending on risk profile and prior performance.

Supplier Obligations:

- Facilitate auditor access to all documents, facilities, and worker interviews;
- Disclose all production units, subcontractors, and homeworkers;
- Maintain audit documentation for at least five years;
- Submit audit reports and CAPs within agreed timelines.

In cases where prior audits have identified material risks, follow-up visits will be conducted to verify implementation of corrective measures.

8.3 Corrective Action Plans (CAPs)

When non-compliances are identified, suppliers must submit a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) detailing how each finding will be addressed. [Brand Name] will review all CAPs for clarity, feasibility, and alignment with international best practices.

Each CAP Must Include:

- Description of each issue;
- Specific actions to be taken;
- Responsible person or team;
- Deadline for resolution;
- Documentation required for closure verification.

CAPs must be submitted within 15 working days of receiving the audit report and implemented in good faith. Minor issues should be resolved immediately; systemic or structural issues may require longer-term timelines but must be tracked and monitored consistently.

Verification of Closure:

- Follow-up audits, desktop reviews, or progress check-ins will be used to verify closure;
- Photographic or documentary evidence must be submitted for each action marked complete;
- Suppliers who fail to close findings or demonstrate poor intent may be placed on probation or have sourcing paused.

8.4 Onboarding and Pre-Approval Assessments

All new suppliers must undergo a thorough onboarding and risk assessment process before being approved for production.

Pre-Approval Requirements Include:

- Submission of facility profile and management contact information;
- Signed agreement to comply with [Brand Name]'s Code of Conduct and Responsible Sourcing Manual;

- Baseline audit (or valid recent equivalent);
- Verification of licenses, policies, and chemical/environmental management systems;
- Disclosure of any subcontracting or homeworker relationships.

Suppliers who do not meet baseline standards will not be approved for onboarding. Conditional onboarding may be allowed if minor gaps can be closed within a short time frame under supervision.

8.5 Remediation and Supplier Support

[Brand Name] is committed to supporting suppliers who engage constructively with the remediation process.

Support May Include:

- Technical assistance and capacity-building workshops;
- Sample policies and guidance materials;
- Cost-sharing for third-party audits or worker training (subject to eligibility);
- Access to grievance management resources or due diligence tools.

However, remediation is a shared responsibility. Suppliers must demonstrate active ownership of their performance and commit to preventing recurrence of violations.

Ineligible for Support:

- Suppliers found falsifying records;
- Repeated non-compliance with zero-tolerance standards;
- Refusal to cooperate with remediation requests.

8.6 Termination and Consequences for Non-Compliance

Suppliers who fail to meet the standards outlined in this Manual — or who refuse to remediate material violations — may face the following consequences:

- Written warnings or remediation deadlines;
- Temporary suspension of orders;

- Probationary status with enhanced oversight;
- Disqualification from preferred supplier programs;
- Termination of the business relationship.

Zero-Tolerance Violations Include:

- Use of child labor or forced labor;
- Sexual harassment or violence against workers;
- Severe environmental discharge violations (e.g., untreated effluent);
- Bribery, fraud, or obstruction of audits;
- Unauthorized subcontracting or use of banned materials.

All termination decisions are reviewed internally and, where appropriate, in consultation with affected stakeholders or rights holders.

8.7 Incentives for High Performance

Suppliers that demonstrate exceptional commitment to responsible sourcing — including strong audit performance, transparent reporting, and active innovation — may be eligible for recognition and rewards.

Benefits May Include:

- Priority access to new business;
- Longer-term sourcing contracts;
- Inclusion in [Brand Name]’s preferred supplier list;
- Public recognition through case studies or brand communications.

9. Innovation and Leadership Aspirations

At [Brand Name], we view sustainability not only as a responsibility, but as a powerful catalyst for innovation, transformation, and long-term resilience. While this Manual sets mandatory minimum standards, true leadership requires a mindset that embraces experimentation, invests in the future, and pushes the boundaries of what’s possible.

We believe that the fashion industry has the potential to become a regenerative force for good — one that restores ecosystems, empowers workers, and reshapes consumption models. To achieve this, we seek to partner with suppliers who are not only compliant, but courageous — willing to lead the shift toward circularity, equity, and climate stability.

9.1 Defining Leadership

Sustainability leadership is not defined solely by certifications or technology adoption — it is characterized by:

- A willingness to go beyond compliance in all areas of social and environmental performance;
- Transparent, measurable progress toward ambitious goals;
- Engagement with workers, communities, and innovators to drive systemic change;
- A proactive approach to solving industry challenges collaboratively.

Leadership is about anticipating risks before they become crises, seeing constraints as innovation opportunities, and sharing knowledge to raise the bar for the entire industry.

9.2 Pillars of Supplier Innovation

Suppliers that exemplify sustainability leadership often demonstrate excellence across several key pillars. [Brand Name] encourages suppliers to pursue the following strategic areas:

Regenerative Agriculture and Raw Material Transformation

- Support or implement regenerative farming practices that improve soil health, enhance biodiversity, and support smallholder livelihoods;
- Source materials that go beyond “less harm” and actively improve ecosystems (e.g., verified regenerative cotton, wool, and leather alternatives);
- Collaborate with producer groups to pilot soil carbon measurement or water retention monitoring projects.

Circular Product and Process Innovation

- Implement closed-loop manufacturing systems, including fiber-to-fiber recycling, chemical recovery systems, or waste-to-resource platforms;

- Design products for durability, repairability, and recyclability using mono-material construction and modular design principles;
- Explore business models that extend product lifecycles (e.g., rental, resale, remanufacturing partnerships).

Traceability and Digital Innovation

- Adopt real-time traceability tools such as blockchain or digital product passports that track material origin, labor conditions, and environmental data;
- Use Artificial Intelligence (AI) or predictive analytics to optimize resource use, reduce overproduction, and forecast environmental impacts;
- Partner with technology providers or NGOs to improve digital literacy and system integration across your supply chain.

Climate-Positive Action

- Set verified Science-Based Targets for emissions reduction;
- Transition to 100% renewable energy across facilities;
- Participate in landscape-level climate resilience programs (e.g., reforestation, peatland restoration, mangrove protection);
- Pilot low-carbon shipping or production innovations to decouple growth from emissions.

Inclusive Business Models and Worker Voice

- Build inclusive supply chains by supporting women-led enterprises, smallholder cooperatives, or Indigenous producers;
- Strengthen worker voice initiatives through participatory due diligence, mobile grievance tools, or union empowerment programs;
- Share profit or performance-based incentives with workers when sustainability goals are met.

9.3 Collaboration and Pilot Opportunities

[Brand Name] is actively seeking to co-create the future of sustainable fashion alongside our suppliers. High-performing partners may be invited to join innovation pilots, data transparency coalitions, or material sourcing trials.

Opportunities may include:

- Joint applications for innovation grants, R&D co-investments, or impact measurement projects;
- Collaboration with third-party labs or academic institutions on sustainable chemistry, textile recycling, or life cycle analysis;
- Participation in shared resource platforms, such as supplier learning hubs or material marketplaces.

Suppliers are encouraged to submit proposals, pilot ideas, or requests for technical partnership to [Brand Name]'s Sustainability or Innovation teams. We welcome creativity, agility, and cross-sector experimentation.

9.4 Recognition and Incentives

Suppliers that demonstrate outstanding leadership in responsible sourcing may be recognized through [Brand Name]'s Preferred Partner Program or other forms of public and strategic recognition.

Benefits of Leadership Status May Include:

- Priority consideration for sourcing and product development opportunities;
- Longer-term supplier contracts with growth projections;
- Access to limited-edition collaborations, co-branded initiatives, or storytelling campaigns;
- Shared case studies and supplier visibility in [Brand Name]'s impact reports, website, or investor materials.

9.5 Continuous Learning and Improvement

Innovation is not static. We recognize that technologies evolve, standards improve, and new risks emerge. Suppliers are expected to stay informed and adapt by:

- Attending industry webinars, trainings, or supplier roundtables hosted by [Brand Name] or relevant coalitions;
- Updating internal policies to reflect latest guidance from leading frameworks (e.g., UNGPs, OECD Due Diligence, ZDHC, Textile Exchange);

- Regularly reviewing internal performance metrics and sustainability KPIs.

Suppliers who treat sustainability as a journey — not a checklist — will find [Brand Name] to be a deeply committed, collaborative, and future-focused partner.

9.6 Final Note on Leadership

In an era of growing environmental urgency, social inequality, and economic uncertainty, doing less harm is no longer good enough. The fashion industry must be reimaged — and that starts with every decision, every fiber, and every partnership.

We believe that leadership is measured not by scale, but by intention and impact. Suppliers who share our values — and who act on them — will be essential to our shared success.

Let us lead together.

10. Commitment to Responsible Growth

At [Brand Name], we believe that sustainability is not a trend — it is a shared responsibility and a business imperative. Our commitment to responsible growth is rooted in integrity, transparency, and the belief that progress must benefit people, planet, and future generations.

This Manual reflects more than compliance expectations; it represents our collective ambition to build a fashion industry that restores ecosystems, protects human rights, respects animals, and supports resilient communities.

We understand that the path to responsible sourcing is complex and evolving. No supplier is expected to be perfect — but all are expected to be transparent, proactive, and engaged in continuous improvement.

10.1 Our Partnership Principles

We view our suppliers as long-term partners — collaborators in driving systemic change. Our relationships are built on mutual respect, open dialogue, and a commitment to shared values.

We will support suppliers who:

- Embrace accountability and take ownership of their sustainability performance;
- Act with urgency to remediate non-compliances and prevent future harm;

- Innovate beyond the status quo and lead in their sectors;
- Collaborate with peers, producers, and civil society to address industry-wide challenges.

In return, [Brand Name] will offer:

- Transparent expectations and regular communication;
- Capacity-building support and technical resources;
- Recognition and incentives for high-performing partners;
- Clear, consistent monitoring and feedback loops to promote improvement.

10.2 Accountability and Ongoing Expectations

This Manual is a living document. It will be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect evolving regulations, best practices, and the priorities of our stakeholders — including workers, communities, and customers.

Suppliers are responsible for:

- Understanding and implementing the standards outlined in this Manual;
- Cascading requirements to subcontractors, homeworkers, and material providers;
- Maintaining complete and accurate records of their social, environmental, and traceability practices;
- Participating fully in audits, assessments, and dialogue processes with [Brand Name] and/or our representatives.

We will track progress through regular reporting, audits, and supplier self-assessments.

Remediation support will be provided where appropriate — but failure to engage in good faith may result in termination of the supplier relationship.

10.3 Getting Support and Staying Engaged

Suppliers are encouraged to contact [Brand Name] for clarification, support, or to raise concerns related to responsible sourcing, audit findings, or the implementation of this Manual.

For questions, resources, or to submit documentation: **Email:** [Brand Name Email]

In addition, suppliers are encouraged to:

- Join scheduled training sessions and onboarding webinars;
- Review case studies and practical toolkits provided by [Brand Name];
- Participate in industry forums and working groups advancing best practices in responsible fashion.

10.4 Final Statement

Building a responsible supply chain is not a box to be checked — it is a continuous journey of learning, listening, and leadership. We are proud to walk this path with partners who bring courage, creativity, and conviction to their work.

Together, we can transform the fashion system from the ground up — and leave behind not just products, but a legacy we can be proud of.

Let's begin — with integrity, collaboration, and ambition.

Disclaimer: This template provides general guidance only. Brands must insert or adapt specific policies, processes, and standards to reflect their legal obligations, risk profile, and operating model.