



**Textile  
Exchange**

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MATERIALS MATTER  
STANDARD PILOT V1.0



**SUMMARY PAPER**  
**ANIMAL MATERIALS**

# Summary Paper – Animal Materials

## Materials Matter Standard Pilot V1.0

### **About Textile Exchange**

Textile Exchange is a global non-profit helping to drive beneficial outcomes for climate and nature across the fashion, textile, and apparel industry, right from the start of the supply system.

Our goal is to help the industry achieve a 45% reduction in the greenhouse gas emissions that come from producing fibers and raw materials by 2030 (from a 2019 baseline). To get there, we are keeping our focus holistic and interconnected, accelerating the adoption of practices that improve soil health, water, and biodiversity while respecting human livelihoods and animal welfare.

Over the last 20 years, our internationally recognized standards for the production of different fibers and raw materials have helped build integrity in the industry. As a member of [ISEAL](#), we comply with three credibility Codes of Good Practice which underpin our policies and procedures for organizational functions like standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning. These practices ensure we provide value, rigor, accessibility, and transparency in our standards.

All of our standards are anchored by an independent, third-party assurance model that supports organizations in consistently demonstrating and maintaining conformity while handling and trading their certified products, through an independently verifiable and impartial process.

### **About the Materials Matter Standard**

The Materials Matter Standard is a voluntary sustainability standard for the production and initial processing of raw materials used in the fashion, textile, and apparel industry.

The standard sets out to incentivize a system in which the materials in our clothing and textiles support the climate, respect human rights and animal welfare, and drive beneficial outcomes for soil health, water, and biodiversity. It aligns the industry on a shared trajectory towards this vision by establishing what best practice looks like for different materials in various settings, from farms to recycling facilities.

By focusing specifically on the start of the supply chain, the Materials Matter Standard provides a global certification model that is connected to the unique contexts of producers and processors, as well as their local communities and landscapes. A blend of practice-based criteria and outcome-based indicators helps participating organizations get acknowledged for meeting core requirements and builds their capacity to measure results. At the same time, it gives brands and retailers that choose certified materials a way to speak confidently to customers about them.

In the long term, the Materials Matter Standard provides a foundation for producers and processors to understand how their activities impact the people and ecosystems around them, track their progress based on different practices, and learn where to improve over time to drive beneficial outcomes on the ground. Beyond getting certified, optional leadership criteria invite participating organizations to raise the bar through areas like regeneration, renewable energy, and textile-to-textile recycling.

Over time, the Materials Matter Standard will be improved and adapted using insights from the auditing process and outcome measurements. This will help make sure it brings more meaningful benefits to those producing materials for the industry, as well as those directly impacted by the practices they use.

Please note that the Materials Matter Standard was known as the “unified standard” during its development. With the release of the Pilot V1.0, Textile Exchange is pleased to share its official name with stakeholders.

## **Transitioning towards the Materials Matter Standard system**

In 2021, Textile Exchange began a comprehensive revision of its existing standards framework to develop a more harmonized system across all of our material-specific standards. Our goal was to meaningfully embed our organizational climate and nature goals into the production of all raw materials included in the scope of our certification, as well as to facilitate a simplified communication at the consumer level through more integrated and aligned claims and labeling.

After review and approval of the public project plan from an International Working Group (IWG), the first draft of the Materials Matter Standard (then referred to as the “unified” standard) was made available for public consultation from May to July 2023, with the second draft open for public consultation from October to November 2023. Following invaluable feedback from stakeholders, the Materials Matter Standard Pilot V1.0 was released publicly in early June, 2024.

The rest of our progress in 2024 will then be focused on feasibility testing, the preparation of supplementary documentation, and outreach events to raise awareness among standard users. Learnings from these activities will be used to refine criteria and related policies for the final version of the standard which, following pilot testing and system updates, will be published in mid-2025.

The final published standard will state an effective date and a mandatory date. The effective date is planned for the first quarter of 2026 and means that auditing and certification may begin on a voluntary basis whereby organizations may request an audit to the Materials Matter Standard from licensed certification bodies. This will remain optional during a transitional period for organizations already certified to current standards superseded by the Materials Matter Standard, including the Global Recycled Standard (GRS), Recycled Claim Standard (RCS), Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS), Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS), and Responsible Down Standard (RDS).

The mandatory date is planned for mid-2026, 12 months after the final standard publication date. This means that all applicable audits (for both sites that are already certified and new applicants) will be required to be to the new Materials Matter Standard from that date onwards.

## Timeline

<b>March 2024:</b> Materials Matter Standard Pilot V1.0 is approved by IWG	Finalize core content to release for 2024 implementation planning and pilot testing
<b>June 2024:</b> Public release of the Materials Matter Standard Pilot V1.0	Unified standard released publicly with Materials Matter name as well as supporting documentation to guide standards users
<b>Apr–Oct 2024:</b> Pilot test criteria and hold workshops for stakeholders	Pilot testing remotely and in the field; full standards system updates; promotion and education of new/revised content; progress on approach to recognition partnerships for external standards/tools
<b>2025:</b> Final Materials Matter Standard publication	Criteria and related policies are planned to be released on the publication date in mid-2025; a transitional period will follow publication to allow certification bodies and certified organizations to fully prepare for auditing
<b>2026:</b> Published standard will have an effective date followed by a mandatory date that begins during 2026	Standard becomes effective in the first quarter of 2026: organizations may request audits by approved certification bodies; standard becomes mandatory mid-2026: auditing and certification required for prior standard scopes superseded by the Materials Matter Standard

## Scope

The Materials Matter Standard criteria cover practices and outcomes for the production and initial processing of raw materials, including primary/recycled feedstocks, and apply to farms, producers, and first processing facilities.

The main impact areas of the Materials Matter Standard focus on virgin raw material production (including land use practices in the raising of animals, as well as animal welfare, and treatment of workers), and the first processing stage of extracted raw materials and feedstocks (including processes such as wool scouring, dissolving pulp, chemical/mechanical recycling, down processing, and ginning).

The materials included in the scope of the pilot version of the Materials Matter Standard include:

- Animal fibers and materials: Sheep wool, Mohair, Alpaca, Down, and Skins
- Recycled: Synthetics, Natural materials, Recycled MMCF

Some of the materials proposed for inclusion within the scope of the standard will be added through a framework for recognition partnerships with organizations that own sustainability systems in an effort to focus on collaboration first and avoid duplication of standards systems. Partnerships for full recognition mean Textile Exchange would accept related certified raw material inputs into its standard system rather than through direct Textile Exchange raw material certification. Proposed materials that may be added over time are:

- Animal fibers and materials: Cashmere
- Fiber crops: Cotton
- Forest/plant-derived: MMCF, Biosynthetics

The standard is globally applicable, with no explicit geographic limitations except those that may occur due to legal restrictions.

## Chain of custody

Principle 6 of the Materials Matter Standard contains fundamental chain of custody criteria to be met at the raw material production level. This section contains criteria for:

- **Material handling:** The physical segregation of certified materials from non-certified materials, maintaining an adequate identification system.
- **Volume reconciliation:** Maintaining records of volumes collected, produced, stored, and sold as certified.
- **Sale of certified materials:** The conditions to fulfill for making a certified transaction, including the application for a transaction certificate to be issued by the certification body for each shipment.
- **Logo use and claims:** The conditions for using the Materials Matter trademarks, including the Materials Matter name, the Materials Matter logo, and the Materials Matter Certified label. We will be releasing an updated version of our Logo Use and Claims Policy to align with the Materials Matter Standard in 2024/2025.

Under specific circumstances detailed in the preface of the Materials Matter Standard Pilot V1.0, organizations are required to implement the full Content Claim Standard (we will be releasing an updated version of this document to align with the Materials Matter Standard in 2024/2025), instead of Principle 6 of the Materials Matter Standard.

## Structure of the standard

1. Organizational Management	1.1. General Requirements
	1.2. Shared Responsibilities
2. Human Rights and Livelihoods	2.1. Policies, Management Systems and Records
	2.2. Labor Rights
	2.3. Social Justice
	2.4. Livelihoods
	2.5. Management of Waste Collection for Recycled Inputs
3. Land Use	3.1. Management Plan
	3.2. Soil Health
	3.3. Soil Nutrients
	3.4. Pest Management
	3.5. Water Management
	3.6. Conservation of Biodiversity
4. Animal Welfare	4.1. Health and Welfare Plan
	4.2. Animal Nutrition
	4.3. Living Environment
	4.4. Husbandry Procedures
	4.5. Animal Shearing
	4.6. Herd Management
	4.7. Breeding, Birthing, and Caring for Young Animals
	4.8. Handling and Transport
	4.9. Handling and Transport Managed by the Organization
	4.10. Euthanasia and On-Farm Slaughter
	4.11. Slaughterhouse
5. Processing Facility	5.1. Environmental Management System
	5.2. Chemical Management and Restrictions
	5.3. Waste Management
	5.4. Water Use and Discharge
	5.5. Air Emissions
	5.6. Energy Use
6. Chain of Custody	6.1. Material Handling
	6.2. Volume Reconciliation
	6.3. Sale of Certified Materials
	6.4. Logo Use and Claims
7. Group Certification	7.1. Group Configuration
	7.2. Group Management System
	7.3. Group Member Requirements
	7.4. Inspection of Members
	7.5. Adding and Removing Members

# Main Changes between Responsible Animal Fiber standards (RAF) and the Materials Matter Standard Pilot Version 1.0

The following information provides details of the changes between Textile Exchange's current standards and the new Materials Matter Standard. The summary paper also includes other relevant information surrounding the new standard system.

## Animal Welfare (Principle 4)

An overarching theme for the animal welfare updates within the Materials Matter Standard was greater recognition of the Five Domains of animal welfare with more emphasis on requirements that should provide positive experiences for certified animals rather than just avoidance of negative welfare. For the Five Domains, examples of positive welfare criteria that have been added include requirements for pleasant and positive handling of animals from a young age (4.8.2). This specifies that ruminants should be fed forage-based diets (4.2.2). In addition, there is an expectation that fiber animals are raised by their mothers for a minimum time period before weaning (4.7.12 and 4.7.16 to 4.7.18).

Recommendations have now been identified as leadership-level criteria. All existing recommendations in the Responsible Animal Fiber standards (RAF) were reviewed, and some have been proposed as new conformance-related requirements. Additionally, some new leadership criteria have been included.

## Intent and Clarification

The current RAF standards have accompanying user guidance. The user guide provides additional detail on the expectation for compliance with some requirements, as well as more detailed guidance documents and templates. For the Materials Matter Standard, the Intent and Clarification section for each criteria point informs the intent of the criteria and provides detail on what the auditor will assess for each criterion within the standard document. If anything is unclear about the new or amended criteria listed in this document, reference to the intent and clarification is the starting point. Note also that user guidance and templates will still be separately provided for the Materials Matter Standard but have not yet been updated or developed.

Key changes for animal welfare are covered below using the module topics in the order in which they appear in the Materials Matter Standard. Updates to plans and records are mentioned in several sections. Templates will be provided in the accompanying information for Materials Matter Standard, based on the templates already available in the RAF user manuals.

## Health and Welfare Plan (4.1)

Health and welfare planning, and emergency planning requirements for RAF remain the same, but with more details provided on the expected content of these plans.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding minor conformance level criterion to assess dirtiness of animals (e.g., as a measure of whether sufficient bedding is provided in housing and/or if animals are held in areas where there is no dry or vegetated lying areas).
- Adding new leadership criterion that sheep with a wrinkle score of three or more should not be retained for breeding.

- Establishing as a minor conformance level criterion a requirement for keeping records of treatments administered to animals.
- Establishing as a minor conformance level criterion user guidance from RAF on managing sick or injured animals that need to be kept separate from the rest of the herd or flock.

### **Nutrition (4.2)**

Many of the RAF requirements remain the same in the Materials Matter Standard e.g., provision of good quality feed and water that is checked regularly, Body Condition Score (BCS) monitoring with action taken when animals have a low score, and changes in diet introduced gradually. Additionally, maximum feed/water deprivation for all animals other than ewes/does in late pregnancy remains the same.

New or amended criteria include:

- Focus on nutrition for ruminants that are forage-based.
- Allowance for ewes and does in late pregnancy to be held off water for up to 20 hours.
- Redefining low BCS as two or below rather than less than two as was previously the case.

These new or amended criteria reflect considerable comment in both review phases on the extension of acceptable time off water for ewes and does in late pregnancy to a maximum of 20 hours. This change reflects the calibration that is in place to the current RWS and RMS standards, and this calibration was granted as the practicalities of meeting the existing eight-hour limitation were causing severe problems. The eight-hour limit also contradicted best practice guidelines for pre-shearing management in some regions. Concerns were raised by some reviewers about risks to ewe/doe and unborn lamb/kid health with up to 20 hours off water. However, review of outcomes under the current calibration did not show this to be a problem. There is also a requirement for ongoing monitoring of animals undergoing feed and water deprivation for any signs of distress with remedial action taken if necessary.

### **Living Environment (4.3)**

The Materials Matter Standard and RAF share the same requirements for fiber animal production to be pasture based. This includes the requirement that when animals must be removed from pasture to protect their welfare, facilities to be structurally sound, maintained in good repair and well-ventilated.

New or amended criteria include:

- Upgrading of the criteria for animals to be protected from heat and cold stress (whether in housing/pens or on pasture) from minor to major. Additionally, the criterion intent and clarification highlights the need to re-evaluate provision of shade and shelter on pasture in the face of changing climatic conditions.
- Upgrading of the recommendations on individual space allowances in pens and housing once animals have been held for 24 hours or more as minor conformance-based criteria. Further, the space to be provided for sheep and goats increased slightly.
- Establishing as a minor conformance level criterion the recommendation that housed animals have access to natural light.



#### **Husbandry Procedures (4.4)**

A prohibition on mulesing from RWS remains a critical criterion, but the wording has been revised. The same requirements around good hygiene and maximum age of animals for tail docking (sheep only) and castration (sheep, goats, and alpaca) is retained as for RAF.

The requirement to use pain relief when injurious husbandry procedures are undertaken remains the same as it is in RAF (with some minor rewording of the criterion). In short, pain relief must be applied when suitable products are available. This may be solely local anesthetic or solely analgesic.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding new leadership criterion recommending that both anesthetic and analgesia are used when both are available.
- Revising the welfare risk/benefit assessment that must be carried out to demonstrate a welfare benefit before injurious husbandry procedures take place.
- Establishing as conformance-related criteria the provision of details on later castration of sheep and goats carried out by a veterinarian with mandatory pain relief. These were previously only covered in the User Manual for RWS and RMS.

#### **Shearing (4.5)**

All the shearing requirements from RAF are retained.

New or amended criteria include:

- The requirement that alpacas are restrained for the minimum amount of time needed to shear them is extended to sheep and goats. Restraint includes holding the animal so it cannot move freely. The intent and clarification gives an indication of expected time needed to shear each type of animal.

#### **Herd (or Flock) Management (4.6)**

RAF requirements regarding avoiding isolation of animals and ensuring the type of livestock guardian animal used is suitable (where applicable) are retained.

New or amended criteria include:

- Expanding into a wider criterion the RAF requirement for monitoring for signs of aggression when breeding males are mixed into new groups as part of criterion about the avoidance of mixing animals. Intent and clarification includes the expectation that when mixing is unavoidable, monitoring takes place with action as needed to ensure fewer dominant animals are injured. Following comments received during the review phase of the standard, the intent and clarification also makes clear this criterion is not a prohibition on mixed species grazing.

#### **Breeding, Birthing, and Caring for Young Animals (4.7)**

Requirements for supervision at birth time, or selection of breeds that will successfully give birth alone, are retained from RAF. Laparoscopic AI continues to be permitted when this is carried out by, or under the supervision of a veterinarian.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding as a requirement the User Manual guidance from RAF, which described when electroejaculation was permitted, that this procedure is carried out by veterinarians within the standard and limits. A new criterion requiring veterinarians to undertake any cesarean sections has also been added.
- Adapting the removal of milk from the diet of young animals based on whether the animal is being artificially or naturally reared. The weaning age for lambs and kids reared by their mothers increased to eight weeks.
- Introducing two new leadership criteria with recommendations on the avoidance of stress for young animals around weaning time.

### **Handling and Transport (4.8)**

In RAF, all criteria related to transport were in a separate appendix, and only applicable when the certified organization was responsible for or in control of the movement of their animals. This recognized that in many instances, when animals are sold by the certified farmer, the transport off farm is arranged by the purchaser and therefore not under the certified farmer's control. For the Materials Matter Standard, transport criteria are within the main standard, but some criteria are included that are only applicable when the certified organization is responsible for or in control of the movement of their animals. These are shown in section 9 (see below). However, even when the certified farmer has no control over transport once animals have left the farm, there are still factors that they can manage such as ensuring that only animals that are fit to travel are selected for transport, that loading facilities and practices are managed to ensure animal welfare is protected, and that records on injury or death in transport are collected. The criteria have not changed (and are therefore not listed below), but the point to which the certified organization is responsible for animals has been adjusted.

The critical requirement that animals are not abused or mistreated during handling is retained from RAF, as is the critical level prohibition on live export.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding new criterion that promotes good handling and positive interactions with animals.
- Including two recommendations from RAF on using audible or visual handling aids and avoiding stressful noise as a minor level conformance-related criterion on handling aids, with clarification provided around noise levels at handling.
- Expanding previous alpaca-specific criteria on the correct use of halters and prohibiting tying animals' legs while they are in transport to cover all animals.

### **Handling and Transport Managed by the Organization (4.9)**

As noted in section 8 above, in RAF all criteria related to transport were in a separate appendix. This is no longer the case for the Materials Matter Standard, but still applicable is the model of recognizing that some transport requirements can only be implemented when the certified organization has control of transport.

In this section the requirement for animals to be cared for during transport by a sufficient number of competent workers is retained from RAF, along with the need for contingency planning and ensuring that animals in transport are protected from heat, cold and exposure to noxious gases.

Maximum acceptable transport durations and requirements for rest periods are also retained as per RAF (see additional note under new requirements below).

New or amended criteria include:

- Changing the recommended space allowances in transport to minor conformance-based criteria, and adapting the space in transport for sheep and goats to be more aligned to the weight of the animals.
- Reducing the acceptable angle for loading ramps from 27° to 20°.
- Removing an exemption for the requirement to provide feed and water after 24 hours transport (for species/types of animals permitted to be transported for this long) if the entire journey could be completed within 30 hours.
- Incorporating as a recommendation for all species the recommendation from the Responsible Down Standard that vehicles transporting animals should be clearly labelled as such on the outside of the transport vehicle in the local language.

### **Euthanasia and On-Farm Slaughter (4.10)**

All RAF requirements for euthanasia and on-farm slaughter are retained for the Materials Matter Standard. This includes the allowance to euthanize animals without pre-stunning (i.e., using a knife) when the animal is in severe pain and finding access to tools for stunning would prolong the suffering. The criterion's intent and clarification for this point gives examples of when this could be acceptable.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding new criteria requiring correct placement of tools used for euthanasia, and correct current and propellants depending on the method.
- Clarifying that the RAF requirement that the spinal column is not severed or broken in any animal until after confirmation of death is now required for both euthanasia and on-farm slaughter.
- Adding a list of acceptable methods for stunning animals for euthanasia. RAF includes a list of methods for on-farm slaughter but not euthanasia.
- Updating the signs that must be observed to confirm death.

### **Slaughterhouse (4.11)**

The slaughterhouse sub-section remains a voluntary addition for those who wish to market skins from certified fiber animals. All the requirements of the RAF optional slaughter module are included.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding for fiber animals the RDS requirement that slaughter sites comply with applicable legislation.
- Updating the signs that must be observed to confirm death.

### **Land Use (Principle 3)**

An overarching theme for land use updates within the Materials Matter Standard was a shift of focus to prioritize outcomes, recognizing that these are key to our Climate+ goals. While the RAF land use standards include monitoring, we have included more detail on how this should be carried

out. Also, all existing recommendations were reviewed, and some have been proposed as new conformance-related requirements.

Updates to plans and records are mentioned in several sections. Templates will be provided in the accompanying information for the Materials Matter Standard, based on the templates already available in the RAF user manuals.

### **Management Plan (3.1)**

The same land management planning is required as for RAF, but the structure has changed. The Materials Matter Standard has a major level criterion that requires sites to have a plan in place, and a minor level conformity that details what needs to be addressed in this plan. The Land Management Plan in RAF has also become the Soil and Land Health Management Plan to ensure clarity on the focus area of the Land Use section to which it relates.

New or amended criteria include:

- Clarifying the outlines for detailed management planning for all main land use sectors (land, water, biodiversity, nutrient and integrated pest management) as called for in the land use section.
- Setting a new criterion (3.1.3) that personnel responsible for implementation of the Land Management Plan are knowledgeable in current best practices for land management and competent to recognize when they need to call on experts.

### **Soil Health and Monitoring (3.2)**

The same key soil health considerations remain as were covered in RAF, but the way the criteria are outlined has changed in structure. The approach has been streamlined by grouping criteria that set out to firstly prevent or minimize degradation, then to restore areas that have been degraded and to strategically monitor management intervention effectiveness over time. The requirement for monitoring was also retained. Degradation has been further defined as the degradation of vegetation cover.

New or amended criteria include:

- Retaining the requirement for land to not be degraded by overgrazing and/or other management techniques while adding under grazing due to its relevant impact in certain regions.
- Adding two new recommended criteria including the implementation of conservation or low till practices where land is reseeded or planted for fodder crops and that soil health testing is conducted in line with management planning and objectives.

### **Soil Nutrients (3.3)**

This section was called “fertilizers” in RAF. The requirements for fertilizer management remain largely unchanged apart from streamlining criteria and rewording to ensure clarity of the requirements. For example, the written RAF fertilizer management strategy is renamed as the nutrient management plan to show that all forms of nutrient application must be taken into account.

New or amended criteria include:

- The two RAF requirements calling for efficient nutrient application management and the use of buffer zones between application areas and waterbodies have been combined into one criterion, which effectively makes the previously recommended buffer zone criterion a conformance-based criterion.

### **Pest Management (3.4)**

The same pest management planning and management is required as for RAF. Management criteria remain largely unchanged except for structure and wording changes to streamline criteria. Multiple RAF criteria have been combined into a handful of new criteria. There is still a requirement for a written Integrated Pest Management plan for any farm that utilizes pesticides.

New or amended criteria include:

- The use of buffer zones formally becomes part of the amended minor conformance-based criterion requiring the avoidance of water body contamination when applying pesticides.
- Establishing new major conformance level criterion requiring that chemicals are stored, handled, and applied in accordance with legal and best practice guidance and user restrictions.

### **Water Management (3.5)**

This is a new section, introduced as part of the alignment of the Materials Matter Standard with the Textile Exchange Climate+ strategy. Water is one of the key Climate+ areas along with carbon, soil health and biodiversity.

This section covers the management of water when used for irrigation, and is specifically relevant to crops (including forages) being managed on the certified site for animal production. This section aims to ensure efficient use of water (water quantity) and conserving water quality and the impact of water management on natural aquatic ecosystems.

New or amended criteria include:

- When irrigation is used, new criteria require a water management plan, and efficient use of irrigation water in response to plant needs at essential times of day and stages of plant growth. Records of water used (where it is possible to measure this) is also required.
- Additional criteria require that water abstraction does not exceed licenses or other agreements and does not contribute to long-term depletion of the water source.
- There is also a new leadership criterion on the avoidance of flood or sprinkler irrigation when other more water efficient methods are available.

### **Biodiversity Management (3.6)**

Biodiversity planning is required as it is for RAF, but more details are provided on the expected content of plans. The requirement that lethal control of predators only takes place when non-lethal methods are ineffective remains, as does the prohibition of leg hold traps and snares when lethal control is justified.

New or amended criteria include:

- Biodiversity planning has been streamlined into different stages: considering firstly, the sensitive areas for biodiversity and conservation on the farm, secondly, the risks that day-to-

day farming operations pose to biodiversity and thirdly, the measures to avoid or mitigate these risks.

- New leadership criteria have been added. These include consideration for rewilding of low productivity or unproductive land into habitat for biodiversity enhancement, using native or locally adapted crop species to encourage biodiversity, and improving of habitat connectivity across the farm.
- Reference in RAF to livestock-predator conflict has been expanded to human-wildlife co-existence in the Materials Matter Standard to ensure there is consideration of all interactions between human activity and wildlife, with an emphasis on positive co-existence outcomes.
- However, where invasive species that cannot be controlled by any other means are causing conflict, the Materials Matter Standard also introduces a new major conformance level criterion (with multiple sub-criteria) that outlines the strict conditions and requirements for the use of baiting programs.

This particular criterion on invasive species provoked much debate during the review phases of standard development. However, we are aware that in some regions, most if not all farmers are battling with control of invasive species and non-lethal deterrence is not proving successful for management of existing population numbers. We also note in this criterion that use of baiting is only for invasive species—that is, introduced species that should not be present in a particular region or biome—and which are often causing other significant biodiversity challenges aside from those faced by certified farmers.

## Main Changes Between the RDS and the Materials Matter Standard

### Animal Welfare (Principle 4)

As noted in the animal welfare section above, an overarching theme for animal welfare updates within the Materials Matter Standard was greater recognition of the Five Domains of animal welfare. In bringing all the animal material standards into a single standard there was the opportunity to align on key topics. While waterfowl and fiber-producing animals are very different and are raised on farms in different systems, it is still possible to ensure that the key topics of the Five Domains are considered for all.

It is more challenging to deliver positive outcomes for waterfowl as certification extends to indoor production systems, whereas for fiber animals the requirement is for pasture-based production. The willingness to make changes to comply with the standard and be able to market certified materials also varies between those raising waterfowl and those raising fiber animals. Ducks and geese are primarily reared for meat, not down. Smallholder farmers who kill birds on farm will collect the down and feathers and receive a (small) direct payment for this while farmers with larger intensive systems receive payments solely based on the number of birds and volume of meat they produce. It is therefore difficult to effect change, as the value of the down and feathers—and any premium for certified down and feathers—will often not be paid directly to the farmer and will not compensate for the increased costs of setting up free-ranging areas, for example. However, a few changes, particularly in the living environment section, are included in the Materials Matter Standard. It should be noted that there was limited feedback during the review process from the down sector and the planned piloting is therefore particularly important for testing new criteria for this material.

Key changes for animal welfare are covered below using the module topics and order in which they appear in the Materials Matter Standard. Updates to plans and records are mentioned in several sections. Templates will be provided in the accompanying information for the Materials Matter Standard built on the templates that are already available in the RDS user manual.

### Health and Welfare Plan (4.1)

The same health and welfare planning is required as for RDS, but more details are provided on the expected content of plans, and the animal health and welfare plan and emergency plan are aligned across all species. The requirement for inspections at least twice daily for waterfowl is also retained.

New or amended criteria include:

- The recommendation that a vet reviews the animal health and welfare plan is upgraded to a minor conformance level criterion.
- A combined requirement for all species, that workers are trained and competent, is included with a critical conformance level. This aligns with the animal fiber standards but is a step up from RDS which had this as a minor conformance level criterion.
- Separating and expanding the requirement to keep a record of veterinary treatments, which was previously part of one criterion requiring several different records in RDS.
- Including down in another requirement originating from animal fiber that ensures non-certified animals on the certified site are not subject to inhumane treatment.

## Nutrition (4.2)

Many RDS requirements remain the same, e.g., provision of good quality feed and water that is checked regularly and a critical level prohibition on force feeding.

New or amended criteria include:

- Upgrading to a critical conformance level the RDS major conformance-based criteria that waterfowl receive sufficient food to meet their nutritional needs as well as adequate water. This now align with animal fibers.
- Establishing a new recommendation that soy is only sourced from counties where there is not a high risk that the crop land was created by deforestation or is from a verified source that this did not occur. This change recognizes that soy production can be a driver of deforestation, and deforestation is a major contributor to climate change,
- Upgrading to a major conformance-based criterion the recommendation that birds are not deprived of feed and water for more than eight hours at a time. This now aligns with animal fiber conformance levels on food and water deprivation.

## Living Environment (4.3)

There are the same requirements as in RDS for facilities to be structurally sound and for birds to have continual access to dry, mold-free bedding. The list below shows the expansion of many topics that are included in RAF such as thermal comfort and ventilation along with some new requirements in the Materials Matter Standard.

New or amended criteria include:

- The minor criterion for birds to be protected from extreme weather conditions is extended to ensure birds have their thermal comfort maintained, aligned with a similar requirement for animal fibers.
- Setting a new requirement that birds are protected from the threat of predators.
- Combining the RDS recommendation that there should not be a strong ammonia smell in housing with the conformance-related criterion regarding good ventilation with guidance on acceptable ammonia and dust in housing.
- Setting a minor level conformance-based criterion requiring an alarm system that alerts workers to failures in situations where automatic or mechanical ventilation systems are required to maintain air quality.
- Amending the requirement that birds have eight hours darkness in every 24 hours to allow seven hours continuous darkness preceded by 30 minutes dusk and followed by 30 minutes dawn where the lighting gradually changes. Also, when it comes to lighting, the recommendation that artificial light is distributed evenly becomes a minor conformance level criterion.
- The major criterion requiring that birds have sufficient space to move around and stretch their wings is supplemented by minor conformance-based criteria with specific stocking densities for ducks and geese.
- Amending the minor criterion that all waterfowl have access to an outdoor area once they reach six weeks of age to require this only for birds being raised for meat, i.e., not for parent birds/breeding flocks.



- The minor conformance-based criterion that waterfowl have access to water that at least allows them to dip their heads is upgraded to a major criterion. An allowance for waterfowl to have access to water deep enough to fully immerse and swim remains a recommendation.
- The recommendation that birds have environmental enrichment becomes a minor requirement, with options for suitable enrichment provided in the criterion's intent and clarification.

As noted in the overview for this section there was limited input from those within the down sector during the review phases of the Materials Matter Standard development. However, many comments were raised from other reviewers regarding the amount of darkness or time to sleep that is required for waterfowl and the adjustment of the requirement for all birds that are over six weeks of age to have outdoor access to only being applicable to birds raised for meat.

On lighting, the RDS requirement for eight hours of darkness per day had previously been raised as a barrier to certification by several large groups raising waterfowl for meat. The new criteria for seven hours of darkness preceded and followed by 30 minutes of dusk and dawn is intended to ensure that birds get sufficient time to sleep as well as being feasible to include in the lighting program for indoor-reared birds.

The requirement for parent/breeding flocks that are not directly producing down and feathers to be certified is currently voluntary, and the criterion in RDS that these older birds must have outdoor access is one that has been noted as a barrier to certification taking place. Breeding/parent flocks are generally managed to high health and biosecurity requirements and outdoor access and potential interaction with wild birds is seen as a risk. As part of the review of certification procedures for the Materials Matter Standard, the mandatory certification of parent/breeding flocks in certified down supply chains is being considered, but if this does become mandatory it must be achievable. This criterion is one that would pose challenges if it were retained for all types of birds.

#### **Husbandry Procedures (4.4)**

A prohibition on live plucking (including molt harvesting) from RDS remains a critical criterion, as does the requirement that certified down only comes from waterfowl that were raised for food or the parent flocks in supply chains that produce waterfowl for food. The prohibition of any physical alterations is also retained from RDS.

New or amended criteria include:

- The major criterion prohibiting any form of beak/bill trimming is upgraded to a critical criterion.

#### **Shearing (4.5)**

Not applicable for down.

#### **Herd (and flock) Management (4.6)**

There are no criteria that are part of this sub-section in RDS.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding a minor conformance-based criterion to avoid mixing birds within certified flocks (i.e., maintaining flocks as a single group from hatch to slaughter) to align with animal fiber criteria.

- Adding two conformance-based criteria minimizing the isolation of individual birds, and where this is unavoidable providing them with at least visual contact with other birds to align with animal fiber criteria.

### **Breeding, Birthing, and Caring for Young Animals (4.7)**

Not applicable for down.

### **Handling and Transport (4.8)**

The critical requirement that animals are not abused or mistreated during handling is retained from RDS, as is the requirement that special care is taken when handling any birds with special needs (e.g., injured birds, young birds, etc). Keeping records of any birds injured or dead following transport is also retained.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding a new criterion that promotes good handling and positive interactions with animals.
- Adding more detail to the RDS requirement that only birds that are fit for transport are loaded and transported.
- Adding new criteria on handling birds that prohibit carrying birds by their legs and introduce limits on the number of birds that can be carried in acceptable ways.
- Adding new criteria on the condition of transport crates and how birds are loaded into these when they are used.
- Adding a critical level criterion banning live export of birds for slaughter to align with an animal fiber criterion.

### **Handling and Transport Managed by the Organization (4.9)**

Although this section is titled as only relevant for handling and transport that is managed by the certified organization, this is largely a designation for animal fibers, where animals may be sold off-farm and out of the certified system. However, any criterion where down is listed as a material is a requirement for down certification, regardless of whether the certified site where the birds were raised is responsible for transport or not. This is shown in the intent and clarification of the criterion.

The criteria covering good loading practices, and for vehicles to provide ventilation and protection from weather extremes and thermal stress are retained from RDS along with the requirement for vehicles to be clean and dry before loading commences. Requirements that birds are not overcrowded in transport and that the number of birds per container is determined before loading commences also remain. A requirement for emergency planning that covers transport is now a separate criterion in this section, whereas it was previously included in the health plan for RDS.

New or amended criteria include:

- Replacing the major conformance-based criterion that trained workers accompany birds on trips longer than four hours with a critical level criterion that requires a suitable number of workers who can care for birds at every stage of transport – regardless of how long this takes. This could still be the driver of the truck as per RDS.
- Adding a new criterion ensuring the vehicle used for transport is designed and maintained to avoid injury and protect the safety of birds.

- Adding a new criterion that builds on the retained RDS requirement for vehicles to provide good ventilation. This new criterion requires immediate action to be taken if birds show signs of heat or cold stress or distress from exposure to noxious gases.
- Adding a new criterion for stocking densities in transport crates which aligns with the principle that birds are not overcrowded.
- Revising the criterion that required birds to be given feed and water if the loading, transport and unloading time exceeds eight hours. This is now changed to limit transport to four hours, starting from the time the truck leaves the certified site until birds are unloaded. The criterion's intent and clarification notes that this is not applicable to the transport of newly hatched ducklings and goslings.

#### **Euthanasia and On-Farm Slaughter (4.10)**

All RDS requirements for euthanasia are retained. This includes having clear protocols for when euthanasia takes place and acceptable methods for this procedure.

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding new criteria requiring correct placement of tools used for euthanasia, and correct propellants where captive bolts are used.
- Changing the use of cervical dislocation so that this method is now split into manual and mechanical cervical dislocation with maximum weight of birds defined for each method.
- Reducing the maximum number of birds that can be euthanized by manual cervical dislocation in any one day.
- Including signs of death that must be observed before euthanized animals are moved or disposed of.

#### **Slaughterhouse (4.11)**

Unlike animal fibers, where this section is voluntary for those organizations wishing to market skins, the slaughterhouse module is a requirement for organizations that want to certify down. All requirements on slaughter from RDS have been retained, but some additional criteria to align with the animal fibers slaughter module have been added (see detail below).

New or amended criteria include:

- Adding a requirement for slaughter sites to have documented standard operating procedures.
- Adding new major level criterion for a person to be responsible for animal welfare. The intent and clarification sets out that an individual must fulfill this role on site whenever birds are being slaughtered.
- Adding criteria around the use of waterbath stunning that were previously only in the user manual for RDS, along with a leadership/recommended criterion that this method is not used. This is in recognition of the concerns about inverting live birds that are associated with this method.
- The RDS requirement that animals are stunned then killed before they regain consciousness is expanded to require checks of consciousness and different maximum time intervals between stun and bleed depending on the method of stunning used.

## Land Use (4.12)

As noted in the land use section for animal fibers, an overarching theme within the Materials Matter Standard was a shift of focus to prioritize outcomes, recognizing that these are key to our Climate+ goals. RDS does not currently include criteria that directly contribute to Climate+ goals. Unlike fiber animals there are limited opportunities to influence land management and soil health as down production is largely split between intensive indoor systems with no land access and smallholder systems where direct contact with those keeping the ducks and geese is very difficult. However, some criteria were identified and are shown in the land use section below.

New criteria include:

- Requiring manure management planning when waterfowl are managed in housed systems.
- Requiring management of predators when these pose a risk to waterfowl to align with the animal fiber standards.
- Adding a leadership level criterion suggesting that greenhouse gas accounting takes place.

## Human Rights and Livelihoods (Principle 2)

In comparison to the RAF standards, the Human Rights and Livelihoods criteria included in the Materials Matter Standard are significantly more robust. They will apply to raw material/farm production and initial processing stages across all animal fiber and materials.

Textile Exchange aims to align the Materials Matter Standard with globally recognized human rights due diligence frameworks, primarily the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD's Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector. These frameworks provide the basis for many existing standards along with new and emerging due diligence laws. This enables organizations who wish to or must comply with numerous instruments to do so consistently.

In line with these frameworks, the new HR&L criteria extend beyond labor standards to cover all relevant areas of the internationally recognized human rights while using a risk-based approach. This means that while the number of HR&L criteria increases, organizations can achieve conformance in a more tailored and meaningful way. Certified organizations will be expected to assess human rights risks in relation to their specific operational reality (country, material, processes, etc.). Then they will be asked to prioritize action on those risks or negative impacts which are the most severe or most likely to happen (how 'salient' they are). In practice, this means that organizations will not be expected to take action in all HR&L areas at once. High-risk areas and prioritized actions might look slightly different from one organization to another.

In addition, for some criteria, conformance determinations were adapted to small, and large organizations. For instance, a smaller scale farmer who doesn't employ any external labor directly will not be expected to have an extensive wage management system but will have to provide evidence that the temporary workers employed by their labor contractor are fairly compensated for the work they do for the smaller scale farmer. In contrast, a large facility employing migrant workers will be expected to have a robust wage management system, as well as an extensive ethical hiring system to account for the forced labor risks migrant workers commonly face during the recruitment phase.

Effective grievance channels and access to remedy in cases where human rights have been negatively impacted fully or partially by the organization are other important elements of human rights due diligence required by the standard. Certified organizations will also be expected to implement both policies and management systems to prevent negative human rights impacts from occurring in their priority high-risk areas. They will also be expected to carry out stakeholder

engagement throughout the due diligence process, with a focus on engaging underrepresented rightsholders.

Audits will focus on assessing the accuracy and quality of the HR&L due diligence carried out in relation to each context. Some criteria are designed to sit at a leadership level, meaning they will not be mandatory.

## Piloting

As part of the Textile Exchange Standard development and revision process, pilot activities will be carried out in 2024 to test how the changes introduced to the Materials Matter Standard are fit for purpose and scope. Learnings from on-the-ground implementation will be integrated into the final version of the standard that will become effective in 2025. There are two key objectives in piloting the Material Matters Standard before finalization:

1. **Criteria feasibility assessments:** Assess key questions around feasibility and auditability of the criteria for the intended fiber and material scopes in a varied set of conditions that are representative of the applicable scopes in the certification program. This includes ground-truthing criteria in terms of clarity, means of verification, cost/benefit analysis, and impact across contexts; testing key changes, such as the group certification model, testing the definition of smallholders and criteria applicability, and reutilization of by-products; and assessing impact on fee structures.
2. **Testing related tools and guidelines:** Evaluate the efficacy, use-case, and practicality test of various sets of tools for data collection, along with resources designed to support users in their implementation of the standard in terms of usefulness, feasibility of data collection, challenges, use case and inform on any needed improvements to adapt tools and assess the infrastructure needed to collect, record, monitor, report data. Some of these include testing the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) standard indicators and their means of collection through the farm and processing facility questionnaires (farm/processing facility questionnaire); as well as other scope- related tools and guidelines (e.g., ZDHC guidelines, various HR&L resources, etc.). Insights gained will inform necessary improvements and adaptations to these tools and guidelines, as well as assess the infrastructure requirements for data collection, recording, monitoring, and reporting.