



**AID BY TRADE**  
FOUNDATION

# STANDARDS SETTING AND REVISION PROCEDURES

FOR STANDARDS OF THE  
AID BY TRADE FOUNDATION

Version 1 | March 2024

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<b>Fibre:</b>	All crops and animal fibres in the scope of AbTF standards system		
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**Title**

Standards Setting and Revision Procedures for Standards of the  
Aid by Trade Foundation  
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# 1 Purpose and Scope

1. This document specifies the procedure to be followed by AbTF for the development of any new standard (CmiA, CmiA Organic, GCS, RCS<sup>1</sup>) and when substantive changes to existing standards by AbTF are required to be made.
2. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure all standards are and remain effective and credible by incorporating the values of transparency, participation, and fairness into the processes for their development, and through compliance with international best practice for standards development.

<sup>1</sup> CmiA is the abbreviation for "Cotton made in Africa", GCS for "The Good Cashmere Standard by AbTF" and RCS for "Regenerative Cotton Standard".

## Decision to Develop or Revise Standards

3. The decision to develop or review a standard shall rest with the AbTF Management.
4. Once the decision to develop or revise a standard has been made by the AbTF Management, the subject-specific Technical Advisory Group will be informed.
5. At AbTF, the Standards & Outreach Unit is responsible for reviewing the standards on an ongoing basis, with a review period not exceeding five years from adoption of the previous standard version. The objective is to ensure continuous relevance and effectiveness in meeting the respective standard's stated objectives.
6. The date of the subsequent scheduled review shall be made publicly available and shall be included in the standard document.
7. A revision process may be recommended and initiated for the following reasons:
  - Stakeholder and/or internal AbTF feedback and comments
  - Change in legislation
  - New scientific developments
  - Verification results show that criteria and indicators are not understood and therefore not leading to the intended implementation
  - Change in AbTF strategic planning
  - Other significant changes in the cotton or cashmere production
8. Based on signals or requests from stakeholders, the AbTF Management may decide to explore possibilities for the development of a new standard.
9. Prior to the development of a new standard, a demand assessment needs to be conducted by the AbTF Standards & Outreach Unit including the following factors:
  - Overall goal of the standard
  - Analysis of who needs and will use the standard
  - Description of how the demand can be met
  - Problem and risk analysis, including financial risks
  - Assessment of the extent to which existing standards fully or partially meet the same goals



# Procedures to Develop or Revise Standards

- 10.** For the development or the revision of a standard, the AbTF Management sets up a Working Group (WG) to ensure a balance of interest.
- 11.** The Working Group shall as a minimum include a designated Project Manager from the AbTF Standards & Outreach Unit and the Technical Advisory Group.
- 12.** Before developing or revising a standard, the Working Group shall develop or update Terms of Reference (ToR) for the standard concerned. The ToR have to be approved by the AbTF Management.
- 13.** The Terms of Reference shall include:
  - The proposed scope of the standard and the intended geographic application
  - Well-defined objectives that the standard seeks to achieve, in particular those objectives that focus on social, environmental, animal welfare, and economic aspects
  - An assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate for these, including identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its objectives
- 14.** The Working Group is responsible for drafting the standard.
- 15.** During the standard development or revision process, the Working Group shall involve external experts for cotton cultivation with a focus on small-scale farmers, or respectively for cashmere production with a focus on farmed cashmere, representatives of certificate holders, verifiers and other stakeholders as necessary.
- 16.** The social, environmental, animal welfare and economic objectives of the standard shall be clearly and explicitly specified in the respective standard itself.
- 17.** The standards shall be no more trade-restrictive than necessary to fulfil the legitimate objectives of the respective standard.
- 18.** All standards shall be structured to allow for monitoring and evaluation of progress toward achieving the objectives of the standard as set in the corresponding Theory of Change.
- 19.** All standards need to be clearly structured with objective and verifiable criteria, written in clear manner that ensure consistent interpretation.
- 20.** The standards shall not favour a particular technology or patented item.
- 21.** The AbTF Management shall approve a draft standard before releasing it for public consultation.
- 22.** The launch of a public consultation shall be officially announced on the AbTF and standard-specific websites.
- 23.** AbTF Standards & Outreach Unit shall proactively seek contribution from under-represented stakeholders or disadvantaged groups, e.g. comments from verifiers of assurance providers, agricultural extension staff or workers representatives of Certificate Holders<sup>2</sup>.
- 24.** Any proposed draft of a standard shall include at least one round of public consultation to give stakeholders the opportunity to provide input to the standard. A second round is required if substantive changes have been made since the first draft.
- 25.** The first round of consultation on a proposed draft of a standard shall normally include a period of at least 60 days for the submission of comments. The second round of consultation shall normally include a period of at least 30 days.
- 26.** The Working Group shall amend the draft standard in light with the comments and feedback received and submit the final draft to the AbTF Management for validation.
- 27.** Once the final draft of the standard is approved by the AbTF Management, it will be presented for final approval to the AbTF Board of Trustees.
- 28.** The Board of Trustees shall only make a decision when a quorum as defined in the Board of Trustees By-Laws is present. It shall seek to make a decision by consensus (absence of sustained opposition). In case where the Board of Trustees is unable to reach consensus, the Board of Trustees shall resort to a vote as determined in its By-Laws.
- 29.** In the event the Board of Trustees rejects the final draft, the AbTF Management shall seek to establish the reasons for rejections and forward those to the Working Group for consideration. The Working Group shall then reconvene.

<sup>2</sup> Certificate Holders are either Managing Entities for CmiA, CmiA Organic and RCS or Cashmere Producers for GCS



## Publication and Record-Keeping

- 30.** The approved final standard shall be published on the standard specific websites within 30 days of approval.
- 31.** All approved standards shall include information on the official language and a note that in case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official language version.
- 32.** All approved standards shall include a contact point where requests for clarification and general feedback can be sent.
- 33.** AbTF shall keep a file of all records made during standards development and revision activities (consultation comments, how they were taken into account, list of stakeholders, interested parties involved, draft and final versions of the standard, etc.) and these shall be made available on request where there is justified interest.
- 34.** All records related to Standard development and revision activities shall be kept for at least five years.

## Non-substantive Changes

- 35.** Typographical errors and minor inconsistencies may be corrected with the approval of the AbTF Management. There is no need for a formal revision process.
- 36.** The AbTF Management may also propose non-substantive changes to the Board of Trustees. A written proposal for the recommend changes shall be prepared by the Standards & Outreach Unit and shall be circulated to the Board of Trustees for a 30-day review period. In the event of comments from the Board, the written proposal may be amended. The final written proposal as amended shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- 37.** The updated standard shall be clearly identified with a version number and date and the most recent version shall be made available on the AbTF and standard-specific websites.



# Complaints

**38.** All complaints on issues related to standard setting and revision procedures will follow the AbTF Complaints Process which is publicly available on the AbTF and standard-specific websites.

# References

- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards (v. 6.0)
- Assurance Manual for Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) and other Cotton Standards of the Aid by Trade Foundation (V1)
- Cotton made in Africa Standard – Principles, Criteria and Indicators (Vol. 4)
- CmiA Organic – Complementary Requirements to CmiA Vol. 4 (V1)
- The Good Cashmere Standard® by AbTF (Version 2.0)
- The Good Cashmere Standard® by AbTF Verification Governance (Version 01)
- The Good Cashmere Standard® by AbTF Manual (Version 2.0)
- Regenerative Cotton Standard (RCS) by AbTF (Version 0.0)



# Annex: Definitions

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<b>Non-substantial changes</b>	Typographical errors, minor inconsistencies, mistakes in references.
<b>Revision</b>	Any change to the existing standard resulting in significant modification or change of the standard application (e.g. adding or removing criteria). In this case, the process of revision will have to follow this standard setting procedure. Non-substantial or administrative changes are not considered as standard revision and therefore do not have to follow this procedure.
<b>Stakeholder</b>	Any person or group concerned with or directly affected by a standard of the Aid by Trade Foundation (CmiA, CmiA Organic, GCS, RCS).
<b>Standard</b>	Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory. For the purpose of this document, the standards currently in use developed by the AbTF are considered: CmiA Standard Vol. 4 and CmiA Organic, The Good Cashmere Standard® by AbTF V. 2.0, and Regenerative Cotton Standard® by AbTF V.0.0

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## **AID BY TRADE FOUNDATION**

Founded in 2005, the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) is now an internationally renowned non-profit organisation that works throughout the world to promote sustainable raw materials. Its activities make a decisive and measurable contribution to improving the living conditions of people and animals while protecting the environment. AbTF takes a practical approach by creating and maintaining a variety of standards to verify raw materials: Cotton made in Africa (CmiA), Cotton made in Africa Organic (CmiA Organic), Regenerative Cotton Standard (RCS), and The Good Cashmere Standard (GCS). A global alliance of textile companies and brands purchases the verified raw materials, paying a licensing fee to AbTF's marketing company, ATAKORA Fördergesellschaft GmbH. The payment of this fee entitles the partners to sell their goods under the standards' labels. As the challenges facing textile companies and small-scale farmers grow, the standards have a major role to play in ensuring their resilience and future viability. AbTF collaborates closely with industry experts and with specialists in animal and nature protection.

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**For comments or questions  
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