

## Labeling Recommendations -- 1996

---

### **NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD FINAL RECOMMENDATION ADDENDUM NUMBER 30 LABELING OF CLOTHING MADE WITH ORGANIC COTTON**

Date adopted: September 20, 1996  
Location: Indianapolis, Indiana

#### **Introduction:**

The Processing, Handling, and Labeling Committee has debated the issue of creating standards for organically grown textiles, specifically as regards the dyeing process and proper labeling of fibers and clothing made from organically grown cotton. Although the State of Texas has a well-crafted document for the growing, harvesting, handling, and ginning of organic cotton which the Committee recommended as the basis for the organic cotton standards for the first draft of the Proposed Rules, the Texas standard stops short of the dyeing process. Complexities include 1) the dyeing process' typical use of heavy metals in the mordant in both natural source dyes and low-impact dyes (conventionally-sourced dyes reportedly use less energy and water in production) and 2) the seeming lack of viable alternatives which satisfy color variety and color fastness expectations.

Meanwhile, clothing made from organically grown cotton but dyed with "natural" dyes or low-impact dyes, both using heavy metals in the process, is typically advertised and labeled as "organic", a situation the Committee views as unacceptable.

Currently, unbleached, undyed, "color grown" cottons exist as alternatives to dyed cotton. Commercially-viable natural dyes, based on organically cultivated source material, and free of heavy metals, salts, solvents, and toxic chemicals are now being successfully developed. These produce compostable, biodegradable waste products and could likely fit under organic processing guidelines.

#### **Recommendation:**

Upon implementation of the National Organic Program, textiles made with organically grown fiber based on adherence to the regulations as detailed in the National Organic Standards shall be labeled only as "made with organic fiber" pending future deliberation on the definition of organic textiles which will include approved dyeing process standards.