

Why Buy Organic and Fairtrade Cotton Clothes?

Cotton is a globally important fibre, providing returns to many small farmers in developing countries. Fairtrade cotton has just been released in the UK providing job security and greater incomes to farmers. But the downfall is that most cotton is produced in a way that causes great damage to the environment as it is one of the most chemical intensive crops in the world. High productivity comes at great environmental and health costs. So serious are the negative impacts of chemical-intensive agricultural production, that momentum for change has grown considerably in recent years. The trend toward more environmentally friendly production methods is mainly due to enlightened companies under pressure of increased environmental regulation and competition, and informed consumers calling for greater social and environmental accountability.

In many African countries with lax environmental controls, farmers can apply nearly one-third of a pound of chemical fertilizers and pesticides for every pound of cotton harvested. Some of these chemicals are classified as the most toxic around and the negative impacts can be severe. The simple act of growing and harvesting the amount of cotton fibre needed to make a T-shirt takes an enormous toll on the earth's air, water, and soil, and has significant impacts on the health of people in cotton growing areas. These carcinogenic chemicals can leave residues on the skin, and it is now argued that these are associated with allergies. Organic cotton is therefore kinder to the skin. For more information visit the Pesticide Action Network site at <http://www.pan-uk.org/>

Organic cotton begins with living soil. This means the soil has not had any chemicals used in it for at least three years and it has been enriched with compost and other organic matter. These replace synthetic fertilizers that are harmful to the health.

Organic cotton production has increased 5-fold in the past 4 years. The UK is among the world's fastest growing markets. Each year, thanks to organic cotton, more cotton farmers around the world are able to minimise their effect on their health from pesticide exposure.

There are also signs that organic cotton is moving out of its niche market into the mainstream with increased interest on the part of supermarkets and large companies. Marks and Spencers and the Top Shop have recently launched organic and fairtrade clothing ranges to meet the growing market that started with organic food and then moving into non food areas such as cotton and paints.

For those of you that are parents, Clean Slate Clothing has introduced accountability to the clothes which children wear everyday by selling the world's first Fairtrade and Organic School Uniforms.

Ethical companies also need to move beyond selling organic cotton clothes to ensuring that they are using environmentally friendly dyes and recycled materials with the minimum of packaging and literature.

Find ethical retailers selling [organic and fair trade clothes here](#)

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Davinos Greeno works for the [organic food](#) and [ethical clothes](#) directory that lists 100s of Organic and Ethical Companies and we also have [Health Articles](#) for you to read or publish.