

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 5, 2024

Secretary Tom Vilsack
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing regarding the production and processing of sustainable fibers, specifically plant and animal-based fibers. As global trends have impacted the economics of producing textiles and apparel outside the U.S., and as consumer demand for more sustainably produced products has risen, there is a critical need to reshore production of American made textiles, and to ensure more sustainable textile production. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) plays an important role in supporting these efforts and revitalizing the sustainable fibers industry in the U.S.

Supporting the production and processing of plant-based fiber crops, such as cotton, hemp, and flax, and animal-based fibers such as wool, alpaca, and leather, is key to this effort. These materials may have a lower environmental footprint compared to synthetic fibers, which are largely derived from fossil fuels, and may also be easier to recycle and reuse. These fibers can also be grown and raised in ways that sequester carbon and provide additional environmental co-benefits. According to the Textile Materials Market Report, in 2022, synthetic fibers made up approximately 65 percent of global fiber production, with polyester being the most widely used fiber.¹ As global fiber production continues to increase, it is critical that we consider the impacts on the environment and enhance domestic production of sustainable fibers.

Sustainable fiber production and processing is relevant to multiple USDA mission areas, including farm production and conservation, facilitating domestic and international marketing of U.S. agricultural products, supporting opportunity and economic security for people and communities in rural America, and providing our farmers and ranchers with opportunities to compete in the global marketplace.

We request that the USDA provide the following information:

- Existing programs and authorities that can be used to support sustainable fiber production and processing;
- Examples of USDA funding supporting sustainable fiber production and processing;
- Barriers to addressing existing gaps in the sustainable textile supply chain

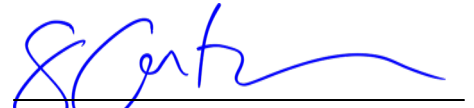
We appreciate learning more about existing support from the USDA to enhance sustainable fiber products and ask for your commitment to working with Congress to enhance the production and processing of sustainable fibers.

Sincerely,

¹ Textile Materials Market Report, <https://textileexchange.org/app/uploads/2023/11/Materials-Market-Report-2023.pdf>




Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress




Jill Tokuda
Member of Congress



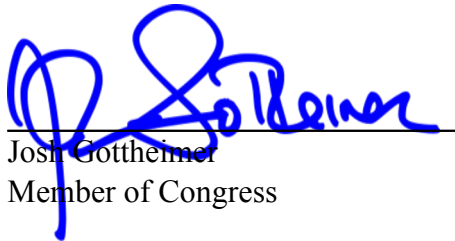
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
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Andrea Salinas
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