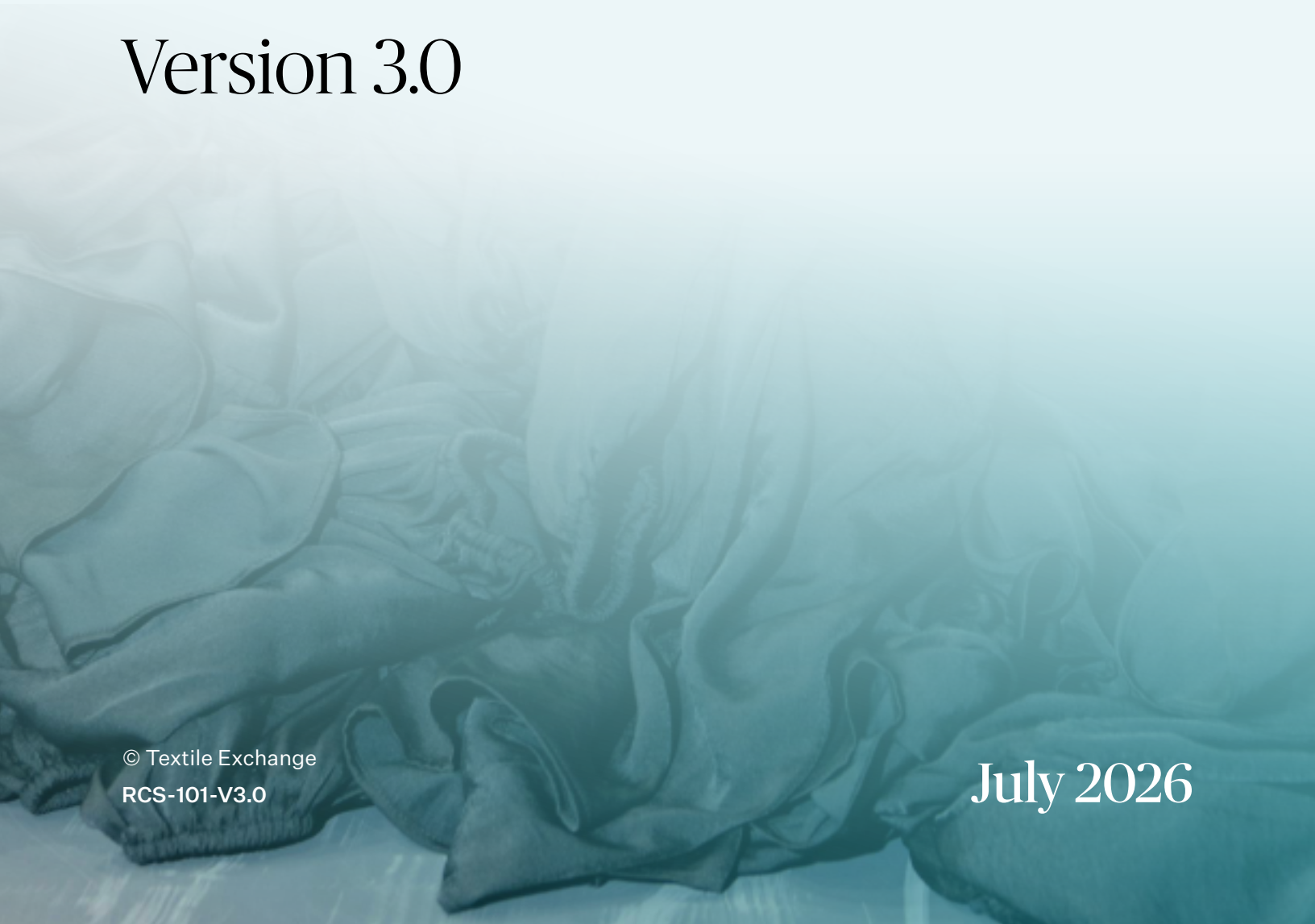
Textile Exchange

Recycled Claim Standard

Version 3.0



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Textile Exchange Recycled Claim Standard

Original Release Date: July 1, 2017

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The RCS 3.0 is effective July 1,2026, and may be used immediately. The mandatory implementation date for RCS 3.0 is December 31, 2026. From this date onwards, all audits are required to be conducted to the standard. It supersedes RCS 3.0, which is not to be used for audits conducted after this mandatory date.

English is the official language of the Recycled Claim Standard. In any case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall be made to the English version.

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Table of Contents

Foreword 5

Introduction 6

International Working Group Members 7

How to use this Document 8

Section A – General Information 9

A1 – Definitions 9

A2 – References 11
A2.1 Accompanying Documents 11
A2.2 Referenced Documents 11

A3 – Principles of RCS Certification 12
A3.1 Scope 12

A4 – Recycled Material Requirements 13
A4.1 Material Recycling 13

A5 – Supply Chain Requirements 14
A5.1 Application of Production Requirements 14
A5.2 Production and Trade 14

Appendices 16

Appendix A – Tools and Resources 16
Textile Exchange Certification Toolkit - Essential Series 16
Questions and Additional Information 16

Appendix B – Reclaimed Material Supplier Agreement 17

Urgent substantive revision to the Recycled Claim Standard

This urgent substantive revision (RCS 3.0) is necessary to support accurate tracking of reclaimed material data. The introduction of the revised Reclaimed Material Declaration Form (RMDF) required corresponding updates to the standard. The revised RMDF helps document reclaimed materials entering the certified recycling supply chain by collecting key information in a structured format, improving consistency, and supporting the tracking of reclaimed materials from source to final products. As the current RMDF did not serve this purpose, it was important to replace it with the revised RMDF in order to mitigate risks of fraudulent activity related to reclaimed volumes.

While "reclaimed material" has, by default, been considered as claimed material, the standard now explicitly includes "reclaimed material" within its scope as a type of claimed material. This clarification ensures alignment with the updated RMDF and directly supports tracking of the reclaimed material. The updated Recycled Claim Standard 3.0 does not constitute a broad revision of the Recycled Claim Standard and is limited to the specific changes presented in the change log table below.

Given the multi-year phase-out timeline of Recycled Claim Standard and transition to Materials Matter Standard, this revision requires the use of the revised RMDF by December 31, 2026.

Change Log from RCS 2.0 to RCS 3.0

Section	Subject	Change
	Foreword and Introduction	Minor language changes such as change in Textile Exchange contact email and others
A3.1b	Scope	Inclusion of the term "reclaimed material"
A4	Desired Outcome	"Reclaimed material" is included for clarity as it qualifies as claimed material along with other minor language changes
A4.1a	Material Recycling	Inclusion of the term "reclaimed material", along with other minor language changes
A4.1b	Material Recycling	Inclusion of the term "first certified entity"
A4.1biii	Material Recycling	Inclusion of reference to the revised Reclaimed Material Declaration Form (TE-MM-TEM 105), with other minor language changes
A4.1c	Material Recycling	Reference to the revised Reclaimed Material Declaration Form

Section	Subject	Change
Appendix A	Tools and Resources	Change of the Textile Exchange contact email
Appendix B	Reclaimed Material Supplier Agreement	Updated reference to Section A1 - Definitions
Appendix C	Reclaimed Material Supplier Form	Removed

Foreword

The *Recycled Claim Standard* (RCS) was originally developed in partnership with Outdoor Industry Association's Sustainability Working Group's Materials Traceability Task Force in 2013.

Textile Exchange also owns and administrates the *Content Claim Standard* (CCS), the *Organic Content Standard* (OCS), the *Global Recycled Standard* (GRS), and the *Responsible Down Standard* (RDS), the *Responsible Wool Standard* (RWS), among others. These standards are designed to ensure chain of custody for preferred materials, and to provide labeling tools for final product claims.

Textile Exchange's mission is to accelerate sustainable practices in the textile industry. This acceleration only happens when steps have been taken to ensure that actions taken toward sustainability result in real and meaningful change. This requires a strong understanding of the issues and a plan to substantiate the claims being made. Certification to a third-party standard accomplishes this.

Introduction

The *Recycled Claim Standard* (RCS) is an international, voluntary standard that sets requirements for third-party certification of Recycled input and chain of custody. The goal of the RCS is to increase the use of Recycled materials.

The objectives of the RCS are:

- Alignment of Recycled definitions across multiple applications.
- Track and trace Recycled input materials.
- Provide consumers (brands and end consumers) with a tool to make informed decisions.
- Provide assurance that materials are actually Recycled and in a final product.

The Recycled Claim Standard is intended for use with any product that contains at least 5% Recycled Material. Each stage of production is required to be certified, beginning at the recycling stage and ending at the last seller in the final business-to-business transaction. Material Collection and Material Concentration sites are subject to self-declaration, document collection, and on-site visits.

The RCS does not address social or environmental aspects of processing and manufacturing, quality, or legal compliance.

The RCS uses the ISO 14021 definition of Recycled Content, with interpretations based on the US Federal Trade Commission Green Guides; the intention is to comply with the most widely recognized and stringent definitions.

This is a voluntary standard that is not intended to replace the legal or regulatory requirements of any country. It is the responsibility of each operation to demonstrate compliance with all applicable laws and regulations related to marketing, labor, and business practices. Sellers of RCS products are advised to reference the allowed Recycled Content claims in the countries of sale, to ensure that they are meeting all legal product claim requirements.

You may submit feedback to the standard at any time; send to standards@textileexchange.org. Points of clarification may be incorporated into the RCS Implementation Manual at any time.

International Working Group Members

Steering Committee Members

Deepak Goel	Geetanjali Woollens Pvt. Ltd.
Jasmine Zhang	Intertek
RS Bala	Anandi Enterprises
Terry Turner	Unifi Manufacturing
Nicole Munoz	SCS Global Services
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Abhishek Bansal	Arvind Limited
Kelsey Halling	Impact Thread
Paolo Foglia	ICEA
Aletta Westra	Dutch Central Government
Rahul Bhajekar	GOTS
Meredith Merritt	NSF Sustainability
Binay Choudhury	Control Union

How to use this Document

This document sets forth the overall requirements for compliance with the RCS. Guidance and clarifications are available in the *RCS Implementation Manual*.

In the RCS, the following verbal forms are used to indicate requirements, recommendations, permissions, or capabilities:

- "shall" indicates a requirement
- "should" indicates a recommendation
- "may" indicates a permission
- "can" indicates a possibility or capability

"Desired Outcomes" have been included to detail the intent of requirements, but they are not requirements themselves. They are designated by an icon before each module, see the following example:

DESIRED OUTCOME*:*
Example text. Why does this requirement exist?

Guidance Documents

The following guidance documents were used in the development and/or revision of this standard:

- ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2: Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards
- ISO/IEC Guide 59: Code of Good Practice for Standardization
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards

Section A – General Information

A1 – Definitions

The Content Claim Standard has a complete set of the terms used in the TE standards. The following are specific to the RCS, and are important in defining the verification requirements for the input materials for recycling:

Material Collection

Material Collection refers to the point in the recycling lifecycle when a Reclaimed Material is collected after its original use has ended (i.e., it would have otherwise gone into the waste stream).

Entities involved in Material Collection may include, but are not limited to:

- Individuals who collect Post-Consumer Materials for sale to brokers
- Government organizations (e.g., municipalities) that offer curbside recycling or operate transfer stations
- Brokers that purchase Pre/Post-Consumer Material from individuals, municipalities, or commercial operations for re-sale
- Commercial operations that collect their own Pre-Consumer Material from manufacturing operations
- Commercial operations that collect Post-Consumer Material (e.g., retail stores)

Material Concentration

Material Concentration refers to the point in the recycling lifecycle when a waste material receives primary handling. This may include, but is not limited to, sorting, screening, basic contaminant removal, or baling. Material is still unprocessed at this stage, meaning it has not been physically or chemically altered beyond basic handling (e.g., screening, crushing, or washing). Examples include:

- Government organization (e.g., municipality)
- Non-profit organization
- Business entity (e.g., brokers)

Material Recycling

Material Recycling refers to the point in the recycling lifecycle when a Reclaimed Material is processed into a Recycled Material.

Post-Consumer Material

Material generated by households or by commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product that can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of materials from the distribution chain.[1]

Pre-Consumer Material

Material diverted from the waste stream during the manufacturing process. Excluded is the reutilization of materials such as rework, regrind or scrap generated in a process and capable of being reclaimed within the same process that generated it.[2]

Reclaimed Material

Material that would have otherwise been disposed of as waste or used for energy recovery, but has instead been collected and reclaimed as a material input, in lieu of new primary material, for a recycling process.[3]

Recycled Content

Proportion, by mass, of Recycled Material in products or packaging. Only Pre- Consumer and Post-Consumer Materials shall be considered as Recycled Content.

Recycled Material

Material that has been reprocessed from Reclaimed Material by means of a manufacturing process and made into a final product or into a component for incorporation into a product.[4]

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[1] This excerpt is taken from ISO 14021:1999, section 7.8.1.1, subsection a.2 on page 14, with the permission of ANSI on behalf of ISO. © ISO 2013 – All rights reserved.

[2] This excerpt is taken from ISO 14021:1999, section 7.8.1.1, subsection a.1 on page 14, with the permission of ANSI on behalf of ISO. © ISO 2013 – All rights reserved.

[3] This excerpt is taken from ISO 14021:1999, section 7.8.1.1, subsection c on page 14, with the permission of ANSI on behalf of ISO. © ISO 2013 – All rights reserved.

[4] This excerpt is taken from ISO 14021:1999, section 7.8.1.1, subsection b on page 14, with the permission of ANSI on behalf of ISO. © ISO 2013 – All rights reserved.

The acronyms in the following table are used throughout the Standard:

CCS: Content Claim Standard
RCS: Recycled Claim Standard
CB: Certification Body
SC: Scope Certificate
TC: Transaction Certificate

A2 – References

A2.1 Accompanying Documents

The following additional documents are considered part of the Recycled Claim Standard, and are fully binding:

- Content Claim Standard
- Content Claim Standard Implementation Manual
- Recycled Claim Standard
- RCS Logo Use and Claims Guide
- Accreditation and Certification Procedures for Textile Exchange Standards
- Policy and Template for Issuing Certificates of Compliance (Scope Certificates, SCs)
- Scope Certificate Template
- Policy and Template for Issuing Transaction Certificates (TCs)
- Transaction Certificate Template
- Textile Exchange Accepted Equivalent Standards

All documents can be found at http://Recycledclaim.org.

A2.2 Referenced Documents

The following referenced documents were used in the development of this standard:

- Textile Exchange Recycled Claim Standard
- Global Recycled Standard 2.1
- ISO 14021:1999: Environmental labels and declarations
- ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2: Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards

- ISO/IEC Guide 59: Code of Good Practice for Standardization
- Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims ("Green Guides"); Federal Trade Commission

A3 – Principles of RCS Certification

A3.1 Scope

A3.1a The Standard applies to products that contain 5% or more Recycled Content. Some exceptions may apply, see *TE Accreditation and Certification Procedures* for the derogation process.

A3.1b The Standard applies to any verified Reclaimed Material and Recycled Material and may apply to any supply chain.

A3.2 Scope

A3.2a The Standard provides verification of chain of custody for Recycled Material, in accordance with the Content Claim Standard.

A3.2b The Standard includes consumer-facing labeling; only products that have been certified up to the seller in the last business-to-business transaction are eligible. See *RCS Logo Use and Claims Guide* for labeling guidelines.

A4 – Recycled Material Requirements

DESIRED OUTCOME:

Claimed Material accepted for the standard meets the established definition of Reclaimed Material before recycling and Recycled Material during and after recycling.

Certification to the RCS is required for entities involved in Material Recycling. To summarize:

- Reclaimed Material suppliers should submit below required documentation to their customers. Reclaimed Material suppliers may be subject to further inspection, as mentioned in the Reclaimed Material Supplier Agreement, Appendix B.
- Material Recycling: full RCS certification; transaction certificates
- Production and Trading: full RCS certification, with exceptions for subcontractors and low volume traders; transaction certificates

A4.1 Material Recycling

A4.1a Entities involved in Material Recycling (as defined in A1) are subject to RCS certification. The RCS requires compliance with the requirements of the Content Claim Standard, whereby the 'Claimed Material' is replaced with 'Reclaimed Material' before recycling and 'Recycled Material' during and after recycling as defined in section A1.

A4.1b In addition, the first certified entity in a recycling supply chain (collector, concentrator, or recycler), shall:

i. Verify that all sources of Reclaimed Material have legal authorization to operate for the relevant function, and hold copies of the relevant documents.
ii. Hold valid Reclaimed Material Supplier Agreements (see Appendix B) for all suppliers of Reclaimed Material (entities involved in Material Collection and/or Material Concentration).
iii. Collect and retain completed Reclaimed Material Declaration Forms from their suppliers for all Reclaimed Material inputs. For more details on the Reclaimed Material Declaration Form collection timeline, please refer to the Introduction &

Instructions section of the TE-MM-TEM-105 Reclaimed Material Declaration Form.

iv. Inspect all incoming shipments of Reclaimed Material to confirm that they are not virgin material; confirm the correct identification as Pre- or Post-Consumer Recycled Material. Retain records of inspections.

v. Request Transaction Certificates for all outgoing RCS certified products.

A4.1c Material Recyclers who collect Reclaimed Material from their own processing shall retain the following records to verify their volume of recycling:

i. Records of all materials entering the recycling process.

ii. Description of Reclaimed Material and the stage where the waste was collected.

iii. Any other relevant transfer notes.

iv. The TE-MM-TEM-105 Reclaimed Material Declaration Form may be used in lieu of the records listed above.

A5 – Supply Chain Requirements

DESIRED OUTCOME:

Claimed Recycled Material follows a complete, verified chain of custody from input to final product.

A5.1 Application of Production Requirements

Organizations involved in production and trade of RCS products are subject to RCS certification. The Recycled Claim Standard requires compliance with the requirements of the Content Claim Standard, whereby the 'Claimed Material' is replaced with 'RCS Material'.

A5.2 Production and Trade

In addition to the requirements of the CCS, all organizations involved in the production or trade of RCS products shall meet the following requirements:

A5.2a All Recycled Materials entering the supply chain shall have a valid Transaction Certificate (TC) issued by an approved CB.

A5.2b Pre-Consumer and Post-Consumer Recycled Material Content percentage shall be recorded separately for each batch at every certified site and recorded on the transaction certificate.

A5.2c Traders with an annual turnover of less than $10,000 of RCS products, and retailers selling to end consumers only, are exempt from the certification obligation; provided that they do not (re-) pack or (re-) label RCS products. Exempted traders with less than $10,000 annual turnover of RCS products shall register with an approved Certification Body and shall inform the Certification Body immediately once their annual turnover exceeds $10,000, or once they plan to (re-) pack or (re-) label RCS products.

A5.2d In cases where there is the possibility of differential rates of production loss between Recycled and virgin inputs, Certified Organizations shall address this through their mass balance formula for each material to show that calculations were done to account for the differences.

A5.2e Buyers of the RCS product will be responsible to set any further requirements on the specific standards or requirements to which the input material shall be certified. These additional requirements are separate from the RCS and its certification process.

Appendices

Appendix A – Tools and Resources

Textile Exchange Certification Toolkit - Essential Series

The *Certification Toolkit* has been developed to provide increased clarity for brands and retailers trying to understand how to most accurately certify their products. This tool helps to address issues around why certification is important, the essential steps, understanding certificates, pricing and labeling.

The guide is free to members of Textile Exchange, or can be purchased on its own by non-members. For more information please visit http://www.textileexchange.org/content/certification-toolkit.

Questions and Additional Information

For questions or additional information about the GRS please contact: standards@textileexchange.org.

Appendix B – Reclaimed Material Supplier Agreement

This document acts as a guarantee that all of the materials listed below and being sold to [*Certified Organization]* ____ are Reclaimed Materials* that would have otherwise gone into the waste stream. It is valid for one year, effective _____.

** see Section A1 for definitions*

By signing this document, we give permission to *[Certification Body]* to visit our facility with a minimum notice of 3 days. The inspection will relate only to verification of our status as a legal organization and to confirm the description of materials as Recycled, including the designation of pre- or Post-Consumer streams.

Signed by:

Title:

Email Address:

Phone:

On behalf of: (*Company name*)

_____ (Signature) _____ (Date)