



EMILCOTTONI GREEN CHOICE

VOLUME 2

STeP
by OEKO-TEX®

Emilcottoni

STeP by OEKO-TEX®



Up to us

When ancient Greeks used to talk about beauty, they meant a concept that was not only about appearance. *Kalos kai agathos*, they used to say: what is beautiful has also to be good. Form and substance are linked together so strongly that they form an unbreakable communion. There are still people who have not forgotten this lesson.

Thirty years ago our story began. At Emilcotoni we have always aimed to achieve a 360-degree excellence, which means that we are not concerned only about the qualitative side of our cotton but also the ethical one, as taught by ancient Greeks: we are 100% responsible for every choice we make.

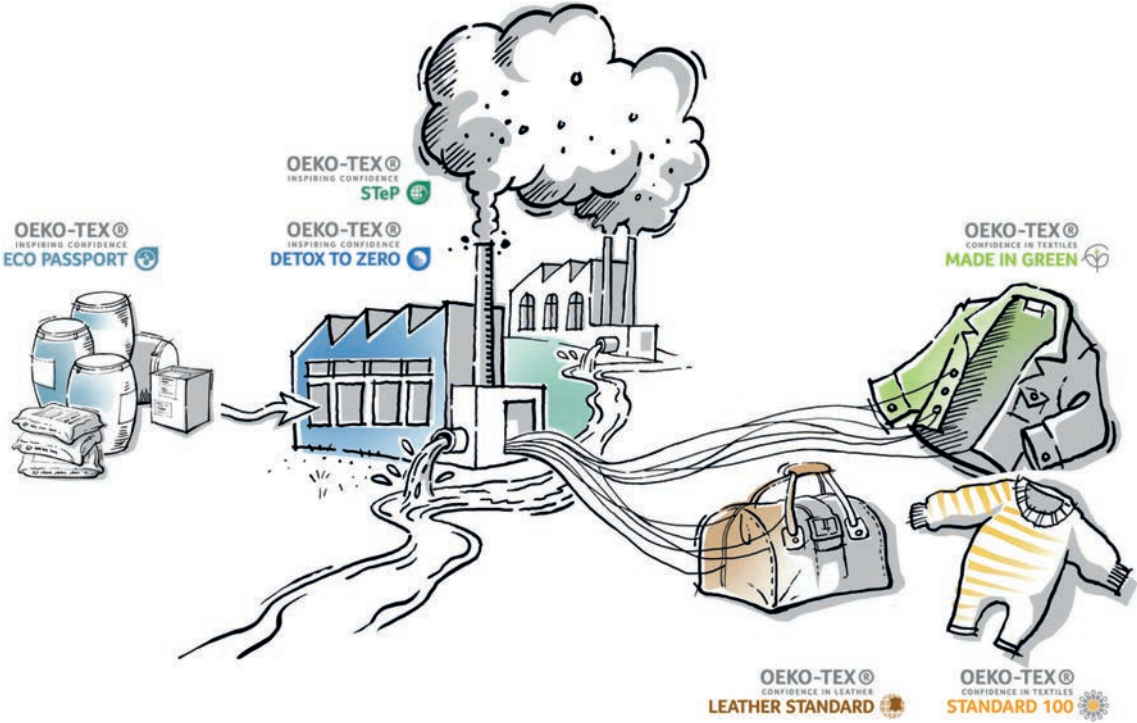
As natural consequence of our long-term ethical need, over the years we have acquired many certifications that show concretely our commitment to constantly and accurately control the whole chain: from cotton cultivation to final product selling.

But there is something more: in 2016 at Emilcotoni we published a code of ethics where we put on paper all the values we believe in. These are the principles we want our company and all the people who work with us to respect.

It is hard work. Tough calls and sacrifices are our daily bread, but, with our eyes on the future, we keep going along the only path we know as true and fair. Aiming at a cotton product that could be qualitatively and ethically good.



INPUT CONTROL PROCESS CONTROL OUTPUT CONTROL



What is STeP by OEKO-TEX®

One of the trends that is becoming more and more popular nowadays is the environmental issue, for sure. Who has never heard before about Greta Thunberg and the environmental movement she has started? It is called *Fridays for future*, but it would sound equally good if it was called *Mondays for future* or *Tuesdays for future*. Every day is the right day to think about the future and, above all, about the part we will play in it.

We tend to think that the environmental change is something too big, too global and too fast for us. Against this kind of changes there is nothing we can do. But this is not true: there is always something we can do. We must start from here.

It is for this reason that at Emilcotoni we have been working on our sustainability for many years. It is still a long path, made up of many little steps. We remember well one of these steps: it happened when we obtained STeP, a certification in the OEKO-TEX® portfolio.

OEKO-TEX® offers two different kinds of certifications to all the companies working in the textile sector: the first one (STeP) is about corporate sustainability, while the second one is about products (STANDARD 100; we will talk about this certification in the next issue). We were ready in both these areas. So, to avoid mistakes, we acquired both of them.



All-round sustainability

STeP by OEKO-TEX® (Sustainable Textile and Leather Production) is an independent and international certification system for brands, retail companies and manufacturers from the textile chain who want to communicate their achievements regarding sustainable manufacturing processes.

When we talk about sustainability, however, there is something we must pay attention to: the concept of sustainability is related not only to the environmental side but also to the social and economic one. In fact, if we take a look at the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN in 2015, we will find that they are related to all these three sectors: we have *No Poverty* and, at the same time, *Life Below Water*, *Gender Equality* and *Climate Action*, *Quality Education* and *Clean energy* and so on.

In the same way, STeP by OEKO-TEX® offers a comprehensive analysis that considers all the elements that compose sustainability, the true one. Therefore, this certification doesn't examine only the environmental performance of a company but also its social responsibility.

In their turn these macro sectors are divided in six areas: Environmental Performance, Environmental Management, Chemical Management, Social Responsibility, Quality Management and Health and Safety. We will consider them more accurately in the following paragraphs.



A modular structure

1

✓ **Environmental Performance:** this area considers the environmental impact of a company. It examines, for example, its emissions to water and into the atmosphere, its use of renewable energy sources, its energy and methane gas consumption etc.

Every company that wants to obtain this certification must comply with criteria defined by STeP by OEKO-TEX®, which often are even stricter than national legislations.

✓ **Environmental Management:** this area is very close to the previous category, but it changes point of view. In this case, what is at stake is how a company manages its environmental impact in order to limit it as much as possible.

Before doing this, it is fundamental to know very accurately how a company works: it is necessary to know all the good it has already done and all the things that have still to be improved. This is why this area is mostly made of documents and assessments. To name but one, every company that wants to get certificated has to fill out an initial environmental analysis. The aim is to get comprehensive information enabling to plan all the steps to go.



A modular structure

2

✓ **Chemical Management:** every company uses a certain amount of chemical products, but how does it handle them? In this regard, STeP by OEKO-TEX® examines a lot of different questions: if these products have been identified and mapped properly, if they are transported and stored in the correct way, if the staff knows all the danger symbols printed on the packaging and so on.

✓ **Social Responsibility:** the aim of this area is to ensure that a company respects what national legislation states about collective labour agreement.

But that's not all. OEKO-TEX® considers also many other criteria such as freedom of association, use of child labour, discrimination of female labour, social protection, violence and abuse on workplace and so on.

The institution OEKO-TEX® looks at as an authority in this sector is ILO (International Labour Organization): a UN agency that, since 1919, brings together governments, employers and workers to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.



A modular structure

3

✓ **Quality Management:** have the managers made a final evaluation about the goals they have determined for that year? Have they been achieved or not? Is there an annual plan to train the staff? And a satisfaction survey for clients? And what about the suppliers? Are there any changes that have to be introduced?

This area is 100% about the management of a company and, just as Environmental management, it includes a wide production of written material.

✓ **Health and Safety:** in Italy this sector is covered by Legislative Decree 81 on job security. This area considers questions such as workplace safety, the health of employees, the presence of protection devices and, not least, the training of workers.

The training of workers is a constant theme in STeP by OEKO-TEX®, as if it was a *fil rouge* that links all these six areas together. It's easy to understand why: an employee who has been trained works better and, especially, more willingly, because he/she knows and shares the common goal.



Stories that count: the Texilon case 1

It's true that OEKO-TEX® criteria are numerous and strict, but at Emilcotoni we had a good basis to start from. What has helped us is the attention we have always had for the environment and our care for employees' wellbeing.

Maybe the time has come to talk a little bit about us, so that all the things said before could find a practical realization. So, let's talk about something that concerns us very closely: the birth and management of Texilon.

Officially Texilon Srl was born on 9th September 2015 from the ashes of former Veneta Filo, a company specialized in yarn processing on behalf of third parties. Emilcotoni used to lean approximately 65% of its productions on Veneta Filo. That's why when we discovered that Veneta Filo was suffering, we decided to intervene. To avoid its closure, Emilcotoni stepped in and leased Veneta Filo as a business branch with a purchase obligation at the end of the rent. But it was not necessary to wait until the end of the lease; Emilcotoni acquired Veneta Filo in 2018.

It was not an easy road. Managing Texilon was a challenge – a hard one – for Emilcotoni, because it was a new sector to compete with and there was high financial expense connected with the lease and the purchase. Yet, things are going well. Texilon is entering a new chapter of its story and the future looks bright.



Stories that count: the Texilon case 2

But why are we talking about this case? Texilon is not only a story about numbers, it's more a story about people. All the 28 employees who used to work for Veneta Filo were confirmed in Texilon. Nothing changed in their contracts, neither remuneration nor employment status.

Working on the same machine for eight hours every day can be really stressing. That's why one of the first things Emilcotoni did was to open a constructive dialogue with its workers, in order to make them feel part of a common project.

14 people among them are not from the European Union. We have always been ready to meet the needs of each of them. Just a little example: during Ramadan we organize shifts so that Muslim employees can work at night. We have worked really hard in order to create a serene environment where everyone could feel respected and welcome, no matter which religion or nationality people are.

Moreover, all the facilities and the machines were secured and we organized a plan for the social protection of our employees. Another part of our commitment in Texilon has been to establish a form of meritocracy, because we strongly believe that people who work well and hard must be rewarded.

Nowadays we often listen to people talking about globalization, but most of the times we don't know what it means. With all its nationalities, cultures, languages and religions, Texilon offers us a little but significant example: a miniature world, which doesn't want to eliminate all the differences but, rather, harmonize them in view of a common goal.

Emilcottoni's commitment:

- ✓ *Thanks to our photovoltaic system, we use clean and renewable energy*
- ✓ *We conduct an accurate differentiated waste collection*
- ✓ *We carry out regular checks on wastewater*
- ✓ *We use recycled paper or paper from certified supply chain*
- ✓ *Our packaging items are made of recycled carton and biodegradable materials*
- ✓ *Our employees have durable and stable contracts, and receive training on a regular basis*
- ✓ *Our work environment is safe and stimulating, without any form of discrimination or abuse*
- ✓ *We take part to several remarkable programs related to environment sustainability and supply chain control*
- ✓ *Together with our Suppliers, we select the safest chemical products for health and environment*
- ✓ *We constantly monitor our Customers PRSL and MRSL*
- ✓ *We ensure that our Suppliers and Subcontractors respect the international regulations concerning health and environment protection*
- ✓ *Year after year, we are expanding our range of organic products*
- ✓ *We have an international ethic code, in which we strongly believe*



Our commitment

Not many companies have acquired this certification yet. Some of them have preferred other kinds of certifications, which are not specifically related to the textile sector or examine only one area at a time (the environmental impact, for example, or work safety). However, if STeP by OEKO-TEX® is so efficient as a certification, it is precisely because it focuses on the textile sector. All the questions, verifications and controls have been calibrated for the sector and so they know exactly what they are supposed to investigate. This is why at Emilcotoni we have strongly believed in this certification from the very beginning and we have decided to acquire it.

Finally, we would like to remind one last thing. For sure, OEKO-TEX® doesn't let any company rest on its laurels. In fact, at the end of every audit, you are supposed to identify new goals – higher, of course – to achieve. Only some weeks ago an OEKO-TEX® examiner came to Emilcotoni. We showed her what we had done lately and she seemed happy about it, but she had just begun complimenting us when, suddenly, she asked: "Now where do you want to set your new standard?".

With OEKO-TEX® as a guide and counsellor, we have traced our path towards even greater sustainability.

Emilcotoni

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