Textile Exchange
Responsible Down Standard 2.0
Brand Toolkit
RDS Brand Toolkit

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Please Note!

Standards are an extremely effective tool to drive change in the industry, and to ensure compliance to a given set of criteria. However, they do not guarantee 100% compliance, 100% of the time; instead they significantly narrow the margins for non-compliance by making expectations clear, and by providing a level of oversight through inspections, interviews and document checking.

Did you know?

- Many standards represent a snapshot in time, where a site is evaluated against the criteria of the standards through inspections, interviews and document checking. These inspections may happen every year, or at a lower frequency, such as every three years.
- Textile Exchange standards all require yearly inspections and certification renewal, and use the transaction certificate system to keep continual track of the flow of goods from one site to another. This gives a higher level of confidence in the chain of custody of certified goods.
Terms

**RDS** - applies to products that contain only RDS-certified down and/or feathers

**Auditor** - the person doing the on-site inspection. He or she will work for the Certification Body directly or under contract, and send their findings to the Certifier.

**Certifier** - the person who reviews the results of the audit, cross-checks documentation and information, and who has the authority to grant certification

**Certification Body** - the organization that is authorized by the standard-owner to certify against the standard.

**Inspection** - the on-site audit against the requirements of the standard of the organization being certified
Roles and Responsibilities

The certification body has the only formal relationship with the certified company. They handle certification to the requirements of the TE standard.

Textile Exchange

TE develops, owns and administers the standard. TE does not do any certification activities, but does keep record of the certified companies, supplied by the certification bodies.

Certification Bodies

Certified Products

Certified Company

Certified Products

Certified Products
Brand Responsibilities

Did you know?

In order for products to be labeled as RDS, the supply chain must be certified at every stage before the final retailer. Further details are explained in 9. Certify Your Supply Chain.
1. Read and understand the RDS

The first step in the process is to read the RDS and be sure that it meets your needs.

You can download the standard, as well as a PowerPoint presentation at http://responsibledown.org/. If you have any questions, contact integrity@TextileExchange.org.

To further understand the way that Textile Exchange standards work, you can also download the Certification Toolkit at http://textileexchange.org/content/certification-toolkit.
2. Identify types of down and feathers for RDS

Look at the down and/or feathers that you use, and identify the types, qualities and if possible the rough quantities.

**Types**
- ducks
- geese
- down
- feathers

**Qualities**
- fill power
- color

**Quantities**
3. Identify top tier down supplier/s

If you do not already know the names and contact details of your top tier down suppliers (those that supply to your cut and sew factories), then work with your factories to find them.

Did you know?

- Your top tier supplier’s role is to provide you with the quantities and qualities that you need to meet your quality and design needs.
- After your top tier supplier there may be many links in the rest of the supply chain: traders, processors, slaughterhouses, farms, hatcheries, collectors, and sometimes multiple layers of any given step.
4. Determine sourcing region/s

You can work directly with your down suppliers to identify the regions (typically countries) that your down is being sourced from, or ask the certification body to work with them on the supply chain mapping.

If you already have a good idea of the types and qualities of down that you will want to have RDS certified, then you may want to focus only on the sources of that particular down.

**Did you know?**
- The main regions that supply down are: China, Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Romania.
- Although it is banned by the EU, for cultural/historical reasons force-feeding is still allowed in Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain, France and Hungary.
- In Romania and Ukraine, most of the down is from small family farms that are raising the geese for personal or local consumption.
5. Create strategy for RDS application

At this stage you will need to identify the volumes needed by type and quality of down and feathers. You will also need to decide on target dates and which amounts of down you will want to have 100% RDS certified, and which amounts will be a blend. Work with your internal team and your suppliers and ask for support from Textile Exchange or the Certification Body as needed. Expect to work back and forth until you have your strategy finalized.

Did you know?
• The groups that may have input on your RDS strategy are: sourcing, design, marketing, your CSR department and top management
• Unless you are small, it would be difficult to convert all of your products to RDS right away. It is a good idea to set a timeline for reaching your conversion target (eg: 25% in year 1, 50% in year 2, 75% in year 3, and 100% in year 4)
You will need to factor in the following:

- When do you want the RDS certified down to be in your products?
- What amounts and qualities of RDS certified down does your supplier believe he can realistically deliver for your timeframe?
- Is your goal to convert a percentage of your total down use to RDS? If so, you may want to consider incorporating some RDS blended products into your mix, as that will give you supplier more flexibility to get certified material that will meet your quality, quantity and price needs.
- Do you want individual products or product lines to be RDS certified? If so, be sure that the qualities and quantities are well understood by your supplier so that they can give you realistic expectations on delivery and price.
6. Coordinate Brand and sourcing strategies.

Your down suppliers and the certification body will use the information from their supply chain mapping, as well as the needs you have specified, to determine which areas to concentrate on for certification. They will also look at which parts of the supply chain may also be certified.

At this point you may be given further information about the timing and costs of certification, and you may want to adjust your own strategy accordingly.
7. Create the training and certification plan.

The best way to ensure the success of the certification is to deliver trainings to people/organizations about the RDS. The certification body can deliver these trainings with the support of the down suppliers. Textile Exchange can also provide support. You may choose to cover the costs of the training directly, or ask your supplier to do so.

The Certification Body will work closely with your down supplier/s to map out a plan to certify the parts of the supply chain that will be meeting your needs. The timing of the inspections will have to align with the movement of the hatchlings, geese and down along the supply chain.

Did you know?
- Because the RDS is an animal welfare standard, the certification will only apply to the products sourced from animals on farms that have been successfully certified.
This is a simplified graphic to show that the trainings must be done before the inspections begin, and that the products must be certified before they move along the supply chain. Parent goose farms will also be included if they provide down or feathers under the RDS.
8. Set clear expectations with down suppliers

Although you may normally wait until later to communicate your down needs for a given season, be prepared to do so early for RDS products. Your supply chain will be making a considerable investment in time and resources to get your down supply certified. It is reasonable for them to expect a strong purchase commitment from you before they sign the contracts for certification. Without these contracts signed, the certification body will not start their work.

The whole process will also be much more effective if you stay engaged with your suppliers and the certification body during the trainings and inspections. Start by communicating very clearly to your suppliers that you expect them to cooperate fully with the certification body, and to be prepared in advance for each step.
Did you know?

• Before a certification body will start the certification process, the client (e.g.: down supplier) will have to submit and application, an offer will be made, and a contract will be signed.
• In some cases your supplier will choose to pay for the certification of the rest of the supply chain.
• For the first inspection, the certification body will usually only be able to verify that the site has the understanding and systems in place to comply with the standard, since certified product may not yet be present. Once they start working with certified product, the certification body may choose to do a random audit to make extra sure that they are meeting all of the requirements.
In order for products to be labeled as RDS, the supply chain must be certified at every stage before the final retailer:

- This includes each step where ownership of the RDS products is transferred.
- After the down leaves the slaughterhouse, the certification will cover chain of custody only, following the Content Claim Standard (CCS)
- In most cases, sites will pay for and organize their own certification, but brands may also choose to do so
- If you own multiple warehouses that follow a common system, only one physical inspection will be required
- Retailers do not need to be certified
As a Brand, you can play a strong and positive role in making the certification process efficient, effective and timely by doing the following:

- Establish your RDS goals as a company
- Development strategic partnerships with your supply chain
- Help them buy into the purpose of the RDS, to understand the process, and to commit to success
- Set clear expectations for them in terms of your volume, quality and timing needs
- Communicate with them early and often
- Drive higher volume through a smaller number of suppliers, so that the certification costs are spread more widely
- Develop a relationship with the Certification Body so that you can support them if and when needed
- Be part of the RDS Revision Process: have yourself listed as a stakeholder, and send in comments at any time
- Encourage other brands to certify product against the RDS
- Use Textile Exchange as a resource

10. Support the process
Textile Exchange Resources

Textile Exchange offers the following:

1. Copies of the RDS, the RDS Labeling and Logo Use Guide in multiple languages
2. Background information on the RDS development process
3. A place to submit your input for future versions of the standard
4. TE Certification Toolkit that explain the certification process in detail
5. Supplier Toolkits
6. Customized training and tool development
7. General support on questions about the RDS and its implementation

http://ResponsibleDown.org
Integrity@TextileExchange.org
Thank you for being part of the process of changing the feather and down industry.