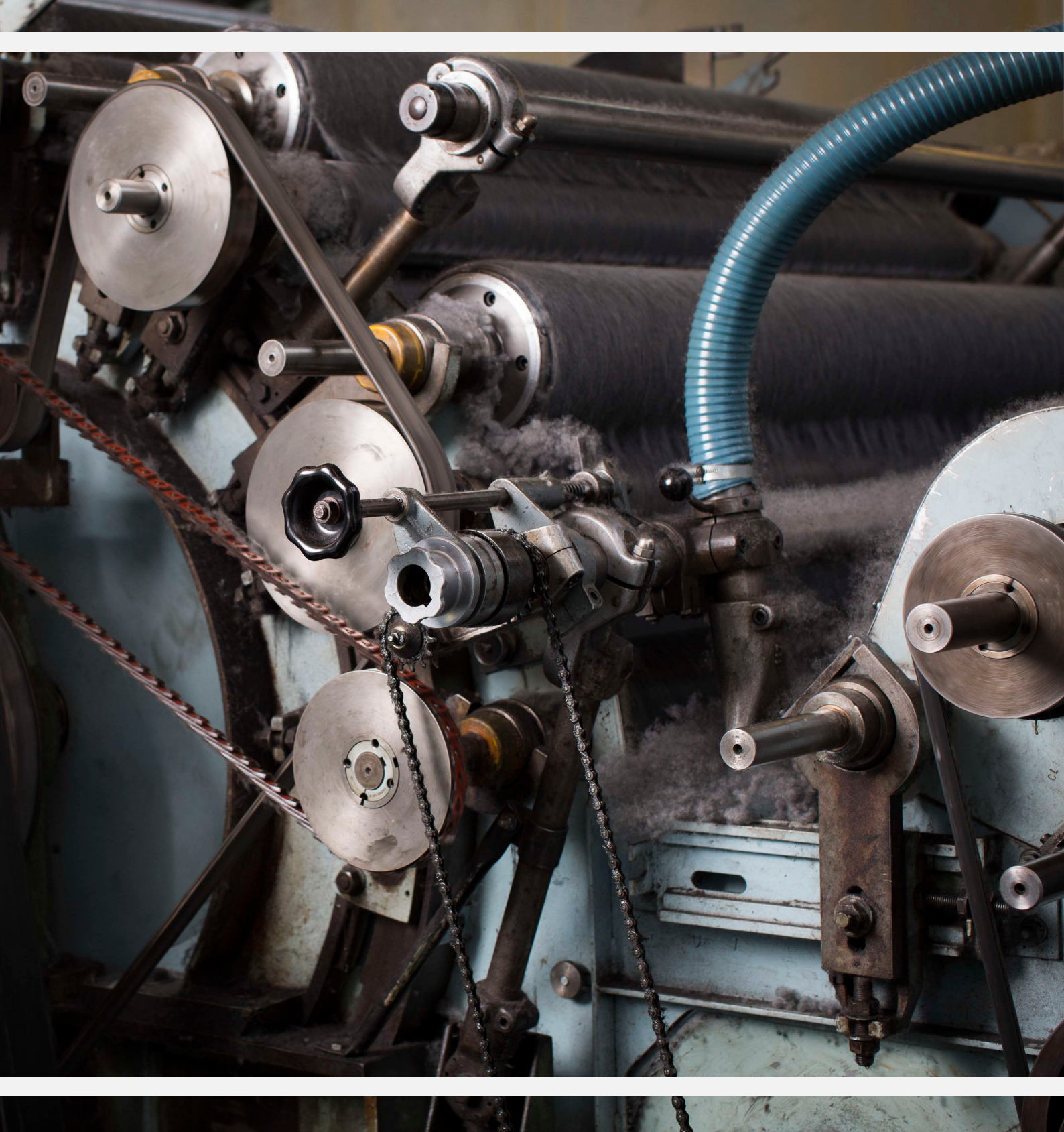




1 DECEMBER 2024

TERMS OF REFERENCE

SFA CLEAN FIBRE PROCESSING STANDARD



SUSTAINABLE FIBRE ALLIANCE

SFA Clean Fibre Processing Standard Terms of Reference

Justification and scope

The Clean Fibre Processing Standard has been developed for 'first stage' processing plants that scour (wash) and dehair raw cashmere. The requirements are focused on the reduction and elimination of harmful chemicals such as APEOs, efficient use of energy and water, and ensuring safe and fair working environments.

What is fibre processing?

Here fibre processing refers to the sorting, scouring (cleaning) and/or dehairing of raw cashmere fibre.

The standard can be applied to processing plants that sort, prepare, scour and/or dehair cashmere fibre along with the environmental, social and supply chain elements of the business that run alongside these operations. It is split into different units for each of these processes, and processing plants must achieve compliance in all units that are relevant to its function.

The SFA developed the Clean Fibre Processing Standard with the goal of reducing the environmental impact of cashmere fibre processing. We want to ensure that harmful chemicals, specifically alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEOs), are eliminated from the scouring (washing) and dehairing process. A standard for the scouring and dehairing process is critical since it is currently a largely unregulated process, with no external overlapping standards. Without it, manufacturers, brands and retailers further down the supply chain may test imported fabrics only to discover that APEOs have been used at this initial stage of processing. This has both legal implications and impacts the claims that can be made regarding the product.

What are APEOs?

APEOs are common agents used in the textile industry and include NPEOs (nonylphenol ethoxylates) and OPEOs (octylphenol ethoxylates), which are known for their cleaning properties. NPEOs are the most ubiquitous across the industry and are commonly used as detergents in the scouring of raw (greasy) cashmere fibre. These cleaning agents are pollutants that are discharged by factories and washed out of the final products. They end up in the environment where they are highly toxic to aquatic organisms, affecting the fertility of fish and other organisms and impairing aquatic ecosystems. APEOs are also known to have adverse effects on human fertility.

Geographic scope: Global

Operations scope: Industrial dehairers and scourers of cashmere.

Expected social, environmental and economic outcomes

The SFA Clean Fibre Processing Standard focuses on three key principles of business sustainability (Figure 1). The specific requirements can be found in the [SFA Clean Fibre Processing Standard](#).

Figure 1: The SFA Clean Fibre Processing Standard's three goals for cashmere processing.

Principle	Definition and desired outcomes
Social and ethical responsibility	This principle covers the principles and values that govern activity in relation to safety, working conditions and fair labour. Processing plants must comply with all of the requirements of the standard covering health, safety and hygiene.
Environmental sustainability	This principle covers the initiatives focused on environmental impact and management. This includes the use of detergents with minimum environmental impact and the safe use and management of chemicals and hazardous substances.
Supply chain and business operations	This principle includes business practices that facilitate long-term economic growth concerning business management, day-to-day operations and the supply chain. It requires evidence that a supplier has proper equipment and conditions for accurate fibre analysis.

Governance

The SFA is a registered charity in England and Wales (Registered Charity Number 1165742), henceforth called the SFA Secretariat (or just, the Secretariat).

The process for standards development is detailed in the [SFA Standard Setting Procedure](#), which is based on the [ISEAL Standard Setting Code of Good Practice](#).

The next review of the SFA Animal Fibre Standard will begin no later than in 2029.

Certification, accreditation and claims

The SFA aims for compliance with the ISEAL codes of good practice at the earliest opportunity. Assurance is done following a third-party assurance model where certification is done by an accredited independent conformity assessment body with no ties to the SFA or the entity being assessed.

The rules for making and substantiating claims regarding SFA certification and 'SFA Certified' products are found in the [SFA Chain of Custody Standard](#).

In summary, in order for a product to be considered 'SFA Certified' it needs to have been produced in compliance with the [SFA Animal Fibre Standard](#), primary processed in compliance with the [SFA Clean Fibre Processing Standard](#) and only traded/handled in compliance with the [SFA Chain of Custody Standard](#).

Stakeholder map

Since the SFA Chain of Custody Standard covers the entire cashmere supply chain from producer to retailer the stakeholder map is relevant to the whole value chain. It is also of interest to a wide range of actors aiming to better understand rangelands and influence the policies that govern cashmere production (Table 3).

Table 1: Stakeholders for the SFA Chain of Custody Standard.

Traditional users	
Recreational users	Those with a lifestyle interest in rangelands.
Rangeland residents	Those who live on rangelands. Includes indigenous peoples.
Administrators	
Governance and/or management	Leadership/administration for the governance of cashmere production and/or rangelands and/or the people who live/work there.
Standard setters	Involved with developing, coordinating, promulgating, revising, interpreting, or otherwise producing technical standards.
Conformity assessment and/or accreditation organisations	Involvement with certifying third parties against an official standard and/or testing or other activities that determine whether a process, product, or service complies with the requirements of a specification, technical standard, contract, or regulation.
Cashmere value chains	
Production	Involved with the production and harvest of cashmere.
Processing and manufacturing	Involved with processing and transformation of raw cashmere to final products for consumption.
Traders, brands and retailers	Involved with the trading of cashmere.
Policy informers and influencers	
Academia	Those with an intellectual/theoretical interest in cashmere production and processing.
Non-governmental organisations	Those dedicated to effecting change according to their objectives, including but not limited to, environmental NGOs and industry lobby groups.