

Master's Thesis Call for Applications

Topic: The Relevance of Water-Related Risks for Seven Selected Textile Certifications

Background:

In light of existing regulations on sustainability reporting (CSRD) and due diligence obligations (German LKSG), as well as upcoming EU regulations on extended producer responsibility (EPR) and corporate sustainability due diligence (CSDDD), companies are increasingly required to disclose and address the social and environmental impacts along their supply chains.

Water risks are particularly relevant in textile value chains, as they intersect with numerous social and environmental sustainability factors, mutually influencing and reinforcing one another.^[1] Here, the most significant environmental issue caused by textile production is water pollution.^[2] Additional risks include the excessive use of freshwater resources and resulting water scarcity, lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities (WASH) for workers and affected communities, negative impacts on biodiversity, and climate-driven extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall, flooding, and droughts.^[3] In this context of increasing demands, certifications provide companies with a tool to tackle complex social and environmental risks in their supply chains.

Objective:

The goal of this master's thesis is to examine six selected textile certifications to assess the extent to which they address water-related risks in the textile sector. The analysis will focus on how and to what extent water risks are integrated into these certification systems.

The study will focus on seven specific textile certifications:

- Bluesign
- Grüner Knopf
- EU Ecolabel
- GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard), und
- OEKO TEX SteP
- GRS Global Recycled Standard (Textile Exchange)
- Fair Wear Foundation

To structure and evaluate the certifications, the water-related targets defined by the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) may be used as a framework. These include:^[4]

- Good water governance
- Sustainable water balance management
- High water quality standards
- Protection of critical water-related areas
- Ensuring access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)

About Drip by Drip:

Founded in 2018 in Berlin, Drip by Drip is a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing water issues within the textile and fashion industry. Working in collaboration with partner organizations in the Global South, Drip by Drip carries out projects such as the implementation of water filters, WASH initiatives, and river clean-ups. Additionally, Drip by Drip conducts educational work in the Global North to raise awareness within the fashion and textile industry about water-related risks along their supply chains, thereby contributing to a more sustainable approach to water management.

Contact:

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[1] Alliance For Water Stewardship. (2022). Water Stewardship: A Resource for the Textiles & Apparel Sector. Alliance for Water Stewardship

[2] Roth, J., Zenger, B., De Geeter, D., Gómez Benavides, J. and Roudier, S. (2023). Best Available Techniques (BAT) Reference Document for the Textiles Industry. Publications Office of the European Union. Luxembourg. doi:10.2760/355887. JRC 131874.

[3] Alliance For Water Stewardship. (2022). Water Stewardship: A Resource for the Textiles & Apparel Sector. Alliance for Water Stewardship

[4] Alliance for Water Stewardship. (n.D.). The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard. Alliance For Water Stewardship. <https://a4ws.org/the-aws-standard-2-0/>