

Are your organic clothes eco-friendly and chemical free? Fraud rampant in India exports, world's largest cotton market

"This product contains independently certified organic cotton grown without chemical pesticides, chemical fertilizers and genetically modified seeds," the product description reads.

With the fashion industry trumpeting its sustainability commitments, those labels are both a means of value signaling and a lure to consumers willing to pay more to act better.

There's only one problem: Much of the "organic cotton" that makes it to store shelves may not actually be organic at all.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other 'disruptive' innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

At the heart of the problem is an opaque certification system rife with opportunities for fraud. Consumers are assured of "organic" material by brands, which rely on official stamps of approval from external organizations. Those in turn rely on reports from opaque local inspection agencies that base their conclusions on a single planned yearly inspection.

...

In 2009, India's agricultural export agency [discovered](#) wide-scale fraud in the country's cotton belt, with entire villages certifying genetically modified cotton as organic. The government promised it would release digital tracking software the next year. It never did.

...

At this point, some industry insiders believe the only way for a brand to ensure its organic cotton is actually organic is to invest in farmers directly through credible organizations before any seed is even sown.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)