

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000154/26
to the Commission
Benoit Cassart (Renew)
(14 January 2026)**

Subject: Protecting the European natural fibre industry and farmers in the face of rules that favour fast fashion

The natural fibre industry employs thousands of people across Europe and supports cultural traditions through local production of clothes. The current arrangements for calculating environmental footprints, however, might well be undermining this heritage. The methodology in place favours textiles made from fossil fuels, allowing fast fashion brands to present synthetic products as ‘sustainable’, while putting European farmers who produce natural fibres on the back foot.

This flawed methodology not only harms the environment and misleads consumers, but also adversely affects the purchasing decisions of European brands, creating trade barriers and penalising farmers.

Given the Commission’s commitment to revising the methods used to calculate environmental footprints:

1. How will the revised methods ensure a fair assessment of factors such as land use, biodegradability and soil organic carbon in order to reflect the true environmental benefits of natural fibres?
2. What specific measures does the Commission intend to take to strengthen European production of natural fibres while also ensuring its long-term viability and attractiveness to younger generations of farmers?

Submitted: 14.1.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(10 March 2026)**

The Commission is in the process of reviewing the Environmental Footprint (EF) Methods ⁽¹⁾ to ensure that environmental impacts of different fibres are well reflected.

It is based on wide stakeholder consultations and scientific inputs of the Joint Research Centre ⁽²⁾ and includes potential changes to updating land use indicator, covering soil organic carbon, a new indicator on biodiversity loss, or improvement of biogenic carbon accounting. Circularity aspects, like biodegradability, are already included in the EF methods.

To support natural fibre production ⁽³⁾ the Commission introduced the 2025 Strategy for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy ⁽⁴⁾.

Efforts include boosting EU wool processing capacity, strengthening its value chain, optimising diversification and improving farmers’ income via the Programme for Research & Innovation ⁽⁵⁾ and the EU Common Agricultural Policy network Focus Groups ⁽⁶⁾.

EU countries may offer coupled income support for flax and hemp in their National Strategic Plans ⁽⁷⁾, when justified, alongside direct payments.

Cotton payments are available in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, as well as eco-schemes promoting sustainable farming practices.

A Strategy for Generation Renewal ⁽⁸⁾ seeks a 6% benchmark for young farmer support, including financial aid, training, and better investment prioritisation to encourage participation of the younger generation in farming.

⁽¹⁾ https://green-forum.ec.europa.eu/green-business/environmental-footprint-methods_en.

⁽²⁾ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

⁽³⁾ Like cotton, flax, hemp, and wool.

⁽⁴⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/bioeconomy-strategy_en.

⁽⁵⁾ HORIZON-CL6-2026-02-FARM2FORK-05: Boosting circularity and diversification strategies of terrestrial livestock production systems.

⁽⁶⁾ https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/focus-groups-innovation-knowledge-exchange-and-elip-agri/focus-group-innovative-and-sustainable-ways-strengthen-role-farmers-revitalising-european-wool_en.

⁽⁷⁾ Under the Common Agricultural Policy.

⁽⁸⁾ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/overview-vision-agriculture-food/generational-renewal_en#documents.

The Commission funds research for bio-based fibers in the 2026 CBE-JU Work Programme ⁽⁹⁾ and the ECOSYSTEX cluster ⁽¹⁰⁾, and facilitates stakeholder engagement with the EU Textiles Ecosystem Platform ⁽¹¹⁾ and knowledge exchange with the Knowledge Centre on Bioeconomy ⁽¹²⁾.

⁽⁹⁾ https://www.cbe.europa.eu/system/files/2025-12/CBE-JU-AWP-2026_0.pdf.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://www.ecosystex.eu/>.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://transition-pathways.europa.eu/textiles/about-eu-textiles-ecosystem-platform>.

⁽¹²⁾ https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/bio-based-textiles_en.