

What GOTS, OEKO-TEX, GRS and Other Textile Certifications Actually Prove

SourcingFrom

Updated 28 Sept 2026 14 min read

What GOTS, OCS, GRS, RCS, OEKO-TEX, bluesign, Better Cotton and the social audits each actually prove, and how to check a certificate from an Indian supplier at the source. It also covers the GOTS transaction certificate rules that start on 1 January 2027.

The Short Version

- Every certificate is about one thing: a site, a product, a shipment or a fibre. Social audits are a dated look at one site.
- A scope certificate is a licence for a company, only a transaction certificate covers the goods you buy.
- Never verify a document through a link, QR code or phone number printed on it. Start from the scheme owner's own site.
- A trader's copy of a mill's certificate shows the mill is certified, not that the trader's goods are.
- From 1 January 2027 every GOTS transaction certificate goes through one database and each company keeps one number across certifiers.

A certificate in your inbox can be real, valid and somebody else's, all at once. In October 2025 an Indian food exporter asked a business forum how to deal with overseas buyers, and the most practical answer he got was this - "share copies of certificates (like FSSAI, IEC, ISO, FDA, etc.) but blur or cover details of manufacturer" ([r/IndiaBusiness, Oct 2025](#)). The same advice does the rounds in textiles too.



Is that a scandal? Not at all. Traders and merchant exporters are a normal part of how India sells, and protecting a maker's name is ordinary business. But it does mean every certificate raises the same question - who does this actually cover, and does it cover the goods you're paying for?

In this guide we sort the main textile standards by what each one really proves, show you how to check each one at the source, and walk through the GOTS rule changes starting 1 January 2027, which make a blurred certificate much harder to lean on. One caveat before we start. Textile Exchange and the social audit bodies blocked our reads in September 2026, so what we say about OCS, GRS, RCS and the audits is marked as reported, and you should read the scope on the certificate itself.

Last researched 28 September 2026 · Next review 15 January 2027 · Written by SourcingFrom

1. Every Certificate Is About One Thing, So Ask Which

A supplier's email signature with five logos in it tells you very little. Each standard proves one narrow thing, and that thing can only be one of four – a site, a product, a shipment or a fibre.

A site certificate says the factory runs its processes to the standard, and GOTS and Textile Exchange scope certificates, bluesign partnership and OEKO-TEX STeP all work at this level. A product certificate says this article, in this material, passed the tests, which is what OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100 does. A shipment certificate says these kilograms, sold by this seller to this buyer on this date, are certified, and that's a transaction certificate. A fibre certificate says the cotton was grown to a farm standard, like organic farm certification or Better Cotton.

Social audits (SA8000, WRAP, amfori BSCI, SMETA) are a fifth thing altogether. They're a dated look at one site's working conditions, and most of them aren't certificates at all.



So why does the sorting matter? If you need a shipment-level claim ("this jersey is organic") and accept a site-level document ("this knitter is certified") then you've paid for a claim nobody actually made. Most of the expensive mistakes we see are that one mistake wearing a different outfit.

2. Scope Certificates and Transaction Certificates

The chain-of-custody standards (GOTS, and Textile Exchange's OCS, GRS and RCS) all run on two documents, and you can't swap one for the other.

A scope certificate is issued to a company by an approved certification body. It "verifies the entity is in conformity with the requirements of the Standard and includes a summary of the processes and products that are permitted", and it lists the facilities covered ([Global Standards glossary](#)). Think of it as a licence that says what the company may do, where and until when.

A transaction certificate covers goods that were actually sold. Under GOTS it can be issued only by the certifier that issued the seller's scope certificate, only to a seller whose scope certificate was valid on every shipment date, and not at all if that scope certificate was suspended or withdrawn ([GOTS TC procedure v4.0](#), 2.1.2 to 2.1.4).

One certificate can cover several shipments if you agreed in advance, from one seller location to one buyer, for no more than 90 days. GOTS itself suggests about 30 days is more realistic, because goods sold on an open certificate haven't been verified yet (same procedure, 2.6). Our view is simple. Ask for one per shipment on a first order, since it costs you nothing and you get to see every document.

Two rules in the procedure answer questions Indian buyers ask us all the time. Job work is covered, so goods moving between a certified company

and its subcontractors need no transaction certificate (2.7.2), which means a Tiruppur knitter sending fabric to a job-work dyer doesn't break the chain as long as that dyer sits under the knitter's certification. Transfers between wholly owned group companies listed on the parent's scope certificate need none either, unless the goods are repacked, relabelled or processed (2.7.1). GOTS says its procedure is "partially harmonised" with Textile Exchange's, so the same logic broadly carries across to OCS, GRS and RCS.



3. What Each Standard Proves and What It Doesn't

We don't love tables in prose, but this is the one place a table earns its keep, because you'll want to compare rows.

Standard	About	What it proves	What it doesn't
GOTS	Site, then shipment	Organic fibre processed under GOTS rules. "Organic" at 95% or more, "made with organic" at 70% or more	Anything without a transaction certificate
OCS	Site, then shipment	Organic content tracked through the chain (Reported)	Processing, chemical or social rules
GRS	Site, then shipment	Recycled content plus social, environmental and chemical rules (Reported)	Where any virgin fibre came from
RCS	Site, then shipment	Recycled content only (Reported)	How the site runs
GRTS	Site, then shipment	At least 90% fibre certified to a recognised fibre standard	Organic status
OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100	Product	Tested for harmful substances for its product class	Organic, fibre origin or labour
OEKO-TEX MADE IN GREEN	Product and chain	Tested product made in STeP-certified sites, traceable by product ID	Organic status
bluesign	Site and chemicals	Chemicals screened before use, site assessed in person	Fibre origin
Better Cotton	Fibre	A farm standard. Physical BCI Cotton is traced to country	Origin, if bought as mass balance
Social audits	Site, dated	Working conditions on the audit date	Products, fibre or next year

GOTS and the New GRTS

Every GOTS product label must show the GOTS logo, the label grade, a reference to the certifier and the certified company's number, and the certifier approves each label before it's used ([GOTS labelling](#)). So a GOTS logo with no number on it is wrong on its face. The standard itself moves to version 8.1, with an implementation deadline of 1 March 2027 ([Global Standards](#)).

The same organisation launched the Global Responsible Textile Standard on 14 September 2026, for fibres outside GOTS's organic rules. Goods need at least 90% fibre certified to a fibre standard GRTS recognises, with transaction certificates and volume checks like GOTS, and 27 certifiers were approved at launch ([Global Standards](#)). You'll probably see the logo on quotes soon. Just don't read it as organic, because it isn't.

OCS, GRS and RCS

As we understand them, OCS and RCS track organic or recycled content through the chain and stop there, while GRS adds social, environmental and chemical rules for the sites processing recycled material. Textile Exchange's site blocked our read, so treat that as reported. Read the minimum content and scope on the certificate itself rather than trusting any summary, ours included.

OEKO-TEX

STANDARD 100 is a product label. "Every thread, button and accessory" is tested against a list of more than 1,000 harmful substances, and the limits get stricter with skin contact across four product classes, with class 1 (babies and children up to three) the strictest ([OEKO-TEX](#)). It's a safety claim about an article and nothing more. It says nothing about organic fibre or the factory's workers, which is why a conventional cotton T-shirt can carry it while an organic one fails it.

MADE IN GREEN goes a step further. The product is tested, the making-up site must be STeP certified, as must the wet-processing sites for any component of 5% or more of its weight, and each product is traceable by an ID or QR code ([OEKO-TEX](#)). Of all the OEKO-TEX labels, it's the only one that tells you something about where the product was made.

bluesign and Better Cotton

bluesign screens chemicals before they enter production and assesses partner sites in person "at least every three years" ([bluesign FAQs](#)). Its labels are now called bluepass, and it runs a verify page. It covers chemistry and site performance, not fibre.

Better Cotton, now the Better Cotton Initiative, sells most of its cotton by mass balance, where the credits "do not have to stay connected" to the cotton and so "the cotton is not traceable to its country of origin". Physical BCI Cotton is traced to country and has its own label ([BCI](#)). Ask which one you're buying, because only one of them backs an origin claim. The fibre-origin rules that now decide whether cotton clears a border are on [cotton traceability](#).



Social Audits

SA8000 is a certifiable social standard (reported), and WRAP certifies facilities for one to two years. amfori BSCI "is not a certification", it's an audit with an A to E rating on a two-year cycle. SMETA is an audit method, and "Sedex certified" describes something that doesn't exist (our research of 23 September 2026, from amfori's own answer and TÜV SÜD on SMETA). Whichever one you're shown, ask for the report, the auditor, the date and the site address.

4. How to Check a Certificate Without Getting Fooled

Start with the blurred copy. You can't check a PDF if you can't read the maker's name on it, so ask for the certificate number and the certified entity's name before anything else.

Then check it by a route you chose, not one the paperwork hands you (the 2020 organic cotton fraud in India ran on QR codes that opened a cloned government site, told in full on [cotton traceability](#)). So rule one - never verify a document through a link, QR code or phone number printed on that same document. Go to the scheme owner's site yourself and start from there.

For GOTS, the [approved certification bodies](#) page lists each certifier's authentication method. Version 4.0 allows an email confirmation within two business days, a lookup page, a random-coded web address or QR code, or the certificate's digital signature (TC procedure 2.4). Use the method GOTS lists, reached from GOTS's own page, not the one on the PDF. The [certified suppliers database](#) helps you find a company, but GOTS says certifiers "are still in the process of updating their data" there, so a missing entry is a question for the certifier and not proof of fraud. For OEKO-TEX, type the label or certificate number into Label Check on [oeko-tex.com](#) (it's case sensitive), and check the separate list of withdrawn certificates as well.



Then match four fields against what you're buying – the legal name, the site address, the scope (processes, product categories and label grade) and the validity dates on your shipment dates, not today's. Check the [GOTS certification bans](#) list too. And for any chain-of-custody claim, get the transaction certificate for your goods and authenticate it the same way.

Put together, the check runs in five steps –

1. Get the certificate number and the certified entity's name, not a blurred copy.
2. Go to the scheme owner's site yourself and use the authentication method it lists.
3. Match the legal name, site address, scope and validity dates against your goods and shipment dates.
4. Check the GOTS certification bans list.
5. For a chain-of-custody claim, get the transaction certificate for your goods and authenticate it the same way.

Buyers who do this do find things. An Australian who looked up a brand's GOTS numbers found "about half were not on the gots database", and noticed that a run of expired numbers across certifiers can mean a maker switching certifiers "after something is non compliant" (forum, February 2026).

The good news is that the better Indian suppliers now expect to be checked. A Tiruppur agent put it plainly in 2026 – "we hand buyers the certificate numbers to check rather than asking them to take our word for it" ([LinkedIn](#)). Tying the certificate to the GST, IEC and bank name of the company invoicing you is covered on [verifying Indian suppliers](#), so we won't repeat it here.

- 01 Indian trade advice tells sellers to blur the maker on certificates.** Advice to an exporter in 2025 was to share FSSAI, IEC, ISO and FDA certificates "but blur or cover details of manufacturer", and to sign a non-circumvention agreement. A blurred certificate usually means you're dealing with a trader, which is fine, but it can't be verified until you get the number and the certified entity. (*r/IndiaBusiness, Oct 2025, supplier-side voices.*)
-
- 02 GOTS transaction certificates change on 1 January 2027.** We read procedure v4.0 against v3.0. Every certificate goes through one GOTS database, each company keeps one number across certifiers, and the certifier must check input certificates, capacity and volumes before issuing. (*GOTS TC procedure v4.0 and v3.0, our comparison, 25 Sep 2026.*)
-
- 03 Buyers who look up GOTS numbers find gaps.** One Australian found about half of a brand's numbers missing from the database, with expired numbers spread across certifiers. (*r/SustainableFashion, Feb 2026, one voice.*)
-
- 04 "BSCI certificate" and "Sedex certified" are misdescriptions.** amfori BSCI is an audit with an A to E rating, and SMETA is an audit method. Ask for the report and its date. (*amfori's own answer and TÜV SÜD on SMETA, our research, 23 Sep 2026.*)
-

What we don't know yet

- ☐ How often certificates quoted by Indian suppliers fail to verify, by cluster. We plan to check a sample of real certificate numbers and publish the rate.
- ☐ The current OCS, GRS and RCS rule texts, which Textile Exchange's site blocked us from reading.

5. Common Misreadings and the Fair Reading of Each

The expired certificate is the duller one and also the most common. A scope certificate that lapsed last month still looks perfectly fine as a PDF,

and under GOTS a suspended, withdrawn or expired one can't support a transaction certificate at all. Check the dates against your shipment, not against the day the email arrived.

Right company, wrong scope comes next. The certificate covers knitting and trading but not dyeing, yarn but not garments, or "made with organic" when you're paying for "organic". An OEKO-TEX certificate for product class 2 (articles worn against the skin) doesn't cover babywear, which needs class 1. Nobody has committed fraud here, it's a real certificate for a different product, and that's exactly why you read the scope line by line.

Then there's somebody else's certificate, and this one deserves a fair reading. Traders, merchant exporters and buying agents are a normal part of Indian textiles, and there's nothing wrong with buying through one. But a certificate covers the entity named on it and no one else.

A trader showing you the mill's GOTS certificate has shown you that the mill is certified, not that the goods you buy from the trader will be. Since the seller on a GOTS transaction certificate must hold its own scope certificate, there are two clean routes - the trader holds its own GOTS certificate (trading is a scope GOTS certifies), or the transaction certificate names the certified mill as seller. Ask which route it's using. A good trader answers that in one email.

Last comes the wrong kind of document. "BSCI certificate", "Sedex certified" and "OEKO-TEX certified factory" are all misdescriptions, since the first two are audits and STANDARD 100 certifies products, not factories. The supplier usually isn't lying, it's just using the words its last buyer used, so ask for the actual document and read what it covers.



Checking a dozen certificates across three schemes and then chasing a transaction certificate every shipment gets repetitive fast, and honestly it's the kind of work nobody enjoys. [SourcingSync](#) can run those checks for you on each order.

6. What Changes on 1 January 2027

GOTS released version 4.0 of its transaction certificate procedure on 15 May 2026. It applies to every GOTS transaction certificate issued on or after 1 January 2027, though certifiers may start earlier. We read it against version 3.0 (October 2021), and four changes matter to a buyer. We'll update this section in place as the rules move.

First, every transaction certificate must now go through GOTS's Global Trace Base, with data filed within 14 days of issue, amendment or withdrawal, so a certificate that isn't in the system is worth asking about.

Each certified company also gets one permanent number that stays with it through any change of certifier, and names and addresses on the certificate must exactly match the registration. That makes the "string of expired numbers across certifiers" pattern our Australian spotted a lot harder to hide.

Before issuing, the certifier must now authenticate the input certificates, confirm the site can technically make the product with its processes and capacity, and reconcile volumes. Read that against the 2020 organic cotton fraud and you can see which hole it closes, because a gin or trader can't easily certify cotton it never had on the strength of a forged input document.

Errors are now fixed by a numbered amendment, and weights, shipment details and scope certificate numbers can't be amended at all. So a "corrected" certificate with new weights is really a new certificate, and you should ask why.

Some things don't change, whatever a supplier tells you. A transaction certificate is still a signed PDF in English, one can still cover up to 100 shipments over at most 90 days with your agreement, and certifiers still have 14 days to issue one after a complete application. Your checking method stays the same too.

FAQ

What's the difference between a scope certificate and a transaction certificate? 

The scope certificate says a company may process and sell certified goods. The transaction certificate says a specific shipment is certified, and you need that second one to make a claim about your products.

Is OEKO-TEX the same as organic? ▾

My supplier is a trader. Can I still buy GOTS goods? ▾

Is amfori BSCI a certificate? ▾

Why couldn't I find my supplier in the GOTS database? ▾

7. What 2027 Means for a Blurred Certificate

That exporter on the forum wasn't doing anything wrong by protecting his maker. From 2027, though, a GOTS transaction certificate has to name a seller with its own scope certificate and one fixed GOTS number, logged in one database, so a blurred copy of somebody else's certificate buys him far less than it used to.

You don't have to wait for 2027 to get the benefit. Get the number, look it up from the scheme owner's own site, match the scope to your product, and ask for a transaction certificate with every shipment you sell under the claim.

Then put all of that in your spec before you sample. How to write it into the order is on [private label in India](#), and how to check the goods themselves is on [quality control in India](#). Hope this helps, and if a certificate puzzles you, write to us at team@sourcingfrom.com.



Related reading: [forced labour due diligence](#), [restricted substances](#) and [are Indian trade fair exhibitors manufacturers?](#)