

Standardizing The Global Supply Chain

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The creation of a Unified Sustainable Textile Standard® 2.0 for carpet, fabric, and apparel involved an extraordinarily complex process. A brief synopsis of the highlights would include: 30 drafts over four years; outreach sessions with more than 1,000 groups and individuals; consultations with interested federal agencies; six hour (and Sunday evening) conference calls; unanimous consent by 25 experts on the Sustainable Textile Committee; and finally, identification of consensus sustainable product global metrics covering environment, social equity, and economy—in other words, the triple bottom line.

A Greater Scope

In addition to the complex measures taken to address these particular issues, USTS 2.0 was designed to comply with the complexities of international law. Under these

rules, any sustainable, green, or environmentally friendly standard or product is required (by unanimous international law) to cover the complete supply chain—from raw materials extraction through manufacturing to final use or reuse.

Thus, any product certified to meet USTS 2.0 regulations must include a raw material manufacturing facility in China (for instance), the U.S. final product manufacturing facility, and the actual reuse/reclamation policies where the product is sold. It must also cover multiple environmental benefits like climate change, acid rain, air and water pollution reduction, solid waste reduction, and social equity (like the exclusion of child labor, the adherence to human rights protections, and the consideration of worker health and safety).

These actions greatly increase the impact, scope,

difficulty, and complexity of the standard. They also provide the greatest overall benefits to end users.

A product approved under this system is life cycle based as defined by ISO 14040 standards (an international standard that examines the LCA framework) and covered by USTS 2.0 and its matrix. The basis for this legal requirement is that consumers rightfully believe that sustainable/EPP products are environmentally beneficial in all respects, and LCA is the only accurate way to make this determination.

The Global Standard

Though unintended, the matrix is generic and any product can be covered—whether it's an airplane, furniture, doors, exterior building products, or almost anything else. Fortunately, the versatility and scope of the standard's matrix will more than likely serve as a consensus basis for additional product standards.

For this reason, in cooperation with state and federal governments, the MTS Board has developed additional sustainable/EPP standards. Using the consensus matrix and the USTS 2.0 certification and auditing scheme as the starting point, any new standard will be easier to approve. Hard surface flooring, cement, and concrete are the first new product areas to be certified.

The certification and auditing requirements of the products covered by USTS 2.0 are both market friendly and

rigorous. This ensures credibility and eliminates the possibility of causing confusion based on greenwashing.

As a result of this standard, facility managers now have a simple yet credible way to identify products without having to become sustainability experts. They can say, "Please give me Silver or higher certified sustainable textile, and don't force me to evaluate each company to make sure the information is accurate." USTS 2.0 achieves this goal by providing a useful basis for more product standards, potentially satisfying many government sustainable/EPP purchasing requirements.

Most importantly, the standard (and others using the matrix) will give everyone the power to achieve global sustainability without having to rely on others. □

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