

## **Over 100 Apparel Brands and Companies Have Signed the Cotton Pledge**

*Momentum Builds to Say No to Modern Day Slavery*

Responsible Sourcing Network (RSN) is thrilled to announce we surpassed 100 signatories to the [RSN Cotton Pledge](#). The Pledge has united an unprecedented number of American and European apparel powerhouses, luxury brands and consumer favorites around ending forced labor of children and adults in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan.

The pledge builds on efforts that began in 2007 when Uzbek human rights groups sent out a call to action against forced child labor in their cotton fields. They [reiterated their message](#) again this year. The growing number of well-known brands and retailers that are publicly committed to avoid Uzbek cotton communicates to the Government of Uzbekistan that the apparel industry does not tolerate modern day slave labor.

According to observers of the 2012 cotton harvest, including the [Uzbek-German Forum](#), this year the Uzbek government intensified adult forced labor, continued forced child labor, and signaled that ending the practice will require stronger external pressure. Despite a statement by the Uzbek government that child labor would be prosecuted, the scale of forced labor of young school children (ages 7-14) was merely reduced. To keep more primary schools open than in previous years, the burden of the harvest was shifted to older children (15-19) and adults. The older school children were threatened with expulsion, and adults with the loss of their job, salary and social welfare benefits if they refused to participate. And in some locations where the cotton fields are further away from main roads, the younger children were still sent to pick cotton.

It is promising that fewer young children were forced into the fields this harvest, a clear response to growing pressure from this alliance

and other groups. This demonstrates that by taking a stand against an egregious practice and coordinating our efforts, consumers, businesses, and human rights groups together can make a difference. On the other hand, there has been no change to the state-sponsored system of forced labor in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan; therefore, we need to maintain and integrate our firm position.

The growing support for the Pledge is also sparking consumer awareness and rejection of the slavery situation in Uzbekistan. Global anti-slavery group [Walk Free](#) recently launched a global social media campaign to encourage Zara (INDITEX) to sign the pledge. After thousands of tweets and Facebook posts, the company signed the pledge last week. RSN is pleased to have such a prominent company help us surpass our 100th signatory milestone.

RSN welcomes working with the numerous brands and companies to take the next steps to implement the pledge. Businesses have a responsibility to conduct due diligence and put purchasing systems in place that ensure that human rights are respected throughout their entire supply chains. For companies to adhere to the pledge, we expect them to create an internal policy against purchasing cotton picked with forced child labor from Uzbekistan and then notifying all of their suppliers. The next step is to use contractual obligations to ensure their suppliers and sub-suppliers do not purchase Uzbek cotton. Traceability systems and social audits can then help with verification. These steps take time and commitment, but they are necessary to rid supply chains of slave-picked cotton. (Click [here](#) to read the specifics of a company's role to end forced labor in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan.)

RSN thanks and commends the 2012 signatories to the pledge: Aerie; American Eagle Outfitters; American Eagle Outfitters, Inc; ARN Mercantile; Blue Essence; Callula Lillibelle; Coop Cooperative; Cotton On Group; Econscious; Fifth and Pacific Companies, Inc.; Fremont Apparel; Fruit of the Loom; INDITEX (Zara, Pull & Bear, Massimo Dutti,

Bershka, Stradivarius, Oysho, Zara Home, Uterqüe); Jack Spade; JCPenney Purchasing Corp.; Jerzees; Juicy Couture; kate spade; Lucky Brand; Mackays Stores Limited (M&Co); Marimekko; Naturaline; Nulu; Olasul; Patagonia, Inc; PB teen; Planet Earth Clothing Co.; Pottery Barn; pottery barn kids; REDCAR SL; Rejuvenation; Revolution; Apparel; Russell Athletic; Sergio; Sophie Theallet; Spalding; SustainU; Tailgate Clothing Company; Target Australia Pty Ltd; Vanity Fair Brands; WE Europe BV; west elm; Williams Sonoma; Williams Sonoma Home; WILLIAMS-SONOMA, INC; Wilster Apparel Group; and Winter Kate.

RSN also thanks last year's signatories for taking the lead among your industry peers: American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), adidas; adidas Golf; Adidas Group; Alexander McQueen; ANN INC; Ann Taylor; ASDA; Balenciaga; Better Homes & Gardens; Bottega Veneta; Brooks Sports, Inc.; Burberry; By Design; C&A; Canopy; Carrefour; Carter's; Columbia Sportswear Company; Crewcuts; Disney; Eddie Bauer; EILEEN FISHER; Faded Glory; Gap Inc.; George; Gucci; H&M; Home Trends; J. Crew; The Jones Group, Kohl's Department Stores; Levi Strauss & Co.; Li & Fung Limited; Liz Claiborne Inc.; LOFT; Macy's Inc; Madewell; Mainstays; Nautica; New Balance; No Boundaries; Nordstrom Product Group; OshKosh B'gosh; Peacocks London; Peacocks Stores Ltd; Pearl Lowe for Peacocks; PPR Group; PUMA; Puritan; PVH Corp.; Redcats; Reebok; Sam's Club; Stella McCartney; Target Corporation; Taylor-Made; The TJX Companies, Inc; Volcom; Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; White Stag; Your Zone; and Yves Saint Laurent.

Together we can put an end to modern day slavery in Uzbekistan!