

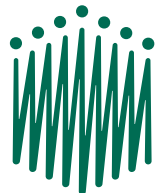
Masters of FLAX FIBRE™

Communication Guidelines



Masters of
**FLAX
FIBRE™**

CERTIFIED FLAX OF EUROPEAN ORIGIN,
FROM FIELD TO FIBRE.



Alliance for European
Flax-Linen & Hemp

This document presents the claims pertaining to Masters of FLAX FIBRE™ [formerly European Flax™] certification. The change of identity from European Flax™ to Masters of FLAX FIBRE™ certification is part of the establishment of an agricultural standard defining good practices for the farming and scutching of European Flax.

This standard replaces the European Flax™ collective agricultural charter signed in 2012 and, like for the downstream textile sector (processing, trading), will be subject to audits carried out by an independent third party, Bureau Veritas Certification, as of 2026.

It reinforces the Masters of FLAX FIBRE™ certification, starting at the very beginning of the European Flax value chain, by including Flax growers, processors and scutchers, who are the first-stage actors in the sector. All certified downstream actors are already committed to guaranteeing the traceability of their value chain by complying with the Masters of FLAX FIBRE™ [formerly European Flax™] standard.

The certification for Cultivation and Scutching is collective and corresponds to a three-year cycle. It is the responsibility of scutchers and Flax farmers, with a sample of Flax farmers are audited each year.



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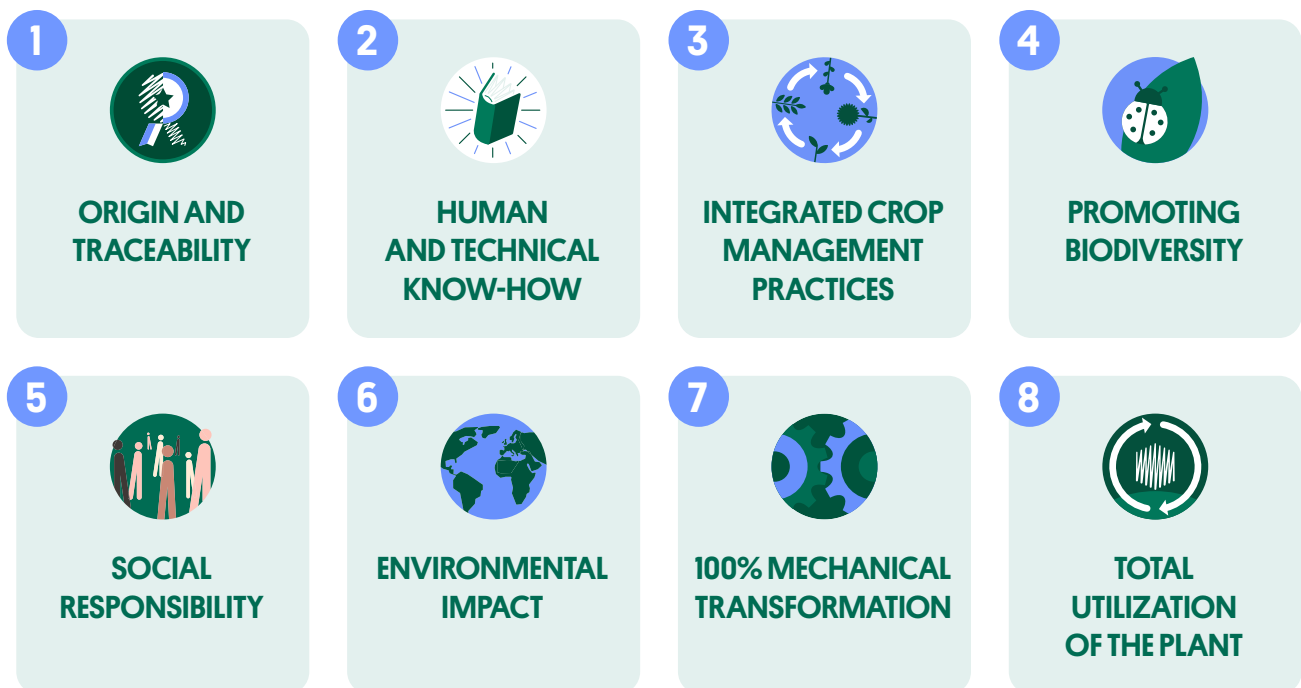
MASTERS OF FLAX FIBRE™

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

The Masters of FLAX FIBRE™ (ex-European Flax™) certification ensures integrated crop management practices and highlights the unique expertise of European fibre producers.

Masters of FLAX FIBRE™ provides European origin traceability from Flax fibre to finished product, for all end markets.

A. The eight key guarantees of Masters of FLAX FIBRE™



1. Origin and traceability

- A renewable fibre grown in Europe: in France (in the three main Flax-growing regions: Normandy, Hauts-de-France and Ile-de-France), Belgium and the Netherlands
- Guaranteed traceability from fibre to finished product

Three-quarters of the world's production of long fibres come from France, Belgium and the Netherlands. ([source: The Alliance Flax-Linen and Hemp Economic Observatory](#)).

2. Human and technical know-how

Know-how includes all the technical and human skills mobilized at each stage of production. In the case of Flax, this is the result of experience passed down from generation to generation and/or enriched by continuous training.

- A combination of terroir, soil and climate advantages, along with human expertise
- Local technical support provided by experts (technical institutes, field technicians, etc.)
- Agricultural expertise passed down from generation to generation, reinforced by ongoing training for farmers and scutchers
- Skilled labour at every stage: farming, harvesting and scutching
- Specialized harvesting equipment that requires specific technical knowledge
- Close collaboration between farmers and scutchers to optimize the value of the fibres

3. Integrated crop management practices

Integrated crop management practices refer to an approach to farming based on observation, analysis, prevention and interventions adapted to the actual needs of crops and local conditions. It consists in making measured and justified decisions, taking into account numerous factors such as weather conditions, soil type and climate (pedoclimatic factors), as well as plant health and pest pressure (diseases, pests and weeds). These choices are shared between European Flax growers and scutchers based on technical itineraries for agriculture and processing, as well as support from leading technical institutes, and can be based on decision support systems (DSSs).

In the case of integrated crop management practices, treatments and inputs are not applied systematically, but only when necessary and at the most appropriate time. The aim is to reconcile economic performance, respect for the environment and crop health by rationalizing the use of inputs (fertilizers, plant protection products, water, etc.) while ensuring high-quality agricultural production.

- Careful water management from sowing to harvest: in Western Europe, Flax is generally grown without irrigation. Irrigation is only implemented in cases of specific need, with justification and after a joint decision by the farmer and the scutcher.
- Field retting, without irrigation. Field retting occurs naturally through the impact of rain, dew, wind and sun. Water retting is prohibited.
- Limited use of inputs:
 - › Reasonable use of fertilizers, based on soil analyses, which are recommended to be done at least every 5 years
 - › The judicious use of plant protection products, based on observation and the use of biocontrols / alternatives to chemicals, is encouraged.
- Fibre Flax seeds are certified by official bodies as GMO-free.
- Chemical-free seed treatments are preferred.
- Agricultural practices that can be backed by decision support systems (DSSs) and technical assistance in the field.

4. Promoting biodiversity

- A crop rotation system that preserves the soil and limits the development of diseases and the occurrence of pests. A long rotation cycle of 6 years or more is preferred.
- Farmers are informed of agricultural practices that promote biodiversity.
- Biodiversity-friendly measures are encouraged (diverse cover crops, planting hedges, flower-rich fallow land, etc.).

5. Social responsibility

- Legal employment opportunities that comply with national and European labour laws

6. Environmental impact

- The environmental impacts of the fibre are assessed: European Flax is committed to an environmental trajectory based on:
 - › Reliable and accessible life cycle data, representative of sound farming and scutching practices,
 - › Contribution to the European Commission's Environmental Footprint methods,
 - › A process of continuous improvement.

7. 100% mechanical transformation

- 100% mechanical scutching, fibre extraction without water or solvents

8. Total utilization of the plant

- A zero-waste fibre: all parts of the plant are utilized.

The European Masters of FLAXFIBRE™ Flax fibre sector also draws on the expertise of leading ARVALIS technical institutes for agriculture – the Institut du Végétal for France and INAGRO for Belgium and the Netherlands.

In a spirit of continuous improvement, applied research efforts focus in particular on Flax fibre production in the current context of climate change and on the implementation of integrated crop protection solutions.

The references produced are then intended for wide distribution. As such, numerous publications, training courses, tools, etc. are freely available to producers and stakeholders in the sector, as can be found below:

- [Arvalis](#)
- [Inagro](#)

B. A few definitions

Soil and climate (pedoclimatic) advantages: Refer to all characteristics of soil and climate in a given location. This is the favourable combination of factors related to soil (composition, structure, nutrient content, etc.) and climate (temperature, sunlight, rainfall, etc.).

Integrated protection: Integrated protection consists of carefully considering all available plant protection methods and, consequently, appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations and keep the use of plant protection products and other types of interventions at levels that are economically and environmentally justified. The goal is to reduce or limit risks to human health and the environment as much as possible. Integrated crop protection promotes the growth of healthy crops by ensuring minimal disruption to agro-ecosystems and encouraging natural mechanisms to control crop pests.

Biocontrols: Alternatives to conventional plant protection products can be used to control pests (diseases, insects and weeds). These methods, collectively referred to as “biocontrols,” are based on mechanisms and interactions that exist in nature.

Intercropping: Plants sown between two main crops to protect and enrich the soil, limit erosion, capture nitrogen from the soil and promote biodiversity.

These definitions, as well as the data relating to crop characteristics and farming methods, are validated by the leading technical agricultural institutes, Arvalis and Inagro.

C. FAQ – Frequently asked questions about Flax fibre that is certified Masters of FLAX FIBRE™

What is meant by careful water management in Flax farming?

Careful water management means that irrigation is only used when absolutely necessary.

In Western Europe, Flax is generally grown without irrigation. However, due to unpredictable weather conditions, some farmers may need to use irrigation when their fields are located in areas with significant deficits in rainfall.

In such cases, irrigation may be considered between sowing and harvesting if drought occurs at a critical stage of plant development, jeopardizing its viability. This decision must be made jointly by the farmer and the scutcher, and may be supported by a decision support system (DSS). It should be noted that the farmer does not install an irrigation system (such as a borehole) specifically for Flax, but for all the crops on his farm.

Why favour a long rotation cycle (more than 6 years)?

Flax is sown according to a rotation cycle, generally every 6 to 7 years on the same plot, alternating with other crops. Long rotations reduce the pressure of diseases, pests and weeds specific to a crop. They limit the need for chemical inputs (pesticides) and preserve the biological balance of the soil. By diversifying the species cultivated over time, these rotations promote more fertile soil and more abundant beneficial fauna. They also strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems, while contributing to the protection of biodiversity.

Furthermore, Flax is a unique cultivated species. It belongs to the Linaceae botanical family, of which it is the only cultivated species, and naturally represents an additional source of diversity into crop rotations.

What is the link between Flax farming and regenerative agriculture?

Flax fibre farming in Western Europe, when certified by Masters of FLAX FIBRE™, adopts integrated crop management practices, some aspects of which are associated with regenerative principles: careful water management from sowing to harvest, crop rotation, no GMOs, limited use of inputs, systematic intermediate farming, irrigation-free field retting and 100% mechanical fibre extraction with zero waste.

However, Flax farming cannot be described as “regenerative” at this stage:

- There is no standard for regenerative agriculture recognized by public authorities; it is governed by private specifications.
- Any reference framework must be adapted to the crop in question.
- Crop rotation must be taken into account: for European Flax, rotation follows a 6-to-7-year cycle, alternating with various other crops (cereals, potatoes, etc.). A specific standard (organic, regenerative, etc.) could not be designed solely for Flax, but must include other crops in the rotation cycle.
- Scientific assessment of soil regeneration is still under development.

Does Flax contribute to soil preservation?

Flax is sown in rotation, generally every 6 to 7 years on the same plot, alternating with other crops. This practice preserves the soil, prevents the spread of disease and promotes the quality of the Flax. Flax cultivation also optimizes soil quality and increases the yield of the following crop. *Source: Flax Fibre, Farming and Processing, ARVALIS - Institut du Végétal, 2013.* Soil structure is preserved through the use of light machinery, which is only used in dry weather.

Flax farming, through the practice of crop rotation and the low input requirements, has recognized beneficial effects: *“Flax farming has positive effects on the diversity of agricultural ecosystems. Fibre crops offer a beneficial environmental break for soil quality, biodiversity, and landscapes.” Source: Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Brussels-2008.*

Does Flax store carbon?

Flax cultivation itself returns little carbon to agricultural soils; however, European Flax cultivation practices help reduce greenhouse gas emissions through agricultural rotation cycles.

- Most Flax fibre comes from spring Flax, which allows for an intermediate crop to be planted between the harvest of the previous crop (often a straw cereal) and the sowing of Flax the following spring. This intermediate crop is returned to the soil, thereby replenishing carbon stocks.

- Since Flax is a crop that requires little nitrogen fertilizer, introducing it into crop rotation cycles reduces carbon emissions compared to rotation without Flax.

Furthermore, the carbon captured by the plant, known as biogenic carbon, is temporarily stored in the fibre and then in the finished product, but will be released at the end of its life cycle. Most LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) methods, including the European Commission's PEF (Product Environmental Footprint) method, currently recommend not accounting for this temporary storage in intermediate products such as fibres and fabrics.

What is the environmental impact of Flax? Is Flax eco-friendly, environmentally friendly, better for the planet, responsible?

The Alliance guarantees robust, representative life cycle data that is accessible via leading databases. Certified Flax fibre data is available in the European Commission's EF database, [Ecoinvent](#) and Higg MSI. The LCA of European Flax™ certified scutched Flax fibre, published in 2022 ([open source](#)), details the Technical Itinerary for farming that is taken into consideration for the data. The Alliance is currently working to develop datasets for post-scutching processing, at the European level, according to the European Union's PEF method.

Thus the Alliance supports the industry and brands so that each player can calculate the impact of their certified Linen products.

The use of terms such as “ecological,” “environmentally friendly” and “better for the planet” should be avoided. All production has an impact. French and European regulations on environmental claims remind us that sweeping, generalizing terms presenting a product as having an overall benefit for the environment should be avoided and may constitute greenwashing.

Only a significant and measurable reduction in the main environmental impacts of the product throughout its life cycle can justify the use of those terms. In order to use them, for example, life cycle analyses must cover the entire life cycle of a product or NF Environment or European Ecolabel certification. This involves calculating the impact at the level of the finished product and comparing it with an average representative product.

Is Linen biodegradable?

The concept of biodegradability refers to specific standards depending on the conditions under which testing was carried out. It is not possible to claim that a Linen fabric is “biodegradable” without specifying the test environment and the standard used. To date, the biodegradability of untreated Linen textiles and fibres has been proven in the marine environment, at the interface between seawater and marine sediments. This is where textile microfibres released during washing can accumulate. [The study is available online.](#)

It can therefore be said that untreated Flax fibres and Linen fabrics are biodegradable under aerobic, benthic and marine conditions, in accordance with ISO 196791.

Further studies are underway to prove the biodegradability of European Linen in other ecological environments.

Is Linen hypoallergenic?

This claim is subject to strict regulations and cannot be made in a generic manner. It must be proven for each product and all of its components.

Is Linen antibacterial?

This term is regulated and refers to a strict medical standard. Linen textiles do not have any antibacterial activity according to the NF EN ISO 20743 standard, 2013. Antibacterial activity requires specific textile treatment.

Studies confirming the properties of Linen, such as breathability and ventilation, thermoregulation, moisture absorption and management, etc., are available online:

- [A Confort Study on Textile Performance](#)
- [Better sleep with Flax-Linen](#)