

How We Work

bakermat

How It Started

Bakermat was created to strengthen the connection between the textile industry and the new generation of creatives. Bakermat has been established as a physical and digital space that combines a textile shop, a virtual library, and a materials agency.

Through the textile shop and materials agency, Bakermat provides designers with access to a carefully curated selection of materials, accompanied by detailed information about their supply chain. These practices are continued in the virtual library. We offer a digital 3D representation of these materials, enabling designers to incorporate digitization and 3D design into their practices to improve design outcomes while reducing development costs and environmental impact.

By empowering designers with access to both physical and digital resources, the ultimate goal of Bakermat is to foster more interconnected and conscious design practices and facilitate a responsible creative process that promotes continuous and innovative outcomes.

Our mission is to support the education of textile professionals, enthusiasts, and creators. We achieve this by connecting them to our network, empowering them to design accountably and fairly, and reshaping the industry from the bottom up.

Our vision is to build a transparent textile universe where responsible creation becomes easier.

Transparency is a tool for change, not the end goal. Transparency is a baseline, without which we cannot meaningfully move towards accountability and positive impact in the global fashion industry. Transparency is not to be confused with sustainability, but without transparency, achieving a sustainable, accountable and fair fashion industry will be impossible."

Sarah Ditty, global policy director, Fashion Revolution

How We Select

Here at Bakermat, we believe in partnerships rather than transactional relationships. For us, this is an important criterion in selecting our partners and materials. When making selections, we aim to be inclusive of all fibers, taking on a curatorial role to find an available option for each product or material category. We do not exclude any specific textile or fiber.

Our choice of partner companies is based on a thorough evaluation of various criteria, including their performance, commitment, and approach to addressing the fundamental challenges faced by the textile industry today.

Although we do not exclude any material a priori, we prioritize traceable and environmentally friendly fiber options. We understand that mixed yarns can improve quality in terms of strength, wearability, and economic issues, but using these yarns can make recycling processes more difficult. We strive for a more circular or closed-loop system and give preference to mono-fibers, both natural and synthetic, that facilitate recycling. We also strive to incorporate low-impact and innovative materials, such as recycled and regenerative fibers.

We collaborate with Belgian Designers on a local ecosystem of leftover materials.

We curate our selection based on three essential categories:

Craftsmanship / Heritage: We aim to preserve certain techniques and materials from specific regions of the world. By showcasing these in our store, agency, and digital library, we aim to provide information and knowledge about these topics to both the old and new generations of makers.

Essentials: We offer a wide variety of essential basics that are needed to create consciously and sustainably.

Next Gen: We provide a selection of the new materials available, ranging from protein fibers to regenerative fibers. This is an experimental division that gives makers the opportunity to create with new materials and gain new insights into development processes.

Besides these three essentials categories, we created an overview of materials we suggest to buy.

How We Select

- *Negative advice on buy-in fabrics in store,
Most of the fabrics marked with a red dot are composed of conventional fibers. These materials sustain an outdated system that lacks the initiative to contribute to a better future. We do not wish to stimulate the industry by producing new textiles with virgin or conventional fibers.*
- *Be conscious about the fabric,
Most of the fabrics marked with an orange dot offer a slightly better solution. We believe that materials that are not commonly utilised in the industry could help balance out the intense overproduction of single materials like polyester and cotton. Most of the materials with an orange dot are purchased from Stock-Service, meaning these materials have already been produced.*
- *Oke to buy,
Most of the fabrics marked with a green dot are considered acceptable to buy. However, we aim to be conscious about these green dots, as the industry is changing rapidly. We do not claim that our indication is definitive but strive to provide an overview of materials we consider acceptable. These include leftover fabrics from suppliers and Belgian designers, as well as better versions of conventional or fossil materials.*

MADE TO ORDER

STOCK SERVICE

LEFTOVER STOCK

MATERIALS

NATURAL CELLULOSICS

Conventional Cotton	●	●	●
Certified Organic Cotton	●	●	●
Mechanical Recycled Cotton > 50%	●	●	●
Mechanical Recycled Cotton < 50%	●	●	●
Conventional Nettle	●	●	●
Conventional Hemp	●	●	●
Conventional Kapok	●	●	●
Regenerative Cotton 100%	●	●	●
Organic Linen & Organic Hemp 100%	●	●	●
Organic Kapok 100%	●	●	●

NATURAL PROTEIN

Conventional Silk	●	●	●
Conventional Wool	●	●	●
Conventional Cashmere	●	●	●
Animal Fur	●	●	●
Animal Leather	●	●	●
Recycled Leather	●	●	●
Pre-consumer recycled cashmere	●	●	●
RWS wool	● <50% ● >50%	●	●
Pre-consumed alpaca	●	●	●
Organic Wool	●	●	●
Recycled Wool	●	●	●
Recycled Silk	●	●	●
Post-Consumer recycled Cashmere	●	●	●

MAN MADE, NATURAL POLYMER, CELLULOSIC

Viscose	●	●	●
Rayon	●	●	●
Modal	●	●	●
Cupro	●	●	●
Bamboo Lyocell	●	●	●
Lyocell	●	●	●

MAN MADE, SYNTHETIC POLYMER, PETRO CHEMICAL

Conventional polyester	●	●	●
Pre-Consumer (rPET) Polyester	●	●	●
Conventional elastane	●	●	●
Conventional Nylon	●	●	●
Polyurethane	●	●	●
Certified Post-consumer rPET	●	●	●
Post-Consumer mechanically/Chemically recycled Nylon	●	●	●
Biodegradable Nylon	●	●	●
Recycled Elastane	●	●	●

- Negative advice buy-in fabrics in store
- Be concious about the fabric
- Oke to buy

* We used Pangaia "Preferred Material List 2022 as a reference

How We Progress

We want to clarify that there is no inherent good or bad in the fabrics we offer. Our selection serves as a guide to help our customers choose the right fabric for their needs. We encourage every client to view and utilize our supplier passport as a roadmap. We strive to provide comprehensive information and details on each supplier and fabric within our selection, based on the data provided by the suppliers.

To ensure reliable information and select trustworthy textile partners, we rely on reputable national and international institutions that issue certifications. We believe certifications and standards are necessary for working toward a better future and providing some guarantee on how products are made and the chemicals used. However, we understand that acquiring certifications and adhering to standards can be a financial burden for some companies.

To recognize their efforts within their available resources, we have collaborated with CENTEXBEL to develop a survey that companies can complete autonomously. This survey aims to assess how our partner companies adhere to high environmental and social standards and their commitment to transparency, traceability, innovation, circularity, and involvement with local communities. Besides the survey, we also examine the company profile to understand the uniqueness of their products, heritage, and craftsmanship.

How We Define Our Wants & Needs To Our Suppliers

RAW MATERIALS

Where does it come from? Please provide information on all materials used in your company.

On each of the materials are you able to tell us:

1. Where it comes from
2. Provide a reliable indication of their environmental and social impact.
3. To prepare the fiber up to the spinning process which treatments are done (do you know if they are impactful ?) (e.g. washing or macerating)
4. If the fiber is recycled, can you explain us if it comes from a post consumer recycling process and how and where the process takes place?
5. Add any other certification or relevant information related to fiber and fiber pre-spinning treatments. (environment - animal - human)

SUPPLY CHAIN

1. Where does the spinning takes place? Could you provide some info on your yarns suppliers?
2. Do you do pre-weaving/knitting treatments on the yarns (e.g. mercerisation, yarns colouring others)? Where?
 - 3.1 How do you manage your water-based and solid waste?
 - 3.2 Do you recycle any of your key inputs, such as water or chemicals?
4. Weaving or Knitting, which weaving or Knitted technologies do you use? Where does it take place?
5. Finishing, where do you finish /color your fabrics and which are the main finishing that you use? Where does it take place?
6. Do you use any hazardous chemicals or materials while finishing or coloring your fabrics? How do you manage them to ensure they don't enter waste streams or water?
7. Do you have any Local or International process related certification? ZDCH etc.
8. With respect to your company, do you have any interesting information on how you manage energy and waste?

Which will be your next actions on your supply chain, how do you see yourselves evolving in the future?

How We Work On Our Progress & Long-Term Objectives

We acknowledge that achieving a traceable and transparent industry is an ongoing process. Due to the lack of standardized information and quotas for traceability in the textile supply/value chain, as well as the absence of general regulations for validating materials, providing reliable information is very complex. Not all suppliers can provide comprehensive information due to a lack of specialized staff, costs, and differing standards and laws outside European regulations.

However, by collaborating with our partners, we strive to communicate as transparently as possible how all materials in our library are made. We take pride in the research we have conducted thus far, but we acknowledge that there is still significant room for improvement in both our selection criteria and the way our partner companies communicate information about their processes.

Our goal is to first provide a supplier passport and eventually evolve to a material passport with every fabric we sell, containing essential information to clearly understand its supply chain. This process takes time, as many companies, depending on their structure and product type, may not have the necessary systems in place to gather all the required information. Nevertheless, traceability is a collaborative effort that requires commitment, and we are continuously working on the following objectives:

- Continuously search for ethical and responsible companies to collaborate with.
- Work closely with our partners to improve the performance of their products.
- Regularly update our selection criteria to ensure alignment with industry standards and best practices.
- Assist our partner companies in providing us with clear and comprehensive information.

Every year we try to add fewer virgin fossil fuel materials in our selection; we try to focus on recycled, regenerative materials. We strongly believe that by continuously sourcing traceable products and sharing knowledge about their supply chains, we can gradually shift towards a more conscious industry. If the next generation of designers gradually incorporates these products into their designs, we can collectively move closer to a better future.

What Are Our Criteria

Bakermat's system collects public information and information of the suppliers; we evaluate each partner on the following issues:

Environmental and social standards: We examined the national and international norms they follow, as well as their certifications and "responsibility" initiatives.

Note: We did not solely rely on certifications, as we wanted to ensure that smaller industry actors with less economic power were not excluded.

Transparency: We assessed the partner's willingness to share knowledge and collaborate to make their products traceable.

Verticalization and proximity: We considered whether the partner managed their supply chain internally or locally, as this can positively impact the environmental footprint.

Attitude towards innovation, environmental concerns, and circularity: We considered the partner's vision and actions in these areas.

Uniqueness and heritage value: We look for unique and heritage products and production techniques that we believe must be preserved.

Community engagement: We evaluated the partner's connection and engagement with local communities and how these companies add value to their territories.

Waste management: We assessed the partner's waste management practices within their productive facilities or partner companies.

Recyclability: We examined how the fabric can be recycled, under what circumstances it is done, and the ecological impact of these processes.

Emotional value: We consider the emotional value of textiles. By fostering greater awareness of design practices, creation processes, and the origin of textiles, we believe the longevity of textile products will improve.

What Are Our Filters

We chose to include commercial information that is needed for any professional in the industry and comprises all the data that you would find when buying from a regular supplier.

- Weight (unit of measure)
- Length
- Price
- Width
- Composition
- Color
- Functional guidelines: Purpose

And, whenever possible, other technical notions often neglected even by professionals in the industry that we feel need to be shared to preserve the culture of textiles, so:

- Structure
- Technique / finishings
- Feature

We also added our Bakermat filters to underline those textiles that we perceive as particularly innovative/new for the state of the industry. We always provide information on:

- Country of origin
- Supplier

Lexicon

Closed-loop systems: Within the framework of circularity, these systems aim to minimize waste and maximize resource efficiency. In a closed-loop system, products or materials are designed and managed in a way that allows them to be continuously cycled back into a production process. This approach aims to eliminate the traditional linear model. Every part of the materials and products is reused, upcycled, recycled, or repurposed.

Circular economy: Based on three pillars: circular design, use-phase, and end-of-life. Incorporating these pillars, the industry can transform. We try to have conversations about this with our clients and provide them with the information they need to adapt to this industry.

Creators: The overarching term for anyone working and creating with textiles.

Craftsmanship: The art of skilled and meticulous workers, where artisans employ specialized techniques and expertise to create high-quality products with attention to detail and a commitment to excellence. This results in unique and enduring pieces that reflect the mastery and passion of the craft.

Heritage: Refers to the rich and traditional knowledge, techniques, design, and craftsmanship associated with a particular culture, region or company. It encompasses the historical and cultural significance of a textile tradition, including different techniques, and reflects the unique cultural identity of a community or society.

Next Gen materials: Materials designed to be future-proof, offering potential solutions in case of resource depletion. We acknowledge that not all next-gen materials are applicable for longevity and believe in the continuous evolution and testing of these materials.

Open-source ideology: Radical transparency and sharing what we know will accelerate the much-needed industry change.

Responsible: Safety and health for the planet, people, and profit.

Sustainability: Due to greenwashing trends, this term has lost a lot of value, but within Bakermat, it still holds its purest meaning: environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Sustainability emphasizes the importance of balancing societal progress with environmental protection and ensuring the well-being and equitable development of all individuals.

Supplier passports: A tool for making transparency available. A tag attached to the fabrics in store with a QR code that provides the customer with all traceable information and the story of the supplier.

Traceability: Relies on transparency but on a deeper level. You cannot be sustainable without traceability, and you cannot be traceable unless you are transparent.

Transparency: Clear visibility of all operations along the supply/value chain, enabling all information about every actor involved in the production process, from start to finish, to be openly known and shared.

Virtual prototyping: Undertaking the sampling of a garment digitally.

Value Chain / Supply Chain: The term value chain refers to the process in which businesses receive raw materials, add value to them through production, manufacturing, and other processes to create a finished product. A supply chain represents the steps it takes to get the product or service to the customer, often dealing with OEM and aftermarket parts. While a supply chain involves all parties in fulfilling a customer request and leading to customer satisfaction, a value chain is a set of interrelated activities a company uses to create an advantage.

3D textures: Digital files that contain the same properties as the physical material they are based on; e.g., with fashion, these are the virtual fabrics. In addition to leveraging our in-house technology and expertise for our virtual library, Bakermat provides full textile digitization services to manufacturers and brands. Our digitization services range from high-resolution digital scans to import-ready 3D files compatible with almost all 3D software used in fashion, interior design, game-design, and more.

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This information is a collaborative gesture by talking and asking feedback to several partners internally and externally.

Processed and written by Janne Claes for Bakermat.