

# THE MISSING PIECE IN THE EU'S ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT METHOD: POSITIVE LAND USE IMPACTS



Overview of the natural fibres ecosystem services that today's metrics fail to account for.

Natural fibres are penalised under current EU Environmental Footprint methods that treat land use as a burden, ignoring how responsibly managed land boosts soil, biodiversity, climate resilience, and rural livelihoods.



## GRAZING-BASED FIBRES

(e.g. alpaca, cashmere, mohair, wool)

### Cultural and heritage value

Pastoralism is deeply rooted in heritage and indigenous practices

### Fire regulation

Herbivores reduce fuel loads and fire risk in savannas and rangelands

### Socio-economic value

Supports pastoralist communities and rural livelihoods, critical income for ~2 billion people dependent on rangelands where climate/soils often limit crop production

### Renewability & circularity

Fibres are annually renewable, biodegradable, and integrated with natural cycles

### Soil health & soil carbon

Crop residues and root systems add organic matter, improve soil structure, reduce erosion, potential for carbon sequestration through regenerative practices

## CROP-BASED FIBRES

(e.g. cotton, flax, hemp)

### Renewability & circularity

Crops are renewable, biodegradable, and residues can be reintegrated into soil or used as by-products

### Nutrient cycling

Crop rotations and cover crops recycle nutrients, reduce synthetic fertiliser and pesticide dependency

### Fire regulation

Crop cover reduces erosion and can limit wildfire spread in mixed landscapes

### Soil health & soil carbon

Trampling incorporates plant litter, manure adds nutrients, enhances soil microbial activity and carbon sequestration

### Water cycle

Grazing improves soil infiltration and water retention, prevents erosion, increases soil water-holding capacity

### Biodiversity

Grazing maintains wildflowers and pollinator diversity, prevents grassland monocultures, supports grassland-dependent wildlife

### Biodiversity

Fibre crops provide habitat for insects and soil organisms; rotations diversify agroecosystems and reduce pest cycles

### Cultural and heritage value

Traditional cultivation of cotton, flax, hemp underpins rural economies and crafts

### Water cycle

Deep-rooted crops like cotton, hemp and flax improve soil porosity, reduce runoff, and increase drought resilience

**Socio-economic value**  
Provides income for millions of smallholder farmers globally, often grown in mixed systems with food crops