

# Consumption Research Norway's response to the public consultation on the upcoming EU Bioeconomy Strategy

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Europe has incredibly rich and important textile traditions based on wool, linen and other locally produced fibres. European textile production has long been under threat from policies that view outsourcing and global free trade as an unquestionable good.

Today, this production (farms, industry, craft) and good clothes for European citizens based on natural fibres are under a new threat: the EU textile strategy [1]. For the biobased textile economy, the worst culprit is the PEF and other similar LCA-based comparative tools [2]. They are not suitable for comparing plastics against natural materials and brand natural materials as the products with the greatest environmental impact. The same goes for the emphasis on the «durability» of textiles, which is most easily achieved by adding more plastic or making clothing entirely of plastic.

We ask that the work on the bioeconomy strategy take into account the large problems that farmers, craftspeople, small-scale producers, and the natural fibre-based textile industry in Europe face today. It is urgent either to discontinue the use of LCAs or to find a solution where the LCAs account for the problems caused by plastics (microplastics, non-biodegradability, etc.).

A sustainable agricultural system is a patchwork of different resources and products. Focusing on both food and clothing contributes to using the entire animal or plant, and to rotation in the use of land and crops. Textile production engages new farmers and SMEs, many of whom are women who believe in a better future. Safeguarding these important resources is to safeguard the future of the bioeconomy and vibrant rural areas/villages in Europe [3].

While creating new opportunities, such a bioeconomy also safeguards cultural heritage: an important part of Nordic farming is the summer pasture farms. These small mountain farms are only used during summer in order to bring the cattle to fresh grassland. The grasslands have no alternative use due to their location high in the mountains and steep hillsides. The use of these farms reduces the need for concentrate and increases animal welfare, since life

here is more in line with natural behaviour compared to a barn. The summer mountain pasture was recently listed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage [4], but the number of these farms is declining rapidly.

We suggest examining how other EU strategies directly counteract/hinder the bioeconomy and finding ways to avert the gravest consequences of these policy measures.

## References

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