

AKINYI ODONGO art centre

PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS AND POLICY INSERTIONS TO THE

Cotton Industry Development Bill, 2023

From Cotton to Fashion: Integrating Agriculture, Textiles, Manufacturing and the Creative Economy into Kenya's Cotton Legislation

SUBMITTED TO	The Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries
SUBMITTED BY	Akinyi Odongo Art Centre (AOAC)
BILL	Senate Bill No. 5 of 2023
DATE	6 October 2026

SUBMISSION DETAILS

SUBMITTED TO	The Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Parliament of Kenya
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POLICY THEME	From cotton to fashion: integrating agriculture, textiles, manufacturing and the creative economy into Kenya's cotton legislation

SECTION 01

Purpose of this document

Akinyi Odongo Art Centre (AOAC) submits these proposed legislative amendments and policy insertions to strengthen the Cotton Industry Development Bill, 2023.

The recommendations are intended to ensure that the legislation recognises the complete cotton value chain, including the downstream textile, fashion, garment manufacturing, creative, cultural and circular-economy sectors.

AOAC's recommendations are particularly relevant at this stage because the Bill has already passed both Houses and is currently subject to Presidential reservations under Article 115 of the Constitution. The official Parliamentary Bill Tracker continues to record the Bill as having received Presidential Reservations, with no assent recorded as at 30 April 2026.

The President's principal reservation concerns the establishment of an additional regulatory entity and the risk of proliferation of State corporations.

AOAC therefore proposes a constructive approach:

Strengthen the cotton value-chain framework while avoiding unnecessary institutional duplication.

SECTION 02

AOAC's central legislative principle

The Bill should recognise that:

> PRINCIPLE
>
> **Cotton is not merely an agricultural commodity. It is the foundation of an interconnected agricultural, industrial, manufacturing, fashion, cultural and creative economy.**

The value chain should therefore be understood as:

01	**Farm**	Seed → Farmer → Cooperative → Collection
02	**Fibre**	Ginning → Grading → Fibre
03	**Textile**	Spinning → Yarn → Weaving → Knitting → Dyeing → Finishing
04	**Creative value addition**	Design → Fashion → Product Development → Branding
05	**Manufacturing**	Garments → Home Textiles → Accessories → Industrial Textiles
06	**Market**	Retail → Institutional Procurement → Regional Markets → Export
07	**Circular economy**	Repair → Reuse → Recycling → Upcycling → Fibre Recovery

SECTION 03

Proposed amendment to Clause 2: Interpretation

The National Assembly amended the definition of “cotton industry” to include:

EXISTING POSITION

growers, ginners, spinners, cotton value addition industries and marketers.

It also inserted definitions covering ginning, processing and spinning.

AOAC considers this an important improvement but insufficient because fashion, design, textiles and garment manufacturing remain implicit rather than explicit.

AOAC PROPOSES

That Clause 2 be further amended by inserting definitions for:

“cotton value chain”

means the interconnected activities relating to the production, collection, aggregation, ginning, processing, spinning, weaving, knitting, dyeing, finishing, textile production, design, fashion, garment manufacturing, marketing, distribution, export, recycling and reuse of cotton and cotton-derived products;

“fashion enterprise”

means an enterprise engaged in fashion design, product development, garment production, fashion branding, fashion retail or related creative commercial activities using cotton, cotton-derived textiles or other textile materials;

“garment manufacturing”

means the industrial or commercial production, assembly, finishing and preparation of apparel and other sewn products from cotton, cotton-derived textiles or other textile materials;

“textile”

means fabric, yarn, fibre or other material produced through the processing, spinning, weaving, knitting, dyeing, finishing or other transformation of cotton or cotton-derived materials;

“creative enterprise”

means an enterprise that generates economic value through creativity, design, cultural expression, intellectual property, innovation or artistic production within the cotton and textile value chain;

“cotton-to-fashion value chain”

means the process through which cotton is transformed from agricultural production into fibre, yarn, textile, fashion products, garments and other finished products for domestic, regional and international markets.

SECTION 04

Proposed amendment to the definition of “cotton industry”

CURRENT APPROACH

The amended Bill defines the cotton industry around growers, ginners, spinners, value-addition industries and marketers.

Replace the definition with:

> PROPOSED WORDING
>
> **“cotton industry” includes growers, farmer cooperatives, ginners, spinners, textile manufacturers, processors, weavers, knitters, dyers, finishers, designers, fashion enterprises, garment manufacturers, artisans, creative enterprises, marketers, distributors, exporters, research and training institutions and other persons engaged in the cotton value chain.**

RATIONALE

This is the single most important amendment proposed by AOAC.

It changes the legislation from a primarily production-and-processing framework into a full value-chain framework.

SECTION 05

Proposed amendment to Clause 3: Objects of the Act

The Bill already seeks to promote a globally competitive cotton industry through regulation in collaboration with county governments.

AOAC proposes adding the following objects:

NEW PARAGRAPH

“to promote the development of an integrated cotton-to-fashion and cotton-to-manufacturing value chain that maximises local value addition, employment creation, enterprise development and export opportunities;”

NEW PARAGRAPH

“to promote linkages between cotton farmers, cooperatives, ginners, textile manufacturers, fashion enterprises, garment manufacturers, training institutions, research institutions and markets;”

NEW PARAGRAPH

“to promote participation of women, youth and marginalised communities in all stages of the cotton value chain;”

NEW PARAGRAPH

“to promote innovation, sustainable production, circular economy practices and responsible use of cotton and cotton-derived materials;”

RATIONALE

The existing objectives establish the foundation for a competitive cotton industry but do not expressly connect cotton production to the downstream creative and manufacturing economy.

SECTION 06

Clause 7: Composition / representation

The National Assembly amended the Board composition to include additional industry representation, including a representative of ginners and the Principal Secretary responsible for trade.

AOAC acknowledges this as progress.

However, if the Board mechanism is retained, representation should extend beyond farmers and ginners.

AOAC PROPOSES

Where an industry advisory mechanism is retained, it should include representation from:

01 Cotton farmers
02 Farmer cooperatives
03 Ginners
04 Textile manufacturers
05 Garment manufacturers
06 Fashion and design sector
07 Private-sector manufacturing
08 Research and innovation
09 TVET/skills development
10 Women enterprises
11 Youth enterprises
12 County governments

Insert:

> SPECIFIC PROPOSAL
>
> **“one person with demonstrable experience in textile, fashion, garment manufacturing or creative enterprise, nominated through a transparent process representing the relevant sector.”**

RATIONALE

The cotton industry cannot be fully developed without representation from the industries that create downstream demand.

SECTION 07

Alternative to a large statutory board

AOAC recognises the President's concern regarding the creation of another State corporation.

The Presidential memorandum expressly objects to an additional regulatory entity on the basis of potential proliferation of State corporations and ongoing rationalisation of State entities.

AOAC therefore proposes an alternative.

Replace institutional duplication with a:

Cotton Industry Value Chain Advisory Council

The Council would operate within the responsible existing Government framework rather than necessarily creating a new State corporation.

It would advise on:

- Farmer development
- Fashion
- Exports
- Sustainability
- Ginning
- Garment manufacturing
- Research
- Investment
- Textile manufacturing
- Market development
- Skills
- Innovation

This approach could accommodate the Presidential concern while retaining broad industry participation.

SECTION 08

Clause 11: Functions

The existing Clause 11 gives the Board functions including regulation and promotion of the cotton industry, standards, market development, research and linkages with institutions.

AOAC proposes that the functions expressly include:

NEW FUNCTION

“promote the integration of cotton production with textile manufacturing, fashion, garment manufacturing and other downstream value addition industries;”

NEW FUNCTION

“facilitate linkages between cotton farmers, cooperatives, ginners, textile manufacturers, designers, fashion enterprises, garment manufacturers, retailers and exporters;”

NEW FUNCTION

“promote the development and commercialisation of Kenyan cotton-based products and brands in domestic, regional and international markets;”

NEW FUNCTION

“promote research and innovation in cotton, textiles, fashion, sustainable materials, circular production and cotton by-products;”

NEW FUNCTION

“promote skills development and partnerships with universities, TVET institutions, research institutions and industry for the development of the cotton value chain;”

NEW FUNCTION

“promote the participation of women, youth and persons in marginalised communities in the cotton value chain;”

SECTION 09

Clause 12: Committees

The Bill allows the Board to establish committees and co-opt persons with relevant expertise.

AOAC recommends making the downstream value chain a deliberate statutory consideration, rather than leaving it entirely to administrative discretion.

PROPOSED ADDITION

> **"In establishing committees under this section, the Board shall ensure appropriate representation or consultation of stakeholders from cotton production, processing, textiles, fashion, garment manufacturing, research, skills development, women and youth enterprises and other relevant sectors of the cotton value chain."**

RATIONALE

This creates a practical mechanism for ensuring that fashion is not forgotten.

SECTION 10

Clause 23: Role of county governments

The Committee's amendments already strengthen the role of counties in promoting cotton production and linking farmers to finance.

AOAC proposes an additional county responsibility:

PROPOSED WORDING

> **"promote linkages between cotton farmers and local textile, fashion, garment manufacturing and creative enterprises within the county and across counties;"**

And:

PROPOSED WORDING

> **"support the establishment and development of cotton value-addition and product-development hubs in cotton-producing areas, in collaboration with relevant national Government agencies, industry and private-sector actors."**

RATIONALE

Cotton-producing counties should not merely be suppliers of raw material.

They should participate in value addition.

SECTION 11

Cotton value-addition hubs

AOAC recommends a new policy mechanism:

County Cotton Value-Addition and Innovation Hubs

These could connect:

Farmers + Cooperatives + Ginneries + TVETs + Designers + Manufacturers + Researchers + Markets

Potential activities:

- Farmer training
- Textile experimentation
- Fashion design
- Youth enterprise
- Incubation
- Digital design
- Fibre quality improvement
- Product development
- Garment production
- Women enterprise
- Research
- Market access

This could be particularly transformative in Western Kenya.

SECTION 12

Clause 25: Licensing of cotton businesses

This is one of the most important provisions for AOAC.

The original Committee explicitly observed that Clause 25 was problematic because the Bill appeared to focus on cotton growing, ginning and value addition and did not clearly address textiles and apparel.

The Senate had previously amended Clause 25 to focus licensing on:

> CURRENT APPROACH
>
> **cotton ginning, spinning or value addition.**

AOAC recommends that the final wording distinguish regulated industrial activities from ordinary creative and commercial activity.

AOAC PROPOSED PRINCIPLE

Licensing under the Cotton Act should not unnecessarily create a new licence for every:

- Fashion designer
- Small garment maker
- Creative enterprise
- Tailor
- Artisan
- Retailer

Instead, licensing should apply to activities for which specific regulation is genuinely necessary.

> PROPOSED WORDING
>
> **“A person shall not engage in a regulated cotton industrial activity prescribed under this Act without the relevant licence or permit.”**

And define “regulated cotton industrial activity” to cover activities such as:

- Commercial ginning
- Specified large-scale processing
- Industrial spinning
- Specified industrial value addition

RATIONALE

AOAC wants to prevent legislation intended to revive cotton from unintentionally creating barriers for small creative and fashion enterprises.

SECTION 13

Clause 26: Standards and quality

AOAC recommends that standards should address not only raw cotton and fibre but also:

- Textile quality
- Sustainable production
- Responsible production
- Traceability
- Fibre content
- Export requirements
- Product safety
- Labelling

Kenya should progressively develop mechanisms that allow Kenyan cotton to be traceable from farm to finished product.

SECTION 14

Cotton traceability

AOAC recommends introduction of a national:

Cotton Traceability Framework

The framework should allow, where practicable, identification of:

Farmer → Cooperative → Ginnery → Fibre → Textile → Manufacturer → Finished product

This can support:

- Farmer recognition
- Export compliance
- Quality assurance
- Consumer confidence
- Sustainability claims
- Premium markets

SECTION 15

Cotton and government procurement

AOAC recommends a new policy provision requiring the responsible Ministry to develop mechanisms, consistent with public procurement law, to encourage procurement of qualifying locally produced cotton and cotton-derived products.

Potential markets include:

- Uniforms
- Workwear
- Hospitality textiles
- Institutional textiles
- Protective garments
- Public-sector requirements
- Hospital textiles
- School and TVET uniforms

PRINCIPLE

Government can become an anchor market for domestic cotton and textile production.

SECTION 16

Women and youth enterprise

AOAC proposes a specific provision:

PROPOSED WORDING

> **"The responsible Cabinet Secretary shall establish or facilitate programmes that promote access to finance, skills, technology, markets and enterprise development for women and youth participating in the cotton value chain."**

The provision should cover women and youth working as:

- Farmers
- Processors
- Designers
- Manufacturers
- Artisans
- Entrepreneurs
- Exporters
- Innovators

SECTION 17

Research, innovation and development

AOAC proposes that the legislation expressly support research into:

- Climate-resilient cotton
- Regenerative cotton production
- Sustainable textiles
- Natural dyes
- Cotton waste
- Recycled fibres
- Circular fashion
- Cottonseed utilisation
- Textile technology
- Product development
- Digital fashion
- Advanced manufacturing

SECTION 18

TVET and industry skills

A new policy provision should require collaboration with TVET institutions.

The responsible agencies should facilitate programmes covering:

- Cotton processing
- Spinning
- Weaving
- Knitting
- Textile finishing
- Garment manufacturing
- Fashion design
- Industrial sewing
- Product development
- Entrepreneurship
- Sustainable production
- Digital technologies

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY

Kenya can use the cotton industry to create a new generation of skilled textile and fashion workers.

SECTION 19

Cotton and the creative economy

AOAC recommends that the Act expressly acknowledge the relationship between the cotton industry and the creative economy.

PROPOSED PROVISION

"The responsible Cabinet Secretary shall promote collaboration between the cotton industry and the creative economy, including fashion, design, cultural enterprise, product development, branding and other creative sectors that contribute to the value addition and market development of cotton products."

This is the provision that would formally bridge the Cotton Industry Development framework with the wider Creative Economy policy agenda.

SECTION 20

Cotton and cultural heritage

Cotton textiles may carry cultural identity and contemporary Kenyan design.

AOAC recommends programmes supporting:

- Kenyan textile identity
- Contemporary African design
- Local textile brands
- Indigenous design
- Cultural storytelling
- Creative exports

This would enable Kenya to compete not only on commodity price but on design, identity and intellectual property.

SECTION 21

Circular economy

AOAC recommends a new provision promoting:

- Repair
- Reuse
- Recycling
- Upcycling
- Fibre recovery
- Textile waste reduction
- Responsible disposal

PROPOSED WORDING

"The responsible Cabinet Secretary shall promote circular economy practices in the cotton and textile value chain, including reuse, repair, recycling, upcycling and recovery of cotton and cotton-derived materials."

SECTION 22

Western Kenya cotton revitalisation

AOAC recommends that implementation of the Act give particular attention to historically cotton-producing regions.

The strategy should connect:

Cotton farmers → Cooperatives → Ginneries → TVETs → Textile producers → Designers → Manufacturers → Markets

The objective should be to create local economic ecosystems, rather than simply restoring production of raw cotton.

SECTION 23

Cotton farmers as value-chain participants

AOAC recommends that farmers should be supported to participate beyond primary production.

Where commercially appropriate, cooperatives could participate in:

- Aggregation
- Grading
- Ginning
- Product development
- Investment
- Marketing

This could increase the proportion of value retained at community level.



Cotton farming communities: the first link in the cotton-to-fashion value chain.

SECTION 24

Proposed new Part: Cotton-to-fashion and value addition

AOAC recommends consideration of a dedicated section or regulations addressing the downstream value chain.

PROPOSED HEADING

Part: Cotton value addition, textiles, fashion and creative enterprise

The section could provide for:

01 Cotton-to-fashion value-chain development

02 Textile industry linkages

03 Fashion and design participation

04 Garment manufacturing

05 Product development

06 Skills development

07 Innovation

08 Market development

09 Export promotion

10 Circular economy

11 Women and youth enterprise

12 Research and development

SECTION 25

Proposed national cotton-to-fashion strategy

AOAC recommends that the responsible Ministry, within a prescribed period after commencement of the Act, develop a:

National Cotton-to-Fashion and Textile Value Chain Strategy

The Strategy should contain:

- National targets
- Ginnery revitalisation
- Garment manufacturing
- Research
- Market access
- County targets
- Textile manufacturing
- Skills
- Export development
- Farmer participation
- Fashion
- Investment
- Sustainability

SECTION 26

Measuring success

AOAC recommends that implementation should measure more than cotton acreage and production.

Key indicators should include:

1 **Agriculture**

number of cotton farmers; acreage; yield; farmer income

2 **Industry**

tonnes ginned; yarn produced; textiles produced; manufacturing capacity

3 **Creative economy**

designers participating; fashion enterprises created; Kenyan cotton products developed

4 **Employment**

women employed; youth employed; rural jobs; manufacturing jobs

5 **Markets**

domestic sales; regional exports; international exports

6 **Sustainability**

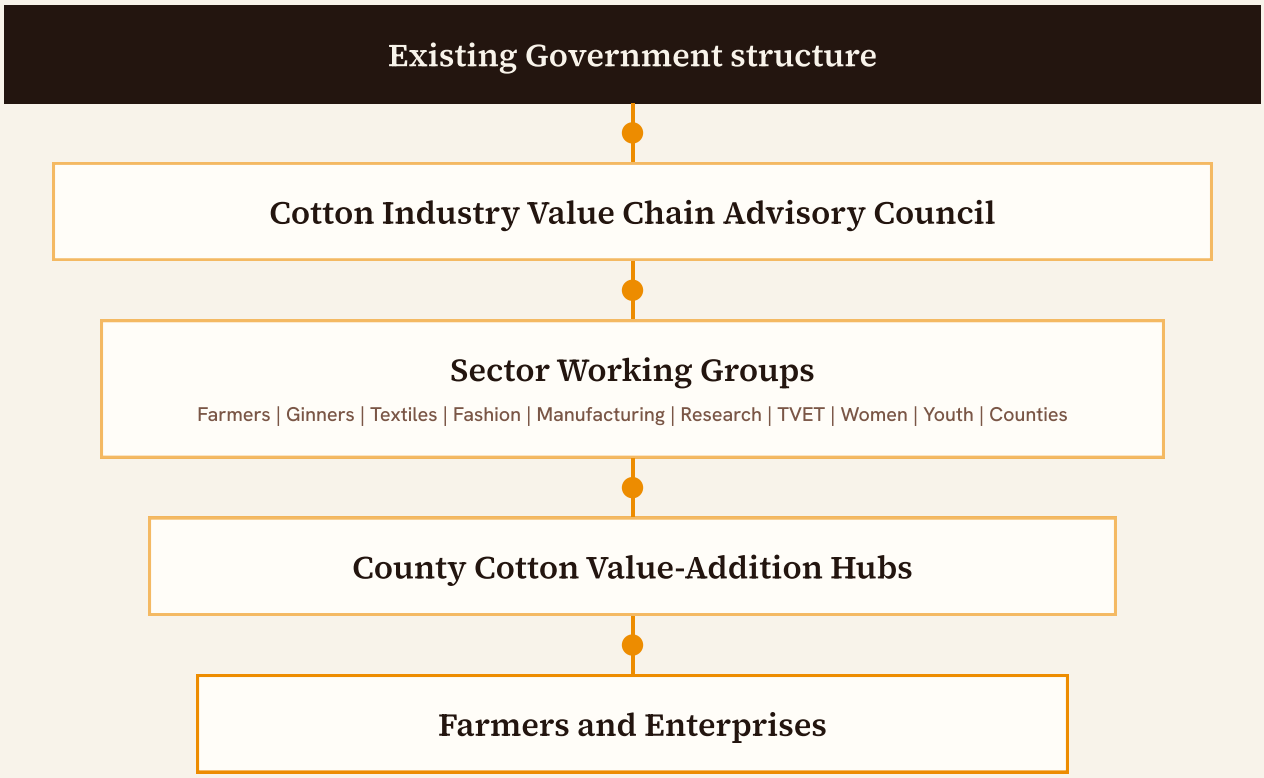
percentage of traceable cotton; recycled material; textile waste recovered

SECTION 27

Institutional recommendation in response to Presidential reservations

AOAC does not recommend that Parliament simply defend the creation of another State corporation without considering the President's institutional concern.

Instead, AOAC proposes a value-chain coordination model.



This structure could deliver coordination without unnecessary institutional duplication.

SECTION 28

AOAC's five priority amendments

If Parliament cannot accommodate the entire package, AOAC recommends prioritising these five:

01

Priority 1

Expand "cotton industry" to explicitly include textiles, fashion, garment manufacturing and creative enterprises.

02

Priority 2

Insert a statutory Cotton-to-Fashion/Value-Chain framework.

03

Priority 3

Ensure representation of downstream textile, fashion and manufacturing stakeholders.

04

Priority 4

Create county-level value-addition and innovation mechanisms connecting farmers to markets.

05

Priority 5

Strengthen the Bill without creating unnecessary institutional duplication.

SECTION 29

AOAC's legislative philosophy

The objective should not simply be:

"Grow more cotton."

The objective should be:

"Create more value from every kilogram of cotton Kenya produces."

That means:

More value for farmers
More jobs for youth
More enterprises for women
More business for manufacturers
More opportunities for designers
More products for Kenyan consumers
More exports for Kenya

SECTION 30

Conclusion

The Cotton Industry Development Bill provides an important opportunity to reposition Kenya's cotton industry.

However, the legislation will have greater economic impact if it recognises that the cotton economy does not end at the ginnery.

Cotton can become:

Fibre
Yarn
Textile
Fashion
Garments
Brands
Manufacturing
Exports
Jobs
Enterprise
Cultural identity
Innovation
Economic empowerment

AOAC therefore respectfully recommends that Parliament strengthen the Bill by formally incorporating the Cotton-to-Fashion and Cotton-to-Manufacturing value chains into the legislative framework.

This would ensure that Kenya's cotton policy connects the farmer in the field to the designer, manufacturer, entrepreneur and consumer.

From **farm to fibre**
From **fibre to textile**
From **textile to fashion**
From **fashion to industry**
From **industry to jobs and exports**
From **Kenya's cotton farms to the world**

SUBMITTED BY



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