

POLICY SUBMISSION AND REQUEST FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON THE

Cotton Industry Development Bill, 2023

Strengthening Kenya's Cotton-to-Fashion Value Chain for Industrialisation, Creative Enterprise, Employment and Economic Empowerment

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

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CORE MESSAGE

Kenya's cotton opportunity does not end when cotton leaves the farm.

The success of Kenya's cotton industry should not be measured only by tonnes of cotton produced, but also by *the amount of economic value, employment, enterprise and foreign exchange generated from each unit of cotton produced.*

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SECTION 01

Executive summary

Akinyi Odongo Art Centre (AOAC) welcomes the objectives of the Cotton Industry Development Bill, 2023 and recognises the importance of establishing a stronger framework for the production, value addition, processing, marketing, research and development of Kenya's cotton industry.

AOAC, however, proposes that the Bill and its implementing framework go further by recognising cotton as the foundation of a complete agricultural, industrial, manufacturing, fashion, cultural and creative value chain.

Kenya's cotton opportunity does not end when cotton leaves the farm.

The greatest economic opportunity lies in transforming cotton into progressively higher-value products within Kenya.

AOAC therefore proposes the adoption of a deliberate:

Cotton-to-fashion / fibre-to-fashion value chain approach

This approach connects:

Agriculture → Cotton Farming → Ginning → Fibre → Spinning → Yarn → Textile → Design → Fashion → Garment Manufacturing → Retail → Export → Circular Economy

The proposed approach would:

- Increase value retained within Kenya
- Create rural and urban employment
- Strengthen textile and garment manufacturing
- Support creative-industry growth
- Strengthen TVET and skills development
- Increase export potential
- Strengthen demand for locally produced cotton
- Support women and youth enterprises
- Create markets for Kenyan designers
- Stimulate innovation
- Promote local manufacturing
- Strengthen Kenya's cultural identity through textiles and fashion

AOAC therefore recommends targeted amendments, policy mechanisms and institutional arrangements that ensure that the downstream textile, fashion, design, manufacturing and creative sectors are explicitly represented within Kenya's cotton-development framework.

SECTION 02

About Akinyi Odongo Art Centre

Akinyi Odongo Art Centre (AOAC) is a Kenyan creative and development organisation working across the convergence of:

Fashion | Art | Culture | Agriculture | Sustainability | Innovation | Enterprise Development

AOAC seeks to contribute to a more sustainable and economically productive creative ecosystem by connecting raw materials, communities, knowledge, creativity, enterprise and markets.

The Centre's work includes initiatives around:

- Sustainable fashion
- Women and youth empowerment
- Farmer and community engagement
- Indigenous materials
- Fashion and agriculture convergence
- Cultural expression
- Local talent development
- Cotton value-chain development
- Creative enterprise
- Research and innovation
- Skills development
- Economic empowerment

AOAC's perspective is therefore informed not only by creative practice but also by the need to connect communities, raw-material producers and downstream markets.

FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

Akinyi Odongo, O.G.W.

Founder / Creative Director, Akinyi Odongo Kenya™
Founder, MEFA Institute of Design
Industry Leader, Fashion, Creative Economy & Enterprise Development

26+
years of industry experience

Founder
& first Chairperson, Kenya Fashion Council

O.G.W.
Order of the Grand Warrior

1,000s
young and emerging creatives mentored



SECTION 03

The core policy position

AOAC's central position is simple:

Cotton should not be legislated only as an agricultural commodity.

It should be understood as the starting point of a broader economic ecosystem.

A cotton farmer can produce the raw material.
A ginnery can produce fibre.
A spinner can produce yarn.
A textile manufacturer can produce fabric.
A designer can transform fabric into a product.
A manufacturer can create garments.
A brand can create market demand.
A retailer can sell the product.
An exporter can take it into international markets.

Every stage can create employment, enterprise and value.

Therefore:

> AOAC POSITION
>
> **The success of Kenya's cotton industry should not be measured only by tonnes of cotton produced, but also by the amount of economic value, employment, enterprise and foreign exchange generated from each unit of cotton produced.**

SECTION 04

The cotton-to-fashion value chain

AOAC proposes that the legislative and policy framework deliberately recognise the following value chain:

01	Agriculture	Seed → Farmer → Cooperative → Extension → Harvest
02	Primary processing	Collection → Ginning → Grading → Fibre → Cottonseed
03	Textile production	Spinning → Yarn → Weaving → Knitting → Dyeing → Finishing
04	Creative value addition	Design → Fashion → Product Development → Cultural Expression → Branding
05	Manufacturing	Garments → Home Textiles → Accessories → Industrial Textiles → Technical Products
06	Market	Retail → E-commerce → Institutional Procurement → Regional Markets → Export
07	Circular economy	Repair → Reuse → Recycling → Upcycling → Fibre Recovery → Waste-to-Value

This is the Fibre-to-Fashion (F2F) approach that AOAC advocates.

SECTION 05

Why fashion must be recognised in the cotton framework

Fashion is frequently treated as the final consumer of textiles.

AOAC proposes a different understanding.

Fashion is a market creator.

Designers identify consumer needs.

They determine colours, silhouettes, products and market positioning.

They create brands.

They generate demand.

They convert textiles into products with significantly higher commercial and cultural value.

A strong domestic fashion industry therefore creates a stronger domestic market for Kenyan textiles.

The legislation should consequently recognise fashion designers, creative enterprises and garment manufacturers as legitimate participants in the cotton value chain.

SECTION 06

Proposed legislative and policy recommendations

Recommendation 1: Expand the definition of the cotton industry

The definition of the cotton industry should expressly recognise the downstream value chain.

It should include, where appropriate:

- Growers
- Ginners
- Textile manufacturers
- Knitters
- Designers
- Garment manufacturers
- Creative enterprises
- Exporters
- Training institutions
- Farmer organisations and cooperatives
- Spinners
- Weavers
- Dyers and finishers
- Fashion enterprises
- Artisans
- Marketers
- Research institutions
- Technology and innovation actors

AOAC POSITION

The definition should capture the full economic ecosystem rather than stopping at primary processing.

SECTION 07

Recommendation 2: Establish a cotton-to-fashion value chain framework

The legislation should require development of a national framework connecting cotton production with textile, fashion and manufacturing industries.

The framework should establish mechanisms for:

- Farmer-to-industry linkages
- Designer access to locally produced textiles
- Domestic manufacturing
- Export development
- Skills development
- Textile industry partnerships
- Local product development
- Market access
- Innovation

SECTION 08

Recommendation 3: Recognise fashion and creative enterprises as value-chain participants

The legislation should explicitly recognise:

Fashion designers, fashion enterprises, textile designers, garment manufacturers and creative enterprises

as stakeholders in the cotton industry.

Representation should be considered in relevant stakeholder forums, advisory structures and sector-development programmes.

SECTION 09

Recommendation 4: Revitalise Western Kenya's cotton economy through value addition

Western Kenya has significant historical and cultural associations with cotton production.

AOAC recommends a deliberate regional cotton revitalisation programme incorporating:

- Farmer cooperatives
- Aggregation
- Fashion enterprises
- TVET institutions
- Modern extension services
- Value addition
- Youth enterprises
- Research institutions
- Ginnery rehabilitation
- Textile partnerships
- Women-led enterprises

Counties such as Siaya, Kisumu, Busia and Migori, among other cotton-producing areas, should be considered within appropriate county-national programmes.

The objective should not merely be to produce cotton.

It should be to ensure that communities producing cotton participate in the economic value created downstream.



Hand-picked cotton: the first link in Kenya's cotton-to-fashion value chain.

SECTION 10

Recommendation 5: Transform ginneries into value-addition ecosystems

Ginneries should be considered more broadly than simply facilities for removing seed from cotton.

Where feasible, they should become anchors for:

- Aggregation
- Grading
- Fibre preparation
- Farmer information
- Cooperative services
- Training
- Product development
- Research
- Textile-industry linkages

This would allow rural cotton-growing regions to participate more meaningfully in industrialisation.

SECTION 11

Recommendation 6: Link cotton development to TVET and skills development

Kenya cannot build a competitive textile and fashion industry without the skills required to operate it.

The cotton framework should therefore encourage structured partnerships among:

- TVET institutions
- Fashion colleges
- Textile institutions
- Universities
- Research organisations
- Manufacturers
- Farmer organisations
- Designers

Training should include:

- Garment production
- Textile technology
- Spinning
- Weaving
- Knitting
- Dyeing
- Textile finishing
- Fashion design
- Product development
- Industrial production
- Entrepreneurship
- Digital design
- Sustainable production
- Circular economy

SECTION 12

Recommendation 7: Create deliberate opportunities for women and youth

Women and youth should not only be beneficiaries of cotton programmes.

They should be recognised as:

Producers, processors, designers, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, innovators and exporters.

AOAC recommends specific enterprise-development mechanisms supporting women and youth across the cotton-to-fashion value chain.

SECTION 13

Recommendation 8: Develop a domestic market for Kenyan cotton

Production cannot be sustained without demand.

Government should explore appropriate mechanisms to increase demand for locally produced cotton and textile products through:

- Public procurement
- School and TVET uniforms
- Household textiles
- Protective clothing
- Other suitable government and institutional requirements
- Institutional uniforms
- Hospital textiles
- Workwear
- Hospitality textiles

Such mechanisms should comply with applicable public-procurement law while deliberately supporting domestic value addition.

SECTION 14

Recommendation 9: Support Kenyan designers and brands as market developers

The Government should consider programmes that connect:

Farmers + Textile producers + Designers + Manufacturers + Retailers + Exporters

This can create commercially viable Kenyan textile and fashion brands.

Kenyan cotton should not only be sold as raw material.

It should increasingly leave the country as:

- Yarn
- Fabric
- Garments
- Home textiles
- Accessories
- Finished consumer products
- Branded fashion products

SECTION 15

Recommendation 10: Introduce innovation and sustainability into cotton policy

Kenya's cotton strategy should anticipate the future.

The legislative framework should support research and innovation around:

- Climate-resilient cotton
- Regenerative agriculture
- Sustainable production
- Water-efficient processing
- Natural dyes
- Indigenous materials
- Textile waste
- Circular fashion
- Recycling
- Upcycling
- Cotton by-products
- New textile technologies

This would position Kenya for emerging global markets that increasingly value traceability, sustainability and responsible production.

SECTION 16

Recommendation 11: Establish a multi-sector cotton industry advisory mechanism

Rather than creating unnecessary institutional duplication, AOAC recommends consideration of a strong multi-sector advisory and coordination mechanism.

Its representation could include:

- Cotton farmers
- Ginners
- Garment manufacturers
- TVET institutions
- Creative industries
- Cooperatives
- Textile manufacturers
- Private sector
- Women
- Financial institutions
- Counties
- Fashion designers
- Research institutions
- Youth
- Development partners

This would respond constructively to the concern raised in the Presidential reservations regarding the proliferation of State corporations.

The objective should be:

One coordinated cotton ecosystem, not multiple disconnected institutions.

SECTION 17

Recommendation 12: Create a cotton innovation and product development fund

AOAC recommends consideration of a competitive funding mechanism supporting:

- Farmer innovation
- Youth enterprises
- Research
- Textile innovation
- Women enterprises
- Technology
- Fashion product development
- Sustainable materials
- Product commercialisation

Funding should support the transition from:

Idea → Prototype → Product → Market

SECTION 18

Recommendation 13: Establish stronger research-industry linkages

Research should not remain in institutions.

The legislation and implementation framework should encourage direct partnerships among:

Farmers + Researchers + Manufacturers + Designers + Training institutions + Markets

This can accelerate innovation and commercialisation.

SECTION 19

Recommendation 14: Recognise culture as part of the cotton opportunity

Textiles are not merely industrial products.

They can carry:

- Kenyan identity
- Storytelling
- Contemporary African design
- Heritage
- Indigenous knowledge

Kenya should therefore explore how cotton-based textiles can support cultural enterprise and creative exports.

This would position cotton not only as an agricultural commodity but also as part of Kenya's cultural and creative economy.



Kenyan kitenge and wax-print textiles: culture, craft and commerce in a single cloth.

SECTION 20

The AOAC proposed value-chain model

AOAC recommends adoption of the following policy model:

01	Farm to fibre	Farmer → Cooperative → Collection → Ginning
02	Fibre to textile	Fibre → Spinning → Yarn → Weaving/Knitting → Dyeing/Finishing
03	Textile to fashion	Textile → Design → Product Development → Fashion
04	Fashion to manufacturing	Design → Garment Production → Branding → Retail
05	Manufacturing to market	Kenya → East Africa → Africa → Global Markets
06	Circular economy	Repair → Reuse → Recycling → Upcycling → Fibre Recovery

SECTION 21

Proposed outcomes

AOAC believes the strengthened framework should ultimately deliver:

1 **For farmers**

stronger markets; better incomes; improved extension; stronger cooperatives; increased demand

2 **For women**

enterprise opportunities; skills; access to markets; participation across the value chain

3 **For youth**

skills; employment; entrepreneurship; innovation; creative enterprise

4 **For manufacturers**

stronger domestic raw-material supply; increased local demand; investment opportunities

5 **For designers**

access to locally produced textiles; product-development opportunities; stronger domestic industry

6 **For Government**

employment; manufacturing growth; rural development; import substitution; export opportunities; increased economic activity

7 **For Kenya**

a stronger textile ecosystem; stronger creative economy; increased local value addition; greater cultural visibility; stronger participation in regional and international markets

SECTION 22

AOAC's key policy message

Kenya should move from:

> FROM
>
> **"How much cotton can we produce?"**

to:

> TO
>
> **"How much economic value can Kenya create from every kilogram of cotton we produce?"**

That shift is fundamental.

A farmer should not only sell cotton.
A Kenyan enterprise should be able to transform that cotton into fibre.
Another enterprise should transform fibre into yarn.
Another into textile.
A designer should transform textile into a desirable product.
A manufacturer should create employment.
A Kenyan brand should access regional and global markets.
And the economic value should circulate through Kenyan communities and enterprises for as long as possible.

SECTION 23

Conclusion

AOAC supports the development of a strong, competitive and sustainable cotton industry in Kenya.

However, we respectfully submit that the future of cotton cannot be secured by focusing exclusively on production.

The future lies in value addition, manufacturing, creativity, innovation, market development and integration across the entire value chain.

Kenya has an opportunity to build an industry in which:

Farmers produce
Industry transforms
Design creates value
Manufacturing creates jobs
Culture creates identity
Brands create markets
And exports create economic opportunity

AOAC therefore respectfully urges the Senate to consider strengthening the Cotton Industry Development framework through explicit recognition of the downstream textile, fashion, design, manufacturing, creative and circular-economy sectors.

We further request an opportunity to make an oral presentation and participate in stakeholder engagement relating to the Bill and the Presidential reservations.

AOAC's vision is simple:

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

SUBMITTED BY



Akinyi Odongo, O.G.W.

Founder & Director, Akinyi Odongo Art Centre (AOAC)

EMAIL	fashion@akinyiodongoartcentre.org
TELEPHONE	+254 734 841 997
WEBSITE	akinyiodongoartcentre.org

AKINYI ODONGO
art centre

Inspiring Creativity. *Preserving Heritage.* Empowering Communities.

Sifa Towers, 4th Floor, Cotton Avenue, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 734 841 997 | fashion@akinyiodongoartcentre.org
akinyiodongoartcentre.org