

From Risk to Resilience:

Building a Social Management System That Works



Protecting workers' rights, preventing forced labour, and fostering ethical business practices. From a reputational, legal, or moral perspective, every textile and apparel company prioritises these values highly in its strategy. But how to achieve them?

The answer is quite straightforward: By integrating the control of these elements into day-to-day activities. The only way to ensure you are effectively protecting workers' rights is to include verifications in your HR processes, for example, and to prevent forced labour by adding permanent controls into your supply chain processes.

To foster ethical business practices, you must communicate and train your employees repeatedly until these principles are deeply ingrained in your company culture. Only an ongoing effort can ensure that you consistently do things right, day after day. Is like quality: you do it every day.

Why not just audits?

You will not prevent social scandals by an annual verification of the "business as usual" ways of work. With a checklist audit, you can only identify past events and try to remediate them afterwards. This can result in regulatory fines, reputational damage, and, worse, boycotts. Management systems, however, anticipate upcoming issues and reduce the risks, as they are based on a proactive risk management approach.

The difference between audits versus a management system

Audits are snapshots; management systems are roadmaps. They ensure continuous improvement, not just one-time compliance.

- ISO management systems use the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle.
- Other approaches offer point-in-time audits or data snapshots.

Most social audits detect issues after the damage has been done. A social management system helps prevent them from happening in the first place.

- Audit-based systems often identify problems after they have happened; they are reactive.
- Management systems proactively anticipate upcoming issues and reduce the risks of these happening (tell you what could go wrong to prevent these from happening).

Data tells you what went wrong. A management system helps you identify potential risks and act on them.

- Many tools rely on quantitative data (e.g., working hours, wages, turnover), which reflect past events.
- A social management system embeds governance, leadership, and worker participation to address underlying systems and risk assessment (an essential element of the new laws) into an ongoing process.

Unlike traditional audits that rely on external validation, a social management system empowers your team to own and drive compliance.

- It builds internal capabilities and fosters a culture of accountability.

Built on the same ISO structure trusted worldwide, FSSC 24000 integrates seamlessly with your existing systems.

- FSSC 24000 is aligned with ISO's High-Level Structure, making it compatible with ISO 9001, 14001, etc.
- This creates efficiency and credibility with regulators and customers.

Compliance is the floor. A management system builds the ceiling, helping you drive performance and trust.

- Audits ask: "Are you compliant?"
- A social management system asks: "Are you improving?"



Introducing your social management system: FSSC 24000

FSSC 24000 is the first global Certification programme based on ISO-aligned management systems to advance social sustainability in supply chains, standing out for its risk-based approach and independent governance. These features make FSSC 24000 a robust, scalable, and credible solution for organisations seeking to improve social performance and meet global expectations.

How does the FSSC 24000 social management system work?

1. A Risk-Based Management System

FSSC 24000 requires organisations to implement a risk-based Social Management System, grounded in the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle and continual improvement. Organisations certified under FSSC 24000 must:

- ⇒ Systematically identify social risks (e.g., labour rights violations, worker safety, discrimination).
- ⇒ Assess likelihood and impact, prioritise risks, and implement controls.
- ⇒ Document and review processes regularly.
- ⇒ Demonstrate ongoing due diligence and improvement.

Unlike checklist-based certification standards, the FSSC 24000 approach fosters preventive action, i.e., acting before harm occurs or escalates, rather than only reacting to issues after they surface. This context-driven improvement aligns with global regulatory requirements on corporate due diligence and sustainability reporting.

2. ISO-Alignment

FSSC 24000 follows the ISO Harmonized Structure, enabling seamless integration with other management systems such as ISO 9001 for Quality, ISO 14001 for Environmental Management, or the ISO-based Food Safety Certification Scheme FSSC 22000. It enables organisations to combine multiple ISO management systems efficiently and achieve consistent, systematic improvements across all their processes.



3. Independent Governance

FSSC 24000 is governed by an independent Board of

Stakeholders (BoS), representing diverse sectors within the consumer goods industry. An Advisory Committee supports the BoS with expert input, reinforcing the Certification Scheme's integrity and responsiveness to industry needs. This system offers oversight, transparency, and industry involvement to ensure FSSC 24000 remains relevant and credible in the marketplace.

4. Industry Recognition and Credibility

FSSC 24000 has achieved recognition from several leading international organisations, confirming its credibility, transparency, and alignment with globally accepted sustainability standards.

- ⇒ EcoVadis recognises FSSC 24000 certification under the Labor Practices and Human Rights category, integrating verified social management system certification into the world's most widely used sustainability ratings platform.
- ⇒ FSSC 24000 successfully completed benchmarking against the Consumer Goods Forum's SSCI Requirements for Processing and Manufacturing.
- ⇒ Under the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), FSSC 24000 certificates are now accepted across participating markets.
- ⇒ The inclusion of FSSC 24000 in the ITC Standards Map validates its transparency and comparability with other recognised sustainability standards, enabling buyers, suppliers, and auditors to easily reference its criteria within global sourcing systems.

FSSC 24000 is the trusted standard for ethical textiles, from factory to fashion.

Achieving certification demonstrates that a company is systematically identifying, embedding, and managing social risks within its operational activities. This shifts the approach away from audit-driven preparation and episodic compliance towards an ongoing commitment, similar to how organisations manage quality or food safety. To protect and enhance reputation, social sustainability cannot be treated as a once-a-year exercise. With FSSC 24000, it becomes a continuous, embedded process.

FSSC 24000: 'Make with Care, Certify for Trust.'