Purpose

The SAC glossary provides definitions and explanations of words, terms and acronyms used frequently in relation to our organization. The definitions describe how we work and give an overview of our tools. Browse them below and get in touch if you would like more information.

1. Organizational Terms

Sustainable Apparel Coalition

The Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) is an independent and impact-creating organization that aims to lead the industry toward a shared vision of sustainability based upon a joint approach for measuring, evaluating, and improving performance.

As a non-profit organization, it has members from across the apparel, footwear and textile sector, but exists independently outside any one company so that it can drive progress. The SAC’s collective action efforts bring more than 280 global brands, retailers, manufacturers, NGOs, academics and industry associations together. They represent about half of the apparel and footwear industry along the whole supply chain – from sustainability pioneers to organizations just getting started.

Before the SAC existed, companies worked in a siloed way, using their own programmes and measurements that lacked standardization and an ability to drive collective action. In 2010, Walmart and Patagonia identified this as a serious problem. Joining forces, they brought together peers and competitors from across the sector, to develop a universal approach to measuring sustainability performance and founded The Sustainable Apparel Coalition.
Higg

Higg was launched in 2019 as a public-benefit technology company to build software for sustainability assessment methodologies. It is a separate company from the SAC. Higg provides access to a variety of sustainability management tools and solutions, including the Higg Index.

2. Higg Index

Higg Index

The Higg Index is an SAC-owned suite of data driven tools for brands, retailers and manufacturers to measure sustainability performance in the apparel, footwear and textile industry. It comprises a set of five independent tools that make it possible to measure the environmental and social impacts of how, where, and under what conditions products are made, as well as the companies making them. The tools provide a standard process for assessment that can then be used for benchmarking, allowing users to leverage verified data to track, manage and improve their performance. They also offer those just beginning their efforts a structured place to start which can make the process of data collection and strategy development less overwhelming.
# Higg BRM (Brand & Retail Module)

The Higg Brand & Retail Module (Higg BRM) is a tool that helps brands and retailers evaluate and improve their social and environmental impact of their business operations, from products, supply chains, packaging, retail stores, offices, transportation, and distribution centers. With up to 250 questions assessments are made on two impact areas: Environmental impacts include water usage, greenhouse gas emissions and chemicals management. Social impacts include fair wages, human rights, and working hours. The result is a single overarching sustainability management score, broken down into each social and environmental impact category, indicating where brands and retailers can make sustainability improvements.

# Higg Facility Tools

The Higg Facility Tools predominately used by manufacturing facilities and includes the Higg Facility Environmental Module (FEM) and the Higg Facility Social and Labor Module (FSLM).

## Higg FEM Higg Environmental Module

The Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) enables manufacturers, brands, and retailers to assess environmental performance at facilities, from water use, to waste management to chemical and energy use. The tool gathers primary data from manufacturers to help organizations understand impact to support sustainable improvements.

## Higg FEM Higg Social & Labour Module

The Higg Facility Social & Labor Module (Higg FSLM) helps empower safe and fair social and labor conditions for workers all over the world, helping facilities to understand hotspots and reduce audit fatigue. The scored assessment helps make it easy for facilities to identify and prioritize high social risks for immediate action, flagging them on the Higg platform when a facility completes their assessment.

# Higg Product Tools

The Higg Product Tools assess a product’s environmental impacts. There are two: the Higg Materials Sustainability Index (Higg MSI) and the Higg Product Module (Higg PM). These tools empower designers, brands, retailers and manufacturers to use life cycle assessment data to make more
Higg Materials Sustainability Index (Higg MSI)

The Higg Materials Sustainability Index (Higg MSI) is the apparel industry’s most used tool to measure the environmental impacts of materials. Apparel, footwear, and textile industry designers and product developers can use the Higg MSI to assess the cradle-to-gate impacts of different materials, such as textiles, plastics, metals, and leather. The Higg MSI uses data submitted from the industry and life cycle assessment databases to calculate environmental impacts of hundreds of different materials. Designers use this information to help make more informed and responsible choices around materials. The MSI doesn’t enable one material to be compared against another – for example, polyester versus cotton. It provides data to help create lower impact versions of materials. It also doesn’t measure the social impacts that different materials can have – for example on the livelihoods of farmers or the ability of the global poor to meet their needs.

Higg Product Module (Higg PM)

A new tool launched in June 2021 helps organizations evaluate the full environmental impact of a product. It measures the cradle-to-grave environmental impacts of a product from the point of resource extraction to manufacturing impacts, all the way through product durability, care, and end of use. With a complete picture of a product’s footprint, designers and sustainability teams can find new opportunities to reduce impact – and accurately demonstrate improvement to customers, stakeholders, and business partners.

Higg Transparency Index

Launched as a pilot in May 2021, the Higg Index transparency program aims to enable brands and retailers to provide information on a product’s environmental impact in a consistent and consumer-friendly way. The program is currently paused to better understand how to substantiate product level claims with trusted and credible data.

3. EU PEF
Product Environmental Footprint (PEF)

As the SAC has members from across 50% of the textile and apparel industry, the SAC is facilitating the PEF Technical Secretariat with the objective to collaboratively develop the global Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCRs) for apparel and footwear.

A Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) is an overall methodology by the European Commission’s Joint Research Center (JRC) which measures the environmental performance of a good/service throughout its life cycle. Its goal is to provide “a common way of measuring environmental performance” for companies within the EU wishing to market their product.

EU PEF is a policy standard that will be used in regulation (such as the Consumer Empowerment legislation).

PEFCR

Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCR) are specific methodologies containing a set of rules on how to measure the life cycle environmental performance for a specific product group (e.g. apparel or footwear).

The PEFCR approach is still in testing. It does not have a say in the direction of the approach but it convenes the industry, facilitating a collaborative, multi-stakeholder secretariat, whose task is to develop Global Apparel and Footwear (PEFCR) which will serve as a policy standard for apparel and footwear products in the EU.

The SAC’s objective is to ensure that the PEFCRs are scalable, meaningful (drive change), and ultimately reduce the impacts of the sector as a whole.

The current EU PEF will not use the Higg MSI, and will be sourcing its own raw material datasets.
4. Ecosystem Partners

Policy Hub

The Policy Hub represents more than 700 apparel & footwear stakeholders including brands, retailers, and manufacturers. The Policy Hub for Apparel and Footwear is working to accelerate change by bringing the industry together to voice ambitious policy recommendations that promote a circular economy in the apparel, footwear, and textile industry. The Policy Hub brings together the expertise of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, Global Fashion Agenda, and Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry and Textile Exchange.

Apparel Impact Institute (Aii)

The Apparel Impact Institute (Aii) was launched in 2017 to help scale the best environmental solutions for the apparel and footwear industry. The organization seeks to identify, fund, scale, and measure the industry’s proven impact solutions with a current focus on energy, water, and chemistry. Aii launched Clean by Design, an efficiency program initiative aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, water consumption and chemical impacts in textile manufacturing and is used by several SAC members.

The Social Labor And Convergence Program (SLCP)

The Social Labour and Convergence Program (SLCP) was launched in 2015 and is a multi-stakeholder initiative of over 200 signatories including leading brands, manufacturers, standard holders, and civil society. The SLCP developed the Converged Assessment Framework (CAF) to eliminate duplicative and repetitive proprietary social and labor audits with a single verified assessment that can be used by all stakeholders. The CAF is the backbone of SAC’s Higg Facility Social & Labor Module.

5. Industry Definitions

Cradle-to-Gate

Used within the context of a life cycle assessment, cradle-to-gate refers to the carbon impact of a product from the moment it’s produced to the moment it enters the store. For example, the Higg MSI assesses cradle-to-gate impacts of different materials.
Cradle-to-Grave

Used within the context of a life cycle assessment, cradle-to-grave covers the entire lifecycle of a product. It’s a full analysis of a product from the raw materials to the disposal of the product. For example, the Higg PM assesses cradle-to-grave impacts of a particular product to give a full picture of its impact.

Life-cycle Assessment (LCA)

Life cycle assessment is a cradle-to-grave or cradle-to-cradle analysis technique to assess environmental impacts associated with all the stages of a product's life, which is from raw material extraction through materials processing, manufacture, distribution, and use. (See cradle-to-grave and cradle-to-gate).