

## Sustainable textiles for the fire service

### Procura+ award runner up



Image: pixabay.com

<b>Procura+ Participant:</b>	Institute for Safety, Netherlands
<b>Contract:</b>	Sustainable fire station clothing for 19 of the 25 Dutch fire service regions Awarded: April 2016
<b>Savings:</b>	CO <sub>2</sub> saved: 134 tonnes Energy saved: 3213GJ of non-renewable energy avoided Other: 262 tonnes of toxic additives and pesticides avoided

#### SUMMARY

- The Institute for Safety (Netherlands) aims to play an exemplary role in the procurement of organic and recycled textiles.
- By collaborating with other authorities and carrying out a market study and supplier engagement process, it was able to identify the possibilities the market had to offer.
- The winning bid saved 134 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and prevented the use of 262 tonnes of toxic additives and pesticides.

## Background

The [Instituut Fysieke Veiligheid](#) (Institute for Safety, IFS) is the institute for disaster relief and public crisis management in the Netherlands. It contributes to a safer society by strengthening the 25 safety regions of the Netherlands through supporting policy, encouraging knowledge sharing, providing training, promoting leadership, managing projects and acquiring and managing communal equipment.

With regards to purchasing, the IFS has a CSR policy and an action plan on sustainable procurement which contains goals on sustainability for several categories (e.g. corporate clothing). The IFS also supports the regions to set procurement policy and undertake procedures. It also provides legal advice and offers advice around undertaking market consultation and managing contracts.

## Procurement Approach

In 2015, the IFS began by carrying out a market study to see what possibilities the market had to offer, and allow it time to develop solutions to the IFS's asks.

After this engagement period, the IFS decided to use a non-public procedure, where they selected companies which have experience of using recycled and organic fibres and have some ability to influence production. This approach also minimised costs for involved parties.

A project structure was created to implement this purchase. Representatives from the fire service were included in a project group and steering committee, which was chaired by a Regional Fire Service Chief who also chairs the Fire Service Clothing Policy Committee. A 'sounding board group' was also created which consisted of members of the ABB (advisory group on fire service wear management), and the chair of the ABB was also an active member of the project group.

## Criteria used in the procurement process

### Subject matter of the contract

Sustainable fire station clothing for 19 of the 25 Dutch fire service regions

### Selection criteria

When submitting tenders, bidders were asked to confirm that they, and any subcontractors they work with:

- do not tolerate any form of discrimination or personal threat;
- accept the right to organise;
- support the right to individual development;
- do not tolerate any form of forced labour or slavery;
- ensure a healthy working environment; and
- require everyone to comply with Convention number 138 of 26 June 1973 and Convention number 182 of 17 June 1999 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concerning the minimum age and the prohibition of child labour.

## Award criteria

Description of how bidders will give substance to three subjects from ISO26000 (CSR) for this order. The bidders had to explain which principles of social responsibility they are dealing with in the decision making and implementation of the following specific core themes and topics on the production for and deliveries to the Client:

The subjects were:

- The environment
  - Preventing environmental pollution (harmful substances)
  - Sustainable use of resources (use of recycled fibres)
- Labour practices
  - Working conditions and social protection (international work needs one ILO)
  - Health and safety at work
  - Human rights
  - Discrimination and vulnerable groups (women, girls and child labour)
  - Fundamental principles and labour rights (forced labour and child labour)

The clearer the principles of social responsibility in the decision making and implementation were described the more points were given.

- Percentage of recycled/organic content in items

The higher the percentage of recycled fibres were on the weight of the clothing and / or the higher the percentage of organically grown fibres, the more the more points were given.

## Contract performance clauses

### 1. Article about innovation

Once a year, for the first time in 2017, the Contractor must present an innovation proposal to the Client. This innovation proposal relates to CSR, the products and / or services provided by the Contractor and contributes to quality improvement and / or cost reduction.

### 2. The IFS decides whether the innovation proposal is accepted and introduced.

## Results

The resulting purchase, worth €4.5 million, supplied garments in which only organic (GOTS certified) cotton was used, and polyester components consisted entirely of recycled fibres, sourced from the cutting waste of production processes.

It was agreed that any intellectual property or patents developed through this process would continue to be held by the supplier, thereby stimulating innovation, however, they will be made available to the IFS if necessary. This has been laid down in a legal instrument, signed in the presence of a civil law notary.

## Sustainability impacts

Organic cotton has a range of sustainability benefits. For example, in 2014 a life cycle assessment of comparing organic cotton and conventional cotton found that, per 1000kg of cotton fibre, organic

cotton had 46% less global warming impact, as well as the potential to reduce acidification by 70%, eutrophication (excess of nutrients in the water environment) by 26%, and reduce non-renewable primary energy demand by 62%. With the right management techniques, it is also possible to reduce blue water consumption 91%. In addition, it completely avoids the use of any synthetic pesticides, which benefits biodiversity (source: [Textile Exchange](#)).

Polyester is derived from oil, and therefore its production is also accompanied with high emissions of greenhouse gasses (CO<sub>2</sub>, methane and nitrous oxide) and high energy consumption. By substituting the inputs with recycled fibres, this environmental impact is reduced. In addition, textile waste is also reduced, as it is redirected back into the production process.

In one year, more than 92,773 kg of fire station clothing is procured by the IFS. By applying sustainability requirements to the tender, the IFS was able to achieve savings of:

- 134 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent
- 3213 GJ of energy derived from fossil fuels
- 7.6 GJ of energy derived from renewable energy
- 262 tonnes (100%) of toxic additives and synthetic pesticides

Every year the production will be around the 92.000 kg. The contract lasts 6 to 8 years, so the total savings are many times higher than is written above.

## Lessons learned

Do's:

- Select companies which have experience of using recycled and organic fibres and have some ability to influence production.
- Put at least 25% recycled fibres in the requirements. It is possible.

Don't:

- Ask for the percentage of recycled/organic content in items as an award criteria. In later tenders we measured the environmental impact on CO<sub>2</sub>, water and primary energy of the garments by using a life cycle assessment. This was an award criteria.

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## About Procura+

Initiated and co-ordinated by ICLEI, Procura+ is a network of European public authorities and regions that connect, exchange and act on sustainable and innovation procurement.

### Connect.



We are a network of European public authorities that connect, exchange and act on sustainable and innovation procurement.

### Exchange.



Our combined knowledge and experience allows us to provide advice, support and publicity to any public authority that wants to implement sustainable and innovation procurement.

### Act.



The Procura+ Network joins forces to champion sustainable and innovation procurement at the European level.

[www.procuraplus.org](http://www.procuraplus.org)



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