



Pushing the boundaries of EPR policy for textiles: Ghana factsheet



EPR Status

EPR for textiles	Other EPR schemes
	 <p><i>Established EPR schemes: packaging and packing materials, tyres</i></p> <p><i>Supported by the World Bank, the Ghanaian Ministry of the Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) is developing the legal framework for a mandatory EPR for plastics scheme. MESTI intends to expand the remit of the EPR legislation in the future to other product categories including textiles, electronics and food products.¹</i></p>

Separate collection & sorting of discarded textiles

Separate collection rate	Sorting of collected textiles
<p>Data is not available as there is currently no formal separate collection in place across the country.</p> <p>However in Accra’s Kantamanto market, one of the world’s largest used clothing markets, where secondhand clothing is sold to wholesalers and citizens, approximately 30% of the textile waste generated (textiles that remain unsold and therefore become waste) is collected by the Accra Waste Management Services.²</p>	<p>Data is not available as sorting activities in Ghana are largely focused on imported second-hand clothing and not on discarded used textiles. Often, sorting operations are carried out by both the importer (wholesaler) and the buyer (trader).³</p>

Destinations of used textiles imported into Ghana

Volume of used textiles imports into Ghana (2022)	111,329 tonnes ⁴
Textiles transported to Kantamanto market ⁵ <i>Relative to the quantity of textiles imported into Ghana in 2022</i>	63% ⁶
Textiles sent onwards to other markets in Ghana <i>Relative to the quantity of textiles transported to Kantamanto market</i>	30% ⁷
Textiles exported to neighbouring countries <i>Relative to the quantity of textiles transported to Kantamanto market</i>	50% ⁸
Textiles remaining for sale on Kantamanto Market <i>Relative to the quantity of textiles transported to Kantamanto market</i>	20% ⁹ <i>Of which approximately 60% are considered quality 1 and 2 grades, while 40% are considered low value and therefore likely to end up in final disposal.¹⁰</i>
Waste textiles ¹¹	At Kantamanto market, 30% of textile waste that is collected by the the Accra Waste Management Services is landfilled. The remaining 70% is abandoned in the environment. ¹²

Ghana's textiles challenge

Oliver Boachie is Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation in Ghana. In his role, Boachie closely follows global developments and policy efforts to create a circular economy for textiles and plastics, and works to develop national circular economy policies tailored to the Ghanaian context.

“Ghana has a thriving reuse economy,” Boachie explains. “Ghanaians purchase used clothing, and rely on local repair businesses and tailors to keep garments in use. This is a fantastic example of a circular economy. Textiles discarded by households are typically no longer reusable, as they are generally used until all reuse value is drawn out. For these products, there is currently no formal separate collection offered by the waste management services, resulting in the majority of these textiles going into the municipal solid waste stream.”

“In addition, there is a significant percentage of imported used clothing that is never sold, or turns out to be non-reusable. Some governmental efforts to separately collect used textiles focus on marketplaces for secondhand clothing, such as Kantamanto market in Accra. Because of this non-reusable fraction that currently ends as waste, there is a strong need to establish a sorting industry in Ghana, alongside engineered landfills and other facilities to process low-quality textiles in an environmentally sound manner.”

What EPR policy could do for Ghana

In Ghana there is currently no mandatory EPR policy in place, however, a legal framework is being developed for plastics. Over time, this will be extended to cover textiles, as well as electronics and food products, as outlined in Ghana's roadmap for the circular transition. “The current lack of processing infrastructure as well as the informal nature of the national textile sector will be important considerations in Ghana's EPR policy design,” says Boachie.



EPR can help create jobs and build new industries to keep textile materials in circulation.

Oliver Boachie

Recognising the opportunity of EPR schemes to capture the value of textile products and materials, Boachie believes that “rather than focusing on growing new fibres and textiles, such as cotton, we should instead focus on building a fibre-to-fibre recycling industry in Ghana, taking advantage of the volume of used textiles we have and collaborating with neighbouring regions, such as Mali and Niger, to spin yarn incorporating both

used and virgin textiles. This approach will generate jobs and deliver upskilling trajectories for workers in Ghana, ultimately improving their quality of life.”

Boachie argues that EPR can be a tool in the transition to a circular economy: “EPR needs to consider an expanded mandate, by design. It needs to cover collection and treatment, but it also needs to cover ancillary services, education, capacity-building, and awareness-raising. It can strengthen the roles and jobs of actors in the value chain, in particular for informal workers. EPR traditionally does not do this, but it certainly can.”

The global dimension

Policymakers are conscious of the interconnection between (future) EPR policies and trade policies. “As Ghana is a net importer of used textiles, international trade flows directly impact our volumes of waste,” explains Boachie. “Therefore, when developing EPR schemes, the global dimension needs to be accounted for. To solve the textile waste problem, EPR schemes need to collaborate internationally.” Boachie suggests that this could involve improved sorting and information-sharing at the export end, prior to shipping. In addition, Boachie believes that by extending the geographical scope of EPR policies in the case of exports, Ghana could benefit from financial support to develop the infrastructure for a domestic sorting industry and for environmentally sound solutions to process non-reusable textiles.



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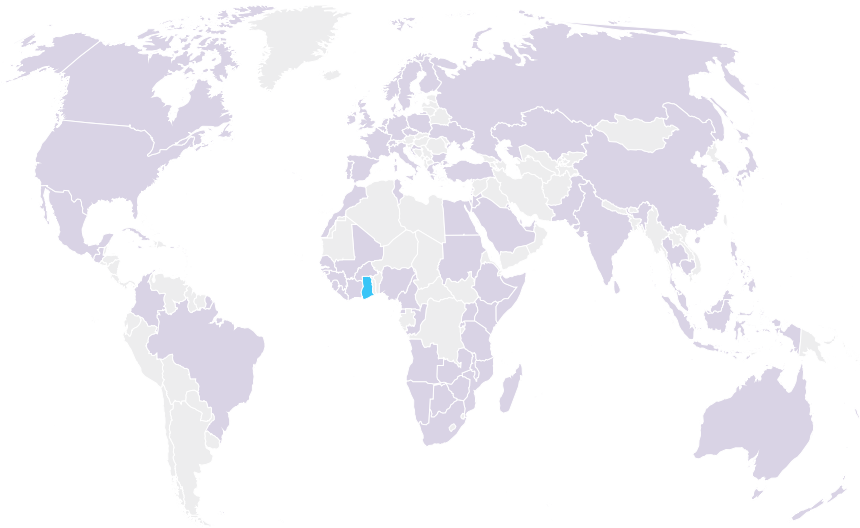
Beyond EPR in its current form, other financing mechanisms need to be considered to eliminate textile waste and pollution. “Countries at the import and export ends of the textile chain need to work together,” Boachie continues. “In 2023, Ghana proposed a Global Plastic Pollution Fee (GPPF). The idea of such a global fee could also be considered for textile products, ensuring that countries receive the support they need to manage waste where it ultimately ends up.”



The role of Ghana in the used textiles trade

Ghana is a net importer of used textiles, and in 2021 was the 12th largest importer, accounting for 2% of global imports. In that year, 62% of Ghana's imports came from just three countries: the United Kingdom (32%), China (22%) and Canada (8%).¹³

Global distribution of exports from Ghana

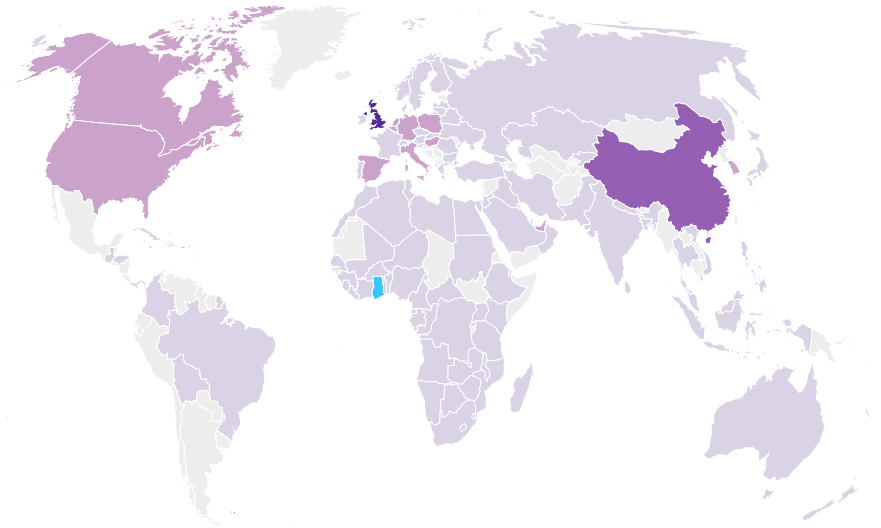


Annual used textile exports (2021): 1kT¹⁴



Quantity of used textiles (kT)

Global distribution of imports to Ghana



Annual used textile imports (2021): 119kT¹⁵



Quantity of used textiles (kT)

Acknowledgements

Core Team

Sophie Moggs
Lead Author

Valérie Boiten
Senior Policy Officer

Laura Collacott
Consultant Editor

Matteo Magnani
Senior Policy Analyst

External Contributions

The team would like to thank the following individuals for their extensive input and feedback.

Oliver Boachie
Senior Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ghana

Background information taken from the study conducted by GIZ via Dr. Kölsch Geo- und Umwelttechnik GmbH: Used Textiles at Kantamanto market, 2024.

Wider Team

Jocelyn Blériot
Executive Lead, Policy and Institutions

Eline Boon
Senior Policy Manager

Sarah O'Carroll
Institutions Lead, Policy and Institutions

Lucy Dayman
Communications Executive

Sofia Voudouoglou
Communications Executive

Matt Barber
Graphic Designer

Georgia Walker
Designer - Digital

Neil Amos
Senior Product Manager - Digital

Sarah Butler
Social Media Content Creator

Endnotes

- 1 Ellen MacArthur Foundation interview with Oliver Boachie, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (2024).
- 2 Ellen MacArthur Foundation interview with Oliver Boachie, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (2024); *Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Waste Management Services* (2024); Ellen MacArthur Foundation interview with Engr. Solomon Noi, Director of Waste Management Department at Accra Metropolitan Assembly (2024)
- 3 GIZ, *Assessment study: Used textiles at Kantamanto market* (2024), p. 10-11. The Or Foundation, *How to Ensure Waste Colonialism is Not Written Into Law and That Fashion's Biggest Polluters Have to Change* (2023), p. 8
- 4 Based on analysis of the *UN Comtrade* data (HS-6309)
- 5 Kantamanto market, located in Accra, is Ghana's largest second-hand clothing market and one of the biggest second-hand markets globally. (GIZ, *Assessment study: Used textiles at Kantamanto market* (2024), p. 9)
- 6 Ellen MacArthur Foundation analysis based on data from GIZ, *Assessment study: Used textiles at Kantamanto market* (2024), p. 13. To note, the import volume the GIZ study based their analysis on has been updated since the publication of their report. The difference between the volume of used textiles imports reported in this factsheet (based on UN Comtrade data) and the GIZ publication are due to these updates. The percentage of textiles transported to Kantamanto market is not impacted significantly by this change. The data reported by GIZ is based on a combination of desk research, local on-site observations performed between September and December 2023 and interviews with key stakeholders.
- 7 GIZ, *Assessment study: Used textiles at Kantamanto market* (2024), p. 13
- 8 *ibid.*
- 9 *ibid.*
- 10 Ellen MacArthur Foundation analysis based on data from GIZ, *Assessment study: Used textiles at Kantamanto market* (2024), p. 13
- 11 Textiles that, after sorting, are considered unsuitable for reuse, recycling, and downcycling. These textiles are disposed of through landfill or incineration.
- 12 See See Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *Pushing the boundaries of EPR policy for textiles* (2024) Appendix A
- 13 Based on analysis of the UN Comtrade data (HS-6309). See Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *Pushing the boundaries of EPR policy for textiles* (2024), Appendix D
- 14 *ibid.*
- 15 *ibid.*



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