



Whitepaper

# Sustainable linen rental

more than just Fairtrade

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Blycolin

# Sustainable linen rental: what matters to you?

Green is steadily becoming the standard, also in the hospitality branch. An increasing amount of guests wants to stay in a place with attention to sustainability. Not just with words, but especially by taking actions. A hotel, wellness center, restaurant or holiday park that takes the initiative to decrease our ecological footprint, that's where we want to go.

## Guests want to make concessions ... in exchange for sustainability

Guests like to be pampered and many hoteliers believe it is an essential part of their hospitality to indulge their guests. Luxury is an important factor, but many guests are willing to concede to this in favor of more environmental-friendliness. What that means? That many travelers do not mind that the air-conditioning or heating is switched off when they are not in their room. Or that they are satisfied with a water-saving showerhead and do not mind using the bath linen more than once.

## ... and go for authenticity that goes hand in hand with sustainability

To many travelers, this does not feel like a 'sacrifice'. Sustainable travel to them equals a more authentic and often also local experience. A dinner exclusively made with regional products is not only a sustainable initiative, but also a way to make the guest experience unique.

***'Consumers think sustainability is important and adjust their behavior to match that. Entrepreneurs should include sustainability in their strategy.'***

– From the branch update by Rabobank, 2018

Travelers worldwide, taking part in a large-scale Booking.com survey, responded as follows:

- 87% intend to stay at least once in a green, sustainable accommodation in 2018
- 39% stated to have already done so
- 68% says that knowing an accommodation is sustainable has a positive influence on their decision
- 67% of the travelers is prepared to spend 5% more on their trip to ensure it has a minimal impact on the environment

From the Global Sustainable Travel Report by Booking.com, 2018



# Making your linen rental more environmentally-friendly? A few tips.

You are convinced of the importance of sustainability, just like many travelers and an increasing amount of entrepreneurs. And maybe you have realized that you can improve your operations, also in the area of linen rental. But what are the things to pay attention to when it comes to linen service? Which knowledge is important?

## 1. Choosing for clean resources

### Does the cotton come from organic farms?

In the first place, clean hotel linen starts with clean cotton: it really is that simple. Organic cotton is cotton for which no toxic and chemical herbicides are used during the cotton cultivation on the plants.

To compare: in regular agriculture, approximately one kilo of pesticides is used to produce one duvet cover. Farmers that cultivate organic cotton use natural herbicides and do not make use of genetically manipulated plants. Moreover, because they timely rotate crops, they prevent depletion of the soil due to one-sided cultivation.

### Is the cotton being produced in a clean way?

Organic cotton is not only cultivated sustainably, but also processed in a sustainable way. This entails that the use of water and water purification is closely monitored. In regular textile production, large amounts of chlorine and formaldehyde are used for the production of cotton, which cause severe illnesses in the employees. The same goes for dyes and finishing products. Also, for the regular production of one kilo of cotton 11,000 liters of water is required, while for organic cotton only 2,023 liters is needed. Attention to people and the environment therefore also matters during the production of cotton.

### Chetna Organic: organic cotton farms and plants in India

Does your partner take or support initiatives to expand organic agriculture? An example of such an initiative is the Chetna Organic project in India. This organization ensures that farmers use organic cotton seeds, receive a fair price for their crops and can close a favorable loan to set up their company. At the same time, the project supports the village community in the area of education and health and further organic agriculture.

### Audits as tool at and with the producer

Does your linen renter perform audits? By having an independent agency perform an SA8000 audit aimed at the working conditions, your linen partner can monitor how the producer scores on subjects such as working hours, wages and employee safety. Cotton can only ever be clean when the conditions for the people working with it are well taken care of.



**Do you want to know whether the cotton of your linen is organic? Check for hallmarks and certificates. GOTS certification is the best known and worldwide standard that strictly monitors that environment and people are central in the cultivation of cotton and the production into linen products.**

## 2. Making the process more sustainable

Besides paying attention to the purchase and processing of cotton, your linen renter can also pay attention to making their own service more sustainable: rental. Renting out linen involves many processes, such as industrial laundry, logistics and transport. Does your linen renter also mind the environment during those processes?

### Is the washing of cotton clean?

Let's not beat around the bush: laundry requires lots of water. But an industrial laundry can minimize the use of water with innovative solutions. A Laundry Dashboard, that monitors the use of water, gas, electricity and detergents, provides many insights to a laundry. And with a high pressure press, the laundry can squeeze out extra water from the washing, so it enters the drying process dryer and requires 10% less energy. Also, the laundry can sustainably purchase detergents: should, for instance, the laundry use the renewed EU Ecolabel certified Cool Chemistry Hospitality washing concept, it can wash at lower temperatures and use a less taxing rinsing program. All much better for the environment.

### Are logistics and transport optimized?

When the linen is washed, it will return to your hotel, spa, holiday park or restaurant. There are many roads leading to that destination, but a sustainable linen renter will choose the one with the least amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emission. Smart logistics is the solution here. Think of optimizing the rotation package, so less kilometers have to be driven. Or limiting the amount of kilometers by optimally finetuning the delivery frequency and routing.

### Greener on the road

Linen transport must be done: the linen has to go from location A to location B. What a linen renter can do, is working with drivers and transport companies that drive with electric lorries or drive as efficiently as possible. With energy-efficient Euro 5 and Euro 6 trucks for instance, that emit less than 1 gram of CO per kilometer. Or by working with a national network of laundries. This is a good way to keep the amount of kilometers that have to be driven low.



**MADE BLUE**

### Compensating water use with Made Blue

Washing without water is still impossible. You never know what the future holds, but for now we can compensate the use of water. Made Blue is an organization that mirrors the use of water in organizations with the project "A liter for a liter". This means that they make just as much clean drinking water available in developing countries as an organization uses annually. This is vital, as there are still almost 700 million people in the world that do not have permanent access to clean drinking water. This is something organizations can do something about together.

- With 775 million liters of water, over 100,000 people can build a healthy existence
- Over 27 companies have decreased their water use with Made Blue
- At the start of 2018, 2,789,825,579 liters of clean drinking water had been realized!

### 3. Improving your own linen management

As a hotel or housekeeping manager, you can make an important contribution towards more sustainability.

#### 1. Handle the linen well (and prevent misuse)

Quickly drying the shower with a towel or using the napkins to polish the silverware: it seems harmless, but it actually wears the linen out. And that is not just a waste of linen, but is also bad for the environment. A threadbare linen product will be discarded sooner and needs to be replaced earlier than necessary. Take a good look at all of your linen and ensure everything is used only for its intended purpose. That will save the products as well as the environment.

#### Tell your guests

Your linen partner can help you to reinforce your story. By furnishing their products and services with attractive materials that show how they invest in sustainability with their linen services, you instantly have access to stories to inspire your guests. This also shows you do not only think about sustainability within your own organization, but also in the cooperation with suppliers and partners.

#### 2. Involve guests and employees in your linen story.

It's one thing to devote yourself to sustainability, but sharing your story is something different. Yet, it is important to do: your story will attract an increasingly expanding group of environmentally conscious guests. If you do not share your story, you will miss out on those guests.

Also, communications with your employees is important: they are the ambassador of your hotel, spa, restaurant or holiday park. They are not just an important link towards (potential) guests. When you tell your employees about sustainability and involve them in the process of improvement, you will get a lot of energy in return in the form of enthusiasm, ideas, tips and dedication. That in itself is indispensable, but also consider what this would mean for the image of your company.

#### Do you know Green Key and Green Globe?

You can check the linen service you use for hallmarks and certificates. However, you can also make your own efforts in the area of sustainability official and structural by means of certificates. The most well-known for the hospitality branch are:

- **Green Key:** the international hallmark for sustainable companies in the recreational and leisure branch, as well as the commercial market.
- **Green Globe:** the worldwide certification for sustainable tourism.

## 4. Taking responsibility for the future

Linen services, their products and suppliers and you as a hospitality entrepreneur: we can all work towards a cotton chain that keeps on improving for people and the environment. Thankfully, the number of sustainable initiatives is increasing, as is the attention within the branch for:

**The circular economy:** an economic system to maximize the reusability of products and resources and minimize loss of value.

**Post-consumer recycling:** the material that companies and consumers offer for recycling after use.

**Pre-consumer recycling:** processing cutting losses and remnants in products and materials.

### A glimpse into the cotton chain

Without realizing it, we use cotton products throughout our entire day. We wear clothes, dry ourselves with towels and crawl between the sheets at night. To produce all these products, 25 million tons of cotton is produced every year. From the production alone, 250 million people worldwide make their living.

So the cotton chain is big, enormous. To minimize the footprint of the industry, cooperation is essential. For good reasons we focus on both the agriculture and production as well as the linen service and hospitality branch here. What does that chain cooperation mean for you? That improvement goes beyond the limits of your own company and becomes more complex and challenging. But you do not have to do it alone: seek advice, find allies and join forces. It is a cliché, but no less true because of that: together, we can make a difference.

### Cooperation in the chain:

#### Code of Conduct

Cooperating in the chain: what does that look like in reality? An example: your linen partner can record the basic principles on ethical behavior for a sustainable and honest industry and communicate this to their suppliers. For instance, Blycolin asks its suppliers to sign a Code of Conduct. By doing so, suppliers also take their social responsibility for the environment and healthy working conditions. Responsibility doesn't stop at the door of your own company, but is a matter of cooperation, in the interest of a shared higher goal.



# Convenient checklist: assess your linen partner and yourself!

## 1. Check where the linen comes from.

Is it produced organically? Is the cotton sustainably processed (production)? Check which hallmarks the linen carries and find out what they entail. Also check how your linen supplier cooperates with other parties in the chain: which initiatives does the company take and which tools are being used?

## 2. Check how the linen is washed.

Which laundry (or laundries) does the linen service use? Does this party use ecological means? Which initiatives does this party take to save water?

## 3. Calculate the distance to the laundry.

Which initiatives does the linen service take in the area of smart logistics? What does the linen service do to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emission?

## 4. Calculate how long your linen lasts.

How long do the various products you rent last on average? Is this average stable or does it fluctuate? What is the reason for that?

## 5. Use textile for its intended purpose.

Is textile being used in the wrong way? For instance, bath towels to clean the bathroom or mopping with the bathmat?

## 6. Check what happens to the linen afterwards.

What happens to discarded linen? Is it thrown away, or is it being used as a new resource? Which initiatives does your linen partner take in the area of circular economy and post-consumer and pre-consumer recycling?



## Questions about or ideas for sustainable linen rental?

Take a look around at our website. Over the past years, Blycolin has continuously been making improvements at various levels to make our services more sustainable. Improvements in our service, but also in the products we supply. Examples are the Comeback bed runners and decorative pillows (post-consumer recycling), the New Atlantic and Stone bath mat (pre-consumer recycling) and the Pure Eco bedlinen line (GOTS and Fairtrade cotton).

At Blycolin, we love to share our story about the ways in which we pay attention to sustainability to those interested in this subject. Of course, you can always contact us to exchange thoughts and ideas about sustainability in the hospitality branch: cooperating together, we get done the most.

**Blycolin B.V.**

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