

DIMENSIONAL CHANGES DURING WASHING AND DRYING

3.29.1 Current criterion

The current criterion is formulated as follows:

”The dimensional changes shall not exceed 6% (length and width) for knitted products, 8% (warp and weft) for terry toweling, or 4% for other woven products. This criterion does not apply to products clearly labeled “dry clean only” or equivalent (insofar as it is normal practice for such products to be so labeled), or to furniture fabrics.

Test method: ISO 5077 (3 washes at temperatures as indicated on the product, with tumble drying unless otherwise indicated on the product, at temperatures as marked on the product, wash load (2 or 4 kg) as indicated on the product). Test report required on application.

3.29.2 Changes to the criterion

For the fitness for use criteria no. 29 34 the consultants have tried to establish the quality level of a textile or clothing brand name at the upper end of the market scale. The quality levels have been fixed to ensure that producers of these products will not be met with justified consumer complaints. From the French Competent Body information has been received about this criterion for instance for bedding that it is very difficult to fulfill. Similar inputs have been received from other competent bodies. Also for knitwear comments have been received that even 6% cannot be met for a number of products.

Acceptable limits of dimensional change depend very much on the type of product. For a woven sheet, which is big enough for the bed 5% shrinkage may be acceptable, but for a long curtain even 2% shrinkage may be unacceptable.

Knitwear constitutes a special problem as many constructions are very elastic, and tight products are often accepted. For knitwear products it could be recommended to use the Swedish TEFO measuring system, which ensures that the particular product fits after wash. The system is applied in 5 Swedish standards (SS 251280 SS 251284), which cover different knitwear types. In this case measurements only have to be made after washing. This solution does not, however, solve the problem for knitted fabrics, unless they are sewn into sample models.

Another solution could be to establish a list of different product types with corresponding acceptable dimensional changes. A few examples are given below:

- Knitted underwear: 8%
- Terry towels: 8%
- Woven clothing: 2%

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- Curtains, upholstery: 1%
- Bed linen 2%.

Yet another possibility could be to state that producers, who do not fulfill this criterion, should write it on the care label. A number of comments have been received, however, which mention that such a statement would discredit eco-labeled products. For non-labeled products there is no demand for information on dimensional changes, so it could be interpreted as if eco-labeled products have a poorer quality level. A compromise between what would be desirable from a customer point of view and what is achievable from some producer's point of view could be the following:

- Curtains, washable/removable furniture fabrics: 2%
- Other woven products: 6%
- Other knitted products: 8%
- Terry toweling: 8%.

It must be stressed once again, however, that for some products on brand label level the above dimensional changes can be unacceptable, and that justified consumer complaints must be expected.

The wording regarding the test method is modified slightly in order to make it clearer, especially regarding the modifications related to the test method ISO 5077.

A large number of comments have been received to this criterion. Some parties suggest that woven products should be allowed to change 8% and knitted products 10%. Other parties, e.g. Competent Bodies from France and Italy, are mainly in favor of the present suggestion. It has also been requested from some parties that the Competent Bodies could compensate from the limits in case of products, where the dimensional stability is not important.

At the ahWG meeting in December 2001 the criterion was discussed again regarding the reasons for including a criterion on dimensional changes in an eco-label criteria document. One of the reasons are that products, which do not live up to consumer expectations, will be discarded earlier and thus have a larger impact on the environment, as they have to be replaced by new products. It was argued, however, that this criterion is very difficult to formulate, but that the latest suggestion was a balanced one, when taking into consideration the possibilities of informing of larger changes on the care label, and to suggest modifications in the care labeling (e.g. "stretch in wet condition before drying" or similar).

The new criterion is formulated as follows:

Information on dimensional changes (%) shall be stated both on the care label and on the packaging and/or other product information if the dimensional changes exceed:

- 2% (warp and weft) for curtains and for furniture fabric that is washable and removable

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- 6% (warp and weft) for other woven products
- 8% (length and width) for other knitted products
- 8% (length and width) for terry toweling

This criterion does not apply to:

- fibers or yarn
- products clearly labeled “dry clean only” or equivalent (insofar as it is normal practice for such products to be so labeled)
- furniture fabrics that are not removable and washable

Assessment and verification: The applicant shall provide test reports using the following test method: ISO 5077 modified as follows: 3 washes at temperatures as indicated on the product, with tumble drying after each washing cycle unless other drying procedures are indicated on the product, at temperatures as marked on the product, wash load (2 or 4 kg) depending on the wash symbol. Should any of the abovementioned limits be exceeded, a copy of the care-label and of the packaging and/or other product information shall be provided.”

3.29.3 Future revisions

It has been questioned why dry cleanable products should not meet the criterion on dimensional changes. This issue should be addressed during the next revision. It also should also be followed whether the future applicants are able to meet the revised criteria.