



Tackling Audit Fatigue

A Call for Unified Action in the Textile Industry

What is 'Audit Fatigue'?

The issue of audit fatigue in the textile industry is a significant and multifaceted challenge that warrants closer examination. In this mini article, the STAR Network revisits our recent white paper: "Addressing Audit Fatigue: Facts, Challenges, and a Call for Action".

If you had to mount your fire hydrants at 2 feet up the wall for one client, only to spend hours repositioning them to 3 feet for another the next day, would you consider this an effective use of resources? This is often the reality of audit fatigue—where factories face repetitive, often conflicting audits from different clients, each with their own granular demands. The result? Wasted time, financial strain, and a distraction from real safety and sustainability improvements.

STAR's Position Paper

The STAR Network includes 9 associations from 6 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Vietnam. Together, the network represents around 50% of the global textile export market, and its members are committed to promoting responsible production & consumption patterns. In this paper, we identified several key challenges in addressing audit fatigue.

With the recognition that Audit Fatigue is a major factor driving inefficiency and redundancy, and with new HREDD legislation on the way - STAR firmly believes that more -



dialogue and collaboration is needed. To address this, our position paper identifies key challenges in tackling audit fatigue.

Challenges

Audits are important and necessary - they have driven substantial improvements, but redundant audits are counterproductive.

A major issue is the inefficiency of current practices, which focus more on policing rather than collaboration. This leads to wasted resources that could be better spent on improving working conditions. Another challenge is fragmentation within the industry, where brands maintain (and compete via) varied and proprietary standards. This hinders the development of unified industry practices and creates additional burdens for suppliers.

Mr. Miran Ali, Vice-President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exports Association (BGMEA), a member of STAR Network, shares his concern:

"The cost of repetitive audits, in terms of both financial resources and human toll, is enormous. Our analysis reveals a staggering annual expenditure that could instead be redirected towards genuine improvements in working conditions and labour practices."

MythBusters!

The paper challenges widely held beliefs that sustain the current audit-heavy compliance model in the garment industry. These narratives often justify duplicative audits that place unnecessary burdens on manufacturers. Here are the key myths debunked:

Myth

Social audits are a great means of brand differentiation.

Reality

Compliance should not be a competitive advantage for brands. Audits exist to ensure baseline standards, not to create unnecessary competition among brands.

Myth

Audits do not cost retailers anything.

Reality

The financial burden is ultimately passed down to buyers and manufacturers, adding pressure to already tight margins.

Myth

Buyers are unwilling to take risks

Reality

A collaborative approach to compliance—rather than excessive audits—offers better protection for all stakeholders.

Myth

Audit companies will lose business if standards are more unified

Reality

Many audit firms will benefit financially from expanding their scope to Tier 2 and 3 suppliers. Streamlining is necessary.

Myth

Manufacturers have no influence or say in the compliance process

Reality

Manufacturers, as the backbone of the industry, are the most capable of driving meaningful improvements. However, their voices must be included in shaping compliance frameworks.

Our Consensus

Reducing audit fatigue is not just a matter of efficiency, it's about sustainability and fairness in global supply chains. We want more people to be aware of this issue.

We are well aware this issue will not be solved overnight, but we urge stakeholders to collaborate to develop solutions that benefit both businesses and workers. Brands, retailers, governments, and certifying bodies are encouraged to join initiatives that promote mutual recognition of audits and adopt internationally recognized standards. Customers and consumers also play a crucial role by supporting fair trade initiatives and choosing products from brands that prioritize responsible production practices.

**To dig deeper into this issue,
please find the full paper here:**

