



# INDUSTRY CAPABILITY REPORT

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## SRI LANKAN HANDLOOM SECTOR

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## **CONTENTS**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. TYPE OF PLAYERS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. KEY PRODUCTS AND VARIETIES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SECTOR</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND KNOWN CLUSTERS IF ANY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6. TOTAL EXPORTS OF HANDLOOM TEXTILES IN SRI LANKA</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7. NUMBER OF PLAYERS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8. KEY PLAYERS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>9. NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN THE SECTOR</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>10. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AVAILABLE IN THE SECTOR</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>11. STRENGTHS IN THE SRI LANKAN APPAREL INDUSTRY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>12. INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED</b>	<b>5</b>



# INDUSTRY CAPABILITY REPORT – SRI LANKAN HANDLOOM SECTOR

## 1. Introduction

Sri Lanka's Handloom Textile Industry is centuries old. The tradition of handloom weaving has been brought down from generation to generation in the country. The Sri Lankan weavers have succeeded in creating a distinct identity of their own by transforming the traditional woven patterns and colour schemes into the beautiful textile designs. The industry has helped showcase the undying creativity of generations of Sri Lankans taking them to the international arena.

Sri Lanka's handloom industry is a highly labour intensive, export oriented rural based industry. The industry provides livelihood for a large number of households in the country. Awareness of modern design trends, combined with traditional craftsmanship and the influx of new processing techniques, Sri Lankan handlooms have been given a new life.

The fabrics presently manufactured in Sri Lanka are mostly of cotton with relatively small quantities of rayons and polyester cotton. Sri Lanka also produces a range of products by using silk yarn. Sri Lanka is capable of producing attractive handloom textile products with a range of designs and colours to satisfy the specific requirements of the international market.

## 2. Type of players

The handloom industry mainly consists of small and medium scale producers. There are some large scale manufacturers too.

The industry can be classified into three categories as follows.

- Private - Export oriented companies, indirect exporters, sub contractors and individual suppliers.
- Government - Production centres managed by Provincial Councils
- Co-operative - Co-operative Societies

### **3. Key products and varieties**

Sri Lanka produces a wide range of products such as upholstery fabrics and curtaining, dress fabrics, bed linen, table linen, kitchen linen, readymade garments, soft toys, hand-woven rugs, tapestries and stationery items such as books, notebooks, albums and writing pads made with handcrafted exteriors.

### **4. Unique characteristics of the sector**

Handloom textile products from Sri Lanka demonstrate excellent fabric handling properties partly due to its weaving method.

Individual innovative designs, craftsmanship, colour combination and patterns from the past combined with modern materials and processing techniques have given handloom textile products from Sri Lanka, its own identity.

Sri Lanka's handloom is a household or cottage industry, where skilled hands create value added products. The industry has the flexibility to supply in small as well as large quantities and styles. The industry can manufacture to individual tastes and requirements of different buyers from various culture.

### **5. Geographical distribution across the country and known clusters if any**

The Sri Lankan handloom industry is clustered, particularly in the Western, Eastern, North Western and Southern Provinces. The Western Province has a major share followed by the Eastern Province and Central Province.

## **6. Total exports of handloom textiles in Sri Lanka.**

The total value of exports in the handloom sector was US \$ 1.096Mn. in the year 2018 and US \$ 0.935 in the year 2019 (Jan to Nov). The top markets for Sri Lankan handloom textiles products are -

- ✓ European Union (Austria, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, UK, Sweden, France)
- ✓ Korea South (Korea, Republic of)
- ✓ Maldives
- United States
- United Arab Emirates
- ✓ Australia
- ✓ Japan
- ✓ Norway
- ✓ Japan

## **7. Number of players**

There are around 962 private producers in operation inclusive of small, medium and large scale unit. Four large companies are engaged in the export business. In addition, eight provincial councils owned 771 production centres.

## **8. Key Players**

- ✓ Selyn Exporters Pvt Ltd.
- ✓ Barbara Sansoni Exports Pvt Ltd.
- ✓ Kandygs Handlooms Exports Ltd.
- ✓ IC Collection Pvt Ltd.
- ✓ Asian Fabrics Ltd.
- ✓ Ko-Lanka Pure Silks Pvt. Ltd.
- ✓ Suntex Handloom Industries
- ✓ Kelani Fabrics

## **9. Number of people employed in the sector**

The industry provides employment opportunities to around 15,000 persons which includes a substantial number of women in the country.

## 10. Government support available in the sector

- ✓ Concessionary income tax rates and exemption of certain levies when importing yarn for handloom manufacturers.
- ✓ Training facilities and centers.
- ✓ Commencement of technology and design programmes in the University, training and vocational education institutes

## 11. Strengths in the Sri Lankan Handloom industry.

- ✓ Employment opportunities for rural unemployed youth, men and women;
- ✓ An Industry with low capital investments;
- ✓ Ecologically friendly.
- ✓ It is a craft that could be developed easily in any part of the country

## 12. Institutions involved

The following institutions are involved which support the handloom sector by addressing the sector related issues through co-ordination with the government institutions.

- ✓ Ministry of Industry & Commerce
- ✓ Department of Textiles
- ✓ Sri Lanka Institute of Textile and Apparel
- ✓ University of Moratuwa (UOM)
- ✓ National Enterprise Development Authority (NEDA)

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