North American Linen Association (NALA)

Status of Flax Fiber in North America

The information below is drawn from NALA's 2026 *Status of Flax Fiber in North America* report — the first step in documenting the history, current state, and future of the flax fiber industry in the US and Canada. The report was created to provide insight into the industry and support NALA's mission of revitalizing North American flax fiber and linen production. All references can be found in that report.

HOW MUCH FIBER FLAX IS GROWN IN NORTH AMERICA?

Once a thriving crop in North America, production of fiber flax today is very limited, with less than 200 acres (~80 hectares) of fiber flax grown in the US and Canada in 2024, according to a 2025 NALA survey. One of the primary obstacles is access to seed, most of which is grown and sold in Europe. Developing a reliable domestic seed supply is essential for the long-term success of fiber flax in North America.

In addition, once the seed grows, production-stage tools are also limited. As of the end of 2025, Canada has one set of specialized harvesting equipment (puller/turner/baler) and the US has two sets. To scale fiber flax production in North America, virtually all fiber flax production infrastructure needs to be rebuilt, replaced, or reinvented.

WHAT IS THE PROCESSING CAPACITY FOR FIBER FLAX IN NORTH AMERICA?

Neither the US nor Canada has commercial-scale fiber flax processing capability post-harvest, though there will be considerable growth over the next three years. Canflax in Canada and three US companies — Coast Fibers, Dakota Linen Company, and PA Flax — are actively working toward the development of commercial-scale scutching mills. There are several small-scale operations, including one scutching mill and equipment producer in Canada (TapRoot Fibre Lab) and one artisan-scale scutching operation in California (Golden State Linen).

As with fiber flax production, virtually all flax fiber post-harvest processing equipment and infrastructure for the fiber-linen stages in North America will have to be replaced or reinvented.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE FLAX-TO-LINEN RENAISSANCE?

Key challenges to fiber flax production include lack of available seed; agricultural research into both appropriate varieties and production practices; harvesting, breaking/scutching/hackling, and spinning equipment; skilled labor and expertise; transportation and logistics; and private and public investment. All these barriers also serve as opportunities as the flax fiber sector expands to emulate production in areas of the world with more advanced infrastructure.

WHAT STANDARDS ADDRESS CHAIN OF CUSTODY AND RESPONSIBLE PRODUCTION?

Standards are in place or being developed that address chain of custody as well as responsible production and processing practices. Certification to such standards will be key to substantiate claims and provide verification traceability from the field to the finished product. There are two primary standards in place that address both chain of custody and fiber flax production practices in North America: national organic standards and the Responsible Hemp Standard, which is being revised to become the ***Responsible Bast Standard*** (**RBS**) in 2026, with both ***Responsible Flax*** and ***Responsible Linen*** components. A global chain-of-custody certification program, the ***Responsible Bast Standard*** brings traceability and transparent, responsible production and processing practices to bast fiber crop supply chains.

WHAT ARE FLAX-BASED BIOCOMPOSITES?

Flax fiber is used in the natural fiber composite market, where it dominates other natural fibers due to its superior mechanical performance. Though not directly competitive with carbon or glass incumbents, flax fibers have lower densities than both glass and carbon, making their utilization compelling. In addition, they have superior vibration-damping properties and can provide competitive pricing to their synthetic counterparts.

The European market has shown early adoption of flax fibers in sports equipment and automotive applications for these reasons. In fact, flax has been introduced into the automotive industry as major companies look to incorporate natural fiber composites to replace glass fibers in their future models. Other companies are using a flax veneer that can replace exotic rainforest woods.

IS FIBER FLAX THE SAME AS THE OILSEED FLAX USED IN FOOD, FEED, AND BIOCOMPOSITES?

Flax can be grown for fiber *or* oilseed — and sometimes both! Varieties grown for fiber are bred for long, strong, high-quality fibers, while varieties grown for oilseed prioritize seed quality and quantity. Today, only oilseed flax for food and feed is produced at scale on this continent, primarily in Saskatchewan in Canada and North Dakota in the US.

Flax straw remaining after oilseed flax harvest contains short bast fibers that, while not suitable for high-end linen, can be used in several ways rather than discarded or burned. When mechanically refined or processed, these fibers can be used in short-staple fabric products such as drapery, denim, and canvas, as well as in paper, nonwovens, insulation, and biocomposites. Utilizing oilseed flax straw in this way provides an opportunity to add value to a byproduct of oilseed production.