

FTC Business Alert

Marketers looking to provide more environmentally friendly choices to consumers may have heard about bamboo, which has been recognized for its ability to grow quickly with little or no need for pesticides. But when it comes to textile products made from bamboo, that's not the whole story.

The truth is, most “bamboo” textile products, if not all, really are rayon, which typically is made using environmentally toxic chemicals in a process that emits hazardous pollutants into the air. While different plants, including bamboo, can be used as a source material to create rayon, there's no trace of the original plant in the finished rayon product.

If you make, advertise or sell bamboo-based textiles, the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, wants you to know that unless a product is made directly with bamboo fiber — often called “mechanically processed bamboo” — it can't be called bamboo. Indeed, to advertise or label a product as “bamboo,” you need competent and reliable evidence, such as scientific tests and analyses, to show that it's made of actual bamboo fiber. Relying on other people's claims isn't substantiation. The same standard applies to other claims, like a claim that rayon fibers retain natural antimicrobial properties from the bamboo plant.

If you sell clothing, linens, or other textile products, you're responsible for making truthful disclosures about the fiber content. If your product isn't made directly of bamboo fiber — but is a manufactured fiber for which bamboo was the plant source — it should be labeled and advertised using the proper generic name for the fiber, such as rayon, or “rayon made from bamboo.”

Any claims you make about your textile products have to be true and cannot be misleading. As the seller, you must have substantiation for each and every claim — express and implied — that you make.

