



CBI Product Factsheet

Baby Blankets

'Practical market insights into your product'

Although birth rates in Europe have fallen over the last few decades, the European market for baby blankets remains a large and interesting market for exporters in developing countries. In order to succeed, exporters should keep three increasingly important trends in mind: sustainability, durability and personalisation.

Product definition

This section provides an overview of the products within the range of the general product view, as well as mentioning the common trade names of the product.

A baby blanket is a soft, lightweight blanket used to cover a baby. The blankets are designed to cover a baby securely for warmth, as a covering for nursing, as a secure place to lay a baby down for a nap, or as a sense of security for the baby through swaddling. Baby blankets can be made of cotton or synthetic materials. They can also be quilts, i.e. blankets composed of 2 or more layers with several pieces of cloth patched together.

Classification of baby blankets:

- **Harmonised System (HS)** Within the EU / EFTA, the following HS codes are used as indications for trade in blankets and travelling rugs:
 - 6301.2000: blankets (other than electric blankets) and travelling rugs, of wool or of fine animal hair
 - 6301.3000: blankets (other than electric blankets) and travelling rugs, of cotton
 - 6301.4000: blankets (other than electric blankets) and travelling rugs, of synthetic fibres
 - 6301.9000: other blankets and travelling rugs
- **Prodcom:** the following prodcom codes are used to indicated European production of blankets and travelling rugs:
 - 1392.1130: blankets and travelling rugs of wool or fine animal hair (excluding electric blankets)
 - 1392.1150: blankets and travelling rugs of synthetic fibres (excluding electric blankets)
 - 1392.1190: blankets (excluding electric blankets) and travelling rugs of other textile materials (excluding wool or fine animal hair and synthetic fibres)

Product specification

This section gives an overview of the product's key specifications regarding quality requirements, labelling, materials, design and packaging.

Quality:

- **Functionality:** In many cases, keeping the baby warm is only one of the primary purposes of a baby blanket. They can be also used as a covering

Examples of baby blankets



Source: redheart.com



Source:
warpedandwonderful.com

for nursing or swaddling. A good baby blanket is made of breathable fabrics that do not overheat the baby.

- **Raw material quality:** A baby blanket is usually made of breathable and soft cotton or synthetic materials such as flannel, fleece or acrylic yarn. Other materials that can be used are wool cashmere, bamboo, silk and blends. Baby blankets can be both handmade and machine made.
- **Durability:** Baby blankets should be easy to clean in a washing machine. The product should not shrink and its colours should not fade due to cleaning and drying.
- **Design:** Bold and fun colours with subtle accents are usually chosen as baby blanket colours. In terms of techniques, baby blankets are often woven, knitted or crocheted. Common sizes for the different types of baby blankets are:
 - Swaddle blanket: 70cm x 70cm
 - Receiving blanket: 75cm x 75cm
 - Knit throw: 90cm x 110cm
 - Crib quilt: 115cm x 85cm
 Other sizes are also possible; it is therefore wise to communicate, to potential EU importers, your size (range) during the early stages of collaboration.



Labelling:

- Labels for transport should include information about the producer, consignee, composition and size, number of pieces, box identification and total number of boxes, net and gross weight.
- The most important information on the product or packing labels of baby blankets is: composition, size, origin and care labelling. For more information and illustrations of product labelling please refer to the labelling-specific rules for textiles under buyer requirements.

Packaging:

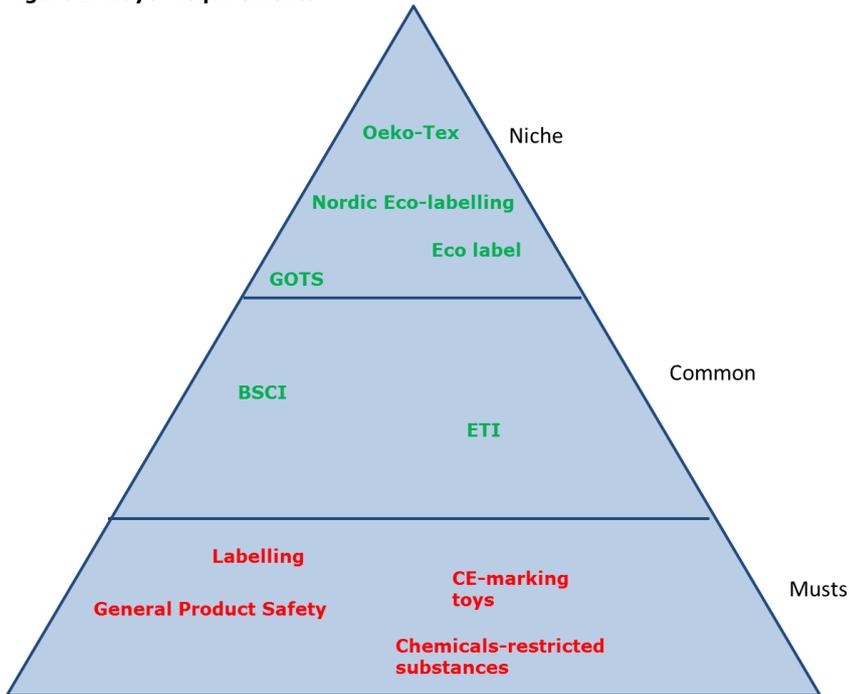
- When shipping your product to a client, the baby blankets should be packed according to the instructions of your buyer. These instructions usually consist of plastic wrapping to protect the blanket from water, solar radiation and staining. The packaging should also consist of dimensions and weight, which are easy to handle. Standards are often related to labour regulations at the point of destination and will have to be specified by the buyer. Cartons are usually palletised for air or sea transport and exporters are requested to maximise pallet space.
- Baby blankets are usually displayed unpacked, thus making attractive consumer packaging of minor importance. In general, consumer packaging can be simple in design, for example a simple paper or plastic wrapping.



Buyer Requirements

This section provides an overview and analysis of requirements that DC exporters face in the market for baby blankets. The analysis includes legal requirements and non-legislative requirements.

Figure 1: Buyer requirements



Requirements you must meet

General Product Safety: The general product Safety directive states that all products marketed in the EU must be safe to use, so that it forms a network for all legislation established for specific products and issues. Even if no specific legal requirements have been established for your product and its uses, the General Product Safety Directive still applies. If there are specific requirements applicable to baby blankets, the general Product Safety Directive applies in addition, covering all other safety aspects which may not have been described exclusively in the product's specific legal requirements.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Study the specific legal requirements listed to ensure the product does not cause any danger in its normal use. Most buyers will require proof of the DC exporter by compliance to legal requirements and most large retailers have their Codes of Conducts. You can read more about the [General Product Safety Directive in the EU Export Helpdesk](#).

Chemicals-Restricted Substances: The EU has restricted a great number of chemicals in products that are marketed in the EU. These are listed in the so-called REACH regulation (Regulation (EC) 1907/2006). If you dye your baby blankets, make sure you do not use any of the [azo dyes](#) that release any of the 22 aromatic amines which are prohibited. The EU legislation lists the aromatic amines, not the azo dyes which release them. The vast majority of azo dyes is therefore legally acceptable. Furthermore, the [flame retardants](#) which can be used have been restricted, where Tris (2,3 dibromopropyl) phosphate (TRIS); Tris (aziridinyl) phosphineoxide (TEPA) and; Polybromobiphenyles (PBB) have been prohibited in products intended to come into contact with the skin.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: In the case of dyeing: Make sure your products do not contain any of the *azo dyes* which release the forbidden aromatic amines. This includes checking your suppliers. To test your products, use the official tests. You can find the tests on the [CEN website](#): CEN Textiles – Methods for the determination of certain aromatic amines derived from azo-colourants – Part 1: Detection of the use of certain azo-colourants accessible without extraction. Reference: EN 14362:2003 / EN 14362-1:2012.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Follow the new development in the field of *flame retardants*, as new alternatives are being developed. You can do so for instance through the [European Flame Retardants Association \(EFRA\)](#). The addition of other flame retardants and proofing agents is only permitted for products that are intended for use in commercial buildings where they are subject to and fulfil the appropriate fire protection regulations. Familiarise yourself with the full list of restricted substances in products marketed in the EU by checking out [restricted chemicals in textile products in the EU Export Helpdesk](#).



Labelling-specific rules for textiles: Textiles should be labelled or marked indicating fibre composition whenever they are made available on the market and should be durable, easily legible, visible and accessible. The main purpose of the EU Regulation is to ensure that consumers, when purchasing textile products, are given an accurate indication of their fibre composition. There is no EU wide legislation on the use of symbols for washing instructions and other care aspect of textile articles, despite the importance that European consumers place on that information. You are therefore advised to follow ISO standards on this matter.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Know your own product and study the EU labelling rules to find out how it should be labelled in the EU. For example, if you use a cotton name, trademark, or other term that implies the presence of a type of cotton, the generic fibre name "cotton" must be used with it. Find out more about [textile labelling rules in the EU Export Helpdesk](#). You are advised to follow [ISO 3758: 2012](#) on care labelling code using symbols for textiles.



CE-marking toys: A baby blanket can also be considered a toy. Therefore, the CE-marking needs to be affixed to your product in order for it to be marketed in the EU. CE-marking shows that a product is assessed before being placed on the market and that it meets EU safety, health and environmental protection requirements. The requirements have been set for a variety of categories, including toys ([Toys Safety Directive 2009/48/EC](#)). The safety requirements are set out in the directives and standards have been developed to show compliance with them.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: If CE-marking is relevant to your products, you can follow the steps as outlined [here](#). You can also use this link to find out whether your product falls within the definition of CE-marking.

Common requirements

Social performance: Companies can differentiate themselves by introducing sustainability. The means of offering sustainable products are numerous, ranging from recycling to certification and use of labels. Sustainability issues are very relevant to baby blankets. Two retail initiatives have gained quite some ground especially in West-European countries:

The [Business Social Compliance Initiative \(BSCI\)](#) has been developed by European retailers to improve social conditions in sourcing countries. Suppliers of BSCI participants are expected to comply with the BSCI Code of conduct. To



prove compliance, your production process can be audited at the request of the importer. Once a company has been audited, it will be included in a database which can be used by all BSCI participants.



The [Ethical Trading Initiative \(ETI\)](#) is an alliance of companies, trade unions and voluntary organisations working in partnership to improve the working lives, across the globe, of people who make or grow consumer goods.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Since more and more European importers participate in BSCI and ETI, complying with the BSCI and ETI codes of conducts is currently seen as a basic requirement.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: If you have not done so already, you may want to look into the possibilities of improving your sustainability performance. This may not always include immediate certification or application of a label, but familiarising yourself with issues included in the initiatives will give you an idea on what to focus on. Also see the CBI publication '[CBI Tailored Intelligence: the Sustainable Design market for Home Decoration and Home Textiles](#)'.

Niche requirements



While sustainability is gaining ground, the actual use of certification is still not widely spread in this sector. Nevertheless, there are several eco-labels used for textiles, including baby blankets. As this is a means of showing sustainability, there is an increasing interest from buyers. [The Global Organic Textile Standard \(GOTS\)](#) is a textile processing standard for organic fibres; [OEKO-TEX](#) stands for no use of hazardous chemicals; and the [EU Ecolabel](#) also looks to chemicals environmentally-friendly options. The voluntary [Nordic Swan eco-label](#) is used in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland for textile products.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Explore the possibility of sourcing organic cotton for your baby blankets. Textile products that contain a minimum of 70% organic fibres can become GOTS certified.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Consider the Oeko-Tex® Standard 100 for your product. The certification provides textile and clothing companies with more transparent supplier relationships and facilitates the flow of information regarding potential problematic substances.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Consider applying for the EU Ecolabel for your product. The label is awarded only to products with the lowest environmental impact in a product range.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Consider applying for the Swan eco-label when targeting the Nordic Countries.

For a complete overview of certifications for textiles please turn to [ITC's Standards Map](#)

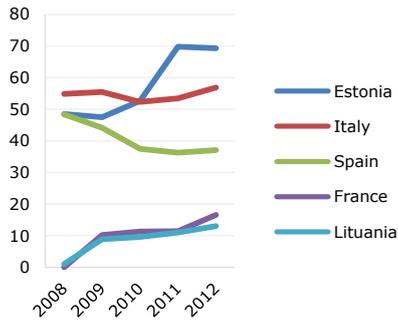
Trade and Macro-Economic Statistics

A statistical analysis of the major product developments and forecasts will be given, based on trade and macro-economic statistics. The statistical indicators being analysed are import, export, production and consumption statistics for baby blankets.

As there are no specific HS and Prodcom codes for baby blankets, trade data on two product groups are provided, namely blankets and throws and baby

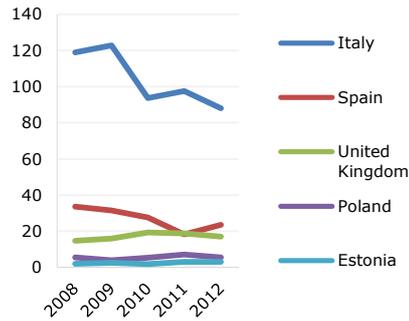
garments and clothing accessories. Together these data provide a coherent overview of the European market for baby blankets.

Figure 2: Leading producing countries of blankets and throws in the EU/EFTA, values in € million



Source: Eurostat Prodcop (2014)

Figure 3: Leading producing countries of baby garments and clothing accessories in EU/EFTA, values in € million



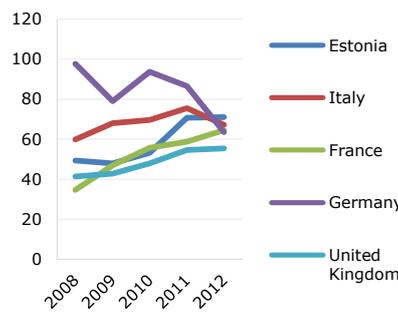
Source: Eurostat Prodcop (2014)

From 2008-2012, **total European production of blankets and throws** fluctuated significantly, amounting to €285 million in 2012. From 2008-2010, there was a sharp decrease in production. In the period between 2010 and 2012, overall production increased, reaching levels before the 2009 drop. The main European producers of blankets and throws are Estonia, Italy, Spain, France and Lithuania. Of these, Italy and Spain decreased their production during the period under review, which can be attributed to the economic crisis. These countries were hit hard.

European production of baby garments and clothing accessories decreased, amounting to € 146 million in 2012. The sharpest decrease took place in 2010, with European production falling by € 153 million. The main producer in Europe remained Italy, with a production amounting to almost € 88 million in 2012. Nevertheless, Italian production declined by 7% on average per year between 2008 and 2012, which is likely the result of the economic crisis.

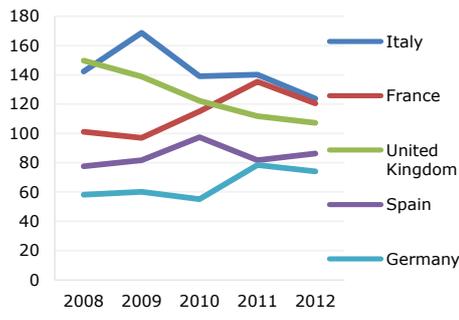
CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Determine your options for exporting to European countries. Western Europe is particularly interesting for blankets and throws as production is low in these countries. Be aware that you can expect competition from East and South European suppliers.

Figure 4: Leading consuming countries for blankets and throws in the EU/EFTA, values in € million



Source: Eurostat Prodcop (2014)

Figure 5: Leading consuming countries for blankets and throws in EU/EFTA, values in € million



Source: Eurostat Prodcop (2014)

Total European consumption of blankets and throws decreased amounting to € 519 million in 2012. Due to the economic crisis, European consumption fluctuated slightly between 2008 and 2012. After an increase in consumption between 2008 and 2011, consumption levels decreased in 2012 by € 34 million.

The main European consumers of blankets and throws in Europe are Estonia, Italy, France, Germany and the UK. In particular, Western European countries, such as France, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, experienced significant increases in their consumption of blankets and throws in the period under review.

European consumption of baby garments and clothing accessories decreased by 5.8% per year in the period 2008-2012, amounting to €658 million in 2012. After a decrease in consumption between 2008 and 2010, consumption levels increased slightly in 2011 by €16 million, followed by a further decrease in 2012. However, some European markets, such as France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, experienced significant increases in consumption.

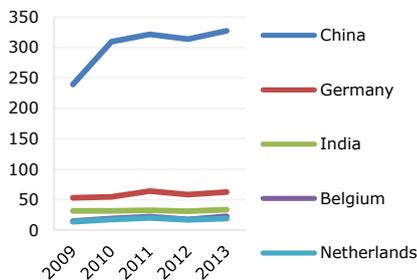
CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Based on the data presented above, we can conclude that the European market for baby blankets probably also decreased. However, West-European countries seem to remain interesting markets for baby blankets.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: The European market is still struggling as a result of the economic crisis, meaning that the high-end segment for baby blankets is probably out of reach for the majority of the European consumers. Therefore, it is recommended to focus on the middle-high segment if one can offer some added value or on the middle-low end if one offers mechanised production.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: GDP & consumer confidence are expected to increase in 2014, as mentioned in the CBI Trade Statistics for Home Textiles. This will positively affect consumption of baby blankets.

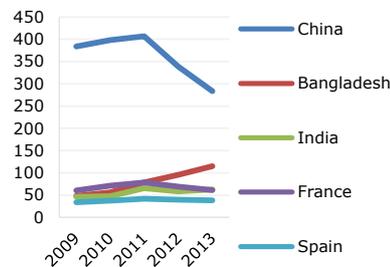
CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Birth rates are falling which will have a negative influence on the overall consumption of baby blankets. See below for more information.

Figure 6: Leading suppliers of blankets and throws to EU/EFTA, value in € million



Source: Eurostat 2014

Figure 7: Leading suppliers of baby garments and clothing accessories to EU/EFTA, value in € million



Source: Eurostat 2014

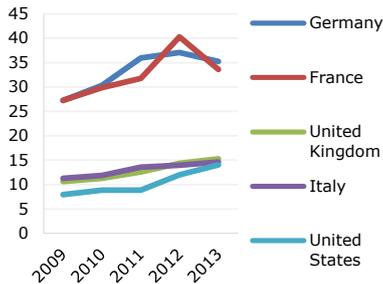
Total European imports of blankets and throws have demonstrated a significant growth which is mostly attributed to Chinese supplies, and which is particularly strong in the low and middle segments of the European market. An

increase in imports in the EU market is a general trend among the leading importers. Developing countries had a significant share in European imports in 2013; 64% (€405 million) was sourced in DCs. Besides China, other important DC suppliers such as India, Thailand, Peru, Nepal and Cambodia also increased between 2008 and 2012.

European imports of baby garments and clothing accessories have remained stable, amounting to €914 million in 2013. In the latter year, 62% of total imports was sourced in DCs. China has been the leading supplier for the last 4 years, accounting for more than 30% of the total imports. However, imports from China have plunged by 17% per year since 2011 due to increased production costs. Consequently, imports from India and Bangladesh have been increasing in the same period.

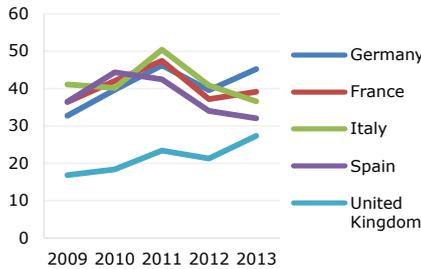
CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Chinese supplies dominate European imports. They mostly focus on mechanised production for the middle and low segments. Producers are therefore recommended to focus on baby blankets with added value, such as handmade products or particular craftsmanship.

Figure 8: Leading export destinations for EU/EFTA of blankets and throws, value in € million



Source: Eurostat 2014

Figure 9: Leading export destinations of baby garments and clothing accessories for EU/EFTA, value in € million



Source: Eurostat (2014)

European exports of blankets and throws amounted to €296 million in 2013. The main destinations were other mature markets in the European Union and the United States. There is a declining trend in exports, which can be attributed to the continuing effects of the economic crisis. Nevertheless, we see a reversing trend in the cases of the United Kingdom, Italy and the United States. The exports by these countries show a reserved but steady increase.

European exports of baby garments and clothing accessories amounted to € 440 million in 2013. The main destinations were other mature markets in Europe such as Germany, France and Italy. The value of exports has been fluctuating, which can be attributed to the continuing effects of the economic crisis. Nevertheless, a reversing trend is noted in the cases of the United Kingdom, France and Germany, where exports of baby garments and clothing accessories have been rising moderately.

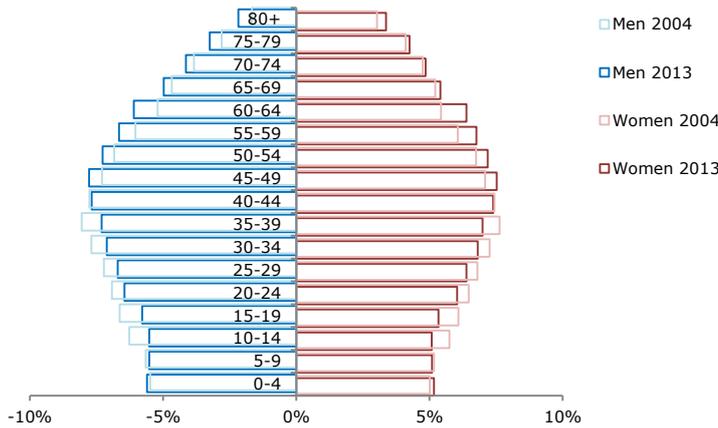
Macro-economic statistics

Falling birth rates in the EU

Europe is the most fast-ageing continent due to a combination of falling birth rate and an increase of life expectancy. Following the decrease in GDP (gross domestic product), the European birth rate has declined during the recession. However, according to Eurostat, the European GDP levels are likely to increase

in the next few years. As there is a positive correlation between GDP and birth rates, the birth rate is also expected to increase in the coming years. Such a development would be favourable for the baby-blanket market.

Figure 10: Age groups in EU/EFTA for the years 2004 and 2013



Source: Eurostat (2014)

Please refer to [CBI Trade Statistics for Home textiles](#), as the macro-economic statistics for baby blankets do not differ significantly from this general overview.

Market Trends

The trends provide an overview of relevant market trends and forecasts in the market for baby blankets.

In the European market for baby blankets, the trends of sustainability, durability and personalisation seem to prevail among designers and consumers.

Better business

The 'better business' trend refers to the choices of consumers, producers and designers regarding sustainability. On the one hand, consumers increasingly want to avoid a negative environmental impact due to their consumption. On the other hand, designers and producers focus on minimising the impact of their production on the environment. This has resulted in a shift to alternative materials for baby blankets, such as organic cotton, bamboo or corn, combined with an increased focus on the baby's safety and health. The latter is guaranteed by using certified fabrics containing no harmful toxins, dyes or pesticides.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Consider sourcing organic cotton or other alternative textiles for your baby blankets, especially when you are targeting the high and middle-high ends of the market, since sustainable alternatives come with a higher price.

Heirloom: buy once, buy well, and pass it on

Time-neutral and durable design for baby products is a growing trend. Consumers prefer to buy fewer baby products, but the products they buy are of higher quality. By buying high quality baby products they do not need to replace the baby blanket and often pass it on to the next baby in their

Example of better business: Organic cotton



Source: examiner.com

Example of heirloom design



Source: natureschild.com

network. Since the products are lasting longer, it is necessary that they will have a more time-neutral, heirloom design.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Consider high quality, durable fabrics and time neutral designs, especially when you are targeting the high and middle-high ends of the market. For example, a cashmere fabric might not be the best material to use, due to its low durability.

Personalisation

At the other end of the spectrum, the trend of personalisation remains present. The approach of products not tailored to meet individual needs is considered outdated and parents focus on giving a unique style to the baby’s accessories. Thus, combining baby accessories with contrasting colours, as well as prints will remain a significant trend for this year, instead of plain fabrics and colours.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Consider innovation by combining materials, and/or hand-made and mechanised processes that can blend in well with the personalisation trend.

Please refer to [CBI Trends for Home Decoration & Textiles](#) for more information on general trends in home textiles.



Market Channels and Segments

Please refer to [CBI Home Textile Channels and Segments](#), as the market channels and segments for baby blankets do not differ significantly from this general overview.

Prices

This section provides an overview of the product’s consumer prices on the European market.

There is a very wide price range within the European market for baby blankets. Baby blanket retail prices can vary from €15 to €85 or more. The prices vary based on the size, fabric and composition of the product, as well as the brand of the blanket.

Table 1: Indicative consumer prices of baby blankets

	Low end	Middle-low end	Middle-high end	High end
Baby blankets	€15-€22	€24-€35	€42.5-€75	€85 or more

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: The European market is still struggling with the economic crisis and is facing reduction in consumption of baby blankets, meaning that the high-end segment for baby blankets is currently out of reach for the majority of the European consumers. Therefore, producers are recommended to focus on the middle-high segment if they can offer some added value, or on the middle-low end if one offers mechanised production.

Rising raw material prices pressure on margins

Besides energy, labour and transport costs, FOB prices depend heavily on the availability and prices of the raw materials. In 2013, the average prices for many of the raw materials used for baby blankets, such as cotton, noted a moderate decrease. In the first months of 2014, this trend has changed and the prices have continued to increase. This example shows the fluctuating character of the raw materials’ market. Incidental price hikes of raw materials cannot directly be passed on to the consumer, but exert pressure on exporters, importers and retailers’ margins.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION: Calculate your prices regularly and carefully, especially when you know that prices of your raw materials are regularly fluctuating. When prices of your raw materials pressure your margin for a longer period, consider to increase your price or find another suitable alternative.

Figure 1: Indicative price breakdown



Source: ProFound (2014)

Field of Competition

Please refer to [CBI Home Textile Field of Competition](#), as the competitive field for baby blankets does not differ significantly from this general overview.

Useful sources

Useful sources provides an overview of valuable references for DC exporters relevant to baby blankets.

Trade fairs

Visiting and especially participating in trade fairs is highly recommended as one of the most efficient methods for testing market receptivity, obtaining market information and finding prospective business partners. The most relevant trade fairs in Europe for exporters of baby blankets are:

- [BabyWelt](#), Hamburg, Germany
- [Bebés & Mamás](#), Barcelona, Spain
- [BabyExpo](#), Vienna, Austria
- [Hallo Baby!](#), Lower Saxony, Germany
- [Baby and Family Fair](#), Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
- [FamExpo](#), Zurich, Switzerland
- [Playtime](#), Paris, France
- [Plusher](#), London, United Kingdom

More information

CBI market information: Promising EU export markets.

EU Expanding Exports Helpdesk - <http://exporthelp.europa.eu> - go to 'trade statistics'.

Eurostat - <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/newxtweb> - statistical database of the EU. Several queries are possible. For trade, choose 'EU27 Trade Since 1995 By CN8'. Use the guide 'Understanding Eurostat: Quick guide to easy comext'

(<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/newxtweb/setuphelp.do?keepsessionkey=true>) for instructions.

International Trade Statistics - <http://www.trademap.org> - you have to register

This survey was compiled for CBI by ProFound – Advisers In Development in collaboration with CBI sector expert Steve Pepper

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