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**Textiles — Qualitative and
quantitative analysis of some bast
fibres (flax, hemp, ramie) and their
blends —**

Part 1:

**Fibre identification using microscopy
methods**

*Textiles — Analyses qualitative et quantitative de certaines fibres
libériennes (lin, chanvre, ramie) et de leurs mélanges —*

Partie 1: Identification des fibres à l'aide de méthodes microscopiques

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 38, *Textiles*.

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Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

This corrected version of ISO 20706-1:2019 incorporates the following corrections:

- in [8.3](#), the SEM procedure structure has been corrected;
- in [7.2.1](#), the missing reference to [Annex H](#) has been added.

Introduction

Among bast fibres used for textiles, flax and hemp are the most expensive. Flax is grown mainly (85 %) in a small coastal area of Northern Europe; hemp textile products are rare. Ramie is less expensive than flax and hemp: 10 % to 20 % cheaper for medium count yarns — and the difference increases for fine counts.

Flax and other bast fibres, such as hemp and ramie exhibit great similarities in their physical and chemical properties, so that their fibre specie and their blends are difficult to distinguish from each other by both mechanical and chemical methods. In addition, these fibres show nearly resembling fibre morphology. It is very difficult to accurately identify the fibre species and accurately determine the fibre content of such fibre blends by current testing means.

Research works on accurate identification of bast fibre has been a long undertaking.

In order to promote fair labelling of products and anti-counterfeiting protection, The European Confederation of Flax and Hemp (CELC) created the Bast Fibre Authority in 2013, inviting laboratories, research centres and providers of quality and control services to develop a common technical protocol. Five laboratories joined in 2013 and comparison testing were carried out between them on May–June 2014 and January–February 2015.

NOTE CELC, founded in 1951, is a non-profit organization and an association for reflection, market analysis, industry concertation and strategic orientations. CELC is the only agro-industrial European organization that covers all stages of production and processing of flax/linen and hemp. It is the chosen representative of more than 10,000 firms in 14 European countries, promoting the fibre from plant to finished product (including sections dealing with agriculture, retting/scutching, trading, spinning, weaving and technical uses).

At present, the most widely used and reliable ones include light microscopy (LM) method and scanning electron microscopy (SEM) method. The advantage of LM method is that the internal morphology of fibres can be observed, but some subtle surface structures are not able to be clearly displayed. Decoloration process can be carried out on dark samples for testing, while improper decoloration process will affect the judgment of fibre analyst.

The scanning electron microscopy (SEM) method shows opposite characteristics to those of LM method. Therefore, some types of fibres need to be identified by scanning electron microscope.

When some samples are difficult to be identified, light microscopy method and scanning electron microscopy method should be used together to identify in order to utilize the advantages of both methods.

It is proven in practice that accuracy of fibre analysis is highly related to the ample experience, fully understanding and extreme familiarity of the fibre analyst to the morphology of various types of bast fibres. Therefore, besides text description, a large amount of micrographs of different types of flax, hemp and ramie are given in [Annex A](#), [Annex B](#), [Annex C](#) and [Annex D](#) of this document.