

53.01

53.01 - Flax, raw or processed but not spun; flax tow and waste (including yarn waste and garnetted stock) (+).

5301.10 - Flax, raw or retted

- Flax, broken, scutched, hackled or otherwise processed, but not spun :

5301.21 - - Broken or scutched

5301.29 - - Other

5301.30 - Flax tow and waste

Flax exists in many varieties, the best known being *Linum usitatissimum*. Flax (or linen) fibres occur in the plant as compact bundles of bast held together with a pectic substance. For use in the textile industry, the fibres must be separated from each other and from the rest of the plant, particularly from the inner woody part.

This heading covers flax, raw, retted, scutched, hackled or otherwise processed but not spun.

(A) Raw flax (flax straw).

This is flax as harvested, whether or not rippled or balled (i.e., with leaves and seeds removed).

(B) Retted flax.

Retting eliminates most of the pectic substance which surrounds the fibres, either by fermentation (by the action of bacteria or mould) or chemically. This process is normally effected either by :

- (1) exposing the plant to dew or damp;
- (2) immersing the plant in gently running streams or rivers, or in the stagnant water of ditches or pools;
- (3) immersing it in warm water in large tanks; or
- (4) treating it with steam or with chemical or microbic agents.

Retted flax is then dried in the open air or mechanically. The fibres are then sufficiently loosened from the inner woody part of the plant and from one another to be separated by breaking and scutching.

(C) Scutched flax.

The flax is first crushed to break the woody part into pieces. It is then scutched, i.e., the woody part is knocked out by hand or mechanically, leaving the flax fibres. Some tow and waste is produced during this process.

(D) Cottonised flax.

In this process the raw flax is first boiled in a solution of sodium hydroxide and then impregnated with sodium carbonate; it is then treated with dilute acid, when the stalks are disintegrated by the liberation of carbon dioxide, leaving the flax fibres free. Flax so treated does not require retting or scutching. Cottonised flax is generally bleached.

(E) Hackled (combed) flax.

Hackling splits up the bast and lays the fibres parallel, eliminating any remaining foreign matter and any short or ruptured fibres (machine tow). Flax is normally in the form of a continuous loose bundle of fibres when it leaves the hackling machines. The fibres are then passed through spreaders and emerge as a continuous sliver. These slivers are subjected to a series of doubling and drawing operations and transformed into rovings. Slivers and rovings are included in this heading **provided** they have not yet been spun into yarn. In their final stage rovings may be drawn out very fine to approximately the thickness of a single yarn, usually with a slight twist but are nevertheless classified here and should not be confused with the single yarns covered by **heading 53.06**.

(F) Flax tow and waste (including yarn waste and garnetted stock).

Tow consists generally of flax wastes of different qualities suitable for spinning; it consists mainly of short, knotted, broken or tangled fibres obtained during the various processes such as scutching, hackling (combing) and spinning.

The heading also covers yarn waste obtained during the spinning, reeling or weaving operations, and waste fibres obtained by tearing up waste pieces of fabric or made up articles into their constituent fibres; these are generally intended for re-spinning into yarns.

In view of the shortness of their component fibres, tow and other waste intended for spinning are usually carded and not hackled (combed). The slivers and rovings obtained after carding are also covered by this heading.

This heading also covers wastes unsuitable for spinning into yarns, mainly obtained from the scutching or carding operations, and used as padding or stuffing, as a binding in mortars, or as raw material in the manufacture of certain kinds of paper.

The products referred to above remain in this heading whether or not they have been bleached or dyed.

The heading **excludes** :

- (a) Broken woody pieces arising from the scutching operations (**heading 44.01**).
- (b) Certain fibrous vegetable materials sometimes known as flax, e.g., Indian flax (*Abroma augusta*) (**heading 53.03**) and New Zealand hemp or flax (*Phormium tenax*) (**heading 53.05**).

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Subheading Explanatory Note.**Subheading 5301.21**

This subheading includes scutched flax obtained from tow.