

Sustainability 4.0 Takes Shape at Performance Days



Creating and sourcing textiles for circularity was a top takeaway from the digital show.

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“Not quite as expected but successful,” is an apt description from show organizers regarding the recent Performance Days fair. Last minute pandemic-related concerns regarding in-person attendance at the Munich event required the PD team to turn on a dime and be digital only for the December edition.

Carbon, circularity and a belief that a collective effort is needed to achieve climate-positive change were top of mind at this winter's Performance Days.

The level of interest in carbon is matched by the level of complexity in the subject. A panel on “Carbon Neutrality 101” explored reduction strategies, offsetting pros and cons and emerging carbon capture technologies. **Andrea Crespi, GM at Eurojersey**, explained his company's approach to carbon stating, “We measure, we declare our footprint, and we target how to improve it,” adding that the main focus at Eurojersey, “is to make a product that lasts longer with less resources.” Whether carbon offsets are a “patch” or a solution to rising GHG emissions was debated; some describe the business as a “compensation scheme,” while others favor the practice.

Industry has latched onto circularity in a big way. Sean Tindale, creative sourcing manager at Polygiene, made this point by sharing his screen with the audience to show what happens when you google “circular loop of garments:” Hundreds of different types of systems appear! Yet a big shift needs to take place for these closed loop models to succeed. **Thekla Wilkening, a business consultant at Cool Circles UG in Rostock, Germany, shared, “It all starts with the design process, that’s where 80 percent of the product impact is manifested.”** Wilkening continued, “It’s about using circular material within circular design and having circular services. Design tells the story, and that builds awareness of circularity.”

The call for collective action for robust circularity sounded loud and clear during Performance Days. **“If you look for perfection nothing happens. We need to try, we need to fail and we need to progress together,”** said Eric Alvarez, business development manager, based in Europe for the U.S. company Genomatica, who participated in a panel discussion of the sustainable future of nylon. Genomatica takes a modern approach to planet-friendly textiles, and is new to the field of polyamide. Alvarez explained, “we don’t focus on nylon specifically, but redesign molecules in plant-based sugar to replicate nylon 6,6.”

One more takeaway: A topnotch lineup of expert talks, panel discussions and the availability of Performance Days’ comprehensive online sourcing platform, The Loop, engaged attendees and exhibitors alike despite being remote, reinforcing how far the textile community has come in virtual trade show presentations. Gone are many of the technical glitches and less-than-compelling fabric imagery that defined early attempts at industry gatherings. Now participation is simple and production seamless. This edition of PD provided personality, lively online participation, and a “feel” for what’s new for the season ahead.

Up next: A hybrid Performance Days fair scheduled to take place in Munich and online on April 27–28, 2022.

More coverage of Performance Days will be available in the Jan/Feb 2022 issue of Textile Insight.