

# sustain & innovate

The first conference for sustainability in the functional textile branch

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Yes, the textile industry has an impact on our environment - but there are many developments that can make textiles more sustainable.

That's why we brought this conference to life.

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“Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women’s empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.” - Ban Ki-Moon

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In 2016 many world leaders adopted the **United Nation's 17 global goals/Sustainable Development Goals** to improve life all around the world and preserve the earth's resources and fight climate change.

## Bad facts



The apparel industry consumes more energy than the aviation and shipping industry combined, accounting for 10 per cent of the global carbon emissions. Chemicals from dyes make their way into the environment, polluting the air, water, and also harming marine life. The fashion industry:

- Produces 20 per cent of wastewater
- Is responsible for 8-10 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions
- \$500 billion of value is lost every year due to clothing underutilisation and lack of recycling

*Source: UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*

## Bad facts



If we keep this up, by 2050 the fashion industry could use more than 26 percent of the “carbon budget” associated with a 2° C pathway (a long-term goal to limit global warming to less than 2° C above pre-industrial levels).

*Ellen Mc Arthur Foundation, A New Textiles Economy*

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A 2016 McKinsey report revealed that three-fifths of all clothing items will end up in an incinerator or landfill within a year after being produced.

By 2030, it's expected that fashion waste will increase to a 148 million ton problem.

*Global Fashion Agenda, Pulse-of-the-Fashion-Industry 2017*

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Despite the grim statistics, producers and consumers of fashion recognize that the industry needs to change. In the lead up to the [Climate Action Summit](#) on 23 September 2019, the fashion industry has recognized that it has a crucial role to play in contributing to the realization of the goals of the Paris Agreement. Previously, in December 2018, [43 major brands and suppliers](#) signed the [Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action](#) under the auspices of the United Nations.

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Consumer attitudes for ethical fashion are increasingly favorable. [Sixty percent of millennials](#) say they want to shop more “sustainably.”

*fabrikbrands.com*

Many brands are moving to more sustainable production methods. As of May 2018, [12.5 percent of the global fashion market](#) has pledged to make changes by 2020.

*Global Fashion Agenda*

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Up to 2/3 of the environmental impact of fashion happens at the raw materials stage. Fiber selection also affect how the garment will be washed, and potentially recycled.

*Thereformation.com*

## What can the fashion industry do?

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circularity....

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It's estimated that less than 1 percent of material used to produce clothing is recycled into something more. That's about a loss of 100 billion USD worth of materials every year.

*Ellen Mc Arthur Foundation, A New Textiles Economy*

Best practice: The textile industry is creating recyclable clothing to close the loop. First step: more and more monocomponent materials are developed

At Copenhagen Fashion Summit 2017, Global Fashion Agenda called on the fashion industry to take action on circularity by signing the 2020 Circular Fashion System Commitment (henceforth 2020 Commitment).

The immediate action points:

- 1) Implementing design strategies for cyclability
- 2) Increasing the volume of used garments and footwear collected
- 3) Increasing the volume of used garments and footwear resold
- 4) Increasing the share of garments and footwear made from recycled post-consumer textile fibres

As of July 2019, signatories have reached 45 of 213 targets (21%) and set 17 new and/or more ambitious targets across all four action points.

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If the average life of clothing was extended by just three months, it would **reduce their carbon and water footprints, as well as waste generation, by five to 10 percent.** The recycling of two million tons of clothing per year equates to taking one million cars from U.S. streets.

<https://www.thebalancesmb.com/textile-recycling-facts-and-figures-2878122> by  
*Rick Leblanc*

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Let´s talk about clean water and soil ...

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Textile dyeing is the second largest polluter of clean water globally, after agriculture.

*Natural Science Vol.4 No.1(2012), Textile dyeing industry an environmental hazard by Rita Kant*

Best practice: The textile industry is using natural dyestuff and ways to dye without water as spin dye or solution dye

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In 2012, testing of more than 100 garments from 20 major fashion labels sold in 29 countries showed that all brands had hazardous chemicals in some of their items.

Greenpeace East Asia, 2012

Best practice: The textile industry banned PFC and improves the way of choosing materials and producing fibres and fabrics by following guidelines and using tools as ZDHC, Nordic Swan, HIGG-Index and more...

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In an study researchers at the University of California at Santa Barbara found that, on average, synthetic fleece jackets release 1.7 grams of microfibers each wash. It also found that older jackets shed almost twice as many fibers as new jackets.

Best practice: The textile industry invented new ways to create warmth without microfiber/microplastic shedding, as brushed surfaces from natural fibres, or fabrics with pocket constructions. Households can use nanoballs during wasing, or special dense washing nets...

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Let's talk about good working conditions ....

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More than 15% of the world's employees are connected directly to the textile and apparel industry. Social issues like the elimination of poverty, achieving gender equality (80% of the employees in the global textile and garment industry are female), and the urgent importance of fair and equitable pay for workers are more relevant than ever.

## Best practice:

Avoidance of price wars, fair wages that easily cover life's basic necessities, equal rights, ban on child labour ... and much more. Certificates as FWF are important!

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## The homework

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Businesses can reduce their chemical impact by:

- seeking out materials, dyes and fabrics that meet third party certification standards such as the [Global Organic Textile Standard \(GOTS\)](#), [Oeko-Tex® Standard 100](#), [bluesign](#) or the [EU Ecolabel](#)
- collaborating with other companies in programmes such as [Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals \(ZDHC\)](#), which have created a roadmap for the textile and footwear sector
- working with suppliers to progressively replace use of toxic chemicals with [safer alternatives](#), and partnering with companies providing alternatives

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- checking that manufacturing plants, especially dyeing plants, have **adequate effluent treatment systems**
- considering use of **natural rather than synthetic dyes** at the product design stage;
- factoring **sustainably sourced fabrics** and alternatives to chemicals into pricing models and purchasing practices

<https://www.commonobjective.co/article/the-issues-chemicals#eff>

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According to the Global Fashion Agenda, 26 percent of business owners surveyed believe that “low consumer willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products” was the greatest barrier for them to become more sustainable.

**Best Practice:** The textile industry must be **transparent** and **traceable** to succeed in terms of sustainability and to convince the customer. Therefore UNECE is mobilizing industry and experts to develop **blockchain traceability tool** and policy framework under EU-funded project!

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**Check the choice of fibres processed**, as the hierarchy of fashion shopping should goe roughly like this (*advice for customers from ecocult.com*):

1. 100% organic, natural fibers (or recycled natural fibres)
2. 100% natural fibers
3. 100% recycled polyester
4. Blended virgin and recycled polyester
5. 100% virgin polyester
5. Conventional blended fibres/ fabrics