



Material world

How sustainability trends are shaping the future of the fashion industry

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“The global fashion industry is one of the largest, most dynamic and influential industries on the planet, generating over EUR1.5 trillion a year in revenues. It is one of the most impactful and therefore should also have the power to play a pivotal role in leading the shift towards a more sustainable future.”

Opening words to the G7 Fashion Pact

Ahead of the 45th G7 Summit in Biarritz in August this year, President of France Emmanuel Macron gave François-Henri Pinault, Chairman and CEO of international luxury group Kering, a mission: to bring together the leading players in fashion and textile with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of the fashion industry. The Fashion Pact was presented to heads of state at the G7 Summit, and has received support from some of the world's largest fashion companies. Currently at 56 signatories, the coalition includes Gucci, Chanel, Prada, Hermès, and Nike. Representatives of the membership companies met for the first time on October 24 in Paris to define the organizational arrangements for the group.

About the fashion pact, [kering.com](https://www.kering.com)

The Fashion Pact is a global coalition of companies in the fashion and textile industry (ready-to-wear, sport, lifestyle and luxury) along with suppliers and distributors, all committed to a common core of key environmental goals in three areas: stopping global warming, restoring biodiversity and protecting the oceans.

This is a major new climate commitment, which comes following political pressure from France, one of the industry's most important hubs. One of its objectives is to align the industry with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The focus is therefore on three main pillars: Climate, Biodiversity; and Oceans, and the stated goals are:

- achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050;
- restore biodiversity by reinstating natural ecosystems and protecting key species; and
- address ocean pollution by eliminating single-use plastics by 2030.

New arrival

The Fashion Pact follows a number of other initiatives within the industry, such as the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action 2018 (which set out a vision to achieve net-zero emissions by 2025), the Global Fashion Agenda's Circular Fashion System after commitment, signed in 2017 (which called upon signatories to achieve at least one “circulatory” goal by 2020) and it sits alongside numerous other groups and organizations across the industry, among the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (a groundbreaking industry collaboration committed to measuring and improving social and environmental sustainability impacts in the apparel, footwear and textile industry and creator of the Higg Index).

THE HIGG INDEX

Developed by the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, the Higg Index is a suite of tools that enables brands, retailers, and facilities of all sizes — at every stage in their sustainability journey — to accurately measure and score a company or product's sustainability performance. The Higg Index delivers a holistic overview that empowers businesses to make meaningful improvements that protect the well-being of factory workers, local communities, and the environment.

Brands are also making themselves publicly accountable by setting targets for themselves, as part of now well established environmental policies and sustainability strategies. We have also seen an array of new ways to tackle the issue of sustainability in the fashion and luxury industry; from carbon neutral runways and the hiring of locally based models for shows, to shipping products by sea as opposed to air. They also include supply chain reform and ethical sourcing programs and technical solutions to manage the industry's water footprint and initiatives to popularize eco-friendly material substitutes.

ECONYL® is a regenerated nylon product made from nylon waste gathered from landfills and oceans around the world, and is one of the regenerated yarns created by the Aquafil Group. These yarns offer the same quality and performance as normal Nylon 6 but with significant environmental benefits, being not just manufactured from regenerated waste but 100% recyclable.

Trends: re-use, rewear, recycle

There is no doubt that the industry is under increasing consumer and regulatory pressure to improve its sustainability profile in a global market. Growing numbers of young people are turning away from fast fashion towards conscientious alternatives.

Activism

Extinction Rebellion earlier this year announced plans to shut down London Fashion Week (LFW) to raise awareness of the ecological damage caused by the fashion industry. The activist group focused on fast fashion as a major factor in the climate crisis and called for drastic reform – staging a funeral march on the last day of the event, starting at Trafalgar Square and ending at 180 The Strand, the home of LFW.

Some examples of the sustainability trends shaping the future of the fashion industry are set out below.

Secondhand

It's not new: the secondhand market is expected to overtake fast fashion in the next few years and be 50 percent bigger than fast fashion by 2028, according to a report produced by market analysts GlobalData for thredUP, the world's largest online thrift store. Other popular resale platforms include Depop in the UK, which offers app users the opportunity to buy and sell vintage and pre-owned luxury items, and The RealReal in the US, an online and bricks-and-mortar marketplace (which recently went public with a valuation of USD2.5 billion) for the resale of authenticated luxury goods.

#SecondHandSeptember saw British model Stella Tennant and charity Oxfam launch a campaign against single-use items of clothing. The pair asked consumers to abstain from buying new clothes for 30 days, and to shop second-hand, Oxfam's "fast fashion fact page" states that each week in the UK, 11 million items of clothing are sent to landfill, and every year the clothes sent to landfill weigh as much as the Empire State Building.

Takeback

Garment takeback campaigns are becoming increasingly popular. It's a simple idea, and some of the big players such as H&M and Levi's® are leading the way. The idea is simple; the retailer accepts unwanted clothes (from any brand in any condition) in return for vouchers or discount codes to use towards a customers' next purchase at their outlets. The materials are then either re-used, reworn or recycled with 0 percent going to landfill. reGAIN is the UK's first app developed for the recycling of unwanted clothing and textiles. The digital take back offers customers discount codes and coupons usable at participating retailers.

Repurpose

The North Face has launched recommerce program the North Face Renewed, offering a collection of “refurbished” clothing – used garments which have been professionally dry-cleaned, repaired and quality-checked, then sent back into the world at reduced prices. Its website states: “We can shift from a traditional, linear model to a circular model where people share, resell, repair and recycle clothing to keep them out of landfills and in the value chain.”

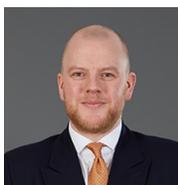
Reformation is a Los Angeles-based fashion company which repurposes vintage clothing re-used deadstock fabric from fashion houses that over-order and it also uses eco-friendly fabrics to create new styles. The brand also recently launched an app that lets you know just how much water and energy you are saving by buying its goods.

ASICS has announced plans to use recycled clothing to make the official uniforms for the Japanese Olympic and Paralympic teams at the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics. The company hopes to gather approximately 30,000 items of sportswear clothing by placing collection boxes in ASICS’ stores and at sports events across Japan.

The textile industry has been key to economic development in many countries and remains crucial for job creation and economic growth. However, the tension between consumption and the climate crisis is real. As the industry steps away from its age-old model of produce-wear-dispose-repeat, eco-responsible circular fashion will not only help to save the planet but can also offer brands positive press and new potential for profit.

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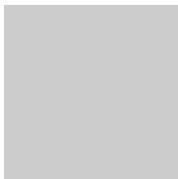


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