

Sustainable products: Taking fashion from runway to responsibility

The fashion industry faces challenges at the intersection of environmental impact, labor conditions, and consumer preferences. These challenges are driven by consumer demand for fast fashion – low-cost clothes produced quickly to follow current trends.

At a glance:

100billion

The global fashion industry manufactures over 100 billion new garments per year – a 2x increase since 2000.
[\(Source\)](#)

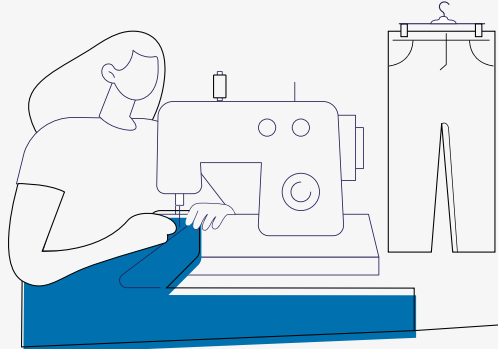
2xincrease

The fashion industry is responsible for an estimated 10 percent of global carbon emissions – more than international flights and maritime shipping combined.
[\(Source\)](#)

10%

50%

From 2019 to 2030, the industry’s CO₂ emissions are projected to surge by more than 50 percent.
[\(Source\)](#)



Exponential growth is straining resources, from raw materials to energy consumption, and impacting labor practices.

\$96

In countries like Bangladesh, a hub of low-wage garment manufacturing, factory workers [earn a monthly wage](#) of approximately \$96,

3.5times

while a decent standard of living requires about 3.5 times that amount.

Consumers are increasingly conscious of sustainability, with a growing demand for responsible fashion choices.

12%

Consumers are willing to pay a 12 percent premium for products that align with ethical and environmental standards.

However... companies often charge a 28 percent premium for sustainable products.
[\(Source\)](#)

28%

Balancing profit margins with ethical practices requires a collaborative effort within the fashion ecosystem. Here’s how sustainable products in the fashion industry can protect consumers, drive innovation, and prioritize ethical practices.

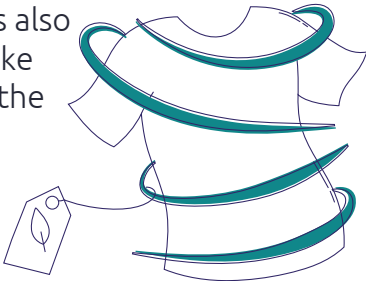
Low-polluting dyes protect consumers

The traditional dyeing process is water intensive and highly pollutive. The environmental consequences are significant – clothing dyes [contribute to 20 percent](#) of global water pollution. Most synthetic dyes used by manufacturers contain chemicals such as nitrogen and bleach, which are highly toxic for humans and aquatic life.

20%

Clothing dyes contributes 20 percent of global water pollution

Natural dyes derived from plants and minerals offer a greener solution. They are biodegradable and require less water and energy for production. Natural dyes also support local communities and traditional crafts, like batik and tie-dye. By embracing natural materials, the fashion industry aligns with sustainability and responsible practices.



Sustainability in action

Harvest & Mill uses undyed, natural color, non-toxic, or naturally dyed cotton to produce its garments.

\$85

The [cost of a men’s t-shirt is \\$85](#), a luxury price.

But 70 percent of US consumers [are willing to pay more](#) for sustainable products.

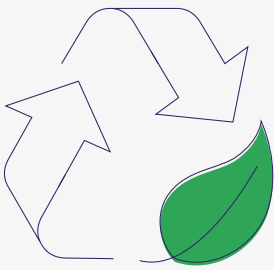
70%

The brand is committed to avoiding harmful dyes, ensuring its clothing is both eco-friendly and safe for consumers.

Sustainable materials drive innovation

Natural materials like hemp and pineapple leather are eco-friendly and reduce the production of synthetic fabrics. By incorporating natural materials, manufacturers are contributing to a more sustainable fashion ecosystem.

Brands are also adopting lower-carbon synthetic or recycled synthetic fibers. Recycled polyester repurposes plastic bottles into fabric, reducing waste and energy consumption. To avoid greenwashing, brands must ensure that all sustainable materials can be traced to the source and that the environmental impact can be quantified for customers.



Sustainability in action

Adidas reduced its carbon footprint associated with synthetic fabrics and embraced a range of sustainable materials, including polyester, cotton, leather, and rubber.

Notably, the brand has produced 27 million shoes [made from ocean plastic](#)

27million

96%

and 96 percent of its polyester is recycled to further [reduce its ecological footprint](#).

Transparency anchors ethical practices

Transparency is not just a buzzword for fashion brands – it’s a legal requirement in many places. In 2020, France introduced the [Anti-Waste Circular Economy Law \(AGEC\)](#), emphasizing a circular economy with reduced waste, safer practices, and transparent communication with consumers.

This legislation mandates that all fashion brands operating in French territory provide environmental labels on their products or online product pages. Labels must clearly indicate where and how the garments are made. Brands must also disclose the contents of each garment, including details like recycled materials, unsafe chemicals, or synthetics prone to shedding plastic microfibers.

Transparency is an opportunity for brands to showcase their commitment to ethical and eco-conscious practices.

Sustainability in action

Italian fashion brand OVS, founded in 1972 as Organizzazione Vendite Speciali, publishes a 115-page annual sustainability report committing to responsible practices.

Its clothing is made from 85 percent organic cotton, [demonstrating the brand’s dedication](#) to sustainable materials.

85%



[Click here](#) to learn about our ongoing partnership with Venture Lab (powered by the Wharton School), and our work on advancing sustainable technologies. Ready to achieve your sustainability goals? Contact us today.

Tyler Williams
Deputy Head, Americas Sustainability
tyler.c.williams@capgemini.com

Farah Abi Morshed
Senior Growth Strategy Manager, Americas
Farah.morshed@capgemini.com

Sazia Nowshin
Lead Sustainability Consultant, Americas
sazia.nowshin@capgemini.com