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New “Dirty Fashion” Report Scores Luxury, Fast Fashion and Sports Brands on Viscose Manufacturing & Sustainability Practices

Levi Strauss & Co., Reformation, Sainsbury’s & George at Asda Join Fashion Frontrunners in Pledge to Source Responsibly Produced Viscose by 2023-25

Luxury Brands Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada and Versace Lag at the Bottom of the Ranking Together with Sports Giant Nike and Low-Cost Retailers Costco, Forever 21, TJ Maxx and Walmart in the Report’s “Red Zone”

**** SEE THE DIRTY FASHION SCORES HERE: <https://dirtyfashion.info/brands> ****

Today, a new investigative report released by the Changing Markets Foundation, the Fashion Revolution, the Clean Clothes Campaign, Ethical Consumer and WeMove.EU evaluated the global textile and fashion industry on its transition towards responsible viscose and modal fibre manufacturing.

The report, *Dirty Fashion: Crunch Time*, ranks 100 well-known fashion brands including Nike, Costco, Walmart, TJ Maxx, ASOS, Levi’s and many more alongside luxury retailers Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada, and Versace on their responsible viscose production plans and commitments and progress on transparency.

Specifically, the report found that:

- Fourteen major brands and retailers have made a public commitment to clean up their viscose supply chains, sending a strong signal to viscose manufacturers that they expect the industry to move to responsible viscose production by 2023-25.
- Viscose manufacturers producing over 50% of global market share have also committed to better manufacturing and have started investing in closed-loop production processes in line with the Changing Markets’ [Roadmap](#).
- However the bulk of the fashion brands are still dragging their feet: three-quarters of companies (75 out of 100) have made few or no commitments to stamp out dirty viscose.

“With viscose manufacturers representing over half of the global production committing to clean up their act, there is no more excuse for fashion brands to be dragging their feet.” said Urska Trunk, Campaign Manager at the Changing Markets Foundation. “After years of engagement we are especially surprised by a complete lack of progress by some luxury brands that claim to sell higher quality and more exclusive clothing, while completely ignoring such a key sustainability issue. There is also a very clear divide running across the Atlantic ocean with European brands being much more progressive and committed to lead the change on this issue, while a vast majority of US brands are lingering in the red zone.”

“The technology to produce cleaner viscose already exists,” continued Trunk. “Brands like Prada, Versace, Nike, Forever 21, and so many more must clean up their act and use their purchasing power to make manufacturers move to closed-loop production. No more excuses.”

SEE THE FULL REPORT HERE: <https://changingmarkets.org/portfolio/dirty-fashion/>

According to the Changing Markets Foundation, US fashion brands and international luxury brands consistently underperform their counterparts in responsible viscose manufacturing. This is the third time Changing Markets and other NGOs contacted fashion brands and retailers about their viscose policies. Of the 100 brands contacted, almost two-thirds (61%) provided some kind of response – a response rate slightly higher than in 2019 (59%).

The report categorizes companies in four groups: Frontrunners, Could Do Better, Trailing Behind and the Red Zone on the basis of their responses to the questionnaire and their publicly available viscose policies. The 28 worst-performing brands assigned to the Red Zone category are those with no viscose-specific policy and transparency of any kind. Over two thirds of these brands (64%) are US-based. Some of them – Aeropostale, Forever 21 and Michael Kors – have repeatedly landed in the Red Zone, indicating they are completely out of step with industry trends and consumer expectations.

The report also highlights the limitations of a voluntary approach in driving a sector-wide transformation and is calling for ambitious legislation, to level the playing field across the industry.

"It is time for EU leaders to step up and make the necessary regulatory reforms, as industry initiatives have clearly failed and the current health economic crises have taken devastating tolls on workers throughout the supply-chain," said Muriel Treibich of Clean Clothes Campaign. "In an industry known for power imbalances, it will take leadership on EU level to ensure that the textile sector supports workers' rights instead of actively undermining them."

SOME KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE REPORT INCLUDE:

- Among the lowest-ranked companies we also find luxury brands Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada and Versace showing that this problem is not confined to the cheaper end of the market.
- Interestingly, some luxury brands made [significant public statements about sustainability in the media this year](#), following the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their complete lack of engagement, commitments and even transparency clearly shows they are only paying lip service to this issue.
- There is a clear divide between US and European brands. Only two US companies (Reformation and Levi Strauss & Co.) signed up to the Roadmap and are considered Frontrunners, while the large majority (90%) landed in the bottom two categories, showing a lack of engagement and action to stamp out dirty viscose.
- Several brands have shown marked improvement when it comes to transparency. Almost all signatory brands disclose some information about their viscose suppliers. Among the most transparent are ASOS, C&A, Esprit, M&S, Reformation and Tesco, which have published extensive lists of their viscose manufacturers on their corporate websites, including the names and, in some cases, full addresses of factories.

The report also evaluated what the world's leading viscose producers are doing to improve their manufacturing practices. In addition to companies - Lenzing, Aditya Birla and ENKA - that were already committed to clean up their production in line with the Roadmap, this year two Chinese producers - Sateri and Tangshan Sanyou - broke rank with the Chinese Collaboration for Sustainable Development of Viscose (CV), and joined others in committing to cleaner viscose production. Meanwhile, the CV is still lagging behind the transformation taking place in the industry.

VIEW THE FULL LIST OF MANUFACTURERS AND THEIR PERFORMANCE HERE:

<https://dirtyfashion.info/manufacturers>

To date, the *Roadmap* has 14 signatories - all brands identified as Frontrunners, including Levi Strauss & Co. (as well as the Dockers®, Denizen® from Levi's® and Signature by Levi Strauss & Co.™), ASOS, H&M, Tesco, Marks & Spencer (M&S), Esprit, C&A, Next, New Look, Morrison's, Sainsbury's, George at

Asda, and Reformation. These companies have made a public pledge to better viscose manufacturing by 2023-25 and have committed to transparently publish their viscose suppliers.

"Levi Strauss & Co. understands the importance of both addressing the impacts of wood fiber production and protecting ancient and endangered forests," said Jeffrey Hogue, Chief Sustainability Officer, Levi Strauss & Co. "The Changing Markets Roadmap will play a key role in guiding our work with suppliers to address the environmental and social impacts of man-made cellulosic fiber manufacturing."

"Reformation is committed to sourcing 100% safe, recycled, regenerative or renewable inputs," said Kathleen Talbot, Reformation's Chief Sustainability Officer & VP Operations. "We have the opportunity to reduce the environmental impact of viscose, and push for responsible production practices. As a Changing Markets roadmap signatory, we will support transparency and transformative change in viscose manufacturing."

READ THE ROADMAP HERE: <https://changingmarkets.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Roadmap-towards-responsible-viscose-and-modal-fibre-manufacturing.pdf>

Earlier investigations - *Dirty Fashion*, and *Dirty Fashion Revisited* - by Changing Markets Foundation into viscose factories across India, Indonesia and China – highlighted how inadequate chemical management and water treatment have been destroying ecosystems, agriculture, directly exposing workers and local communities to harmful chemicals, leading to severe health problems. The reports also revealed that many fashion giants were buying from these polluting viscose factories.

In 2018, following previous investigations and initial engagement with clothing companies, the Changing Markets Foundation developed *the Roadmap towards responsible viscose and modal fibre manufacturing*, which provides a blueprint for the transition in the sector. It outlines a set of principles for brands, retailers and producers to move towards a closed loop manufacturing system, where emission controls and chemical recovery rates are in line with the best practices - the so-called EU Best Available Techniques (BAT).

MORE ABOUT VISCOSE PRODUCTION:

Viscose is a 'cellulose' or wood-pulp-based fibre, derived from trees such as eucalyptus, beech and pine, as well as plants such as bamboo. Along with other man-made cellulosic fibres (MMCFs), such as lyocell and modal, viscose is the third most used fibre - after polyester and cotton. In 2019, viscose had a market share of about 5% of the total fibre production volume.

The *Roadmap* provides guidance for brands, retailers and producers willing to move towards closed-loop viscose manufacturing. We define 'closed-loop production' as a process whereby chemical inputs are captured and reused, instead of being released into the environment. More specifically, closed-loop production ensures that emission controls and chemical recovery rates are in line with EU Best Available Techniques (BAT).

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***The Changing Markets Foundation** partners with NGOs on market-focused campaigns. Our mission is to expose irresponsible corporate practices and drive change towards a more sustainable economy.
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