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## **Inditex, ASOS and M&S lead transition to responsible viscose, while luxury and low-cost brands continue to play dirty**

- Report reveals progress towards cleaner production of viscose in fashion industry
- Shoppers trust luxury brands over cheaper alternatives for environmental policies, according to new research
- But luxury brands including Prada and Chanel sit alongside low-cost retailers Asda, Lidl and Missguided in continuing to ignore major sustainability issue

Faced with evidence of severe environmental harm at textiles factories, the global fashion industry has made mixed progress towards cleaning up viscose production. A new report from the Changing Markets Foundation, based on over a year's worth of investigations and research, finds that despite bold leadership from some brands, a large part of the industry has still not signed up to cleaner production.

Luxury brands including Gucci, Prada and Chanel sit alongside low-cost retailers, such as Asda, Lidl and online brands Boohoo and Missguided with a complete lack of engagement on a critical sustainability issue. This may come as a shock to UK shoppers, 30% of whom consider luxury brands to be sustainable, compared to only 13% for low-cost brands, according to new research.\*

The research reveals that sustainability is an important consideration when it comes to fashion. 60% of shoppers would stop buying clothes from a fashion brand if they found out that they were using materials that could damage the environment or impact communities.

Viscose is the third most commonly used textile fibre in the world and has the potential to be a sustainable fibre. However, if not produced responsibly, viscose can have a devastating impact.

Changing Markets' investigations found that companies supplying viscose to global fashion brands were dumping toxic wastewater in lakes and waterways, destroying subsistence agriculture and fisheries. Communities living near some of the plants spoke of a lack of access to clean drinking water, sickening smells that were making life unbearable and higher incidence of serious diseases such as cancer.

In light of this evidence, seven retail brands have committed to cleaning up their viscose supply chain. Inditex, ASOS, Marks & Spencer, H&M, Tesco, Esprit and C&A have all signed up to Changing Markets' *Roadmap towards responsible viscose and modal fibre manufacturing* and started engaging with their suppliers. Next is also set to sign up in the coming weeks.

However, brands from both ends of the fashion industry have failed to respond to letters sent by a group of environmental and consumer NGOs and there is scant detail about their environmental policies online. While other leading retailers, such as Arcadia Group (owner of Topshop, Burton and Dorothy Perkins), have engaged with the campaign, they still do not have any policies relating to viscose, nor provide any transparency about their supply chain.

**Natasha Hurley, Campaign Manager at Changing Markets Foundation, commented on the most recent findings:**

*“After many years of complacency from fashion brands and producers with regard to the environmental impacts of viscose manufacturing, the tide is finally beginning to turn towards more responsible production methods. But the unlikely bedfellows of luxury brands and discount retailers continue to ignore an issue that is blighting people’s lives and the environment.*

*“What’s more, most luxury fashion brands are failing to publicly disclose supply chain information. This is unacceptable. It’s time for them to wake up to consumers’ desire for more transparency and more sustainable fashion.”*

Viscose manufacturers are also making progress on sustainability. The two largest viscose producers in the world have both committed to making all their sites meet EU Ecolabel requirements for viscose production by 2022.

Yet more needs to be done: the report reveals that the EU Ecolabel currently does not cover water pollution, and is therefore not sufficient to show compliance with Changing Markets’ Roadmap. In addition, manufacturers need to translate initial commitments into detailed implementation plans, concrete investments and the transparent reporting of their performance, including of complaints and grievances.

With this commitment, clothing brands and retailers are sending a clear message to viscose manufacturers that they expect the industry to move towards closed-loop production by 2023-25.

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**About Changing Markets:**

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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\*Research conducted by YouGov on behalf of Changing Markets. 2,000 GB adults surveyed in July 2018.