A group of textile and sporting goods industry bodies has launched a new manifesto for reducing waste and encouraging circularity in their industries. Their aim is to help brands, product manufacturers, policy makers and consumers build a pathway towards the circular economy.

Waste management manifesto

Five apparel organisations have partnered to call on EU policymakers to help establish a circular fashion system. Euratex (European Apparel and Textile Confederation), the Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI), Global Fashion Agenda (GFA), International Apparel Federation (IAF) and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) have published a manifesto that stresses the need for the industry to rethink its business model.

It contends that closing the loop requires unprecedented collaboration to combat fashion waste and to guarantee that business models are fully circular. It says a new approach must be adopted across the industry by using innovations such as technology to separate fibres for reuse and upcycling. It requests more measures tailored to the needs of a range of businesses and smart regulations to help consumers rethink the way they dispose of garments they no longer want to keep.

Hand in hand with the publication of the manifesto, the industry organisations have formed a policy hub to push for change. The policy hub will be in place for one year, pursuing the aims that the manifesto lays out. Clothing retail bodies, including H&M and the C&A Foundation will help fund the policy hub's work.



A jacket by Ecoalf made from plastic bottles taken from the ocean.

Ecoalf

A call to unite

Jérôme Pero, secretary general of FESI, says his organisation now has, within its steering committee for responsibility, a task force dedicated to the circular economy. He comments: "Circularity has become a key issue in all aspects of daily life. However, the schemes in place now do not sufficiently support a scaled circular economy system. To drive change, it is essential that all actors work together to make it happen. That's why I believe this manifesto is a perfect, timely call to unite everyone."

He says the organisations that have signed the manifesto will talk to industry players to identify what can be done to accelerate circularity in their sectors. Including industry stakeholders in the conversation is of great importance, he argues, explaining: "Many brands have circular economy initiatives already but we do not yet have an aligned way of doing things, at least in the sporting goods sector. We are trying to find the common denominators now."

Legislation proposals

Euratex's director of sustainable businesses, Mauro Scalia, says the vision outlined in the manifesto is in keeping with wider thinking on the circular economy. It aims to establish a new model of production and consumption in which we minimise waste, reuse as much as possible any waste we do create, and build up a society in which we all strive to use less material to make goods. "These ideas are very important for policy-makers now," he says. "We have already seen them launch legislation on plastics and the intention is there to make legislation proposals specifically for textiles and apparel too."

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High-fashion circularity. A Max Mara dress using Newlife fibres from Sinterama and a skirt from Salvatore Ferragamo that uses silk and Orange Fiber show the desire among big-name brands to put waste to the best possible use.

Max Mara/Salvatore Ferragamo/Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Mr Scalia's contention is that the circular economy is already in place in Europe's textile and apparel sectors and says this will have an impact on production worldwide. Euratex has been active on this for two years now, and he insists that the examples that have emerged offer lessons for the whole global industry. His organisation has worked with wider representative group Business Europe to contribute examples from the textile and apparel sector to stand alongside other circular economy success stories that Business Europe has published and is adding to at www.circulary.eu. So far, the number of examples flagged up from the world of textiles is 28, starting two years ago with a close-the-loop textile waste recycling project launched by Ikea in Poland and including, as the most recent addition this June, Infinited Fiber from Finland, which, with the backing of investors that include H&M, has developed technology for producing "cotton-like", sustainable fibre out of post-consumer textile waste, cardboard and pulp.

Good for society, good for business

"There is still lots of work to do, of course," Mr Scalia says. "Recycled material is still more expensive and the quality cannot always be guaranteed, plus we need collaboration to create a reverse supply chain that works well, but there is a lot we can learn from all these examples." Other successes, among the 28, that *WSA* readers are familiar with include DyeCoo's water-free and process-chemicals-free dyeing technology for textiles, Lenzing's project to incorporate Refibra cotton scraps into its Tencel

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Finland's Infinited Fiber is the latest textile-sector company to have its circular economy success story highlighted by Euratex. It has developed technology for producing "cotton-like", sustainable fibre from post-consumer textile waste.

VTT/Infinited Fiber

fibres, Sinterama's Newlife yarns, the Upcycling the Oceans project by Ecoalf, TWD for its Diolen Recircle recycled fibres and the Orange Fiber fabrics that are made from waste from the citrus fruit sector.

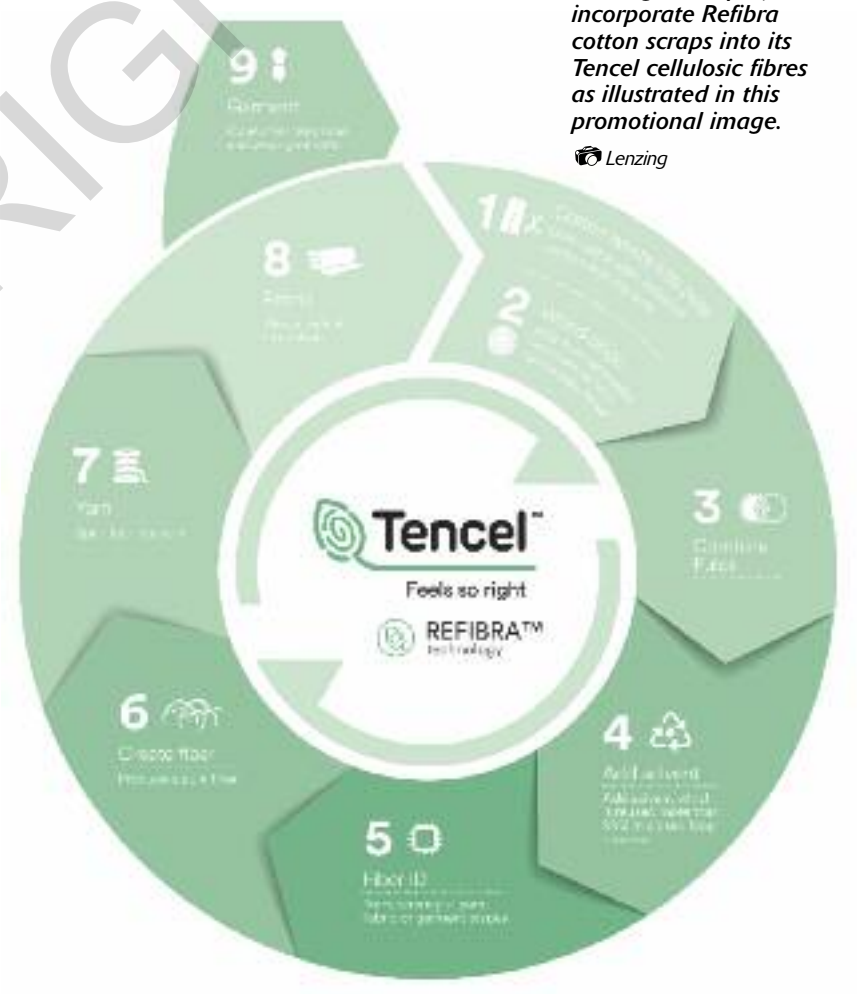
"The circular economy is good for society and for business," Mr Scalia continues. "It will create huge opportunities for this industry and reduce its environmental impact. That's why we are calling for new policy measures that will incentivise more sustainable products. There is soon going to be a new European Commission and we will offer our knowledge to help identify what measures can be taken." He goes on to explain that this sharing of knowledge will include explaining how fibres are made, what their properties are, what differences there are between fibres and what the limits are.

Incentives in sight

For Jérôme Pero of FESI, one of the concrete steps the industry will need to take will be to design product with "mandatory separate collections" in mind. "We will have to make sure waste goes back into production," he explains. He points out that the outgoing European Commission has already put in place policy guidelines for the new Commission, which is likely to begin its work this autumn. It is worth re-emphasising that the European Commission has a clear view that policies it puts in place can help spread good practice throughout the world.

Not all of the initiatives will be negative. For example, Mr Pero believes green tax incentives to help textile, footwear and sporting equipment companies make products that are easier to recycle is one positive contribution policy-makers might consider. "We have no crystal ball so we cannot know for sure what the next Commission will decide to do, but they see our sector as one that has a lot of potential when it comes to circularity," he says.

Nevertheless, the politicians are likely to bring considerable pressure, too, as his Euratex colleague acknowledges. "You can see this on the streets," Mauro Scalia says. "The pressure on the European Parliament and on the Commission to make textiles and clothing more circular will be huge, but we need to keep a calm head. We need to learn the lessons from, say, REACH, which provides information on the potential impact on the environment and on human health of chemical products. We're not denying anything. We have 4.6 billion items made in the European Union every year and import 22 billion more. We know the textile and apparel industry has a huge environmental impact."



Lenzing has a project to incorporate Refibra cotton scraps into its Tencel cellulosic fibres as illustrated in this promotional image.

Lenzing

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