

## SUSTAINABILITY: PUMA INCYCLE

Puma has been true to its promise and has launched the new InCycle Basket shoe and an athletic apparel collection to go with it. The sports brand has made much of the footwear and apparel's green credentials but appears to have backed away from questionable comparisons between the environmental cost of the new shoe and that of its more traditional leather ones.



# Low-key launch for InCycle Basket

**I**n keeping with statements it made in October last year, sports brand Puma launched a new shoe called the InCycle Basket in February. However, its launch announcements included none of the controversial “environmental cost” comparisons with leather that the company made when it began talking about the new product.

It has subjected the shoe to analysis by the Cradle to Cradle movement, which aims to encourage consumer product manufacturers to use materials that can be recycled or that are biodegradable. The shoe, and a range of

athletic clothing with which it makes up the InCycle collection, have won Cradle to Cradle certification.

Upper materials Puma has used in the InCycle Basket include biodegradable organic canvas (made from organic cotton) and hemp fibres (early reports referred to linen rather than hemp, but the official product description refers to “hemp curd fibres”). Inside the materials are coconut fibre. The sole is composed of a new biodegradable plastic called APINATbio, which can be shredded into its component materials and composted to go back into the ecosystem.

*The InCycle Basket shoe was launched but with much less hype and controversy than when Puma first announced the product in October 2012.*

 Puma



*Puma's InCycle athletic apparel collection includes the T7 Recyclable Track Jacket and Pant.*



Puma said at the time of the commercial launch that InCycle products represent “a tremendous step forward in reducing our environmental footprint and giving consumers a more sustainable product choice”.

At a media event to introduce the shoe in October 2012, the company published a comparison between the InCycle Basket and the Puma Suede shoe (popular since its launch in 1968), which a consultancy in London had carried out for it. The aim of the exercise was to show the “environmental cost” of the two products, taking into account water-, energy- and land-use, and carbon emissions. The analysis appeared to suggest that the “environmental cost” of the suede used in the older Puma shoe would make the cost to the environment of each hide used to make the Puma Suede shoe substantially higher than the market value of the hide itself.

Questioned by our sister magazine, *World Leather*, over several months about this conundrum, neither Puma nor the consultancy it worked with were able to justify the figures.

At the time of the commercial launch of the InCycle Basket, Puma made no mention of this comparison or of the analysis it had commissioned. One of the brand's directors, Reiner Hengstmann, limited himself to saying InCycle products impacted the environment “by a third less than their conventional counterparts”, without going into any further detail.

Puma's InCycle collection became available

in its stores from March 2013.

The brand has told consumers that when InCycle products are “ready for a new life” a few years after purchase, they can be returned to a ‘Bring Back Bin’ in designated own-brand stores around the world for the company to sort for either recycling or biodegrading.

InCycle's athletic clothing range includes the Basket Tee Biodegradable, which is made from 100% organic cotton at a medium weight of 160 grammes per square-metre. Then there is the T7 Track Jacket, which has been re-issued as the women's T7 Track Jacket Recyclable W for the InCycle collection; “it's a more sustainable version of the product” Puma says. It is made with 100% recycled polyester from used PET bottles and will be “fully recyclable” at the end of its lifespan because the jacket can be turned back into polyester granules to serve as raw material for further products to be made of recycled polyester in the future, reducing the need for crude oil, energy and the amount of waste created.

It's a similar story with the trousers that match the jacket, the T7 Track Pant W Recyclable. This, too, is an updated version of an existing Puma product, the women's T7 Pant. Again, one of the main differences is that it is made from 100% recycled polyester from used PET bottles.

InCycle is, clearly, a serious enough collection to tell a strong story in its own right, suggesting that there was little need in the first place for the controversial comparisons with other Puma products. 🌍