



# Lets Fix Fashion and the Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, set by the United Nations in 2015, are a road map intended to guide action that balances human needs with environmental health. The goals are a global agenda, a to-do list, that will end poverty, inequality, and achieve environmental sustainability by 2030. The fashion industry can achieve sustainability through the integration of the goals across its supply chain to not only protect the environment but also the people working throughout. The industry can be directly related to the following goals:



## Production, Supply chains and Consumerism

Since 2000 clothing consumption has doubled. Globally, fashion is responsible for 92 million tonnes of waste being dumped in landfill every year, the equivalent of 1 rubbish truck of textile waste landfilled or burned every second. Less than 1% of the material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing, with many textiles exported to the "rag" trade infiltrating both local communities and landfills.



Polyester is one of our most worn fabrics. Synthetics now account for 70% of all materials. It is derived from fossil fuels, contributes to global warming, and can shed microfibres that add to the increasing levels of plastic in our oceans when it's put through the wash. But even "natural fabrics" can be a problem at the scale fast fashion demands. Conventional cotton requires enormous quantities of water and pesticides in developing countries. This results in risks of drought and creates huge amounts of stress on water basins and competition for resources between companies and local communities. For example it takes 2,500 litres water to make a t-shirt. In addition synthetics can sit in landfill for up to the 200 years releasing methane and other harmful greenhouse gases contributing to global warming. manufacturing of conventional cotton uses high levels of pesticides and hazardous chemicals which can leach into our waterways and soil devastating eco systems and citizens living in the area.



## Climate Change

Textile production contributes more to climate change than international aviation and shipping combined, consumes lake-sized volumes of fresh water and creates chemical and plastic pollution. The fashion industry, in its current linear form, is unsustainable and is now confirmed as one of the world's biggest contributors to climate change. Globally the industry is reported to account for 10% of the world's annual carbon emissions. In 2015, greenhouse gas emissions from textile production totalled 1.2 billion tonnes of CO2 which was more than that of all international flights and maritime shipping combined. In addition, with consumer demand for new clothing growing exponentially (fast fashion), experts predict that the fashion industry could account for a quarter of global emissions by 2040.



### Pollution

The constant supply and demand puts huge stress on our environment such as for land clearing, impacting biodiversity, and soil quality. The processing of leather also impacts the environment with 300kgs of chemicals being added for every 900kg of animal hides tanned. The speed at which our clothes are produced also means that more and more clothes are disposed of by consumers, creating textile mountains in countries we export our disgarads to. Take a look at the short documentary 'Textile mountain' if you have not yet done so.



Textile pollution thrives across the supply chain from textile dyeing, toxic chemicals leaching into soil, adding pesticides, contaminating surface and groundwater. 500,000 tonnes of microfibres (50 billion plastic bottles) are released into the oceans yearly. An average wash of synthetics can release 700,000 microfibres into our water systems. Take a look at the River Blue for the extensive damage. Animals are also impacted by fast fashion, by the toxic dyes that are released in waterways and the microfibres that are often ingested by ocean life. When animal products such as leather and fur are used, animal welfare is put at risk.



### Human and Social Impact

By the mid-2000s, the fast fashion model dominated the fashion industry. It is characterised by super-fast, offshore production in countries that offer the lowest wages, the least regulation, and the fewest protections for workers and the environment. Labour, gender and poverty inequalities estimated to employ more than 60 million people worldwide and directly linked with labour issues vastly driven by the cost of labour, with many brands seeking out the cheapest route. An estimated 21 million people are entrapped in modern-day slavery where millions of people are forced to work with little or no pay under the threat of violence and horrific working conditions. 80% of the workforce throughout the supply chain are women, often subjected to violence and sexual harassment. Further down the supply chain, there are the farmers who may work with toxic chemicals that can have devastating impacts on their physical and mental health.

