

Fashion Has ‘Carbon Tunnel Vision.’ Textile Exchange Wants to Fix That



[RONDA KIMBROW PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES]

What Textile Exchange will consider a preferred fiber or material next year won't be the same as what it does today. It's a necessary part of what the sustainability-focused nonprofit dubs its "direction of travel," one that it hopes will help its members hit its Climate+ goal of slashing fiber and material production emissions by 45 percent by 2030. This includes "raising the bar" by moving from fibers and materials that are "less bad" to "more good." In the case of cotton, for instance, incorporating a soil health program will soon be a minimum requirement.

"We're not standing on a holy hill judging everyone that you're not doing good enough," LaRhea Pepper, the organization's outgoing CEO, told an audience of 1,700, both physical and virtual, at Textile Exchange's 2022 conference in Colorado Springs last month. "We're here to name and fame; we're here to inspire and equip. But if we're going to transform an industry—and we must—we've got to take

that next threshold, we've got to move to that next place in space."

There's a reason why there's a plus sign in both its climate commitment and its forthcoming life cycle assessment methodology, known as LCA+. Too much of the industry has what sustainability advisor Jan Konietzko describes as "carbon tunnel vision," where companies are so absorbed in their net-zero targets, they ignore everything else.

"Yes, we've got to address carbon concretely," Pepper said. "But without losing sight of the importance of protecting the ecosystem, protecting the people, protecting the biodiversity, protecting our water. We must be more than islands of good."

The plus sign also represents collaboration. Since Textile Exchange began 20 years ago—its first conference involved 40 people in a hotel room in Lubbock, Texas—the organization has grown to a powerhouse of 820 members, including major brands such as Adidas, H&M and Patagonia. By the end of the year, its stable of certifications, which include the Global Recycled Standard, the Organic Content Standard and the Responsible Wool Standard,

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will have endorsed 61,000 sites in nearly 100 countries. These best practices, Pepper said, are part of the mechanism that is driving transformation.

2023 will see further changes, not least because Claire Bergkamp, the organization's current chief operations officer, will be taking over Pepper's role. Textile Exchange plans to harmonize its different standards to create one unified system, with a fresh name and logo. The aforementioned LCA+ approach will infuse a \$500,000 tranche of new assessments for cotton, polyester and leather. A slew of new tools is poised to go online, including TrackIt, a platform that will help brands map Textile Exchange-certified raw materials in supply chains; the Shared Measurement System, which will automate the collection and analysis of data; the Transaction Authentication Tool, which will allow users to check the veracity of transaction certificates; and the Climate+ and Materials Dashboards, which will let members measure and track progress across different metrics. Ensuring deforestation-free supply chains will also take greater prominence.

One of the underlying conversations, Pepper said, is about price. The question is how to move the sector from a "price paradigm" to a "value paradigm." At the start of the year, Textile Exchange released its Regenerative Agriculture Landscape Analysis to chart the burgeoning healthy soils movement. Similar reports on biodiversity and water will be "following shortly," she added. Overall, there is a desire for more

useful data. And on top of that, a need for continuous improvement.

That's where yet another plus sign comes in.

"It's not an 'or' strategy," Pepper said. "Quite frankly, folks, it's got to be all of the above. We don't have time to cherry-pick or do one little shiny thing at a time. We've got mountains to move—and they can be moved. But we have to do them together."

The theme of the conference was "Materials Matter: A Pathway to Positive Impact." But an unofficial throughline was "Bee Courageous," complete with a bumblebee emblem that flashed on the screen as Pepper spoke. It was there in the bee-shaped plantable paper, embedded with pollinator-attracting wildflower seeds, that was distributed at every table. It was also alluded to in the jars of amber-hued local honey that speakers received as thank-you gifts.

"I'm going to ask you to be the change; be courageous," Pepper said. "Because the easy stuff, the low-hanging fruit, has been done. The next steps are going to require courageous conversations with your shareholders, courageous conversations with legislative bodies, courageous conversations with your co-workers, courageous conversations with your consumers to make sure we're engaging a broader and fuller community."

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Link

<https://sourcingjournal.com/sustainability/sustainability-materials/textile-exchange-2022-colorado-conference-preferred-fibers-carbon-tunnel-vision-396567/>

Provided by Sourcing Journal

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Vietnam factory workers laid off as West cuts imports



[Thousands of Vietnamese factory workers have lost their jobs as Western consumers cut spending due to soaring inflation © Nhac NGUYEN / AFP]

Almost half a million others have been forced to work fewer hours as orders fall in the Southeast Asian country, one of the world's largest exporters of clothing, footwear and furniture.

The cost-of-living crisis in Europe and the United States -- major markets for Vietnamese-produced goods -- has seen the buying power of Western shoppers plunge.

Women factory workers, who make up 80 percent of the labour force in Vietnam's garment industry, have been hit the hardest by the knock-on effect.

Early last month, 31-year-old Nhieu -- who lives in a nine-square-metre (100 square feet) room in Ho Chi Minh City with her two young sons and husband -- was told she was no longer needed at Ty Hung Company, a Taiwanese shoemaker that supplies big Western labels.

"They told us they did not have enough orders," she said of Ty Hung's announcement that it would fire 1,200 of its 1,800 staff.

"I was so, so shocked and so scared, I cried, but I can do nothing, I have to accept it."

The job earned Nhieu just \$220 a month in an expensive city where the average monthly income is \$370, but the money was regular and a step up from the mushroom picking she did as a teenager in the heat of the Mekong Delta.

'Worse than Covid'

Now, with just two months' severance pay to survive on, Nhieu must feed her family on a few dollars a day, and her kids are struggling to get enough to eat.

"We have no one to help us. I will have to get us through this on my own."

Since September, more than 1,200 companies -- mostly foreign businesses in the garment, footwear and furniture sectors -- have been forced to sack staff or cut working hours, according to the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour.

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Compared with last year, orders are down 30-40 percent from the United States and 60 percent from Europe, where inflation and energy bills have soared because of the war in Ukraine.

More than 470,000 workers have had their hours slashed in the last four months of the year while about 40,000 people have lost their jobs - 30,000 of them women aged 35 or older, the confederation said.

Taiwanese giant Pouyuen, a Nike shoe producer, has put 20,000 of its workers on paid leave in rotation, while reports said Vietnam's largest foreign investor, Samsung Electronics, has started reducing its smartphone production at factories in the north.

The situation is bleaker than during the Covid-19 pandemic, say workers, who were helped out with food donations when strict quarantine measures forced them to stay home -- and were quickly in demand again once restrictions lifted at the end of 2021.

"It's not easy to find a new job like before (following the pandemic)," said Nguyen Thi Thom, 35, who was laid off from a South Korean garment firm that makes clothes for US retail giant Walmart.

'No dream'

Since her factory work finished, Thom, who has three young children, spends her days on the streets of a shiny new suburban district of Ho Chi Minh City, selling dried noodles, shrimp sauce and oranges to passers-by.

The slowdown has come as a shock because export businesses in Vietnam were running at "their fullest capacity" for the first half of 2022, according to Tran Viet Anh, deputy head of Ho Chi Minh City's Business Association.

"At the start of the third quarter, due to global inflation, consumption demands have shrunk, leading to the suspension of orders... and huge stock surplus," he told AFP.

But the downturn in Vietnam will likely only be temporary, Viet Anh added.

A cut in production during the pandemic led to a shortage of goods in the first six months of 2022, and the situation will likely repeat a year on. Viet Anh said that "2023 will be a period where we increase production to compensate".

Until then, women like Nhieu and Thom, who form the backbone of a low-paid workforce that has helped Vietnam become a key manufacturing hub seen as an alternative to China, must find another way to keep their families afloat.

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"I have never had the luxury of dreaming what I want from life. I have only one wish, of earning enough to survive," Nhieu said.

Link

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221214-vietnam-factory-workers-laid-off-as-west-cuts-imports>

Provided by France 24

Burn Hazard Behind Life is Good Clothing Recall



[RECALLED LIFE IS GOOD SWEATSHIRTS COURTESY]

The Life is Good Company has recalled women’s fleece sweatshirts and men’s fleece shorts that violate federal flammability standards and pose a burn hazard, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

“The recalled clothing fails to meet flammability standards for clothing textiles, posing a risk of burn injuries to consumers,” the CPSC said in a Dec. 8 posting, noting that 750 units were involved in the recall.

Specifically, the recall involves “Fall 2022 Darkest Blue Fleece Men’s Simply True shorts” and two styles of “Fall 2022 Darkest Blue Women’s Simply True Hoodies”—“Good Vibes Daisies” and “Optimist Athletic.” CPSC said Good Vibes Daisies has a front zipper, a white daisy and “LIFE IS GOOD” printed on the upper left breast area and “Good Vibes” printed on the back. Optimist Athletic has “Optimist” and “Life is Good” printed on the chest.

The men’s shorts have a white “Life is Good” label below the left pocket. The shorts and the hoodies

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have season and style numbers printed near the bottom of an interior side-seam care label and a product item number printed on a hangtag.

“Consumers should stop using the recalled products immediately and contact Life is Good to request a postage-paid shipping label to return the products for a full refund,” CPSC said. “Upon receipt and verification of the recalled product, consumers will be issued a full refund.”

Life is Good, a lifestyle brand based in Boston, is contacting all known purchasers directly. There have been no incidents or injuries reported.

The merchandise, manufactured in Guatemala, was sold at lifeisgood.com and independent clothing stores from April through November for between \$33 and \$44 for the Men’s Simply True Fleece Shorts, between \$51 and \$68 for the Women’s Zip Hoodies and between \$48 and \$64 for the Women’s Simply True Hoodies.

“This recall is limited to a small number of items, approximately 750 individual units out of the millions the company sells each year,” said Kay Pancheri, vice president of brand marketing. “Life is Good is grateful that no one has been injured and is committed to doing right by our customers. The company is offering a full refund along with an additional \$25 gift card to those who have purchased one of the three affected items.”

The past several months have seen several brands and retailers subject to recalls, including merchandise linked to Disney as well as Under Armour, Clarks, Carter’s, TJ Maxx in two separate incidents, and Adidas, to name a few.

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<https://sourcingjournal.com/topics/compliance/life-is-good-sweatshirts-shorts-recall-burn-hazard-cpsc-federal-flammability-397507/>

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