

Wear
Nature.
Not
Plastic.

OUR PLASTIC FREE HANDBOOK

kowtow



We have embarked on a 17-year journey fuelled by a deep sense of purpose — to eliminate all plastic from our clothing. Our commitment to Fairtrade organic cotton has always been unwavering but we recognised the need to go beyond industry norms, and find natural alternatives. Why? Because we believe in a future where

fashion harmonises with the planet and people, leaving no harmful footprint behind. From January 2024, new Kowtow Fairtrade organic cotton garments are plastic-free.

The journey to plastic-free has been one of ambition, innovation, craft and commitment. It's the result of years of research and development.

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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

Introducing the Kowtow open source handbook, a guide to plastic-free clothing. Read and learn from experience to adapt what works for your collections, within your design and production systems. The intention is to help you start or continue your own plastic-free journey — from buttons to elastic, thread to fabric and where to source them. Each page contains the specifications for the components of our garments. The index at the back provides the supplier contact information for the components that we now use as standard. We've said goodbye to plastic, and now others can too.



ANATOMY OF A GARMENT

We started by identifying all of the components that make up our garments. There are no industry regulations for listing components on a care label so they can be over-looked but these components need to be replaced to achieve plastic-free. The Daily Shirt is used here as an example.

A FAIRTRADE & GLOBAL ORGANIC TEXTILE STANDARD (GOTS)
CU1011200 "ORGANIC" APPROVED COTTON.

B GLOBAL ORGANIC TEXTILE STANDARD (GOTS)
204325 "ORGANIC" APPROVED COTTON THREAD.

C OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100
APPROVED ORGANIC COTTON LABELS.

D CERTIFIED ORGANIC COTTON INTERLINING.

E OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100
APPROVED SHELL BUTTONS.

Cotton, Cotton Thread, Cotton Wadding, Cotton Labels, Cotton Interlining, Latex Rubber Elastic, Latex Rubber Elastic Thread, Shell Buttons, Nut Buttons, Metal Tacks & D-Rings...

(INDIA)

(INDIA, ITALY)

(INDIA)

(INDIA)

(INDIA, HONG KONG)

(GERMANY)

(INDIA)

(NEW ZEALAND, ITALY)

(NEW ZEALAND, ITALY)

(GERMANY)



COTTON

We use a natural mono-fibre, Fairtrade organic cotton for every garment we make - because it's traceable, biodegradable and simpler to breakdown for recycling. From this single fibre we create an entire product range including knitwear, denim, jersey and wovens.

Kowtow organic cotton is grown without harmful chemicals, it's rainfed and is entirely biodegradable. Both strong and gentle, beautiful and versatile, this cotton forms the basis of an entire wardrobe.

CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Fairtrade
- 2 Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) CU1162747 "organic"

MANUFACTURER

- 1 Purecotz Eco Lifestyles Pvt. Ltd,
India
Global Organic Textile Standard
(GOTS) CMPY-154541-GOTS "organic"
- 2 Rajlakshmi Cotton Mills Ltd,
India
Global Organic Textile Standard
(GOTS) 193142-GOTS "organic"

SUPPLIERS

- 1.1 Anandhi Texstyles Pvt. Ltd
- 1.2 Pratibha Syntex
- 1.3 Om Organic Cotton Pvt. Ltd
- 1.4 Farmers United House
- 2.1 Chetna Organic Agriculture
Producer Company Limited
- 2.2 RSWM Ltd



COTTON THREAD

The thread of a garment holds our entire collection together and often goes unseen. There is a misconception that most thread used in fashion is cotton but in fact, industry standard is synthetic - a polyester or a poly-cotton blend. There are good reasons behind using a synthetic thread - low cost, durability and shrinkage control.

Since 2023, Kowtow garments have been sewn together with certified organic cotton thread.

This switch required a lot of testing to be confident in its performance, and when we were, we progressed the entire range to this natural solution. This was a major achievement towards our vision of returning clothing to the earth without harm.

CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) 204325 "organic"
- 2 Oeko-Tex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Vardhman, India
- 2 MIC SPA, Italy



COTTON LABELS

The norm in the industry is to use two synthetic garment labels - one size label in the neck and another with care instructions in the side seam. We combine all this information onto one label only, made from certified organic cotton.



CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Oekotex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Punarbhavaa Sustainable Products, India.



COTTON WADDING

Cotton is a natural fibre that breathes – keeping you cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Our quilted styles have an additional inner layer of cotton wadding, sandwiched between our Fairtrade organic cotton fabric, specifically designed to keep you warm. After originally exploring recycled plastic options for this, we landed on using organic cotton wadding. This undyed, natural cotton wadding adds warmth and volume, supporting our vision to create clothing that can return to the earth without harm.

CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Oeko-Tex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Ginni Spectra Private Ltd,
India

COTTON INTERLINING

There are many invisible components that go into constructing our garments. Like the interlining, a 'hidden' cloth layer that serves as reinforcement in collars and cuffs; behind pockets; in button plackets and waistbands. Interlining gives a garment shape, strength and durability. Traditionally used in fashion tailoring, interlining was a natural cloth made from either cotton or horse hair.

In the 1950s it moved to being a synthetic material with a glue face that allowed it to stick to the garment – this option took over as the industry norm. Sourcing a natural alternative base cloth has been an extensive process, there are limited options. Where possible we reduce, or simply use our Fairtrade organic cotton as the interlining, but where extra stability is required we use certified organic cotton interlining.

CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) CU1107786 "organic"

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Wendler Interlining HK Ltd, India / Hong Kong



LATEX RUBBER ELASTIC

Elastic is another unseen component of Kowtow garments, which we have found a natural alternative for. Replacing the synthetic industry norm. Kowtow garments use natural latex rubber encased in certified organic cotton, to provide stretch and ease in our waistbands and cuffs. Our latex is carefully harvested by scratching the bark of the rubber tree, sourced responsibly from a member of the Fair Rubber Association. Finding this solution was a game changer.

CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) CB-GOTS-CUC-03-50062 “organic”
- 2 Oeko-Tex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 CharLe Premium Haberdashery, Germany. (filo-tex Garnvertrieb GmbH)

LATEX RUBBER ELASTIC THREAD

Kowtow knitwear has a small, yet vital component that supports a garment’s structure and longevity – a narrow thread of elastic knitted into the hem edges. This was synthetic and needed to change. When we couldn’t find an existing natural alternative we started an innovation partnership with Punarbhavaa Sustainable Products to develop our own solution. Garments now use natural latex rubber elastic thread wrapped in certified organic cotton. This is our most recent innovation, and although a small component, it is one we are proud of.

CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Oeko-Tex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Punarbhavaa Sustainable Products, India.





SHELL BUTTONS

Choosing buttons over zips has always been part of our reductive design process. Previously, we used recycled hemp buttons assuming they were natural – but as we learnt more we discovered they had synthetic binders holding their shape. Finding plastic-free alternatives became an intriguing design challenge for our team, showcasing their creativity within limitations.

Now, we use Oeko-Tex Standard 100 approved agoya and mussel shell buttons which are natural and completely plastic-free. These are responsibly sourced by-products of the fishing industry in Australia and Japan, and can be returned to the earth.

CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Oeko-Tex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Oceania Accessories - Italian Import Co Ltd, New Zealand & Italy



NUT BUTTONS

We also use nut buttons, made from corozo nuts that grow on tropical tagua palm trees. These corozo buttons are die cut straight out of the nut. They are processed and dyed under Oeko-Tex Standard 100 and are free of harmful substances. The dyeing of these buttons follows these strict standards, and are tested for toxins that may be left behind in the dyeing process. You can see the beautiful, naturally occurring grain in our nut buttons, adding texture to the final product.



CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Oeko-Tex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Oceania Accessories - Italian Import Co Ltd,
New Zealand & Italy



METAL TACKS & D-RINGS

Kowtow doesn't use zips. Instead, we use nickel-free metal tack buttons and d-rings for our denim jeans and jackets. Always designing with reduction in mind, we use these trims sparingly. As part of our Take-Back programme, all metal components can be removed, broken down and recycled in a special partnership with our supplier – a key step in supporting circular solutions that no other supplier provides.



CERTIFICATIONS

- 1 Oeko-Tex Standard 100

SUPPLIERS

- 1 Berning & Söhne GmbH & Co. KG,
Germany





A vision for clothing
that can return to the
earth without harm.

This handbook is the culmination of our 17-year journey and the work of so many passionate designers, producers and Kowtow team members. We want to sincerely thank everyone for their contribution to this milestone.



“ Plastic does not ever go away; it just breaks down into smaller particles and ends up in our oceans. We want to be a solutions provider, not part of the problem so finding plastic-free alternatives seemed obvious. ”

Gosia Piątek, Kowtow Founder

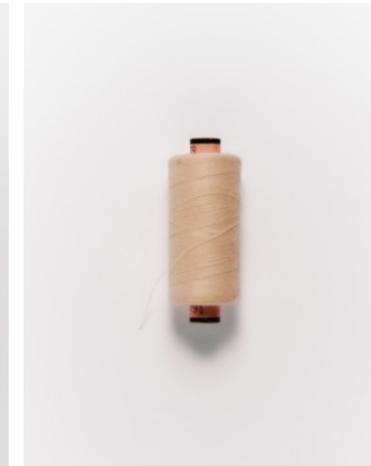
The release of plastic-free clothing marks a new era for Kowtow but our work is never done. We are always looking for new ways to innovate and improve our business operations on the journey to achieve our vision - to create clothing that can truly return to the earth without harm.

SUPPLIERS INDEX

COTTON Purecotz Rajlakshmi Cotton Mills	India India	purecotz.com rcm-organic.co
COTTON THREAD Vardhman Manifattura Italiana Cucirini SPA	India Italy	vardhman.com.au micspa.com
COTTON LABELS Punarbhaava Sustainable Products	India	pspindia.net
COTTON WADDING Ginni Spectra Private Ltd	India	purecotz.com
COTTON INTERLINING Wendler Interlining HK Ltd	India/HK	wendlerinside.com
LATEX RUBBER ELASTIC CharLe Premium Haberdashery	Germany	premium-haberdashery.de
LATEX RUBBER ELASTIC THREAD Punarbhaava Sustainable Products	India	pspindia.net
SHELL BUTTONS Oceania Accessories - Italian Import Co Ltd	New Zealand & Italy	oceania.co.nz
NUT BUTTONS Oceania Accessories - Italian Import Co Ltd	New Zealand & Italy	oceania.co.nz
METAL TACKS & D-RINGS Berning & Söhne GmbH & Co. KG	Germany	berning-net.de



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