

## Sustainability Information



Transparency is key.

We believe that one of the most important things for a sustainable brand is transparency.

We know how important it is to our customers to be able to easily find the information they need when shopping sustainably.

We wanted to share with you a bit more information about how our clothes are made.

When choosing our suppliers, we wanted to make sure they share the same core values as we do.

We wanted to feel confident that our supply chain is as sustainable as possible, and that our suppliers really know their stuff when it comes to sustainability and working ethically.

We undertook months of research before we launched our brand, and we are proud to say that our suppliers are among the top leading brands in the world for sustainable material sourcing (as listed by the Textile Exchange in their Material Change Index, released on 23 January 2020).

This ranking shows their commitment to making positive changes in the textile industry.

At the outset, their mission was to create high quality garments in the most ethical and responsible way.

Therefore, sustainability is integrated into everything they do, deliberately deciding who they work with, choosing fair working practices and the materials they use in the manufacturing of the garments.

Independent bodies and industry standards certify the supply chain used by the manufacturers. Environmental practices help to work towards the certifications set out by the independent bodies helping to respect the environment at every stage of the process.

The Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) support their partners by working closely with them to ensure workers safety in their approach to their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The FWF carry out extensive social audits and, once happy the supplier is showing best practices in areas such as freedom of association, they award them 'Leader' status.

But it doesn't stop there—regular visits to the factories and monthly reports ensure that decent working conditions are upheld and an internal Code of Conduct is in place.

State-of-the art Effluent Treatment Plants are installed at all their partner factories which extract toxic elements from the water, meaning it's safe to be reused.

Furthermore, recycling fabric waste projects have been developed.

Transparency and co-operation are integral to their sustainability work. Staff members are given the opportunity to travel to Bangladesh to see the processes first-hand. Regular trips to India are made by the sustainability team to continue the work on cotton traceability.

Our suppliers' ultimate aim is to reach a fully sustainable supply chain. However, they realise that this is a complex and ongoing project and therefore are continually improving their global footprint and supply chain. They are committed to making changes for a healthier planet and happier staff.

From the beginning, the decision to use only 100% organic cotton was important as they felt that using conventional cotton wasn't ethically justified. The definition of organic cotton is that seeds have not been genetically modified (non-GMO), and it is grown without the use of fertilisers or chemical pesticides.

Only natural methods are used in organic cotton farming. Crop rotation is an ancient method to help preserve the quality of the soil and therefore plants and the environment. This also helps the biodiversity of the area which in turn improves the health and quality of life for the farmers and the communities in the area.

The journey of cotton from the field to being a final product is long and part of a complex supply chain. Our suppliers aim to achieve the highest level of responsibility as the organic cotton, sourced in India, finishes its journey as a garment for the European market.

Let's take a closer look at this journey and how our clothes are made...

### *India – organic cotton farms*

Organic cotton comes from a selection of smallholder farmers in India.

### *India – Ginning mill*

The cotton is then taken to the ginning mill where it is processed and cotton lint is extracted. The remainder of the cotton ball is used as oil and cattle fodder.

### *Bangladesh – Spinning mill: Yarn manufacturing*

The fibres are twisted and spun into yarn. They only use ringspun, combed yarn, which gives a softer feel to the finished garment.

### *Bangladesh – Partner factories*

Their Quality Controllers are based in their Bangladeshi Liaison Office. They make sure

that the factories adhere to the social and safety regulations in all of the factories as well as ensuring that the production process runs smoothly. They have a team of over 20 which handles the South Asia business.

### *Bangladesh - Fabric knitting*

They use the weft knitting method for their t-shirts, polo shirts and sweatshirts. The fabric is then:

dyed and washed,

cut and sewn,

ironed and packed in Bangladesh,

and shipped via boat or plane to Belgium.

### *Antwerp - Warehouse*

The warehouse that receives their garments is GOTS certified.

### *Europe - Distribution*

The garments are then shipped to our wholesaler partners in the UK.

### **THEY ARE PROUD TO BE GOTS CERTIFIED**

“GOTS is the worldwide leading textile processing standard for organic fibres, including ecological and social criteria, backed up by independent certification of the entire textile supply chain.”



## *GLOBAL ORGANIC TEXTILE STANDARD—April 2022*

The standard guarantees that cotton is organically grown without the use of GMO seeds, or any harmful chemical products (such as pesticides, fertilisers and insecticides) that are dangerous for the environment or the health of farmers or factory workers.

Transaction certificates are issued at every stage of production, which allows products to be traced on their entire journey from field to customer.

GOTS is the most respected and rigorous certification covering not only raw materials and production practices, but also ensuring the health and well-being of workers in the supply chain.

Other certifications our suppliers hold:



## **RESPONSIBLE PRODUCTION**

Our suppliers are proud to contribute to the country's economy. From the start, they have worked with the factories to improve and ensure fair working conditions for the workers and this is always an ongoing project.

## ***MOST OF THE TOTAL PRODUCTION TAKES PLACE IN BANGLADESH***

### **COMMITTED TO BANGLADESH**

Our suppliers have decided to be loyal to the factories in Bangladesh.

This is against the trend of other brands which have moved production to save costs in countries such as Ethiopia and Myanmar, which has had a huge impact on the textile industry in Bangladesh.

They know that by maintaining a long-term business relationship with their partners in Bangladesh they will continue to make a lasting and positive impact on the working conditions of the people working in the factories.

### **THEY ARE A MEMBER OF FAIR WEAR FOUNDATION**



Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) is an independent organisation that helps to improve labour conditions in garment factories by working with clothing brands, fashion influencers and the factory workers themselves.

They always work with the employees' livelihoods at the forefront of their minds.

Factories in Bangladesh are audited by FWF to lobby European governments and welfare organisations to improve working conditions and wages for the workers. These audits are carried out every three years and if necessary Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) are instigated.

Workplace Education Programmes (WEPs) are organised in collaboration with brands including our suppliers which help to reduce and eliminate workplace harassment and violence.

The factories have grievance procedures in place but should the employee be unhappy with the outcome, there is an independent helpline number to the FWF where the complaint is heard and taken care of on the employee's behalf.

## **FWF CODE OF PRACTICE**



Fair wear Foundation—<https://www.fairwear.org/about-us/labour-standards/>

## **A LIVING WAGE - AND MORE..**

By choosing to work with some of the most ethical and responsible factories in the country, workers are guaranteed a legal minimum wage as well as in-house childcare facilities, medical cover and maternity leave. Other benefits include attendance and performance bonuses and free transportation.

Onsite childcare in Bangladesh factory.

All the factories our suppliers use offer on-site childcare and most offer scholarships to workers' children.

Which is pretty fantastic, don't you think?!

### THE GROCERY SHOP PROJECT

By investing in projects such as the Fair—priced Grocery Shops, our suppliers have found they are a great way of increasing the spending power of the workers and improving their livelihoods.

Just because our suppliers pay more for a t-shirt, this doesn't automatically mean a direct wage increase for the workers.

History has shown that when wages go up in an area, so do general costs like food and rent. This is why projects such as the Fair—priced Grocery Shop can be better for the workers.

Competing countries offer lower prices for the garments, by not paying minimum wage and fair working conditions. Price wise, this puts Bangladesh at a disadvantage.

However, to keep Bangladesh as competitive as possible, the government set the minimum wage relatively low.

This is where creative solutions which give workers many benefits without raising wages are a good idea.

The Fair-priced Grocery Shops, set up in both the Interstoff and Meghna factories, heavily discount food essentials such as lentils, salt, rice and sugar and to date have been distributed to more than 16,000 workers.



## **Production planning**

By collaborating with the factories, our suppliers have a number of ways to ensure they are treating their workers fairly.

Fixed lead times are applied when agreeing contracts for production requests. Factory closures for public holidays are added to these lead times. Requests for reduced lead times, for things like stock issues in European warehouses, will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

To help the factories anticipate their needs our suppliers undertake a monthly review, which looks at the numbers required for the next 6 months.

To allow them to reduce overall lead times, they help the factories manage a buffer stock of certain raw materials. This ensures that time pressures are not imposed on the dyeing and Cutting, Making, and Trimming (CMT) processes.

Our suppliers are in regular contact with the factories to help manage production. For instance, if the factory has some spare production capacity, they will help them to fill that capacity. Conversely, if they have a shortage of capacity they can temporarily move some orders to a different supplier to alleviate the pressure.

## **The Factories**

Our suppliers are transparent about the factories they use.

These factories are in:

Meghana

Shuangxi

GSM

Ahsan

Aus Bangla

Interstoff

Dird

**Some of the other recent achievements in these factories include:**

- Career progression for women by introducing training programmes
- The importance of health and personal hygiene amongst factory workers
- A well-being programme for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed
- Scholarship programme for workers' children
- Donations to local schools
- Health insurance for workers
- Anti-harassment and investigation procedures coalition
- Helper to Operator training scheme
- Vaccination programme
- Employment progression of trainees
- Installation of fire-fighting systems in the new knitting and store building
- Fire Safety Committee Training
- Fire Safety training for all employees
- Enrolment of women in supervisory roles
- Tree Plantation program

- Waste Management programme
- Free medical facilities for all workers
- Women empowerment programme
- Opportunities for disabled people
- Donation of garments for people in need
- Training centre for improving skills

## **OUR SUPPLIER'S ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT**

*“The earth is what we all have in common and we need to be conscious of our environmental impact.”*

## **CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030—**

### **THEY ARE WORKING ON IMPROVING THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT**

At the moment, the carbon footprint of the garments cannot be fully estimated. Many factors are involved, including the weight and colour of the product, the factory that it's made in and the region the cotton is grown in.

To understand and improve their environmental impact, our suppliers will regularly collect data from within the supply chain.

The data such as consumption figures will help to analyse the carbon footprint, but there are many variables within the data such as acquisition procedures, methods of calculation, garment styles and fabric shades manufactured by various factories in particular time periods.

The ongoing commitment to assess the companies' carbon footprint is a huge project with the aim of offsetting it where necessary. This will be done by reforestation, and community projects which help improve life conditions.

## **WATER CONSUMPTION**

Our suppliers only work with factories with effluent treatment plants (ETPS). As water is an invaluable resource, our suppliers ensure that only a minimal amount of water is used

in the production of cotton by choosing organic cotton. By not using chemicals, the water is not polluted, meaning soil and fauna are protected from contamination.

Garment manufacturing uses water for washing, dyeing and printing the textiles which generates water based toxic waste, or effluent. Our suppliers insist that this waste water should be treated in accordance with legal requirements so that it can be fed back into the national environment.

Toxic elements are removed from the waste water at Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPS) to make sure that it's safe enough to use. The factories use this treated water for car washing and gardening at their sites.

## **TRANSPORT**

Our suppliers only work with transport partners who act sustainably. They estimate that by the time their garments reach their warehouse in Belgium, they would have travelled almost 24,000 km.

## **THE ROAD AHEAD**

Our suppliers say:

“We can't do everything. But we can do something. And that's what drives us. We refuse to let what we cannot do interfere with all the good we can do.”

They realise they can't get to their end goal overnight—that it is a work in progress in an ever-changing world, harnessing new innovations and improvements.

In the meantime, they make a concerted effort to make the right choices in who they work with, how they work themselves, what materials are used and to respect the people they work with and the planet we all live on.

By being involved in every step of their own supply chain, our suppliers keep close to their plan of being a sustainable and innovative company trying to make a difference. The

ultimate aim is to be in control of the whole process to guarantee a sustainable business from start to finish.

## **BIODEGRADABILITY SERIOUSLY**

The world has a growing concern about the effect of the fashion industry on the environment. Not only can the production of clothes present a threat to the eco system, but the washing of clothes has been proven to release millions of tonnes of micro-plastics every year.

The industry as a whole is looking for effective ways of reducing this harmful impact of textiles on the environment by searching for biodegradable sustainable fibres.

Did you know that clothes made from synthetic materials can take up to 200 years to biodegrade and 72% of all clothes that are thrown away are made from synthetic fibres?

It's important to protect soil biodiversity and to raise awareness of the importance of soil quality for the well-being of humans and ecosystems.

## **OUR SUPPLIERS' COMMITMENTS FOR 2025**

They pledge to take a number of measures to limit their environmental impact:

- To continue to increase the use of recycled cotton
- To continue to research and use biodegradable & compostable fibres
- To continue to reduce the use of chemicals for both production and dyeing processes and to favour natural dyes
- To support their customers to use non-toxic solutions, such as water-based inks
- To continue to research bioengineered materials and dyes made from living bacteria, algae, yeast or fungi
- To continue to refine their packaging

We appreciate this is quite an in-depth presentation, but we feel it's important to cover every aspect of the issues.

We are sure you'll agree that our suppliers have made a thorough investigation into their own practices, and have come up with a plan to minimise the environmental impact.

We are also constantly reviewing our own procedures and taking steps to minimise our own environmental impact even further.

Have a look at the other pages on our website to find out more.

Hopefully this is thought-provoking and will help you to be assured that by buying from Reverse, you can be happy you are buying from an ethical company.

“Earth loves you, love it back”

