



Sustainability Report 18/20

team timbuktu.

Welcome

Welcome to our very first sustainability report, it's new, shiny and packed to the brim with our sustainability efforts, impact and progress since we started in 2018 and where we're going as a sustainable outdoors brand.

But first, you might be wondering why it's even important to create a sustainability report? For us it's all about transparency and accountability. The fashion industry historically has a pretty bad history of not doing right by people or planet, churning out fast fashion as quick as can be, without any consideration on the impact it's creating.



**The textile sector represents 6 percent of
global greenhouse-gas emissions.**

(McKinsey, 2019)

The impact of the fashion industry is complex, with the multiple tiers of the supply chain, rather than being overwhelmed by this we look at the opportunity to create progress and change. We've simplified this within our report to cover the categories of; Fabrics, Factories, Packaging, Freight and Giving Back to create transparency about what we're doing now and how we can improve in the future.

We believe businesses of all sizes (ranging from billion dollar multinationals right down to micro businesses with just one employee) should be accountable for their actions, they should be investing in changing their materials and processes to eliminate negative impact on people and planet. And so we think an annual sustainability report is a pretty good place to start: highlighting our achievements, creating accountability, transparency and planning our next steps to improve and reduce our impact.

*This first report covers our first 25 months in business from June 2018 - June 2020, ongoing it will be an annual report. It's also important to note that sustainability can never be achieved, it's a continually evolving process of using the most sustainable materials and processes available, whilst committing to continual change and evolution to reduce impact.



As a micro sized brand we're pleased as punch at what we've achieved in the past two years.

51,511

BOTTLES RECYCLED

Over 50,000 bottles recycled into fabric (reducing our dependence on fabrics made from oil and recycling single use plastics)

4,800

BAGS SAVED

By refusing single use plastics and only using compostable packaging, we've saved over 4,800 single use bags from being used

\$4,900

DONATIONS

Over \$4,900 of cash and in kind donations to Australian organisations making a difference to people and planet

Fabrics

To understand the impact of fashion some basics first need to be covered: fabrics are either natural (grown; e.g. cotton or wool) or synthetic (man made; e.g. polyester or acrylic). Natural fibres are low impact, biodegradable and great for everyday clothing. Synthetic fibres are needed for performance: being waterproof or sweat wicking and features that are beneficial within sports and performance wear.



63% of all textiles created are derived from petrochemicals.

(Lenzing, 2017)

The issue is that synthetic fibres traditionally create a heavy environmental footprint, and is only increasing due to their lower cost and popularity.

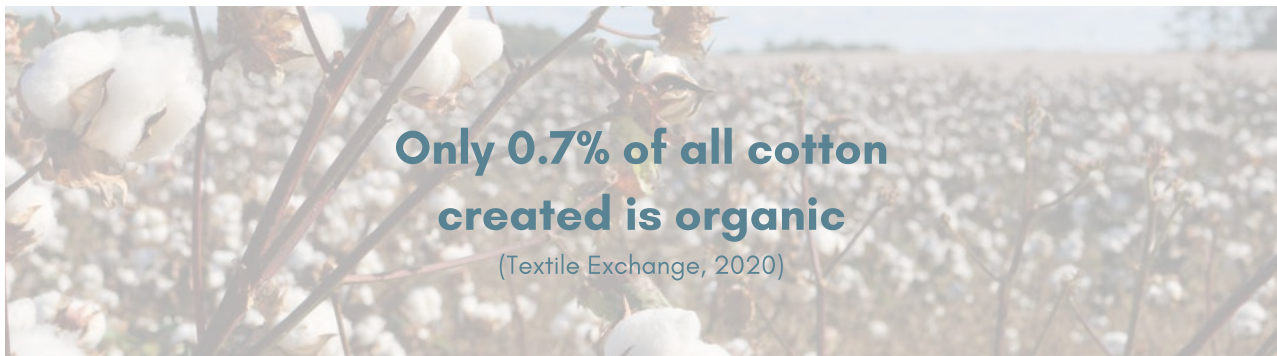
Synthetic fabrics are needed for movement and performance, which is why we use recycled polyester as our main fabric, it's lower impact than conventional polyester and still achieves what it needs to performance wise. 86% of our total fabric usage was recycled polyester and 14% organic cotton (approximately - based off units, rather than yardage).

We've recycled 51,511 bottles into our jackets & activewear.

RPET or recycled polyester is created from recycled plastic bottles, which has two fold impact; saving plastics from landfill, and reducing the dependence on oil to create fabric. All of our recycled polyester is Global Recycle Standard (GRS) certified, verifying that it is post consumer single use plastic.

In 2018/2019 our Jackets were made from a 48% RPEI/52% polyester, in 2020 we were able to transition to a 100% recycled polyester, reducing our impact and increasing our number of bottles recycled per jacket. We've used three Activewear fabrics, starting with Carvico (a branded recycled fabric created from recycled fishing nets, carpet and bottles), then transitioned to a 73% recycled polyester/27% elastane blend, before landing on our current, favourite and highest performance Activewear fabric created from 75% recycled polyester/25% elastane.

No fabric is perfect though, as with all synthetic fibres, microfibrils are shed when washing. We've already introduced the Guppyfriend Wash Bag online (in August 2020), to help reduce the impact from washing for our customers, but we acknowledge this is an interim solution.



For our Jumper and Tees we use 100% Organic Cotton that is GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) certified. We chose to use organic cotton, as it's much lower impact than conventional cotton, saving water and not using harmful pesticides, chemicals or synthetic fertilisers. This prevents the pollution of the farms water and soil and provides the cotton farmers a safer and healthier work environment, rather than the mainstream practice of using known carcinogens to grow conventional cotton. Cotton is the most widely produced natural fibre in the world, yet only 0.7% of cotton made is organic.

Whilst we aren't certified vegan, we don't use any animal products or animal by-products, with no down, leather, wool or silk used in any of our products. Using sustainable and recycled fabrics makes our supply chain more complex than most, but we think it is worth the effort to save plastic bottles from landfill and to reduce our environmental impact.

Factories

We partner with manufacturers who not only have the highest quality of product, but also are ethically and environmentally responsible. We create our fabrics and clothing ethically in Taiwan, China and India, with our factories audited and annual visits by us.

When we launched in 2018 our first two collections were made in Bali, Indonesia by a small, family run factory and we used an Italian fabric, Carvico. As we grew we needed to change factories and transitioned to our current factory in Xiamen, China. Our Activewear factory are audited by SA800, WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production) and close friends with our nearby Jackets factory. Our recycled polyester Activewear yarn is made in Taiwan and fabric in China.



Our Jackets factory is also located in Xiamen, China and is audited by BSCI (Business Social Compliance Initiative). We've been working with them since we launched the brand and our Jackets yarn and fabric is created in Taiwan, whom we also visit.



We create our Organic Cotton collections in Tirupur, India with a small factory, who whilst isn't independently audited, has incredible policies for their workers, ensuring not only a safe and fair work environment, but one with many added benefits, including free lunch daily, extended breaks and employee upskilling and training programs.



Within the next twelve months, we'll be formalising our internal code of conduct for all of our manufacturers, creating a baseline across key areas (as currently our factories are audited by different certifications, with different reporting areas) to help create consistency and transparency.

We visited our Jackets and Activewear factories and fabric mills in 2019, but unfortunately our 2020 factory visits were cancelled due to coronavirus (with our flights cancelled just 3 days prior to departure in March). We've kept in touch digitally and look forward to visiting in 2021 as soon as borders are open again.

Packaging

The industry standard for packaging clothing is to put each product into a single use plastic bag and then to send out online orders again using a single use plastic bag. Instead, we use certified home-compostable bags (as opposed to commercially compostable), which have saved us from using over 4,800 single use bags. The only plastic in our warehouse comes from returns and occasional samples from manufacturers.



When we launched in 2018 we sent our first six months of orders in cardboard envelopes as we refused to use plastic mailing bags and couldn't find a suitable alternative. We quickly discovered that flat cardboard envelopes didn't travel well with clothing inside, but we didn't compromise on our values and were so happy to see The Better Packaging Co enter the sustainable packaging market, with their home compostable, biodegradable mailing bags, made from corn starch. We quickly switched our mailing bags to these and introduced similar garment bags too, as we discovered stocktake and warehousing of product not individually wrapped is an unscalable nightmare (think stocktake of unfolded product everywhere - taking triple as long to do). Plus our thank you cards are recycled and recyclable.

We'll be introducing recycled swing tags to all of our products moving forward and are hoping to introduce recycled or organic labelling (at back of neck and side care) within the next 12 months too. Plus introducing soft plastic recycling at our warehouse, as whilst we don't order or create any single use plastic, we still do receive some from customer returns and exchanges.

Freight

Unfortunately this is one area which we did not excel in, only 10% of our product was sent via sea freight from our manufacturers, with 90% sent via air freight, creating far more carbon emissions than necessary.

Air freight has a significantly larger carbon footprint than sea however was used due to lack of knowledge within transport and urgency of product arriving, which is an area we'll be changing significantly next year, hoping to achieve 80% sea freight at a minimum.



To deliver our online orders to our customers we use Australia Post, who have recently made all of their deliveries carbon neutral, this is achieved by purchasing carbon credits to offset their impact and fund projects such as planting trees.

Giving Back

We believe all businesses should give back, balancing profit, with people and planet. But, we have learnt that giving back is viable in different ways for different companies. When we launched in 2018 we tested a model of giving back 20% of our profits from day one, whilst this was well intentioned, it was flawed for our stage as an early business, as we weren't profitable.

As we had committed to this we made over \$1,000 of donations of what would have been expected future profits (prior to paying any salaries). With our accountants guidance, we discovered this particular give back model wasn't viable for us, but are incredibly proud of the donations we did make.

In total we gave \$2,155 of cash donations, split amongst four organisations doing good for people and planet. In 2019 we gave to the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife (an Australian conservation foundation looking after national parks and endangered species) and Waves of Wellness (a mental health surf therapy charity for those struggling with mental health issues).

In 2020 we gave to the Bendigo Bank's Community Enterprise Foundation for their Victorian Bushfire Disaster Appeal, and Thread Together (an organisation giving clothing to people in the community doing it tough).

We also gifted products valued at \$2,800 RRP to the Sparkling Diamonds Netball Club in Adelaide (a community netball club created for children from underprivileged backgrounds) and Missadventure in Sydney (a youth group encouraging teen girls to get outdoors).

We'll continue to support people and planet via organisations that are doing great things, but are testing out new ways to give back that make it sustainable and viable for us to give back.

Covid-19 Response

The impact of COVID-19 has been devastating on the fashion industry, especially for those who work in factories, with \$1.5 billion of orders cancelled within Bangladesh alone (Fashion Revolution, 2020). That includes orders that were in progress and already finished, yet large brands refused to pay up.

Rather than cancel orders, we supported our factories and were flexible with their ability to deliver, enduring the unavoidable delays, as the virus impacted cities and countries at different times and to different levels of severity our supply chain and factories were all impacted differently.

We didn't cancel any orders and placed no pressure on factories to achieve our original agreed upon delivery dates or to rush back to factories. Our Organic Cotton factory in India was entirely shut by their government for months and then could only operate at 30% capacity upon returning, resulting in our Winter jumpers being received out of season, 3 months late. However the health and safety of all workers in our factories will always remain more important than any delivery date.



Future Goals

We've achieved a lot within our first 2 years, but we'll always be improving and our goals for the next 12 months across our core pillars are:

- **Fabrics:** Explore alternate sustainable fabrics and introduce a solution to reduce the impact of microfiber pollution
- **Factories:** Formalise our ethical code of conduct for all manufacturers
- **Packaging:** Introduce recycled swing tags/care labels to all new products and soft plastic recycling at our warehouse (from customer returns)
- **Freight:** Significantly change the impact of our freight, with 80% of product to be shipped via sea rather than air
- **Giving Back:** Introduce tree planting to begin to offset our carbon and donate seconds product to organisations and individuals in need

Our longer term goals include B Corp certification, full supply chain traceability (to all five tiers), becoming carbon neutral and achieving circularity with our products, but these are large goals and will take time to achieve.

Thank you so much for supporting Team Timbuktu and our sustainability efforts. This report is a commitment to continual change, feedback and discussion is welcome with Rhianna at hello@teamtimbuktu.com

Photography by: Gina Pulfer, Rose Jones, Fred Moreno, Dale Staton, Jean Delberghe, Trisha Downing
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