Do we know enough about apparel and sustainability to develop a simple, trustworthy, equitable and science-based labelling system?

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Increase in fiber production for clothing and textiles (million tons)
DRAFT PRODUCT ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT CATEGORY RULES (PEFCR)
APPAREL AND FOOTWEAR

Quantis

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Most relevant impacts are...

Worse

Better

Results relative to the average sweater*
The Make the Label Count campaign brings together an international coalition of organisations who share an ambition to ensure the EU's clothing sustainability labels are credible.

WHAT CONSUMERS SHOULD KNOW

Consumers should be able to trust sustainability claims on their clothing labels. We are asking European Commission policymakers to update the PEF methodology to make the label count for consumers. Here is where we can start:

Renewability & Biodegradability
Only products made from renewable raw materials can be truly sustainable. The inherently circular attributes of natural fibres, including renewability at start-of-life and biodegradability at the end-of-life need to be accounted for in a credible product claim. Inclusion of parameters to account for biological circularity could address this limitation.

Equitable comparison of fibres
The impact of forming natural fibres is fully accounted for in PEF but not the full impact of forming fossil fuel-based fibres (accounting starts at extraction). The same system boundary should be used for natural and fossil fuel fibres to inform consumer choices.

Social impacts
The socio-economic impact of fibre production and textile manufacturing is not considered in the PEF methodology. Credible measures of sustainability encompass planet, people and prosperity.

Accounting for microplastics
The environmental impacts of microplastic pollution should be included to inform consumer choices. Laundering synthetic clothes accounts for 35% of primary microplastics released into the environment.

Duration of service
The use-phase has a major influence on a garment's environmental footprint. Factors that extend the lifetime of clothing, including odour resistance, wrinkle resistance, less frequent laundering and the rate of reuse by further owners should be included in PEF methodology.

Production practices
The impacts of fibre production are assessed without considering whether sustainable agricultural management practices are used. By failing to assess and incentivise sustainable agricultural practices, an important opportunity to achieve the EU's goal of 'protecting and restoring natural ecosystems' is lost.
Microplastics
The Higg Material Sustainability Index compares the environmental impact of various materials. The index includes materials like Cork, Typical Footwear Rubber Compound, Polyester, Elastane/Spandex, Acrylic, Viscose/Rayon, Nylon, Modal, Polyurethane (PU) Synthetic Leather, Wool, Cotton (Conventional Production), Silk, Cow Leather, and Alpaca Wool.

- Cork: 14
- Typical Footwear Rubber Compound: 30
- Polyester: 41
- Elastane/Spandex: 44
- Acrylic: 48
- Viscose/Rayon: 53
- Nylon: 56
- Modal: 58
- Polyurethane (PU) Synthetic Leather: 59
- Wool: 81
- Cotton (Conventional Production): 99
- Silk: 128
- Cow Leather: 161
- Alpaca Wool: 281

The index provides detailed information on material-specific impacts and comparison with conventional materials. For instance, materials like wool and alpaca wool have significantly lower environmental impacts compared to conventional production materials.
The COP26 plastic uniforms are a disaster for the environment
Market share of main fibers, 2016

- 65% Synthetics (mainly polyester)
- 21% Cotton
- 8% Cellulosics
- 1% Wool
- 5% Other
We introduce our new material seawool which is made of recycled plastic bottles, 100% sustainable! Get sustainable with our new knit in seawool!
https://clothingresearch.oslomet.no/

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