

Is Sustainable Fashion a Contradiction in Terms: What Can Businesses Practically Do to Make a Real Difference?

Q&A:

<p>How does BEPI support in training, bringing this business case?</p>	<p>Eric Gravier: Training content mentions that reducing CO2 emissions start with energy consumption reductions. It is a direct money saving for the producer. In addition, training mentions that more and more customers are selecting business partners from their CO2 emissions levels. Being part of the lowest CO2 emitters would be a business opportunity.</p>
<p>GHG emisison calculaton is important, but how do we translate them into design guidelines for sustainbale fashion system design?</p>	<p>Eric Gravier: amfori is part of the UNFCCC workings groups. It is planned next year to deliver more workshops and events with UNFCCC. At that time, some recommandations will be shared as latest studied collected by the UNFCCC working groups list the most useful recommandations regardind Ecodesign of Textile.</p>
<p>How to convince producers of the business case?</p>	<p>Rachel Alexander: There are several ways that pitches of business cases sustainability initiatives can be improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We found many business case pitches did not use detailed number. Incorporating more specific calculations may help to show the proposal is realistic. • If possible, providing customized financial forecasting based on the target factory's operational budget, as opposed to a model factory, can make the factory management see what they can actually achieve. • Use peer-to-peer marketing can be helpful. If factory managers can hear that others in their industry have had success they may be more willing to join. Also, if they feel their competitors have already done the programme and become more efficient, there can be an incentive to keep up.
<p>It is great to see that high-street fashion brands are making an effort to become more sustainable, however there is a lot of greenwashing occuring. How can we make sure susainable fashion is sustainable throughtout the WHOLE supply chain - should we call brands out on this?</p>	<p>Rachel Alexander: I think calls for transparency are very important. A lot production takes place in complex production networks which currently have a lot of opacity. Increasing transparency can help shine light on problems and help concerned parties to know what is happening and address the situation.</p>

<p>It has been talked about for many years that brands and retailers should provide explicit incentives for performance improvement, but it hasn't happen. Why do you think this is?</p>	<p>Rachel Alexander: I think that in many brands and retailers that the responsible sourcing team have a separate relationship with the suppliers than the buyers. I think increased cooperation between these two sets of staff can help with this issue.</p> <p>Also, the use of balanced score cards can help to change the way that buyers make decisions. If supplier evaluations formally include sustainability criteria, then these criteria can become part of purchasing decisions.</p> <p>Workplace incentives of buyers are also important to consider. If buyers are rewarded solely on criteria related to issues such as price and timelines then they may not place a high value on choosing a supplier with good sustainability performance. If buyers' performance evaluations can formally include the selection of suppliers with high sustainability standards, it will change how decisions are made.</p> <p>I think some companies are starting to make these changes and hopefully this will be a growing trend in the industry in the future.</p>
<p>What are your thoughts about helping the unorganised sector to produce in a sustainable manner (for example 80% of the Indian textile industry is non-export oriented and thus common market-based incentives don't really affect them)?</p>	<p>Rachel Alexander: I think one way to promote improvements for producers, regardless of their end markets is to use practices that are currently being promoted by the types of 'business case sustainability initiatives' that we looked at in our study. Often these initiatives have the most success with reaching out to producers by working with brands and retailers who then promote the programme to their suppliers. However, there is another way that these initiatives have been able to effectively reach producers, which is working through intermediaries, such as business associations.</p> <p>Business associations that have producers as member can reach out to their members to promote 'business case sustainability initiatives'. The business associations can also develop their own training programmes that are modeled after existing initiatives.</p> <p>The strength and appeal of 'business case sustainability initiatives' are based on the fact that the producer will save money while also improving their environmental performance. These are benefits that can be felt by any producer, regardless of their end customers.</p> <p>However, one challenge is that some of these initiatives have upfront costs. Funding may need to be available to support the initial investments, either through grant or loans. If the projects are run effectively the producer should begin to save money over the first few years of running their facilities using the improved processes.</p>

<p>How to improve this argument inside fashion companies... maybe Starting From the School? Do you think it is possible to make people really think about HAVE LESS but BETTER? Thank you</p>	<p>Joe Hobbs: That's a great question. One of the toughest parts of this is trying to change people's minds to convince them that having less but better quality is better. I do think that one of the best ways to teach this is to start at school. By teaching sustainable processes and suggesting programs to students, we can allow them to learn more about the new role sustainability plays in the fashion industry. One of the key points I like to point out is that becoming sustainable isn't needlessly expensive or pointless. While it may cost more, consumers are more likely to buy something sustainably produced and ethically sourced.</p>
<p>It is great to see that high-street fashion brands are making an effort to become more sustainable, however there is a lot of greenwashing occurring. How can we make sure sustainable fashion is sustainable throughout the WHOLE supply chain - should we call brands out on this?</p>	<p>Joe Hobbs: Greenwashing is a huge issue with not just the fashion industry, but all industries. The oil industry has even done some greenwashing. One of the best ways to combat this is to be completely transparent about your whole supply chain and layout your 5 year and 10-year plan for being carbon neutral. Another great thing to do is to call out brands who are greenwashing. Ask them to show their plan and to be more transparent around their production, instead of releasing one shirt a year that is "sustainable"</p>
<p>We need to increase prices for non-sustainable fashion - the price needs to reflect the true cost of garments, with cost of damage for environment and unethical behaviours</p>	<p>Joe Hobbs: I 100% agree with this statement. By raising the prices of garments not sustainably produced, it would allow companies to have a financial incentive to move sustainably. One of the best ways of doing this is to impose a carbon tax or some tax that raises prices depending on how much damage the garment is causing to the environment in production.</p>
<p>This is Min of Sunrise Group. May I have a question to Joe? Would the young people like to pay more money to buy the recycling cloths since facotries need to put more cost on recycling process than the regular production.</p>	<p>Joe Hobbs: Hello Min, great question. I do think young people will pay a premium if possible to buy clothing that is recycled. One of the big issues is that in some cases it's not possible for the youth to pay that extra. Many youths provide for their families or do not have a job, and paying the premium juts isn't feasible. By revolutionizing the pricing of sustainable clothing to be cheaper, I believe we can have a faster transition to sustainability.</p>