

## Forests for Fashion-India Campaign; A Concept Note

### Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests



*Sustainable Development is a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, while addressing the global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Sustainability is being internalised in almost every sector, including the fashion and textiles sector. This industry is an important driver of Indian economy, impacting fashion and our lifestyles, meeting domestic requirements, creating sizeable employment and export opportunities. The sector is, however, inherently unsustainable, often with negative impacts on the environment due to high demand and speedy production. The clothing brands, organizations, industries and fashion conscious personalities are coming forward to uphold sustainability of the environment and slowly moving towards more sustainable practices and sources of fabric (e.g. EcoVero, Hemp, Bamboo fibre, Coir, Ramie fibres), setting new trends in the fashion industry.*

*Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF), a not for profit organization of India, is actively engaged in diverse conservation activities including, development of globally benchmarked and India specific sustainability certification standards for various constituents of our natural resource base, as its core working area. Through a campaign, Forest for Fashion- India, NCCF intend to sensitize the designers and fashion brands aware about sourcing sustainable and alternative raw materials (fibres) from sustainably managed and certified forests, impacts of deforestation due to use of dissolving pulps, and to encourage the industry to use only sustainable materials in their supply chain. NCCF is committed to collaborate with the key and supporting stakeholders from the fashion industry including the raw material suppliers, retailers, manufacturers, packaging units, fashion and design institutes, central ministries, state governments, corporates, experts and many more to sensitize and spread awareness about sourcing and use of certified forest fibres. Many stakeholders and members of industry and industry associations have expressed interest in the Forests for Fashion Campaign.*

### **The Indian textile Industry:**

***Indian textile industry is one of the largest industries in India. India is currently the world's second largest textile and apparel producer behind China. The whole textile and apparel industry represent over 4% of India's total GDP and more than 14% of country's export earnings every year, making it the largest manufacturing sector in India.***

Sustainable clothing market in India is growing at a steady pace even as the industry is at a nascent stage. Manufacturers are adopting better practices to produce clothes that leave little impact on environment. Consumer pattern is encouraging globally, as two-thirds of buyers are willing to spend more on eco-friendly clothes.

A [CII-AT Kearney Report](#) on sustainable retail, highlights Indian consumers becoming more aware and conscious of what they are buying and as a result willing to buy from brands that follow ethical and sustainable practices. Over 70% of survey results show, Indians look for brands that are sustainable and trustworthy, much higher than their global counterparts. There is an increasing affinity with brand prestige and willingness to shift towards responsible brands, brands with ethical practices and sustainable processes. The trend has picked pace globally, with brands across value chain talking about adopting more sustainable practices, sourcing ethically and reducing their carbon footprint.

Major players like [TCNS Clothing](#), Zara, Levi's and H&M have announced their gradual shift to ethical and sustainable fashion practices. TCNS association with Livaeco is one such step where they have tried to convert goals to sustainable results. The Yolo Dress tailored in partnership with Livaeco is the perfect style statement balancing sustainability and fashion. Made using Livaeco, a fiber that reduces carbon footprint, this collection has balance of sustainability and everything trendy. Small scale retail labels like Akira Ming, Doodlage and YarnGlory have entered the Indian market to manufacture garments the organic way. These brands create designs where manufacturing processes use less energy, use natural colours for dyeing and maintain recycling unit in their supply chains.

Livaeco is a natural fabric, is Pro-Planet, helps save water, increases forest cover & reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emission. It not only is fashionable but also helps preserve environment. Its carbon footprint is smaller than conventional textile fibre. Yolo Dress is tailored in partnership with Livaeco.



According to the [National Climate Change Journal](#) (2018), textile production is one of the most polluting industries and produced 1.2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, more than the emissions of international flights and maritime shipping put together. The [UNFCCC](#) estimates that carbon emissions from apparel industry are set to increase by another 60% by the end of 2030. In Asian countries like India and China, emerging fashion trends have increased carbon footprint per garment, due to use of coal fuelled plants.



Source: UN Fashion Alliance

A [McKinsey Report](#) titled, “*Style that’s sustainable: A new fast-fashion formula*” claimed that fashion witnessed a major change in buying trends, with production doubling from 2000 to 2014 and the purchase index of an average consumer increasing by 60%. This has led to a “fast fashion cycle” wherein consumers are purchasing clothes for summer, autumn, spring and winter, forcing fashion industry to produce more synthetic fibres, polyester, nylon, wastewater and plastic waste; on an unsustainable fashion path.

### What Is Sustainable Fashion?

Sustainable fashion is concerned with the environmental impact. Choosing fibres and materials that are organic, recycled and limit harmful chemicals/dyes, reduce energy/water usage and waste, are low-impact fibres.

### Sustainable Fashion in India

Sustainable fashion has started making its mark in the Indian market. From paying workers fairly, to using natural fabrics and dyes, brands are embracing a new shift in the fashion industry. One of the main reasons behind this sudden surge is because of the spurt of awareness. More and more brands are stepping forward to promote ethically sourced clothes because consumers are raising questions,

are becoming aware. Many brands are also promoting recycling which is a step in the right direction.

Indian brands have realized that they can contribute towards reducing the resource footprint, saving the planet even while looking good. Consumers have stopped hoarding trendy garments one after another. The strategy here is to become sustainable while sourcing, manufacturing, transporting, storing, selling, consuming and recycling clothes.

Sustainable fashion or environment-friendly clothing is growing and becoming a booming industry in India. Environmental and social NGOs have made people aware of unsustainable practices rampant in the clothing/fashion industry. Owing to speedy production and high demand for clothes, textile industry has left many scars on environment, hence it is consumers' responsibility to make sure that they are aware from where their garments are being sourced.

### Alternatives to Synthetic Fibres

Sustainable fibres are derived from eco-friendly resources, such as fibre crops, sustainably managed forests, recycled materials, etc. These fibres follow the sustainability aspects of *Environment, Economics, and Social Equity* and the three R's, *Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle*.

### Sustainable Forest Fibres

- **EcoVero**, a fibre derived from certified wood sources from sustainably derived forests.
- **Hemp**, one of the most environment friendly fibre, is a bast fiber plant like Flax, Kenaf, Jute, and Ramie. It blends easily with other fibres. It doesn't strip soil of nutrients, rather it returns 60-70% of all nutrients back into soil. It can displace use of cotton, which requires huge amount of chemicals and water (hemp needs half the amount of water and land required for cotton).
- **Bamboo fibre** is cellulose fibre extracted or fabricated from natural bamboo. It is also eco-friendly, requires less water, uses no pesticides and prevents soil erosion. New technologies have made it possible to use bamboo fibre for a wide range of textile and fashion applications.
- **Coir and Ramie fibres** can also be used to make clothes. Forest materials are softer and comfortable and also environmentally friendly than cotton or silk requiring less energy and water to produce compared to synthetic fibres

### Sustainable Fashion and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Development of fashion industry has a significant impact on the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The need is to change path of fashion, reducing its negative environmental and social impacts and turning fashion into a driver of the implementation of SDGs.



Source: UN Sustainable Development Goals

- **SDG 1**, eradicating poverty is influenced for instance by salaries paid to millions of people working in apparel industry in developing countries.
- **SDG 3**, linkages fashion industry via health impacts of chemicals used in production on workers as well as communities affected by environmental pollution.
- **SDG 5**, social dimension of fashion industry is directly linked to gender equality.
- **SDG 6**, relates to water pollution, release of hazardous chemicals and materials, treatment of wastewater and water-use efficiency.
- **SDG 8**, improving working conditions of ‘fashion workers’ is an important starting point for achievement and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.
- **SDG 11**, focuses on Sustainable Cities and Communities, looking at the recycling of clothing.
- **SDG 12**, commits to ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns and is structured over eight targets, addressing use of natural resources, chemical waste, fossil fuels and integration of sustainable practices to production cycles – all of which apply to the fashion industry. However, it is not only producers who can make a difference. These targets also address consumer’s right to be informed to be better aware of sustainable development issues – an area untouched by fashion industry.
- **SDG 13**, stresses to ‘take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts’. Textile industry is responsible for 8-10% of world's GHG emissions; thus fashion industry has a role here.
- **SDG 14**, addresses issues of marine pollution such as microfibers and microplastics released into oceans from textile industry.
- **SDG 15**, cotton production severely degrades soil quality, which calls for restoration as committed to by target three under this goal.

### **Negative impact of fashion industry**

The fashion industry has a disastrous impact on the environment. It is the second largest polluter in the world, after the oil industry. Its environmental damage is increasing as industry is growing. It produces untreated toxic wastewaters from textiles factories which are dumped directly into rivers, water contamination by use of fertilizers for cotton production, a major water consumer for dyeing and finishing process for clothes, generating more and more textile waste by disposing off clothes, use of chemicals during fibre production, dyeing, bleaching, and wet processing, etc.

### **Initiative in India to move towards Sustainable Fashion**

***Project SU.RE is Indian apparel industry’s largest commitment to move towards sustainable fashion***

The SU.RE project is a commitment by India’s apparel industry to set a sustainable pathway for Indian fashion industry. SU.RE stands for ‘Sustainable Resolution’ – a firm commitment from industry to move towards fashion that contributes to a clean environment. It will also underline the need for collaboration across the sector in order to bring about innovation and transformative change. Project SU.RE aims to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, especially SDG-12 for responsible consumption and production.

The project has been launched by the Ministry of Textiles, along with Clothing Manufacturers Association of India (CMAI), United Nations in India and IMG Reliance.

Several Indian brands as leaders and representatives of the industry, are signatories to this pledge. 16 of India’s top fashion and retail brands and CMAI members such as Future Group, Shopper’s Stop, Aditya Birla Retail, Arvind Brands, Lifestyle, Max, Raymond, House of Anita Dongre, W, Biba, Westside, 109F, Spykar, Levi’s, Bestsellers, and Trends among others. They have pledged to source/utilize a substantial portion of their total consumption using sustainable raw materials and processes by 2025.

## Forest for Fashion at International Forum

The joint [UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section](#) has led the 'Forest for Fashion' initiative together with various partners such as the [Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification \(PEFC\)](#) since 2014, promoting wood-based fibres as sustainable material alternatives.



Source: UN Fashion Alliance

Through research and awareness raising activities, they have been able to recognize and promote the value of sustainably produced wood and wood-based products as environmentally friendly materials. They have developed various exhibits on "Forests, Fashion and the SDGs", showcasing unique designs made from wood-based materials. Together with actress and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Michelle Yeoh, they have also produced a short video on sustainable fashion called '[Made in Forests](#)'.

## NCCF's initiative: Forest for Fashion India

**Network for Certification and conservation of Forests**, through the campaign, "**Forest for Fashion-India**," will like to take forward the work being done by UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, PEFC and their other partners in India.

Through this we want to make designers and fashion brands aware and sensitise them about sustainable forests, sourcing raw materials from sustainably managed & certified forests, sustainable and alternative fibres, deforestation that may be associated with dissolving pulp, and to encourage them to use only sustainable materials in their supply chain. The first step for manufacturers is to establish a traceability of their supply chain. The most important thing for them is to know their suppliers and from where is their raw material coming, origin of raw materials, etc. This will put these companies in a better position to assess the environmental and social impact of their products, practices and actions.

Most textiles are either made using cotton or synthetic fibres. Cotton production and processing requires large amounts of pesticides, insecticides, water and energy; whereas most synthetic fibres are made from crude oil and washing them produces microscopic plastic particles that affect water bodies, ocean ecosystems, and ultimately human health.



Source: PEFC International

The fashion industry thus needs to opt for new, environmentally friendly choices for their textiles, to meet growing demands, not pollute the planet, give up excessive use of water and chemicals and also contribute in achieving SDGs. **The solution lies in our forests!** It's important that forest-based fibres/yarn materials originate from sustainably managed & certified forests. This will link the fashion world with these fibres sourced from sustainably managed forests and presenting new, innovation and sustainable fashion labels for the consumers.

### **Forests for Fashion-India; Way Forward:**

- Sensitise and spread awareness about certified forest fibres
- Encourage brands to develop sustainable sourcing policy for consistently prioritizing and utilizing certified raw materials in their supply chain
- Encourage brands to make conscious and informed decisions about how, where, and what they should source across the value chain by choosing sustainable and renewable materials
- Encourage brands communicate their sustainability initiatives effectively to consumers and media through sustainable raw materials, clothing lines, stores, product tags/labelling, social media, campaigns and events.
- Help brands and manufacturers reduce resource footprint in their entire value chain
- Ensure environmental, economic and social benefits of forest based fibres and benefit sharing with stakeholders, especially forest dwellers and local communities
- Address concerns of conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity
- Enhance brand equity and international recognition of apparel industries through use of certified forest based fibres

To fulfil these objectives, NCCF is committed to collaborate with all associated and allied stakeholders from the fashion industry including but not limited to fashion brands, manufacturers, retailers, packaging, raw material suppliers, fashion and design institutes, government departments and ministries, experts and many more. We wish to join hands with sector leaders like **Ministry of Textiles, Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), Clothing Manufacturers Association of India (CMAI), Birla Cellulose, National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), National Institute of Design (NID), International Institute of Fashion Technology (IIFT)**, and many more.

The Concept note is hosted on NCCF website to seek suggestions from the stakeholders for its further refinement and chalking out an action plan to jointly organise events/exhibitions with brands showcasing unique designs made from wood-based materials, jointly run campaigns with brands, conduct sensitisation workshops/talks/lectures, help brands develop procurement policies and procure sustainably, etc.

### **About the Organisation**

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) a not for profit organization of India, is actively engaged in diverse conservation activities including, development of globally benchmarked and India specific sustainability certification standards for various constituents of our natural resource base, as its core working area.

We are a recognized as a think tank on diverse conservation matters, deriving strength from our network of diverse stakeholders including representatives from Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts, international organizations, premier research and academic institutions like ICFRE, IIFM, IPIRITI, WII, renowned forestry and biodiversity experts, civil society organizations, forest dwellers, farmers groups and workers bodies, industry and industry associations and many more.

We are a member of PEFC Governing Council for India, member of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and have got Observer Status of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). NCCF's Certification Standard for Forest Management has been endorsed by the PEFC, giving it an international recognition. We are also developing a Carbon Registry-India aimed to provide a trading and tracking platform for verified GHG emissions reduction and removals enhancement.

## References

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- <https://www.pefc.org/>
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- <https://tcnslimited.com/>
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- <http://www.fao.org/>