

Expert's guide on starting with integrative sustainability in fashion

Inspirational sustainability guides

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The sustainability platform transforming the fashion industry.

BCOME is the platform for sustainability management in the textile and apparel industry. A smart, reliable, secure software that enables fashion businesses to build responsible supply chains, guarantee transparency and bring it to the final customer. Founded in 2019, BCOME has more than 1 million traced, measured and evaluated products on the market.

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“ Sustainability is a complex concept, and one which necessarily requires a multidisciplinary approach to its study, understanding and implementation. We must understand that behind every product lies an entire ecosystem of developmental and production processes, each with their own environmental, social, economic, and ethical implications. ”

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Integrative sustainability in 3 steps

Step 1

Take into account the impact of all processes per life cycle stage.

Step 2

Look at the entire production value chain in a systemic way per area of impact.

Step 3

Implement actions from a multi-dimensional approach: life cycle stage and impact.

Integrative sustainability along value chain

Step 1

Applying integrative sustainability affects the entire product life cycle considering the impact of all processes; from conditions in the cotton plantations to the origins of the wood used to make shelves in-store.

Integrative sustainability along value chain

The value chain of a product includes all the life cycle stages of a product's life, including:



Including packaging and transport.

Integrative sustainability applied in 4 dimensions

Step 2

To add a further layer of complexity, sustainability criteria must be met not only over the entire value chain of the product, but also extend to other associated areas, such as the social, environmental, and ethical impacts.

Integrative sustainability applied in 4 dimensions

Planet

Practices for the environmental efficiency in the management and responsible use of resources.

Circularity

Practices carried out to promote actions towards a circular model and consumption.

People

Practices generated to ensure ethical and safe working, social and animal welfare conditions.

Transparency

Practices carried out for follow-up, definition and scope of the value chain and commitment.

Action plan for a integrative sustainability strategy

Step 3

In recognition of the concept's complexity and environmental, ethical and social dimensions, we must set a clear sustainability strategy as an integrated ecosystem of solutions and challenges. The objective is to create a product with as little environmental impact as possible and social improvement for all participants in the life cycle.

Raw material

Raw material stage has one the greatest challenge along value chain, not only in the availability and scalability of sustainable raw materials, but also in energy and water consumption and pollution. 2/3 of the impact on sustainability occurs at the raw materials stage. The next steps will be challenging, as few alternative and scalable material solutions exist.

Decision-making is paramount at this point:

1. Make a list of recurring materials and their suppliers.
2. Rate their environmental, social and ethical impact.
3. Study alternatives.
4. Analyze its feasibility by suppliers, price, availability, etc.

Action Plan <> Raw material extraction

Planet	People	Transparency	Circularity
<p>Learn about the material's characteristics and optimize it.</p> <p>Prioritize recycled materials.</p> <p>Innovate in R&D matters.</p> <p>Choose local and not export raw materials.</p> <p>Promote ecological sustainability and organic and/or Fairtrade certified production.</p>	<p>Ensure high labor standards and ethical working conditions: improve wages, gender equality, eliminate child labor and ensure safety, health and chemical control standards.</p> <p>Eliminate child labor: veto countries with a high risk of child labor and forced labor.</p> <p>Develop training programs for farmers and ranchers.</p> <p>Set a clear code of conduct.</p>	<p>Adopt environmental and social certification schemes.</p> <p>Control km 0: ensuring the origin of the fiber and guaranteeing its traceability</p> <p>Ensure and commit to animal welfare: Principle of the 5 freedoms.</p> <p>Vetoing high risk countries.</p>	<p>Use unmixed biodegradable materials.</p> <p>Avoid blends.</p> <p>Use recycled synthetic materials and also bio-derived raw materials.</p> <p>Address the end of life of synthetic and natural fibers.</p> <p>Search for a second useful life for the residual raw material.</p> <p>Control the excess raw materials.</p>

Material process

Weaving processes include spinning, weaving and other fabric preparation.

Spinning and weaving require significant amounts of energy and resources: fibers are subjected to various mechanical processes that comb, align and spin them to produce yarn.

Decision-making is paramount at this point:

1. Make a list of recurring materials and their suppliers.
2. Rate their environmental, social and ethical impact
3. Study alternatives
4. Analyze its feasibility by suppliers, price, availability, etc.

Action Plan <> Material process

Planet	People	Transparency	Circularity
<p>Incentivize renewable energies in the production process.</p> <p>Improve energy and water efficiency levels and measure them throughout the process.</p> <p>Implement better textile processing R&D techniques.</p>	<p>Ensure high labor standards and ethical working conditions: improve wages, gender equality, eliminate child labor and ensure safety, health and chemical control standards.</p> <p>Establish Occupational Risk Prevention Plan and training (proper product handling).</p> <p>Set a clear code of conduct for supplier and manufacturers.</p>	<p>Adopt environmental and social certification schemes.</p> <p>Control Tier 2.</p>	<p>Use biodegradable resources.</p> <p>Adequate treatment of waste and wastewater and encouraging a closed-loop chemical management system.</p> <p>Control of excess materials during the production chain.</p> <p>Have waste collection points to classify waste and analyze whether it can be reused.</p> <p>Search for a second useful life for the residual raw material.</p>

Wet process

Much of the fashion industry's environmental footprint occurs at the wet processing and finishing stage. Spanning multiple levels of the supply chain and covering multiple processes, its environmental footprint is enormous as each stage consumes significant amounts of water, energy and chemicals. Transparency is a critical weakness at this stage, especially an issue with chemical usage.

Decision-making is paramount at this point:

1. Make a list of recurring materials and their suppliers.
2. Rate their environmental, social and ethical impact
3. Study alternatives
4. Analyze its feasibility by suppliers, price, availability, etc.

Manufacturing

The manufacturing stage involves cutting, sewing, fastening, gluing, welding and taping the fabric together, along with some dyeing and finishing such as stone washing. Social impact is the main challenge here with labor and health and safety standards having been in the public spotlight recently.

Decision-making is paramount at this point:

1. Make a list of recurring materials and their suppliers.
2. Rate their environmental, social and ethical impact.
3. Study alternatives.
4. Analyze its feasibility by suppliers, price, availability, etc.

Action Plan <> Manufacturing

Planet	People	Transparency	Circularity
<p>Incentivize renewable energies in the production process.</p> <p>Improve energy and water efficiency levels and measure them throughout the process.</p> <p>Implement better textile processing R&D techniques.</p>	<p>Ensure high labor standards and ethical working conditions: improve wages, gender equality, eliminate child labor and ensure safety, health and chemical control standards.</p> <p>Promote gender equality.</p> <p>Occupational Risk Prevention Plan and training (proper product handling).</p> <p>Set a clear code of conduct for supplier and manufacturers.</p>	<p>Adopt environmental and social certification schemes.</p> <p>Control Tier 4.</p> <p>Public data</p>	<p>Adequate treatment of waste and wastewater and encouraging a closed-loop chemical management system.</p> <p>Control of excess materials during the production chain.</p> <p>Have waste collection points to classify waste and analyze whether it can be reused.</p> <p>Search for a second useful life for the residual raw material</p>

Retail

It receives little attention in terms of sustainability, which is unfortunate because it has great potential to improve energy use, reduce waste and engage with consumers. The point of sale is the consumer's point of contact with brands or products for purchase.

Decision-making is paramount at this point:

1. Make a list of all point of sale.
2. Rate their environmental, social and ethical impact.
3. Study alternatives and commit to low-consumption practices.
4. Analyze its feasibility.

Planet	People	Transparency	Circularity
<p>Eco-efficient stores</p> <p>Energy efficiency.</p> <p>Good arrangement of the store layout, optimal use of sunlight, lighting and air-conditioning.</p> <p>Furniture made sustainably.</p> <p>Eco-friendly packaging</p>	<p>Ensure high labor standards and ethical working conditions: improve wages, gender equality, eliminate child labor and ensure safety, health and chemical control standards.</p> <p>Occupational Risk Prevention Plan and training (proper handling of products).</p> <p>Set a clear code of conduct for employers.</p>	<p>Inspiration and information point with the consumer.</p>	<p>Address the end of life of garments.</p> <p>Have waste collection points to classify waste and analyze whether it can be reused.</p> <p>Search for a second useful life for the residual raw material.</p>

Transport

Transportation and distribution have clear sustainability-related impacts. However, the environmental and social footprints at this stage are much smaller than at other stages.

This is because the activities at this stage are similar to what happens in other industries, so fashion brands can benefit from the scale and innovation that already exists elsewhere.

Decision-making is paramount at this point:

1. Make a list of recurring transport and suppliers.
2. Rate their environmental impact.
3. Study alternatives.
4. Analyze its feasibility by suppliers, price, availability, etc.

Distribution

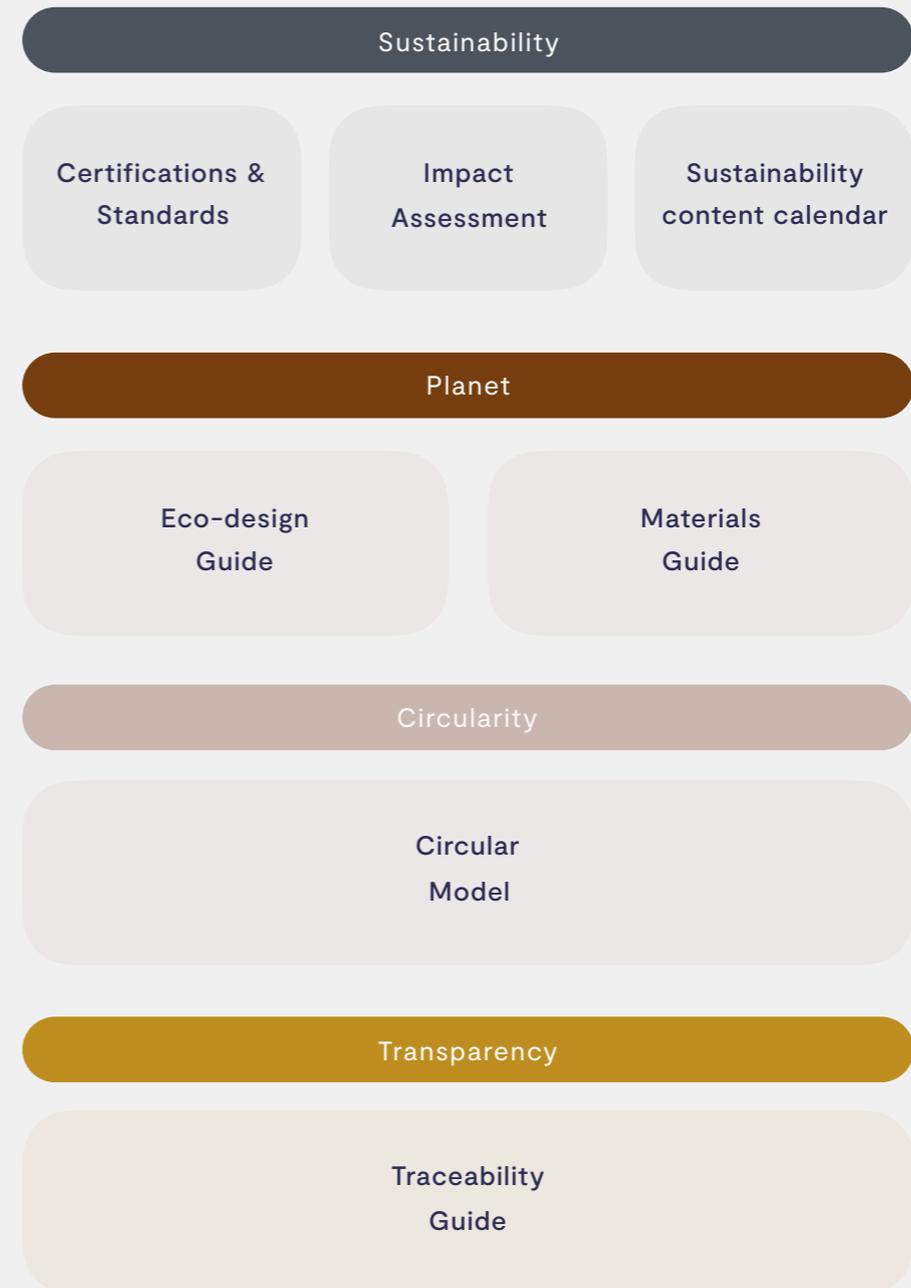
Packaging has clear sustainability-related impacts. One of the aims of sustainable companies is to introduce solutions for the optimization and circularity of used packaging.

Decision-making is paramount at this point:

1. Make a list of recurring transport and suppliers.
2. Rate their environmental, social and ethical impact
3. Study alternatives
4. Analyze its feasibility by suppliers, price, availability, etc.

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