

# Sustainable Fibre Strategies



**Company: Aldi North & Aldi SOUTH**

**Project: ECAP**

**Sector: Apparel and Textiles**

**Number of employees globally:**

**76.000 (AN); 149.000 (AS)**

## Key Facts:

- Our goal was 30% sustainable cotton for Germany by 2018. We achieved 35% sustainable cotton, and the majority is organic (GOTS).
- Publishing of our own cotton purchasing policy in Germany.
- Almost 100% leather from LWG certified tanneries for our shoes.

“Talk to your supply chain early on (and repeatedly) to understand what they can offer. It will take time, but by persisting it will drive ideas among suppliers and encourage them to look to their supply chain for opportunities to provide more sustainable options”

Erik Hollmann,  
Director Corporate Responsibility ALDI Nord

Key facts

Ambition

Achievements  
and Learnings

Impact and  
Reflections

Case study



## Ambition

### What was your motivation to start sourcing more sustainable fibres and, as part of that, join ECAP?

We wanted to understand the impact of moving to more sustainable fibres, especially to show the impact of our sustainable cotton strategy.

We were also interested to engage in conversations with customers around circularity, re-use and recycling through the ECAP consumer engagement programme.

### What are your targets and priorities in relation to more sustainable fibres?

- Target for sustainable cotton sourcing – aiming for 100% as soon as possible.
- Moving to more sustainable synthetics (i.e. polyester). Improvements in process efficiencies have been implemented in some facilities, but we are yet to set targets here. Our involvement in ECAP has supported us in measuring and communicating the impact of our cotton strategy but has also provided ideas that we can act on for synthetic fibres.
- Monitoring and improvement of water management in our textiles category, as part of our ALDI National Water Policy (published in March 2019), e.g. by using innovative dyeing concepts like “dope dyed” technologies.

### What impact are you aiming to achieve through your sustainable fibre strategy?

- A reduced water footprint of the fibres used as well as ongoing monitoring of the water footprint to see how this improves with an increased use of sustainable cotton.
- A secure supply of sustainable cotton – as well as contributing to the long-term viability of the cotton industry.

“We are aiming to achieve 100% sustainable cotton as soon as possible”

Katharina Wortmann,  
Director Corporate Responsibility  
International  
ALDI SOUTH GROUP

Key facts

Ambition

Achievements  
and Learnings

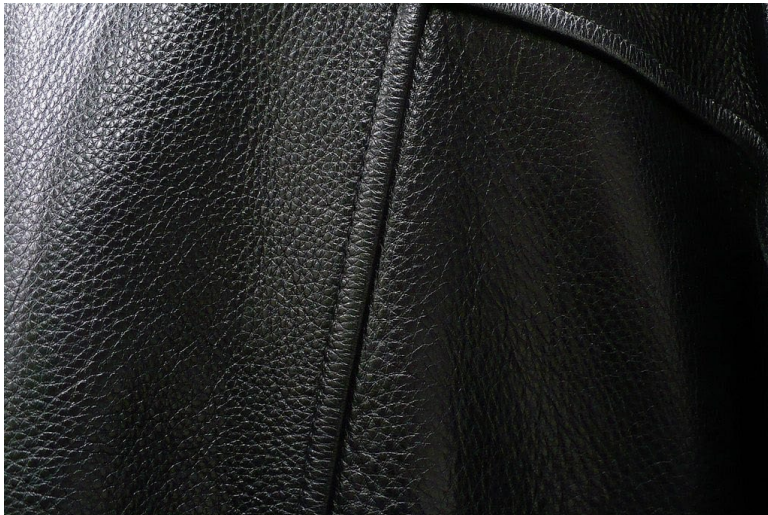
Impact and  
Reflections



# Achievements and Learnings

## Key achievements or breakthroughs celebrated so far on your journey to source fibres more sustainably?

- Our goal was 30% sustainable cotton for Germany by 2018. We achieved 35% sustainable cotton, and the majority is organic (GOTS).
- Publishing of our own cotton purchasing policy in Germany.
- Almost 100% leather from LWG certified tanneries for our shoes, and now also using this for small leather parts, where we are working towards 100%.



## Main challenges faced whilst trying to switch to more sustainable fibres?

- Organic cotton availability & traceability
- Synthetics fibres – a lack of easily implementable standards that we can use for all categories.

We have found talking to our business partners critical in tackling these issues. We needed to tell our supply chain that we were interested in sourcing products following certain standards or using more sustainable fibres or processes for them to know the demand was there. They could then talk to their suppliers and cascade the message down the value chain. Pilot projects have helped to demonstrate what is possible, such as our progress on the use of water-based PU or dope dyed technologies.

## Key learnings as a result of being part of the ECAP programme?

There is no easy route to improve sustainability among all fibres. Especially for synthetic fibres, there are multiple approaches that need to be considered and investigated.

The significant reduction of the water footprint by using organic and other sustainable cotton options. We had hoped this would be the case but were surprised by how much we have been able to reduce our water footprint.

Key facts

Ambition

Achievements  
and Learnings

Impact and  
Reflections



Project supported by LIFE funding

# Impact and Reflections

**For others not yet sourcing more sustainable fibres, have you any advice for them regarding how they can get started on the topic and what steps they can take in the early days of their journey?**

Talk to suppliers and understand what they can offer. It will take time, but by persisting it will drive conversations and ideas among suppliers and encourage them to look to their supply chain for opportunities to provide more sustainable options.

At the beginning you may be told more sustainable options are “not yet available” or are “not yet competitive”, but we have found persistence as well as a developing market lead to finding supply chain partners more willing to change and adapt.

It always helps to talk to other brands/retailers/supply chain partners especially where there is neutral ground (e.g. through the German Textile Alliance), where we can share challenges and come up with solutions – and maybe even start projects together, especially to leverage availability of resources.

**What barriers from your perspective exist today in order for the textile sector to move to a more circular fibre system?**

ALDI North and ALDI SOUTH are already working on guidelines to help our suppliers improve the circularity of their products.

Our biggest challenge is the interest of our customers. There is consumer interest in packaging and waste (especially in food categories), but few people seem to be interested in and asking for circular products. We have found the concept of circular products is too difficult for many consumers to currently grasp.

ALDI SOUTH is working together with two German suppliers to make bed sheets and towels from pre-consumer waste, which we anticipate will continue.

**What’s next for you? What are you working on in 2019/20?**

- Make sustainable cotton purchasing policy / strategy international.
- Internal study on existing standards for synthetic fibres using fact sheets from ECAP project; this will allow us to ask our supply chain for specific standards and to find out what they can offer us to help meet these.
- Design for recyclability in clothing or shoes categories.

“There is no easy route to improve sustainability across all fibres”

Katharina Wortmann,  
Director Corporate Responsibility International  
ALDI SOUTH GROUP

Key facts

Ambition

Achievements  
and Learnings

Impact and  
Reflections



ECAP is €3.6 million EU LIFE funded project which aims to reduce clothing waste across Europe and embed a circular economy approach.

## ECAP mission

Cutting the environmental impact of clothing across the supply chain. Generating value for business through collaboration, measuring and sharing best practice

### Disclaimer

While we have tried to make sure this case study is accurate, we cannot accept responsibility or be held legally responsible for any loss or damage arising out of or in connection with this information being inaccurate, incomplete or misleading. This material is copyrighted. You can copy it free of charge as long as the material is accurate and not used in a misleading context. You must identify the source of the material and acknowledge our copyright.

You must not use the material to endorse or suggest we have endorsed a commercial product or service. For more details please see our terms and conditions on our website at [ecap.eu.com](http://ecap.eu.com)

Case studies were generated as a result of pilots carried out for ECAP by WRAP and the named organisations from 2016 to 2019.