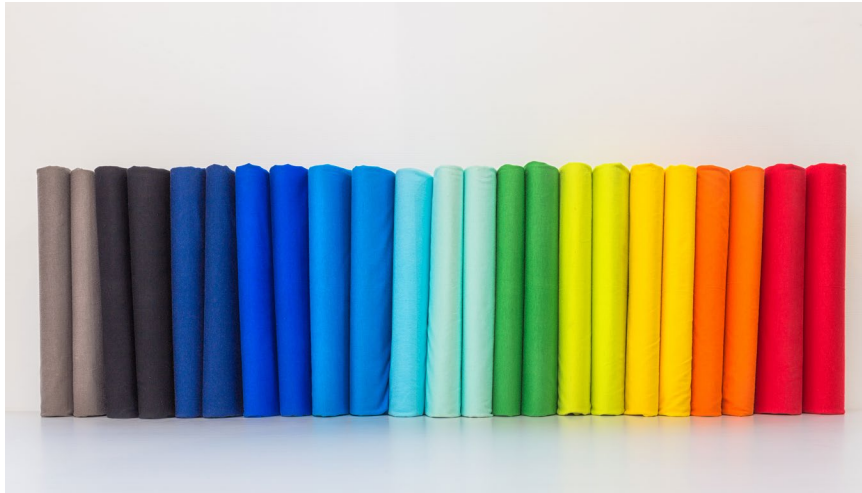


Fibre Recovery Cooperation



Rijkswaterstaat
Ministry of Infrastructure and the
Environment



From 2016 until 2019 nine fibre to fibre pilots have been implemented by the European Clothing Action Plan - ECAP. The fibre to fibre pilots were aiming to support the use of recycled post-consumer textile fibres.

Three workwear companies, a linen supplier and five fashion companies were involved in the ECAP pilots. They individually trialed the use of fibres from post-consumer textiles in new garments and shared the learnings from their experiences in case studies and factsheets.

Key findings

- Long term relationships with suppliers are recommended
- When starting a new a partnership, it is easiest to engage in existing supply chains
- Front running brands and retailers can help each other in finding a way to share knowledge and work together
- Minimum and maximum volumes are one of the most crucial variables in finding the right suppliers
- The market and the government should have a dialogue regarding circularity in trade agreements.

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Cooperation in the supply chain

Organising the supply chain expectedly turned out to be a key factor in the pilots. All of the pilot companies agreed on one thing: collaboration is key. Yarn or fabric with recycled content from post-consumer textile is not something you can simply order from a supplier. Because retailers and brands are used to order ready-made garments, they normally take no part in the development of new yarn and fabric. Now, they ask their suppliers to be mutually responsible for experimentation and taking risks, not knowing themselves what the limitations and opportunities could be. Therefore, finding suppliers prepared to use recycled fibres was quite challenging.

The pilot companies all agreed on one thing:
cooperation is key!

Turning point

Brands and retailers now have to be very dedicated to invest all this time in sustainable clothing. On the other hand, the more companies will search for suppliers of recycled content fabrics, the more suppliers will have to adapt. This will lead to a turning point where producing sustainable clothing and textile becomes regular business. The perspective is that these pilots contribute to reaching that turning point.

Long term partnerships

It was experienced that working with new suppliers resulted in delays. Since there was no relationship build on trust yet, the first small orders did not have priority with the new suppliers. Therefore, a successful strategy to find new partnerships is to search in the networks of the partners in the existing supply chains and build further on their relationships. Long lasting partnerships build on trust are more beneficial, preferably when both partners take an equal part of the responsibility. This could be less time consuming. To assure a successful partnership, one of the companies maintained the relationship by annual meetings and sessions with all its suppliers together to mutually decide strategy, goals, innovation and improvements for the recycled products.

Vertically integrated suppliers

Some pilot fashion companies were able to produce garments with recycled content relatively fast, due to their existing partnerships with a vertically integrated supplier. These suppliers provide all the steps from sourcing the material to make yarn and fabric out of it and eventually do the cut, make and trim (CMT). It is easier to change this vertically integrated supply chains because of the absence of many stakeholders. This was an advantage to the companies that already worked with such suppliers.

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Volumes

One of the companies needed large volumes to scale up the production of the garments with recycled content. But, the supplier who produced the first batches could not deliver the larger volume. A search for other suppliers led to a supply chain of different parties in different countries, which took a lot of time to organise.

Another company experienced the opposite: they couldn't find a supplier prepared to supply the small volume they needed. Their solution was work together with other brands under their parent company to meet the large minimum volume of the supplier. As a result, the other brands started using recycled content garments as well. Both experiences make clear that volume is an issue regardless the size of the company.

Shared observation of the pilots:

The current market is not yet suitable for circular systems due to legislation and protecting trade agreements

Knowledge sharing

The pilot companies realise that there is a need to share their knowledge and experiences with others in order to scale the production of fabric with recycled content in general. Although there is a fear for mistrust and giving away their USP's, everyone could benefit from the exchange of information. A lesson learned is that when sharing knowledge between companies, clear agreements should be made from the very start. The focus should come from shared intrinsic values.

Best practice

Family business Schijvens is a workwear company in the Netherlands. Schijvens started the search for good partners to develop yarns and fabric with recycled content with in their own network. They found their new partner through the network of an existing supplier. It resulted in a take back system, wherein clients' discarded clothes go to Mersin (Turkey) to be processed into new yarns and fabric again. Schijvens maintains long term relationships with all its suppliers. The workwear company also encourages cooperation between its suppliers via annual meetings with all production partners. See the [video](#).



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The European Clothing Action Plan - ECAP is €3.6 million EU LIFE part funded project. ECAP contributes to creating a more circular approach to reduce clothing waste and water and energy use during production.

ECAP mission

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

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Fact sheets were generated as a result of pilots carried out for ECAP by Rijkswaterstaat and the named organisations from 2016 to 2018.



Blycolin

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