


FASHION INDUSTRY GUIDE TOWARDS A CIRCULAR



The logo is a circular emblem. It features a central circle with a smaller inner circle. From the center, six lines radiate outwards to the outer edge of the circle, creating a sunburst or gear-like pattern. The text 'FASHION INDUSTRY GUIDE TOWARDS A CIRCULAR' is written in a sans-serif font, following the curve of the outer circle. The text is split into two lines: 'FASHION INDUSTRY GUIDE TOWARDS' on the top half and 'A CIRCULAR' on the bottom half.

ABOUT

Close The Loop



We consume and produce at an ever faster pace nowadays. Fashion is guilty of this too, being one of the world's most polluting industries. Becoming more sustainable and taking both planet and people into account is not just 'an option' anymore. It's the only possible way to stay both relevant and economically profitable.

Flanders District of Creativity and Circular Flanders have developed this tool to take fashion entrepreneurs through the basics of sustainability.

The online platform Close The Loop wants to encourage the industry to steer clear of a linear system (take-make-waste) and to embrace a more circular approach instead (durability and avoiding waste being key concerns). The additional focus on CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) as a strategy in which people, planet and profit are equally important is meant to push companies in the right direction.

This brochure offers a sneak peek of our more extensive online tool.

The product lifecycle of a garment consists of six phases: resources, design, production, retail, consumption, and end of life. For each phase, we've formulated five strategies that you can implement to contribute to a circular fashion industry. In addition, Close The Loop provides you with a lot of practical tips and tricks, as well as a database with more than 400 case studies to motivate and inspire you.

Last but not least, we share the stories of our Close The Loop ambassadors, who are building a sustainable fashion business or who are taking the green road with their fashion company. We list the actions they took and plan on taking.

Happy reading!

Take a deep dive at close-the-loop.be



Resources

MATERIALS MATTER

Producing a cotton T-shirt requires 3000 liters of water. For a pair of jeans you may even need as much as 8000 liters. Deciding on which fabric to use is clearly one of the most crucial aspects of the design process, affecting not only the look, lifespan and quality of your piece, but also its environmental impact.



Take action

Go for low-impact materials

Each material has its own strengths and weaknesses. Low impact materials are typically derived from natural products (maybe even bio-waste), they are biodegradable and renewable (meaning that they regrow quickly).

Choose recycled or recyclable fibres

Recycling fabrics scores well in terms of impact because the process requires less energy and less resources than the production of new textile. Luckily, the family of recycled textiles is continually welcoming new members these days.

Reuse and redesign 'waste'

Turning to existing textile means reducing

the need for virgin (raw) materials. The enormous amount of textile and clothing waste at our disposal obviously boosts the popularity of this strategy.

Learn from nature

It may seem like a bit of a stretch, but it's amazing how many solutions you can come up with just by looking at nature.

Keep your entire product in mind

It pays off to learn more about the recyclability of your piece as a whole. Keep track of the latest developments in coatings, dyeing and finishing techniques, and look for innovations involving yarns and seams. Don't lose sight of the materials used for labeling or packaging either ...

Cases



G-Star RAW for the Oceans

Plastic pollution is a big issue for G-Star. Their RAW for the Oceans collection transforms recycled ocean plastic into denim.



Lies Mertens

Lies Mertens handbags are made from chemical-free, naturally-tanned, leftover leather. Moreover, the bags are completely biodegradable.



Rombaut

Rombaut is a Belgian, vegan luxury brand that transforms natural resources into innovative, avant-garde footwear.



Design

DESIGN FOR
ETERNITY

As a designer, you are responsible for what you create. This involves more than your choice of materials, styles, colors or shapes. Rather, the entire life cycle of your product should be taken into account. We're talking about resources, design, production, retail, consumption as well as 'end of life'. In a circular economy, designs are consciously created with each phase in mind.

Take action

Design to last

The aim of circular design is to create products that last, things that we're dying to have and to keep. Timeless design and above-average quality are important prerequisites here.

Design for rebirth

Acknowledging that not all designs or items will 'last forever', you can offer repair options or facilitate dismantling. And why not think about the recycling possibilities right from the start of the design process?

Design to minimize waste

In a circular economy, waste is regarded as a design flaw, so the 'no waste' philosophy reigns supreme. This philosophy paves the way for design interventions such as zero

waste pattern cutting, virtual prototyping, and design on demand.

Design to reduce the need for rapid consumption

Digging through the discards of other people's closets, we seldom find clothes that are completely worn out. How can we add an emotional touch to our products so our feelings for them last? What could stimulate users to hold on to things a little longer and to resist the need for 'new'?

Design with new technologies in mind

Lastly, if you want to cut back on waste, it is quite important to design with the right techniques in mind. Have you given (fly) knitting, digital printing, lasercutting, or 3D weaving any thought yet?

Cases



HNST

Belgian brand HNST producing the most sustainable jeans in the world. Their 'ESG Green yarn' consists of 50% discarded jeans and 50% Tencel®. All HNST items are biodegradable.



I AM NOT A VIRGIN

The I AM NOT A VIRGIN collection features colorful men's and women's shoes made from 100% recycled cotton. 'Fresh' and 'breathable' sneakers: check.



Filippa K

Filippa K strongly believes in long-lasting simplicity. This brand is synonymous with clothes that stand the test of time, both qualitatively and aesthetically.





Production

PRODUCE CLEANLY,
LOCALLY & WITH
RESPECT

The production process, or turning designs into physical products, is a deciding factor in the success of your brand. Moreover, this phase offers multiple opportunities to start focusing on sustainability and to incorporate 'zero waste' thinking.



Take action

Mind the environment

The use of water, energy and toxins has to be reduced to an absolute minimum. Furthermore, the energy that is used has to be renewable or even induced during the process, if possible.

Try new technologies

It's always a good idea to look beyond the standard methods of production. Digital technologies, for instance, have a lot going for them because they enable local production. Digital designing, printing or even 3D weaving allow for small editions or even production on demand.

Produce locally

Bringing production and consumption closer together has several advantages

in terms of logistics (shorter distances), communication (fewer misunderstandings), and closing the loop (reusing clothes will be easier if they can find their way back to production in the same country, to give just one example).

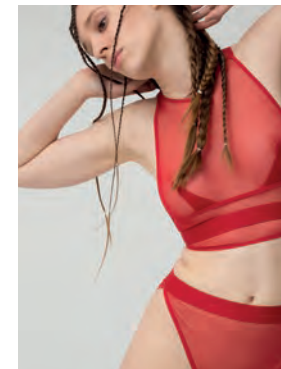
Avoid waste and surplus

Zero waste production is a holistic approach aimed at avoiding textile waste throughout the entire production process.

Focus on lifespan and durability

Clothes are discarded when they no longer 'suffice' in one way or another. Perhaps they're tattered, perhaps they no longer fit. Try to delay this moment of dissatisfaction by focusing on quality.

Cases



La fille d'O

From the drawing table to the manufacturing plant, La fille d'O's production process is 100% honest and 100% Belgian.



Post-Couture Collective

The Post-Couture Collective integrates open source methodologies and new technologies, and explores both local and on-demand production.



Studio JUX

Studio JUX has its own factory in Nepal. Every piece is handmade, and customers can check the JUX website to know exactly by whom.



Retail

HACK THE TAKE - MAKE - WASTE MODEL

With its habit of launching 30 to 50 collections a year, fast fashion reduces the lifespan of a piece of clothing to just a couple of weeks.

Fortunately, the traditional linear business model of TAKING (resources), MAKING (and selling), and WASTING (throwing away) at high speed is slowly making way for more circular business models.

Take action

Keep your textiles in the loop

While younger generations bravely invest in completely new business models, well-established brands tend to focus more on closing the loop and collecting clothes by implementing take-back systems.

Rethink ownership

The 'new' movement of sharing and borrowing, which is also referred to as the sharing economy or peer economy, revolves around having access to a certain product or service rather than owning it. The rise of clothing libraries is just one example of this trend.

Opt for a more service-oriented sales model

"Could consumer engagement have a positive effect on sustainability?"

The theory suggests that it does, stating that the higher the involvement, the longer a consumer will cherish a product (and its brand).

Use the online marketplace

Consumers also borrow from and share with complete strangers these days. The internet is a huge facilitator, providing unprecedented opportunities for giving away, swapping, and selling or buying second-hand.

Think about the impact of your marketing

You can reduce your environmental footprint by paying attention to all the little extra's. Keep in mind that decisions about tags, bags and hangers do count.

Cases



Made & More

Made & More lets customers choose what they pay for certain items. The lowest price covers sourcing, manufacturing and shipping; the full price allows Made & More to innovate.



go as u.r

go as u.r refuses to launch seasonal collections and works at its own pace instead. They use recycled hang tags and boxes, and have a take-back system in place.



Patagonia

This outdoor brand has a revolutionary approach to sustainability. It's worth checking out their repair, reuse and recycle efforts.





Consumption

GO SLOW AND TAKE
GOOD CARE

Sustainable fashion consumption is all about encouraging consumer behavior and attitudes that help reduce waste. It involves buying slow, thinking things through, learning some repair skills and looking for sustainable ways to get rid of old clothing. Demanding durable alternatives and caring for garments in less impactful ways are also part and parcel of sustainable fashion consumption.



Take action

Carefully plan your ideal wardrobe

Carefully planning your wardrobe pays off: it's bound to result in a more personal style as well as better clothes, while also helping you save money by avoiding bad buys. Don't be afraid to check brands, labels and fabrics when you buy something new.

Take good care

Small steps can lead to big changes, so you can definitely do your part as a consumer. In terms of maintenance, there's one golden rule: 'take good care'. This includes carefully washing and drying your clothes so they will last as long as possible.

Swap, rent or buy second-hand when you need variation

There are other ways to stack up your wardrobe than buying new clothes time and again. Take a good look at what you already own and swap the pieces that you

no longer wear but that are still in good condition. You can also become a member of a fashion library, or embrace the endless second-hand options you find online.

Learn some basic skills

Things are moving on the repair and DIY front, as is illustrated by the rise of sewing and knitting workshops, which cater to people who want to make or repair their own clothes (again). Learn some skills and prolong the life of your clothing.

When worn out: bring back

What to do with clothes you no longer like? Well, the possibilities are virtually endless. You can give them away, sell them online, donate them to charities, exchange them for 'new' pieces at swapping events, or take them back to a retailer that collects old garments.

Cases



Swishing

You can participate in swishing events to swap the clothes that make you yawn for clothes that make you happy.



Roche Rouge

Calling for an end to our throwaway society, this Belgian brand produces embroidered fashion accessories to pimp your favorite clothes.



Nudie Jeans

Every pair of Nudie Jeans comes with a promise of free repairs. No shop around the corner? You can order a Repair Kit free of charge.



End of life

EVERY ENDING IS A
NEW BEGINNING

So here we are, at the end of the
cycle. Or aren't we?

There are so many alternatives to
throwing clothes in the trash bin, so
many things you can do to extend
the lives of those pieces that took
blood, sweat and tears to create.

Take action

Biodegrade organic textile

Have you ever heard of fabrics that disintegrate completely? They are called biodegradable. Making shoes that you can simply put in the ground at the end of their lives: quite spectacular, right?

Create new life by redesigning and upcycling

Upcycling is quite popular already. Want to join in? Work with used clothing, old pieces or fabrics - or even fabrics that were already labeled as waste during the design or production process (before entering the consumer's closet, that is). Pattern cutting and fabric production often generate these kinds of surpluses.

Recycle textile

Going one step beyond reusing the fabric itself, you can also reuse its fibers. Recycling is still an option here, but it needs to be taken into account right from the design phase.

Organize collection and take-back systems

Do you cringe at the idea of clothes just ending up on landfills? Facilitate the return of clothing that is no longer wanted.

Prolong life through reuse

Why not reuse? Perhaps someone else is just dying to wear those clothes that you've grown tired of.

Cases



w.r.yuma

w.r.yuma turns old dashboards, soda bottles and even fridges into quality sunglasses. 3D printed, and made in Antwerp.



Freitag F-abric jeans

Best known for repurposing truck tarpaulins into bags, Freitag has also developed its own biodegradable textile. F-abric denim is prêt-à-composter!



Eva Maria Bogaert

Eva Maria Bogaert turns other local designers' waste materials into new, colourful and playful pieces, carefully sewing each of them by hand.





Get to work

**DON'T PUT OFF TILL
TOMORROW WHAT
YOU CAN DO TODAY**

Corporate Social Responsibility equals striving for economical (Profit), social (People) and environmental (Planet) improvement - the 'triple P bottom-line'. CSR is a process, not an outcome. This means that you can incorporate CSR practices step by step. No idea where to start? Fill out the Close The Loop Planner and get a personal action plan.



Take action

Explore the vocabulary of sustainability

Familiarize yourself with the terms you need to navigate the world of sustainability, such as 'stakeholders' (the organizations, groups and individuals your company affects and is affected by), 'SDGs' (the UN's universal sustainability goals) and 'the circular economy' (which maximizes the reusability of products and resources).

Start with your quick wins

You don't need to wait until you have your CSR strategy all figured out. The results of your first (perhaps less streamlined) initiatives often act as a catalyzer for the strategic integration of sustainability.

Draw up an action plan with the Planner

To evolve from ad hoc initiatives to a fully developed sustainability policy, you need an action plan. The Close The Loop Planner walks you through every step of the chain, making you reflect on the most important

topics for your organization. Get started at close-the-loop.be/en/planner.

Get the entire company involved

The success of your sustainability initiatives will depend on the engagement of all the members of your organization. So, invest in internal communication, educate your store staff and customer service team, and improve your after-sales support (explain to your customers how to maintain their clothes, for instance).

Move transparency and communication to the top of your list

Don't wait for perfection, but keep your stakeholders and customers up to speed on your plans and results. A sustainability report is always a good idea (use the Global Reporting Initiative standard to get going).

Cases



Kowtow

Kowtow's website is a prime example of open communication, providing info on anything from their sustainable fabrics to their recyclable packaging.



Bel & Bo

This Fair Wear member keeps looking for ways to step up its sustainability game, sharing its efforts on a blog.



JAN 'N JUNE

This German clothing brand outfits every item with a QR code containing information on every step in the supply chain.

Ambassadors

e5 mode, caroline biss and Café Costume joined the Flanders DC coaching program in the beginning of 2017. Bonneterie De Groote (Eskimo a.o.), Flanders Fashion Design International (Furore), FNG (Fred & Ginger a.o.), JBC, The Woody Group (Woody), Labels by Andres (Xandres), Marylise & Rembo Styling Fashion Group and Novavo (Atelier Noterman) followed in their footsteps in 2018-2019. These ambassadors were scanned in terms of their CSR efforts and offered a tailor-made coaching program teaching them all about the circular economy, sustainability, CSR and how to implement the right strategies in their business. Each company is working on different levels to become more sustainable. We will continue to share the results of the program and challenge other companies to take action as well.



Novavo

Novavo, a family company founded in 1946 by Etienne Noterman and currently run by his grandson Wouter Noterman, has been making men's fashion for three generations now, both for their own brands and private label. The company launched a new brand in 2011, Atelier Noterman, focusing on casual men's trousers with a perfect fit.

Resources

Sustainably and locally produced resources are key for Novavo. The company switched to GOTS certified cotton for its customer e5 mode and is working towards 100% GOTS cotton, while Atelier Noterman opted for Detox Denim in 2016. Compared to traditional denim, the latter material requires 80% less water, 80% less energy and 80% less chemicals.

Design

Novavo aims to keep the amount of collection pieces in proportion to the number of items sold and to make the most of the fabrics it buys. For the Atelier Noterman collection, Archroma dyes (from natural pigments) are used.

Production

Novavo stimulates and encourages all of its Portuguese partners to take the sustainability agenda

forward. In the longer term, the team wants to achieve complete transparency by listing every supplier and manufacturer on the website.

Retail

In addition to banning all individual plastic packaging, Novavo turned to StonePaper for some of their labels.

Consumption

Novavo wants to make end consumers think about why, how and where their clothes were made.

End of life

Novavo is planning a take-back system and a label to facilitate recycling and reuse, detailing the composition and origin of the fabric for every pair of pants.

Q&A with Novavo

What does sustainability mean for you?

Working sustainably starts with being transparent in everything we do. In addition, sustainability goes hand in hand with corporate social responsibility. We're not after maximum profit, but attach importance to the way a product is made, both in terms of environmental and human effects. After all, what's the use of an environmentally friendly production process when it depends on vastly underpaid workers?

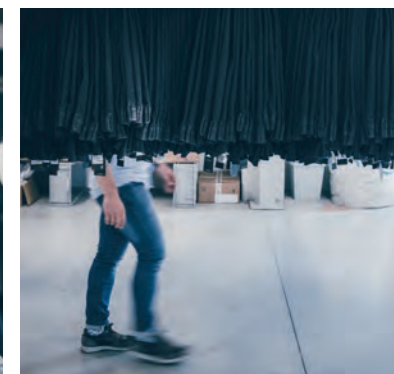
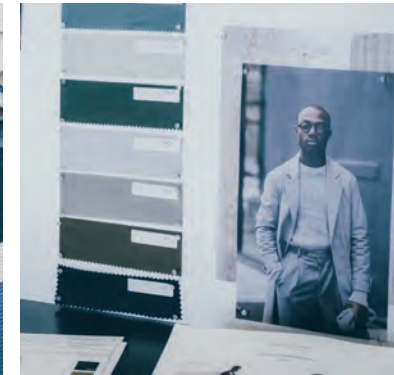
What challenges are you currently facing?

In our industry, many good solutions exist only on paper and are not feasible in practice. There are plenty of companies who - just like us - have plans to become more sustainable, but some parts of the chain just can't or don't want to follow suit yet.

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

To make our organisation more sustainable, I immersed myself in the topic. This was a time-consuming (and pricey) project, but it was definitely worth it.

Wouter Noterman, CEO at Novavo



FNG

FNG is a Benelux fashion group with a diversified portfolio of seventeen brands, including Brantano, Miss Etam, fred + ginger, CKS, Claudia Sträter and Ginger. The group designs and distributes both clothing and shoes for children, women and men. FNG is working on an overarching sustainability strategy, after which the individual brands will translate this framework into their own concrete action plans.

Resources

FNG has its own materials policy and plans to draw up a fabrics list to put the spotlight on sustainable alternatives. The Ginger x HNST 2019 collection is made from 50% discarded jeans and 50% Tencel®.

Design

CKS, fred + ginger and Ginger are hard at work to create single-material (hence easy to recycle) basics.

Production

FNG relies on internal supplier scorecards to select new partners. The group has its own Code of Conduct and CRS officers who regularly perform factory audits. In 2017, CKS, fred + ginger and Ginger joined the Fair Wear Foundation.

Retail

The group helps a lot of charities, and that's hard to miss when visiting the stores of some FNG brands. The fashion group works closely with partners like Natuurpunt to

achieve a number of goals, such as encouraging nature conservation.

Consumption

Thanks to The Empty Shop, the clothes worn by FNG store staff get a second life, which encourages customers to make more informed choices too. To get the end consumer involved, FNG tries to communicate more about sustainability.

End of life

FNG closes the loop with the help of Wereld Missie Hulp, De Kringwinkel, Eurofrip and HNST, who mend, reuse, sell or recycle FNG returns and dead stock. The collaboration with Eurofrip, which sold CKS and fred + ginger clothes that were still wearable on the second-hand market and reused the rest as cleaning rags and insulation material, raised a nice sum for the Brussels charity Straatverplegers.



Q&A with FNG

What does sustainability mean for you?

Sustainability is an umbrella term that encompasses a lot of aspects, from material use to employee welfare. Throughout, respect is key for us: respect for the environment and respect for the people who put their time and energy into creating our items. Yet I believe sustainability is a shared responsibility. No matter how much you do as a brand; if your customer throws his or her item away after a few months' use or doesn't take proper care of it, the result is still not sustainable. So we think it's crucial the customer does his or her part as well.

What challenges are you currently facing?

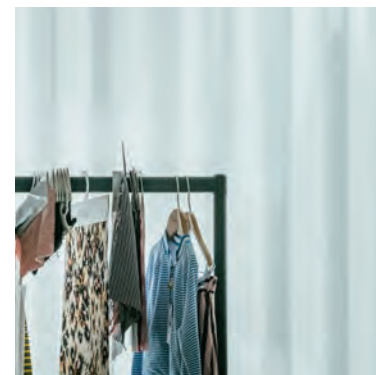
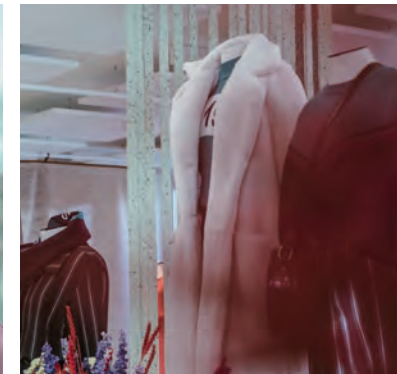
As a group uniting seventeen brands, we not only have to come up with a consistent policy and overarching rules; we also have to translate these into individual frameworks that match every brand. In addition, finding a

balance between sustainable materials (which are expensive) and the retail price the customer is prepared to pay is one of the biggest challenges for our brands, such as CKS and Ginger. We feel that competitors/colleagues operating in the same segment are struggling with similar issues, because, contrary to larger chains, brands with a unique identity cannot cut costs with economies of scale.

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

We have been exploring different ways to give our items a second life, but this was far from self-evident. Fortunately, we managed to create several 'end of life' options with the help of HNST, De Kringwinkel and The Empty Shop. So it's worthwhile to persevere in the search for the right strategic partners.

Sara Kovic,
CSR Coordinator at FNG





Eskimo

Eskimo is a Ghent-based family company with 100 years of experience in designing and producing underwear and nightwear for the entire family. Until five years ago, there were no monitoring procedures or communication processes in place to speak of, but Eskimo has been hard at work to redress the balance.

Resources

Eskimo has small volumes and works mainly with small factories. The brand encourages these suppliers to become OEKO-TEX® certified, thereby banning all harmful chemicals. At the moment, 50% of the materials wear this label, a third of which are 100% OEKO-TEX®.

Production

To make sure they comply with the Code of Conduct, Eskimo's producers are regularly visited by the company's quality officers as well as by external auditors. BSCI-membership also helps Eskimo to work towards a sustainable supply chain.

Retail

Eskimo reduced its packaging in the W19 collection and is aiming for recyclable packaging (as well as FSC® and PEFC™ certified paper) for its W20 collection. By 2021, the brand wants to get rid of all the plastic and PVC in its packaging.

Q&A with Eskimo

What does sustainability mean for you?

Sustainability means being as responsible as possible, constantly making concrete improvements today for a more respectful tomorrow.

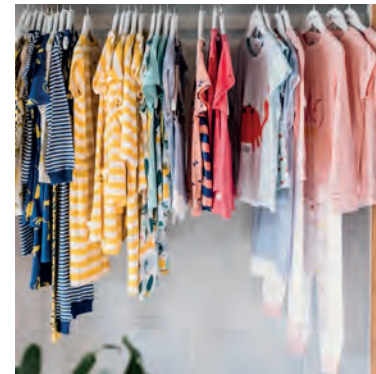
What challenges are you currently facing?

Though we're working hard to reach our targets, progression is sometimes slow due to pressure from above, busy schedules and lots of other priorities that demand our attention. I think many players in the industry will recognise this problem of balancing the importance of sustainability with the demands of everyday business life.

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

The reality is that sustainability is a long-term challenge. You can't fix everything overnight, and you don't have to either.

Réjane De Groot, General Manager at Eskimo



FFDI

Flanders Fashion Design International (FFDI) has four brands under its wings: Julia June, Her. (formerly Giovane), Amania Mo and Furore. The company has been leaving its mark on Belgian fashion for more than fifty years and has always called for 'quality over quantity'. They go for long-term relations with their partners, turning the search for sustainable alternatives into a shared ambition. With the launch of slow brand Furore in September 2019, FFDI stepped up its sustainability efforts, and the company plans on expanding that approach to its other brands as well.

Resources

FFDI consistently opts for suppliers who have already taken steps towards sustainability and actively asks for sustainable materials and water-based prints when selecting fabrics. The company gets 80% of its resources and materials from European suppliers, thus reducing transport emissions.

Design

On Furore's shelves you will find little 'summer' or 'winter' clothes; the collection consists of 70% seasonless articles. Yet, despite their timeless design, the items do tune in to the fashion spirit of the times.

Production

90% of the FFDI production takes place in Europe. FFDI regularly visits and audits its partners, and developed its own Code of Conduct that all suppliers will have to sign. FFDI chooses new suppliers with the help of a sustainability checklist.

Retail

FFDI attempts to reduce its plastic consumption, no longer sends out

folders or catalogues and opts for FSC® certified paper carrier bags and hang tags. It tries to reuse its window dressing material at events and/or in the showrooms. The company wants to set up a take-back system for its clothes hangers, which will be made from wood plastic composites as of 2020.

Consumption

FFDI wants to steer clear from giveaways with a high disposability factor and replace them with more useful gifts like brochures with washing instructions for the end consumer. The company attaches a lot of importance to informing their customers on how to treat their items right.

End of life

Furore items can easily handle a second life, and FFDI is exploring this option for its other brands as well. In addition, Julie June, Amania Mo and Her. aim for zero overstock. When their retail stores do have surpluses, the company gives them a second chance in the 'More brands for less' outlet store in Knokke.



Q&A with FFDI

What does sustainability mean for you?

Sustainability is key to future-proof our brands and to make sure that that future will be humane, too. It's a broad concept that is inextricably linked to quality. We opt for quality items with a little extra something, and won't settle for less than premium finishes. That's how we make sure our items last. We definitely have a 'happily ever after' in mind, not a 'one-night stand'. We want to do our bit and refuse to answer the fashion industry's call to produce fast, faster, fastest. In this respect it's also worth mentioning that we continue to build a stable and sustainable relationship with our partners, so we can discuss the options together. In addition, we are really people-oriented. We want to ensure decent working conditions for our suppliers and the people in the workshops, and we want them to know we appreciate and value their work. Their craftsmanship deserves more respect from the end consumer. Lastly, FFDI has a family atmosphere: our team is close knit and dedicated, and we want to keep it that way, even though every individual is obviously facing his or her own challenges. Change requires focus, and FFDI focuses on sustainability for all stakeholders - in different forms and through various channels.

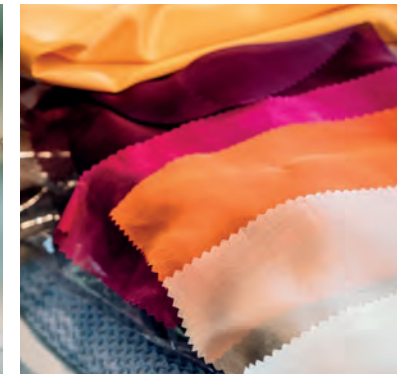
What challenges are you currently facing?

Quality is and always has been one of our main concerns. Though this in itself already ties in perfectly with the sustainability concept - when you take good care of them, our items last a lifetime - we realise today's challenges go beyond the topic of quality care. For instance, reducing packaging waste is in order, while material selection gains importance too. Coming up with solutions that balance all influencing factors is quite a challenge, but it is our responsibility towards the next generation and to planet to make the sustainable choice as a company. We go for less and especially for better.

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

We find ourselves brimming with ideas. That's good news, obviously, but at the same time we tend to get stuck in the brainstorming phase and fail to make a quick transition to concrete actions. As a company, you sometimes have to force yourself to make a decision, even though you can always think of more or other things that are worth trying. Creating a roadmap gives you peace of mind, without therefore slowing you down. It also helps to keep in mind that striving for 100% sustainability is a long and laborious journey, but the process in and of itself - and all the small successes that come with it - is more than worth it too.

Veerle Baert,
CEO at FFDI





JBC

JBC, a Belgian family business that offers quality and fairly priced clothing for women, men and children, was one of the first companies to appoint a CSR manager to chart their sustainability journey. The organisation mapped its entire supply chain, identifying the risks and putting together a step-by-step plan to eliminate them.

Resources

JBC focuses on fair and healthy materials. The I AM collection is made from organic cotton, lyocell and bamboo, for instance. JBC is currently creating a tool to categorise all its resources and suppliers in terms of sustainability.

Design

In I AM, their Eco Lab, JBC develops new materials, such as denim consisting of 20% recycled fibres. The brand wants to increase the share of these fibres, and expand the principles of sustainable design to all its collections.

Production

JBC has its own Code of Conduct and demands a transparent attitude from every supplier. The brand signed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, and is a member of the FWF and the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles.

Retail

JBC no longer wraps its home deliveries and leaflets in plastic, and takes every refurbishment as an opportunity to make its stores more energy efficient.

Consumption

JBC stimulates reuse by leaving room for two owners on every name tag. Fun tips on the JBC blog create attachment between wearer and garment.

End of life

JBC encourages recycling through in-store collection points, in collaboration with Wereld Missie Hulp. The company also teamed up with 37° to turn old clothing into new products.

Q&A with JBC

What does sustainability mean for you?

As a family company, we're all about ethical entrepreneurship. You could say that sustainability is in our DNA. To us, there's no contradiction in being sustainable and being a clothing retailer. We try to take our responsibility throughout the supply chain, because JBC loves our planet and the people who live on it.

What challenges are you currently facing?

We are constantly trying to find a balance between sustainable entrepreneurship and the business model we're tied to. Certain expectations in terms of speed and price just can't be changed overnight. This balancing act is a reality for others in the industry too.

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

Commitment from the top is crucial, because it speeds up the implementation process. In addition, a strong collaboration between the various phases in the chain constitutes an essential basis. We got the different departments on board and appointed a representative who is closely involved in sourcing and production, as well as in the other part of the value chain. Taking such a helicopter view is of major importance, too.

Valerie Geluykens,
CSR Manager at JBC



MRFG

MRFG stands for Marylise & Rembo Styling Fashion Group, the Belgian family company behind bridal wear brands Marylise and Rembo Styling. MRFG specialises in made-to-measure wedding gowns.

Resources

MRFG critically examined the fabrics it uses and will launch a capsule collection in 2020 with six dresses that are made as sustainably as possible. From then on, the share of sustainable gowns and materials will gradually increase each year.

Design

All designers are trained in optimal material use. MRFG's (minimal) cutting waste gets a new life as building material, but the group is looking for ways to use it internally.

Production

All MRFG gowns are made to measure, so overstock is seldom an issue. 94% of the collection is handmade by Portuguese seamstresses who work in an MRFG-owned facility. This eco-friendly building is close to the suppliers.

Retail

MRFG opts for sustainable marketing material and minimises its logistic footprint by shipping the dresses directly from the production base to the stores.

Consumption

The group communicates about sustainability on the MRFG website as well as on the sites of the individual brands, planning to increase this type of communication by launching a blog with sustainability stories and publishing their own sustainability report.

End of life

MRFG is toying with ideas to inspire customers to transform their beloved dress into new items.



Q&A with MRFG

What does sustainability mean for you?

For us, sustainability means respecting both people and planet. Step by step, we adapt the way we work to reduce our effect on the environment. In addition, sustainable entrepreneurship equals local entrepreneurship and short chains.

What challenges are you currently facing?

We are actively looking for sustainable materials, but many of them fail to meet our colour and/or quality standards. This is quite a challenge, and one that we want to address together with our suppliers. We push our current partners at all levels to come up with new solutions and we consistently ask them for sustainable alternatives - from the

plastic at the cutting table to the materials of our hang tags. Thus we want to raise awareness with every actor in the chain, growing towards a more sustainable way of working together.

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

The top of the company is highly motivated and takes corporate social responsibility very seriously. This has the huge advantage of allowing us to speed things up: the management makes decisions and swiftly introduces changes. But we also get the rest of the company on board via work groups - a combination that has done wonders for us.

Chiara De Vlieger, managing director at MRFG





The Woody Group

The Woody Group is the Belgian company behind Woody, a brand synonymous with colourful pyjamas, nightgowns, homewear, underwear and swimwear for babies, children, women and men. Woody items are cheerful and comfy, and thanks to their superior quality, they can be passed on to brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces.

Resources

Woody underwear is Oeko-Tex certified. The brand recently released a clothing line for babies in organic, GOTS certified cotton, and is working on a brand-new Tencel® underwear collection for men and women.

Design

Woody prints are made in Belgium with water-based inks. Woody is currently looking for a partner to help dye all of its fabrics in an environmentally friendly manner. In addition, the brand is trying to find a way to recycle its 3% fabric waste.

Production

The brand's production process revolves around strong collaborations with specialised partners, who respect the Code of Conduct and the requirements of the Fair Wear Foundation, of which Woody is a member.

Retail

Woody focuses on environmentally friendly packaging materials, such as recycled cardboard (cut as efficiently as possible). The label gave its goodies a sustainable makeover, and donates a percentage of every pyjama purchase to charity.

Consumption

Woody sends its customers home with maintenance tips and intends to better inform them about what to do with items they no longer wear.

End of life

Woody items last long and beg to be passed on to others. The brand plans on collecting discarded pyjamas to donate to charity and stimulates the resale of surplus stock. The team wants to close the loop by recycling old pj's in collaboration with the Lenzing Group, a fibre and textile manufacturer best known for developing Tencel®.

Q&A with The Woody Group

What does sustainability mean for you?

Sustainability has become one of our standard concepts. It forms the foundation for the many innovations and economic, ecological and social projects we're working on. We're always on the hunt for sustainable alternatives and we constantly question our own approach, trying to do our work as best as we can and as sustainably as possible.

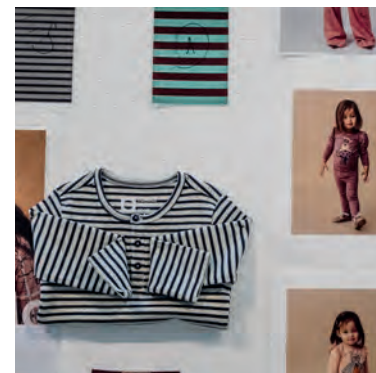
What challenges are you currently facing?

Selecting sustainable materials is one of our biggest challenges. Though they are often harder to find and though they come with a heftier price tag, we do think it's important to push on. We keep up with innovations and hope that sustainable resources will eventually become the norm in the industry. It obviously makes all the difference if more companies start to invest in these materials, so we can buy larger quantities together.

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

For Woody, sustainability comes from the heart. I really want to take the lead in this. To create a success story, you have to take time as a CEO to get inspired and to expand your knowledge, so you can make the right decisions. For instance: in 2019, I went to the Copenhagen Fashion Summit for the first time, and I came home inspired, full of energy and with tons of leads.

Steven Van de Velde, Managing Director at The Woody Group



Xandres

Belgian fashion house Xandres encompasses corporate fashion as well as three successful fashion brands: Xandres, Xandres Gold and Xandres Studio. Each of these labels is high-quality in terms of comfort, fit and aesthetics.

Resources

Xandres sources from a limited number of countries and suppliers, whom its team regularly visits. Xandres is mapping its partners' social and environmental risks, and wants to come up with specific actions to mitigate them. The company has plans for a materials database as well.

Design

Xandres is synonymous with high-quality, timeless design and optimal material use. The team is setting up a quality framework that will enable them to objectively measure their performance.

Production

Xandres has a team of seamstresses in its own atelier in Destelbergen, but it also keeps a close eye on its production partners abroad, regularly visiting them, raising awareness and making improvements wherever possible.

Retail

The company is doing market research and consulting with its logistics partner to reduce their impact. Specific goals include using less and 100% recyclable primary packaging materials and reusing primary and secondary packaging materials.

Consumption

By focusing on maintenance, Xandres wants to extend the lifespan of its clothes. The company is looking into the possibility of maintenance tips, marketing actions to encourage good use, and a repair service.

End of life

The company plans to collect half of the items it sells, and to make the most of the materials it takes back. It is looking for partners that can help close the loop.



Q&A with Xandres

What does sustainability mean for you?

First and foremost, sustainability comes down to extending a product's useful life, and producing high-quality items with a timeless design. In addition, working sustainably means keeping our entire supply chain under control: from working with sustainable materials and reliable partners to, in the longer term, closing the loop with take-back systems.

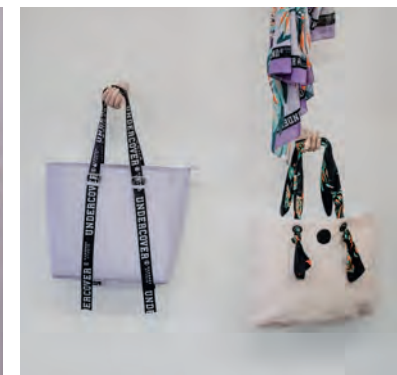
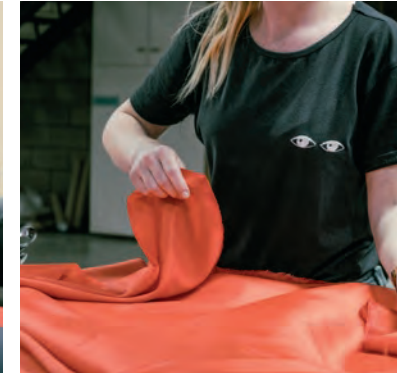
What challenges are you currently facing?

Communication features high on the agenda here; we think it's important to be honest. On the one hand, we're looking for a way to get started, and on the other, we know we're not perfect yet. Openly admitting the latter always entails the risk of becoming a target for the press, yet we don't let that discourage us: transparency also means talking about how we're not entirely there (yet).

Which lesson(s) do you want to share?

Teamwork makes the dream work. Not only the management is really committed; we have established a core team that regularly meets up and makes sure sustainability is on the minds of everyone in the company. The entire organisation supports our sustainability efforts and that close involvement really bears fruit.

Patrick Desrumaux, CEO at Xandres



www.close-the-loop.be

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

We thoroughly believe that we can make a change, create a movement, that we can push our industry towards a brighter future together. That's why we don't just want you to read this brochure; we want you to take action and share your experiences and ideas. Join our Close The Loop community on Facebook or register for our newsletter via the website to get the latest news on events and new initiatives.

Flanders DC

Flanders DC, or Flanders District of Creativity, is the single point of contact for entrepreneurs in the creative industries in Flanders. As an independent non-profit organization, Flanders DC actively supports creative entrepreneurs who want to build or grow their business.

www.flandersdc.be
info@flandersdc.be

Circular Flanders

Circular Flanders is the hub of the Flemish circular economy, where governments, companies, civil society, and the knowledge community come together and take action.

www.circular-flanders.be
info@circular-flanders.be

This booklet was printed by EPO, a company that switched to alcohol-free printing in 2016, banning the poisonous isopropyl alcohol and using less ink to achieve the same color intensity. The company only works with plant-based ink and FSC-certified or chlorine-free recycled paper, grouping shipments and having specialized firms collect and recycle their waste.



