

Media Release: 5th November 2016

‘Moving towards 100% - Kathmandu are increasing their use of sustainably sourced cotton’

Kathmandu increased their use of sustainable cotton from 38% to 59% in 2016 according to their 2016 Sustainability Report.

Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental and social impacts of cotton in the clothing they wear, particularly as these issues come up in films like ‘The True Cost’.

Kathmandu’s goal is to phase out conventional cotton completely by 2020.

‘We care about promoting and protecting workers’ rights throughout our supply chain, and improving working conditions,’ says Textile R&D and Responsible Materials Manager Manu Rastogi.

‘We also care about sustainability and protecting the outdoor environment we love to play in.

As we use cotton in a range of our products, it’s important the cotton we use is environmentally–friendly and ethically produced.’

The textile industry is undergoing a major reform this decade. This is good news. The race is on for different systems to meet consumers’ and manufacturers’ desires to have more ecologically and socially sustainable management systems in place.

Kathmandu has decided to combine three sustainable cotton initiatives – BCI (Better Cotton Initiative), organic and Fairtrade – to build a flexible fabric sourcing strategy that moves them away from conventional cotton. Kathmandu became the first Australasian member of the BCI in March 2015.

This strategy makes good sense. Not only does it secure a long–term supply of sustainable raw material, it also allows Kathmandu to become a market leader in Australasia.

‘The mix of BCI, organic and Fairtrade cotton in our portfolio gives us the opportunity to create an organic, Fairtrade product range for our highly responsible consumers, who are willing to pay a higher price, and also take responsibility for bulk cotton production via the Better Cotton Initiative. This means Kathmandu can improve its social and environmental performance and can still meet the demands and expectations of its customers,’ Manu says.

There are lots of sustainable cotton standards out there. And they’re all aiming to shift cotton production to be more environmentally and socially responsible.

Kathmandu chose to work with the Better Cotton Initiative because it’s the fastest growing standard by far and it is helping to change the way main stream cotton farmers cultivate their land.

The Better Cotton Initiative came out of a ‘round table’ led by the World Wildlife Foundation back in 2005. The goal was to find more sustainable solutions for farmers, for the environment and for the future of the sector.

The programme began implementation in 2010. By 2015, BCI had reached 1.6 million cotton farmers across 21 countries in five continents. BCI cotton was grown on 3.4 million hectares of land.

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BCI BY THE NUMBERS 2015

1.6 MILLION FARMERS

23% increase



3.4 MILLION HECTARES

11.9%
of global cotton production



FARMERS' YIELDS UP



PESTICIDE USE DOWN



'We are building the momentum we need to transform the market.'

Alan McClay,
BCI Chief Executive Officer

BCI's reports show farmers in India have raised their yields by 11% while cutting synthetic pesticides by 20%. These results really are better – better for farmers, better for the environment.

The initiative aims to have 5 million farmers producing 8.2 million metric tonnes of Better Cotton by 2020. That's around 30% of global cotton production. Organic cotton, by comparison, makes up around 1% of global cotton production.

Kathmandu also sponsored Summit Club member, Tricia Cutforth, on her trip to Prathiba, India to visit Fairtrade cotton farms. Kathmandu's Summit Club sponsorship program aims to provide travel and adventure opportunities to their Summit Club members, particularly to learn about sustainability issues.

'My visit unquestionably deepened my commitment to the cause and opened my eyes to the power of buying a single T-shirt' says Tricia Cutforth, Fairtrade's 2015 Supporter of the Year.

Kathmandu is a recognised leader in sustainability. The company won the Large Business Sustainability Leadership award at the 2016 Banksia Sustainability Awards on 30 November. The Banksia Foundation has been promoting sustainability with its annual awards since 1989. It is Australia's most prestigious and longest running sustainability awards program.

The judges were impressed by the sheer breadth of Kathmandu's sustainability initiatives: "From their commitment to the sustainable procurement of cotton, feathers and wool and their five Green Star rated store in Melbourne to their admirable social work, Kathmandu is a leader when it comes to sustainability and reaching the pinnacle in the retail sector."

This is Kathmandu's fifth annual sustainability report is available online at:

http://www.kathmandu.co.nz/media/wysiwyg/Sustainability/Material/KMD_Sustainability_Report_2016.pdf

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