

Neonyt: The future of denim production

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What could environmentally friendly, water-saving jeans production look like? Neonyt is once again dedicated to the future-relevant topic of water and will be putting the focus on progressive approaches to the subject of denim this July.

“It’s high time for the fashion industry to take a more holistic and consistent approach to the subject. And that applies in particular to the resource-intensive denim industry,” says Thimo Schwenzfeier, Show Director of Neonyt. “We bring companies together that have developed innovative production processes and visionary solutions, and are therefore accelerating a more sustainable development of the fashion industry.”

Denim: an ever-popular icon with water-intensive production

Whether as a jacket, jeans or overalls – denim is one of the most popular, versatile and robust fabrics in the fashion industry. On average, every German person has eight pairs of jeans in their wardrobe.* But there’s a downside to this: the indigo fabric is one of the worst offenders of environmental damage. Especially with regard to the limited and increasingly scarce resource of water. The water consumption of conventional jeans production is immense. It takes up to 7,000 litres of water to produce a single pair of jeans.** This figure results from the different production steps: starting with the water-intensive cotton cultivation in often very dry regions, which accounts for the majority of denim’s total water footprint. In addition to this, fertilisers and pesticides are used and their production consumes considerable amounts of water and also pollutes the groundwater. This is followed by the wet processes of dyeing, washing and finishing the fabrics, the core problem of the denim industry. After all, the chemicals that give the jeans their desired look have to be washed out in numerous washes. In the producing countries, the untreated wastewater is often disposed of in the environment due to the lack of sewage treatment plants. The World Bank estimates that textile dyeing and treatment contribute up to 17-20 percent of total industrial water pollution.

Water – an increasingly limited resource

Just how important it is to protect the resource of water and to initiate change in the fashion industry is shown by the figures of the UN’s 2019 World Water Development Report: global water consumption is rising continuously. Due to population growth, new consumption patterns and climate change, the availability and quality of water are currently

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changing drastically. 2.1 billion people worldwide currently have no access to clean and continuously available drinking water. And worldwide there are more than two billion people living in countries with high water stress. This means that more than a quarter of renewable water resources are used in these countries. 22 countries even use more than 70 percent, including for example Egypt or Pakistan – where the cultivation of cotton, for example, requires huge amounts of water.

Neonyt is showcasing new, innovative options

How can the fashion industry, in particular the denim sector, minimise its global impact on water consumption and contamination and actively contribute to preserving this vital resource? How can chemicals be avoided? How can water consumption be reduced? Which recycling methods offer new solutions? Neonyt is presenting an array of progressive companies that are exploring new directions in denim production and developing versatile solutions – from water-saving organic cotton cultivation to chemical-saving dyeing processes and alternative procedures like laser technology instead of bleaching with chlorine, down to innovative water treatment plants and denim made of recycled materials.

Two examples: Mud Jeans and Feuervogl

Dutch company Mud Jeans is already putting the ideal of a circular economy into practice: since 2013, the label's customers have been able to lease sustainably produced jeans instead of buying them. Their system guarantees that the company retains ownership of the valuable raw materials and that every item is recycled. This saves significant amounts of water, energy and resources as less new cotton needs to be cultivated and processed. Repairs are also offered free of charge. And for Feuervogl, which is fully GOTS-certified and comes from Bavaria, 100 percent organic cotton fabrics, fair working conditions and the avoidance of harmful chemicals are part of the company's DNA. Feuervogl has its designs produced by a family-run business in Poznan, Poland, which keeps the transportation distances short. In the adjoining laundry, for example, the jeans are lightened with ozone instead of chlorine or other chemicals. Effects are also achieved using laser technology, which saves water and energy. During the washing process, special attention is paid to ensure that all wastewater is purified. All treatments are energy and water-saving.

Denim panel in cooperation with Textile Exchange

Coinciding with the Neonyt Trade Show, high-profile speakers will be presenting best-practice examples and discussing solutions at the adjoining Fashionsustain conference – for example on 3 July 2019 during a discussion panel by the non-profit organisation Textile Exchange with international experts from the denim industry. And so for all things fashion, sustainability and innovation, Neonyt is set to become a central hub for solution-oriented dialogue and concrete action once again.

NEONYT
The global hub for fashion, sustainability
and innovation
Berlin, 2-4 July 2019

*Source: Vente Privee: Germany's big jeans survey 2015

**Source: Greenpeace: Clothing as a throwaway commodity. A representative Greenpeace survey on buying behaviour, wearing duration and disposal of fashion

Dates

Neonyt Trade Show	2-4 July 2019
Fashionsustain	3-4 July 2019
Thinkathon	1-2 July 2019
Prepeek	2-4 July 2019

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Background information on Messe Frankfurt

Messe Frankfurt is the world's largest trade fair, congress and event organiser with its own exhibition grounds. It employs a workforce of 2,500* at around 30 sites and generates annual sales of around EUR 715* million. Thanks to its far-reaching ties with the relevant sectors and to its international sales network, the Group looks after the business interests of its customers effectively. A comprehensive range of services – both onsite and online – ensures that customers worldwide enjoy consistently high quality and flexibility when planning, organising and running their events. The wide range of services includes renting exhibition grounds, trade fair construction and marketing, personnel and food services. With its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, the company is owned by the City of Frankfurt (60 percent) and the State of Hesse (40 percent).

For more information, please visit: www.messefrankfurt.com

* Provisional key figures for 2018