

THE MEDIA BRAND FOR DENIM AND FASHION TRENDS

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THE SUSTAINABLE ISSUE

*Fashion's Effort
to Save Nature*



ESTEEMED OPINIONS

THE DENIM MARKET HAS MADE GREAT PROGRESS IN BECOMING MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY. HOW CAN IT GO EVEN FURTHER?

Text **Maria Cristina Pavarini**



GIUSY BETTONI, C.L.A.S.S.



ANDY ZHONG, PROSPERITY TEXTILE



MUNIR AHMED, M&J



JOSÉ RAFAEL ROYO,
TEJIDOS ROYO

The denim industry is very serious about improving its environmental footprint.

Sustainable denim was the number one topic on most recent exhibitions, both by large mills, and small and innovative players," says Tomas Vucurevic, founder, Braind, a German strategic management and brand consulting company.

More critical is Giusy Bettoni, founder C.L.A.S.S., an Italian consultant in sustainable textiles: "There is a lot going on in denim manufacturing although it is sometimes difficult to get the right value. Though once you get in touch with companies behind such innovation you discover a fantastic new emerging world. However, although most companies show they can do 'everything,' including sustainability, many seem not to follow a real complete project as they simply seem to be willing to be ready for it if there's a demand." While Bettoni is an expert in her field, many manufacturers believe they have been working a long time to impact less. Most of them agree that producing sustainably has to be part of an overall company approach. "We have been doing sustainable fabrics

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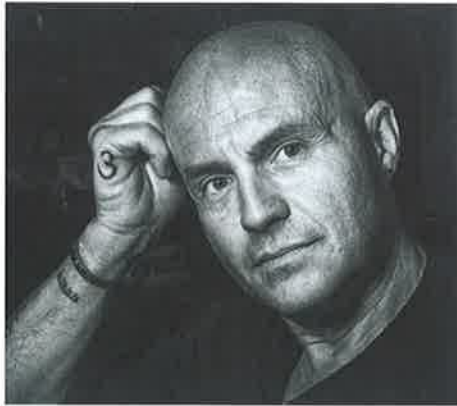
—Giusy Bettoni, C.L.A.S.S.

for more than 15 years. It is our own DNA," says José Rafael Royo, owner, Tejidos Royo. "We have been recycling all of our industrial waste for the last 25 years and used it for the home textile industry. For more than 10 years, we have been recycling our own energy, and created clean energy that we use and sell to the industry. We have also been making special 'close the loop' projects with key customers globally. We are also very keen on innovation as to be leader you must be number one in R&D."

Tavex also believes in the importance of a total approach to sustainability. "Sustainability is no longer a style or an outward gesture. It is dictated by a new consciousness of taking better care of garments and keeping them for longer. We offer premium denims that are made with awareness, unique pieces that speak to

consumers not as simply focused on their image but on what is inside of them," the company states.

Garment manufacturers believe in the importance to act fairly, too. Munir Ahmed, owner of specialized garment manufacturer M&J, says: "Only a sustainable plant can produce sustainable products. At M&J we have designed the first LEED Platinum Certified laundry in the world. This allows us to create eco-friendly pieces and environmental-friendly production every day. Thanks to laser technology we have achieved highly detailed finishings and speed that were not available before. We are investing also in new highly automatized production as it is the key to reduce energy and chemicals' impact on the environment while increasing safety of products and of workers." Though could automatized work



STEFANO ALDIGHIERI, ARVIND



CHIARA FERRERO, MADE-BY



TOMAS VUCUREVIC, BRAIND

be considered as sustainable when it might cause massive unemployment?
 The fashion industry needs a change of mentality anyway and it doesn't only depend upon manufacturing. "Fast fashion culture still encourages consumers to buy more clothing at ever-cheaper prices," Vucurevic says. "The key for improving is with the retailers, not the denim manufacturers. Consumers did not say: 'I want to buy five pair of jeans for €10 each'. They were led there through mass merchandising and the ubiquity of media and e-commerce," he adds. "For this retailers and brands should develop—rather than 'capsule collections' or single items—widely available sustainable offers, which they can sell for acceptable premium prices, although not at three-five times higher than regular prices."

Vicunha thinks that avoiding waste is possible by being more creative and efficient at the same time. "The fashion industry is one of the five biggest CO2 emitters in the world. Vicunha is not as we are carbon neutral," it explains. Checking one's productive process by certifying entities is key. Made-By organization has created Alliance for

Responsible Denim, a specialized platform analyzing denim productive processes. Annemieke de Vries, head of operations director, Beneleux, Scandinavia and Italy, and Chiara Ferrero, associate, Made-By explain: "We have been working on finishing and wet processing already and brands and denim manufacturers have started switching to more sustainable processes. Many manufacturers are also embracing sustainable production for differentiating their business and to have an advantage upon others."

For f/w 2019-20 Prosperity Textile is launching the first ever Bluesign approved denim fabric line. "We have produced it with a minimum impact on people and the environment, made from approved chemical products and raw materials, for a highest level of consumer safety," explains Andy Zhong, marketing director, Prosperity. Alternative materials and sustainable cotton alternatives play a role, too. M&J employs 60% more BCI cotton than in 2013. Cone Denim uses three different eco-friendly cotton types—BCI, Cotton Leads and E3 cotton. Though Arvind's creative director Stefano Aldighieri is critical: "Ten

years ago we witnessed the disaster of 'organic cotton,' when the amount of cotton products sold as 'organic' was over 100 times bigger than the actual amount of real, certified organic fiber available worldwide; it is easy to declare oneself 'green,' but it is meaningless if it is not backed by facts!" Although consumers are more aware today about what they buy not everyone thinks they are so sensitive to environmental matters: "There is more interest in sustainability than five years ago. We offer and sell more eco-friendly fabrics. However, consumers aren't truly interested in the sustainable issue. They read articles, know that fashion is one of most polluting industries, though when purchasing they are concentrated only on look, image and price of a garment," says Francesca Polato, sales and marketing analyst, Berto. "Statistics say Millennials are increasingly more focused on origin and composition of what they buy. We hope data tells the truth." A more radical shift from the manufacturers' side could speed up the change, according to Bettoni: "Company vision, innovative responsible production and transparency shall be combined with a fantastic design. Those key values will speak loud to consumers." >