

# Sustan

SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR NEWS / SUMMER 2023

## INGREDIENT BRANDS

Meet material maker sustainability pioneers

## CIRCULARITY DÉJÀ VU?

How far has Outdoor come, or is it just going in circles?

## END "ECOCIDE"

The fight to equate ecosystem destruction with genocide



12

### THINK TANK THOUGHTS

Four years since  
Outdoor Futures

### HIGG FAQ

Still the best  
LCA tool around?

### PARTNER PRESENTATIONS

Good brands share  
good stories

# WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS?

What is the difference between ingredient brands and other materials? Can ingredient brands be an asset for outdoor brands in their sustainability efforts? And can such partnerships carry risks? Suston turns to the experts to answer these questions.

BY GABRIEL ARTHUR



**M**embranes, zippers, leather, outer fabric, buttons, velcro, rubber soles, insoles... products in the outdoor world are a puzzle of materials. Each such puzzle piece in a hiking backpack, for example, is likely to have a name, at least familiar to the designer and purchaser. But some of the materials - or ingredients - are known to many more people. If you ask retail staff or experienced outdoor enthusiasts, they will probably be able to list over twenty material names. Brands like Gore-Tex, Sympatex, Vibram, Polartec, Primaloft etc. Other materials, meanwhile, are completely unknown in the same circles.

"The first category is usually called ingredient brands - the rest are what we call 'branded ingredients', or, materials with a name," says Tomas Vucurevic, Founder and Managing Director of Braind, one of the industry's leading experts in brand development and marketing in this niche.

## Known within the wider community

There is no clear-cut line between the first and second categories, says Tomas Vucurevic.

"But you do not suddenly become an ingredient brand by self-declaration. You must bring something special to the market and think and act like a brand, communicating with persistence based on a clear, attractive promise.

"One of the most common mistakes is that companies address that too superficially. They believe putting a hangtag or a label on their fabric will do the job. But if you continue to think like a supplier, you will remain a supplier."

Martin Kössler is CEO of the consulting firm Huginbiz, with several clients among ingredient brands. He also leads a network for Nordic brands, with members such as Recco, Mips and others. He agrees that marketing is a key differentiator.

"A material supplier focuses on the customer's purchasing organization. An ingredient brand also focuses on the sales and marketing organizations of its customers. They want to create demand - the pull effect - for their customers, by helping to process the downstream. This often means speaking directly to the user of the finished product, the outdoor enthusiast."

Another important difference is the level of innovation, says Martin Kössler.

"Just like in the automotive industry and many other industries, innovation is mainly driven by large subcontractors. Few outdoor brands are big enough or have the expertise and manufacturing resources to initiate real development themselves. This also applies to sustainability."

## Performance and/or sustainability?

Tomas Vucurevic has seen and participated in many brand developments over the years. Between 2001 and 2010 he was Global Brand Manager at W.L. Gore's Fabrics Division, responsible for the Gore-Tex and Windstopper brands. He then went on to set up his own consultancy, Braind, which has helped brands such as Primaloft, Terracare and Polygiene. Looking back, Tomas Vucurevic identifies three distinct phases in the textile industry.

"In the beginning, the focus was on performance. Companies held patents on innovations that pro-

vided a unique performance benefit that was not available elsewhere. These innovations made the finished products better. In the outdoor industry, it might be making products waterproof, windproof, more durable or better insulated."

The next phase began around 2011 with a focus on sustainability, says Tomas Vucurevic.

"That's when, for example, Aquafil developed Econyl, which is made from recycled nylon. In the last ten years, many ingredient brands have broadened their focus from performance to purpose."

The third and newest phase is about eco-designed and bio-based ingredients.

"At the beginning of this movement, the performance aspect was secondary and some very eco-minded host brands settled for lower quality, as the materials were bio-based and more sustainable," says Tomas Vucurevic.

But there is a risk in leaving out what has been the core of ingredient brands: Performance. How does an ordinary customer of an outdoor brand react if a shell jacket is not resistant to water and wind? Performance might move from a point of differentiation to a point of parity, but bio-based materials still need to meet the performance expectations of the end user. It's really about what you promise to the customer and how you are able to deliver on that."

## Outsourcing to specialists

When it comes to sustainability, the focus has increasingly shifted to "scope 3" - or over to the textile industry's suppliers, in layman's terms.. Whether you're talking about the need for more

transparency or reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, it's in the supply chain that the big potential - and the big risks - lie. As ingredient brands shift their focus towards sustainability, they can become a central part of an outdoor brand's path to achieving its goals. Sympatex is one of the earliest such companies to profile itself in sustainability.

"Around 80% of a garment's environmental impact is decided in the design phase, so what materials that are selected can make a very big difference," says Kim Scholze, Chief Sales & Marketing Officer at Sympatex, adding that the company not only contributes to traceability and more sustainable materials.

"With the knowledge that we have acquired over the last 30 years, we can support our partners with eco-design guidelines, share our knowledge and connect to the right people within the industry."

The focus on sustainability means that brands like Sympatex can have different communication goals, compared to a fixation on performance. Raising important industry issues and reaching out to consumers can create a new "pull effect."

"Education is one important part of our communication. We don't want anyone to ask explicitly for a Sympatex jacket, but for the most forward thinking and sustainable products."

## Traceable, transparent, risk management

Today, outdoor brands are under pressure to improve traceability and transparency in their supply chains. After major retailers like REI in the US and Globetrotter in Germany started asking questions, more and more outdoor retailers have followed

More and more ingredient brands aim to join the "host brand's" sustainability sourcing and marketing strategies.



**TOMAS VUCUREVIC**  
Founder and Managing  
Director, Braind



**MARTIN KÖSSLER**  
CEO, Huginbiz



**KIM SCHOLZE**  
Chief Sales & Marketing  
Officer, Sympatex



Performance Days in Munich, New York, Portland and Shanghai are important arenas for the ingredient brands to showcase their products.

suit. At the same time, policymakers are demanding more substantiated green claims. This can benefit ingredient brands that already have full control of their own supply chain and production.

At the same time, there are risks. An important reason why ingredient brands started to get attention was Greenpeace's Detox campaign, launched in 2011 with the mission to eliminate hazardous chemicals from textile production. In 2015, Greenpeace specifically targeted PFCs with the Detox Outdoor message. One material that was attacked was Gore-Tex, which in turn led to brands such as Patagonia and The North Face also being criticized. Gore Fabrics chose to collaborate with Greenpeace and in 2017 pledged to step-by-step eliminate PFCs of Environmental Concern from its outdoor weatherproofing laminates.

Depending on who you ask, the events following Detox Outdoor can be an example of either the risk or the strength of tight collaborations between "host brands" and "ingredient brands." If one falls, it can drag down the other one - or they can help and strengthen each other in times of crises.

"I think the best cases come from companies that have a long-term relationship and very clear expectations and communication. Brand value is a lot about trust. At the end of the day, both sides need to ensure that their brand promises are upheld in a joint appearance. It is a mutual dependency," says Tomas Vucurevic.

Kim Sholze adds another perspective: That because the larger ingredient brands already work with many outdoor brands, they can initiate collaborations around sustainability. Also, this relation-

ship enables them to get insights from their different partners.

"An ingredient brand can take a more neutral position and strengthen cooperation within the industry. We learn from our brand partners, the retailers, and the end consumers. At the same time, we also look at other industries to exchange information and solutions. We bring the knowledge from this into circulation and establish connections and synergies. Especially in the textile industry, this is a very decisive step. Water and CO<sub>2</sub>-saving dyeing technologies, for example, are associated with incredibly high MOQs [Suston: MOQ = minimum order quantity] and sustainable purchasing practices require an early commitment from the entire supply chain.

#### Supporting communication

Another advantage that ingredient brands say they bring to the table is communication. Both the educational parts, but also marketing toward the end-consumers.

"Generally, we support with a wide range of communication tools to share this information as informatively and emotionally as possible. We are more than suppliers. Our values and a service promise should give our brand partners significant added value", says Kim Sholze.

And last but not least, an additional advantage is increased transparency.

"Material selection has a very big impact on the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint and overall, in terms of social and environmental sustainability. It is our responsibility to be transparent."



# Redefining Supply Chain Responsibility

To meet the requirements of the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, Hohenstein guides companies on their journey towards responsible and sustainable supply chains.

In our globalized world, complex supply chains are commonplace. With the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, the German government has set the course for increased sustainability and corporate responsibility. The law obliges companies to respect and comply with human rights and environmental standards throughout their supply chains. As an experienced partner, Hohenstein supports companies in meeting these requirements and promoting sustainable business practices.

Hohenstein brings over 75 years of experience in the textile and apparel industry, offering a comprehensive portfolio of solutions to comply with legal requirements in the area of supply chain due diligence while remaining competitive. Let Hohenstein accompany you on your journey towards a sustainable and responsible supply chain and benefit from the expertise in implementing due diligence obligations.

#### Services for your success:

- Risk Analyses & Supply Chain Management: Identify risks along your supply chain and develop effective management strategies.
- Supplier Assessment & Development: Assistance in selecting and developing responsible suppliers in accordance with Supply Chain Due Diligence Act requirements.
- Training & Workshops: Ensure that your employees understand and can implement Supply Chain Due Diligence Act requirements.
- Social & Environmental Audits: Independent audits help to ensure compliance with legal requirements.
- Certifications & Labels: Oeko-Tex Made in Green, Oeko-Tex Organic Cotton, Oeko-Tex Step and Hohenstein Quality Label highlight your commitment to environmental protection and social responsibility.
- Sustainability Consulting: Joint de-

velopment of sustainable business strategies based on circular economy principles, waste reduction, resource efficiency, and innovation promotion.

With the holistic Hohenstein approach, you can shape your supply chain without losing sight of your own business goals.

#### In summary:

By relying on Hohenstein's customized and holistic solutions, you meet the requirements of the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act. Ensure sustainability and compliance in your supply chain and strengthen your competitiveness at the same time together with the Hohenstein experts. Show your customers and partners that you are investing in a responsible and successful future for your company.

Outdoor by ISPO: A3.1, Stand 124  
[hohenstein.com](https://www.hohenstein.com)