



Lifestyle & Design Cluster.

SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES & GAPS

RESULTS FROM **48** TEXTILE COMPANIES

SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES AND GAPS FROM 48 TEXTILES COMPANIES

Final report based on the Programme *“Fremtidens Tekstilkrav”*

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FOREWORD



In 2021, the Minister for Industry, Business & Financial Affairs appointed a taskforce to restart the Danish textile and fashion industry, which had initially been hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis. [The taskforce is comprised of fashion CEOs, trade organisations, researchers, business developers, unions, NGOs and ministries.](#)

A wide range of companies and stakeholders were present when the taskforce met for the first time in March; their common goal was to restart the fashion and textile business in a greener way. Despite our many different backgrounds, two things were clear: the business is facing growing demands for documentation, and small and medium-sized companies will find it very difficult to tackle this without help.

A programme was therefore developed, and a framework selected. The programme was designed to enable many small and medium-sized companies to get help to build a strong foundation for their future sustainability work. And the selected framework ensured that each company would be challenged and encouraged to consider all aspects of sustainability and obtain a holistic view of the demands and requirements that the future holds.

As there are many different paths that lead to the common goal of transitioning to a more sustainable industry, a fairly holistic approach was needed. It was also necessary to consider the wide variation in the companies' current approaches, experience, and degree of progress in their green transition. With this programme, each company would shape its own path going forward and choose its focus in the coming years. This makes it possible for all to improve and thereby make the entire industry more sustainable.



We were happy to see such a broad spectrum of small and medium-sized companies seeking help and applying for the programme. They ranged from husband-and-wife start-ups to legacy companies more than 100 years old. Between them they produce everything from cushions to sportswear, from avant-garde high fashion to everyday ready-to-wear. This shows that in all areas of the textile and fashion industry people are willing to roll up their sleeves and tackle the current and forthcoming challenges.

From the results it seems clear that most of the companies now have a solid foundation for their future sustainability work and know where they are heading. For many, though, there is still much work to be done. We look forward to seeing what steps will be taken next by many of these ambitious companies and hope that many more get the opportunity to build this foundation.

The results from the programme give us a unique insight into how 48 very different small and medium-sized companies approach sustainability. We hope the findings and suggestions can aid the future development of the industry and feed into funding programmes, research, education and development. There is no doubt that the success of this programme also lies in the focus and framework developed in the light of the challenges and needs of the textile and fashion industry.

We thank the taskforce for getting together quickly and for its excellent collaboration and engagement, and on behalf of the industry we thank our Minister Simon Kollerup and his administration for the availability of the allocated funds. And, last but not least, warm thanks go to all the textile, interior design and fashion companies who responded promptly to this unique opportunity to be part of the focused programme and made the decision to join within days or weeks. One of the admirable skills of the industry is its ability to change fast and adapt. For the companies who didn't make it this time – we are hoping for further funds to continue this very important programme and include many more companies.

Betina Simonsen

CEO of Lifestyle & Design Cluster

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present an analysis of how sustainability is understood, conceptualised, practised, and prioritised in 48 Danish small and medium-sized fashion and textile companies.

It provides **a glimpse into these companies** on the basis of data from the programme *Fremtidens Tekstilkraft*, which ran during the autumn/winter of 2021. The programme was organised by Lifestyle & Design Cluster and supported by the taskforce with funding from the Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs.

It is hoped that the report will contribute to knowledge of the industry and that the analysis and needs assessment can provide the foundation for further political engagement with sustainability in the Danish fashion industry.

THIS REPORT IS MAINLY WRITTEN BY **LIFESTYLE & DESIGN CLUSTER**, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM **COPENHAGEN FASHION WEEK** AND IN **FUTURUM**. THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE EXPLICITLY MARKED, AND WE THANK BOTH FOR THEIR EXCELLENT COLLABORATION.

THE FINDINGS
PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT **DO NOT DESCRIBE THE LEVEL OF SUSTAINABILITY** IN THE INDUSTRY AND THE ANALYSIS DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO ASSESS THIS. **THE FINDINGS SHOW HOW THE COMPANIES ENGAGE WITH SUSTAINABILITY** AND IDENTIFY SOME (THOUGH BY NO MEANS ALL) OF THE AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.

the report at a glance

TO HELP THE READER, HERE IS AN OVERVIEW OF THE SECTIONS OF THE MAIN REPORT:

- **FOREWORD:** Contains acknowledgements from LDC CEO Betina Simonsen and sets out the background to the results.
- **INTRODUCTION:** Contains an overview of the available data and outlines the limitations and methodology of the report.
- **SUMMARY: HOW 48 TEXTILE COMPANIES WORK WITH SUSTAINABILITY.** The summary can be read as a standalone section as it summarises the findings and includes the most important data. If you read only one section, this gives you the clearest overview. The summary covers both the starting point and the future plans of the 48 companies.
- **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.** This section is divided into two parts: findings from the gap analysis and survey, and findings from the action plans. The findings from the gap analysis and survey describe the companies' starting points and show how they were working with sustainability before they entered the programme. The findings from the action plans describe their future focus and show how the companies are choosing to work with sustainability going forward.
- **AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE ON THE FINDINGS FROM IN FUTURUM.** This section is written by In Futurum, who have been supporting the programme and helped launch the CFW framework used in it. This puts them in a unique position to put the findings into perspective. This section can also be read as a standalone article.
- **APPENDIX:** The appendix contains all the background information about the programme and the CFW framework, and an extended version of the data. All the data referenced in the findings and summary is available in full here.

data & methodology

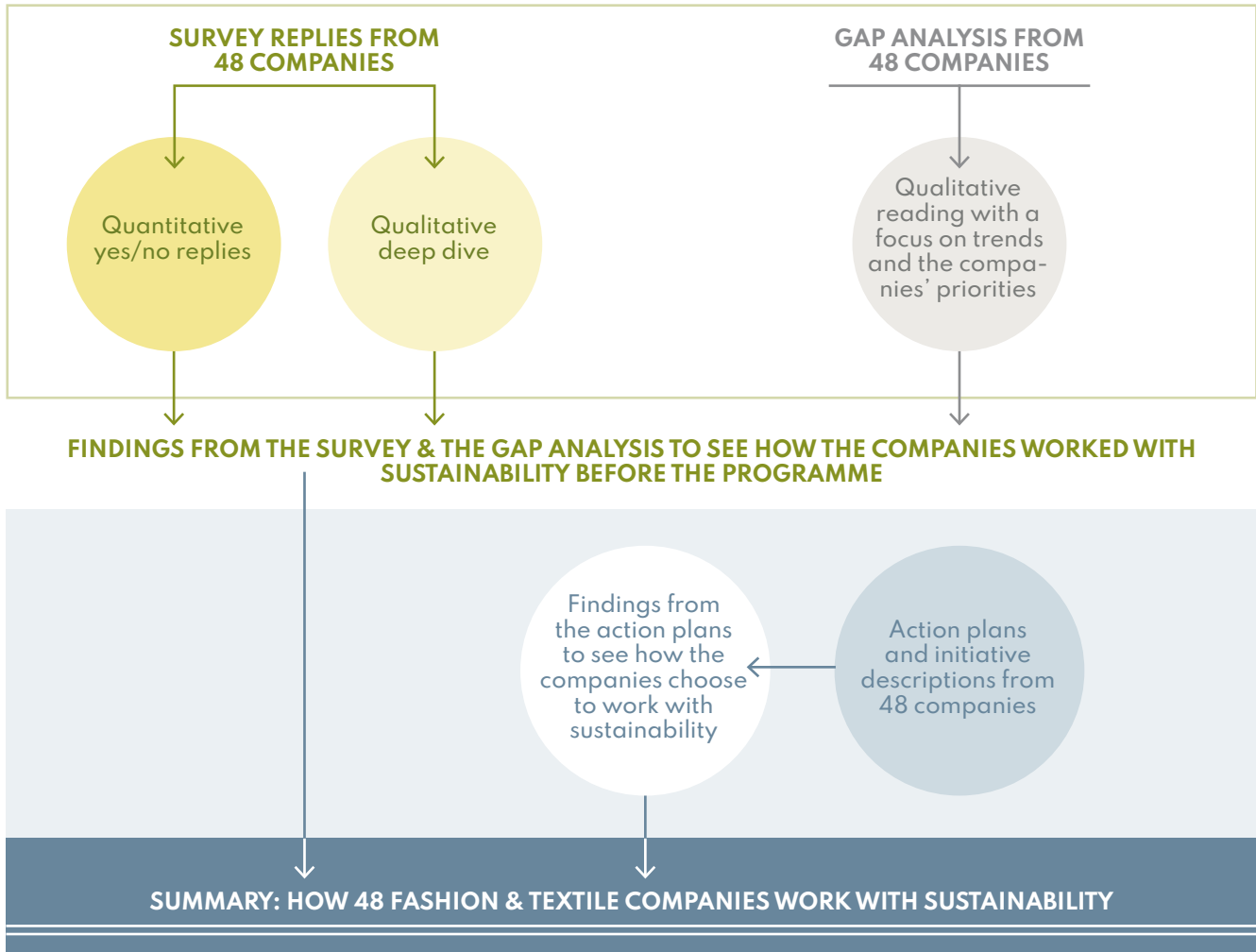
The analysis is based on data provided by the 48 companies through their participation in the programme. As the first step in the programme the companies filled out a survey developed for the Copenhagen Fashion Week 2023 Sustainability Requirements (hereinafter “the survey”). Most had considerable help from sustainability & CSR (corporate social responsibility) consultants in filling it out. Afterwards they submitted a gap analysis outlining their current engagement with sustainability across the value chain and the areas in which they do not engage – based on their survey results, but in their own words. These provide the first two data points for analysis in this report.

The data collected for this report consists of the results of the surveys, the gap analysis and the action plans of the 48 participating companies. These companies are very different, and

although they are not a statistically representative sample of the industry, their diversity is notable within their size category. They operate in the fields of apparel, footwear, underwear, workwear, sportswear, soft furnishings, home textiles, merchandise, high fashion and ready-to-wear. In size they range from two-person companies to firms with nearly 200 employees. In consequence, their data provides an interesting insight into a diverse group of small and medium sized textile companies.

The analysis is not built on an explicit definition of “sustainability”. Rather, it is driven by empirical data with the requirements of Copenhagen Fashion Week acting as a frame of reference but leaving scope for interpretation by the participating companies and their CSR consultants.

See overview next page.



anonymity and limitations

To maintain the companies' anonymity and ensure fair handling of the results, access to data has been restricted and divided between the three contributors. Copenhagen Fashion Week has handled and produced the initial analysis of the raw data from the survey.

Lifestyle & Design Cluster has processed the results of the gap analysis and action plans. In Futurum has consulted on the analysis but has only had access to the results of the analysis, not the individual companies' replies.

In order to provide context on how the companies have filled in the surveys and worked with the questions and gap analysis, In Futurum has interviewed selected consultants.

The data sources have provided informative insights into how small and medium sized fashion and textile companies understand sustainability and how they put it into practice. The initial analyses are presented below, but a clear description of the limitations of the quantitative analysis is needed.

The data is all derived from a self-assessment process, and while a deeper engagement with the answers is desirable, that is beyond the scope of the programme and of this report.

Based on interviews with the consultants, it is clear that the process of completing the survey has been approached differently by the different companies. Some have done the work themselves, while others have relied heavily on the consultants. It is also evident that the companies' level of knowledge and their understanding of sustainability in general and the survey questions in particular have influenced the results. The responses to both the

BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH THE CONSULTANTS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PROCESS OF COMPLETING THE SURVEY HAS BEEN APPROACHED DIFFERENTLY BY THE DIFFERENT COMPANIES.

survey and the gap analysis vary greatly in depth, and it is important to note that shallow answers do not necessarily imply a shallow or limited understanding of a topic, or a lack of action.

This means that the results merely indicate how the companies understand the different areas of sustainable development and how they believe they address these individual areas. They also provide an indication of what the companies believe is most important. Most of the relevant knowledge comes from the descriptions and the documentation the companies are asked to provide.

The overview of how many companies have answered yes or no to the individual survey questions must therefore be read with these limitations in mind.

It should also be noted that several of the companies that have participated in the pro-

gramme can be considered “front runners” with regard to sustainability in the industry. The term is not an exact description but it refers to their focus on sustainability and their public image. As front runners, their knowledge level and engagement are expected to be higher. The results can therefore not be generalised across the industry.

THIS ANALYSIS CAN SHOW HOW THESE 48 SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED COMPANIES WORK WITH SUSTAINABILITY, BUT NOT HOW SUSTAINABLE THEY ARE CURRENTLY.



SUMMARY

HOW 48 TEXTILE COMPANIES WORK WITH SUSTAINABILITY

IN THIS PART, WE ATTEMPT TO SUMMARISE THE FINDINGS RELATING TO SIX MAIN TOPICS. **THESE ARE THE TOPICS** THAT OCCUR MOST FREQUENTLY IN THE DATA. **THESE SIX TOPICS** PROVIDES A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUES THAT THE COMPANIES REGARD AS MOST CURRENT AND IMPORTANT AND SHOW HOW THEY WORK WITH DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY.

sustainability strategy – what is the plan?

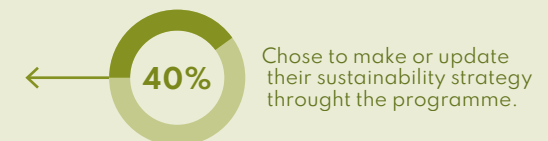
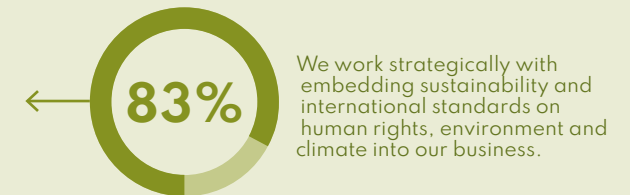
Fremtidens Tekstilkrav was a programme with a strong focus on drawing up a gap analysis and identifying future plans, so it is no surprise that **sustainability strategy is an important topic for many companies**. At first glance, most companies seem to be working strategically with sustainability. This is evident from the survey replies: 83% (40 companies) answer yes to “We work strategically with embedding sustainability and international standards on human rights, environment and climate into our business.”

However, **there is a difference between working strategically and having a strategy**. Only 38% of the companies say yes to “We have a long-term (5 to 10-year) sustainability strategy in place that guides our business practices.”

“When analysing the qualitative answers in this section, it becomes evident that companies’ primary focus lies on codes of conduct and certifications to integrate sustainability on a strategic level,” says Copenhagen Fashion Week, who looked at the qualitative replies from the survey.

40% of the companies chose to make or update their sustainability strategy as part of the programme. For many companies, this was the main initiative they worked with and it helped them set a clearer direction for the company. However, many companies also stated that they have difficulty setting quantitative goals as part of their strategy, because they lack a baseline for their current impact.

For a lot of companies, communicating internally about their strategy and involving the entire company was an embedded part of making or updating the strategy. This seems necessary, as only 48% of the companies answered yes to: “Our in-store and online customer service staff are informed about our sustainability strategy.”



communication – the desire to say more

Half of the companies chose to draw up a communication plan as part of the project, making it the most frequently chosen initiative and a number one priority for many. Some companies needed an overall strategic plan, while others needed a more operational approach with an emphasis on product texts and webpage messages.

At the outset, 50% of companies answered yes to “We educate and inform our customers about sustainable practices on multiple platforms, e.g. online and in-store”. However, **it was also clear that some companies had not yet started communicating** and almost all wanted to do more.

19% of companies express fear of greenwashing. This is seen as a risk in communication and is linked to not being able to get the correct documentation from suppliers, and to incomplete knowledge of the marketing laws.

The desire for more or better communication was also evident in other topics: the motivation behind getting certified or having LCA data was often to communicate more clearly – and safely.

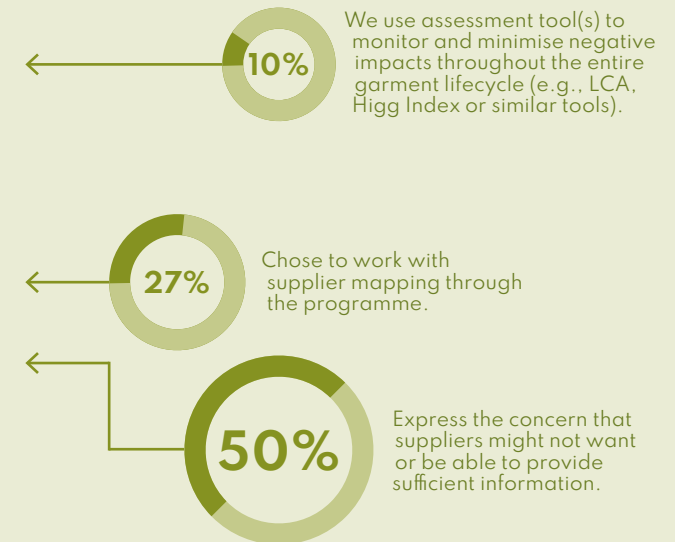


data – measuring, identifying the baseline, and setting goals

A topic that was much in evidence in both the gap analysis and the action plans was **the desire to have more data, to measure impact and to establish baselines** for the companies. It was already clear from the survey that this was not yet happening in many companies: only 10% answered yes to “We use assessment tool(s) to monitor and minimise negative impacts throughout the entire garment lifecycle (e.g. LCA, Higg Index or similar tools)”.

A first step towards measuring impact is obtaining the right data and information. This is usually achieved through supplier mapping, with 27% of the companies explicitly choosing to work with this during the programme. Supplier mapping was also a component of other chosen initiatives, so the true number may be even higher. But can companies get the right information? 50% of companies express the concern that suppliers might not want or be able to provide sufficient information.

Not many chose to work specifically with CO²e calculations or produce a life cycle assessment (LCA), but almost all expressed a desire for more data. Some want data to back up their green claims when communicating; others want it as a baseline for setting future targets.



basic compliance and documentation

Many companies feel that they comply with standards on human rights and working conditions, but through the programme it became clear that **they could not document this** or show real improvements in these areas.

“While more than 60% of the companies do claim to require full compliance regarding minimum wages and collectively bargained wages from the suppliers, only a few of the companies monitor real wage growth in their supplier factories, highlighting the complexity of this topic,” reflected Copenhagen Fashion Week when looking at the survey answers.

75% of the companies said in the survey that they exercised due diligence, but 27% still chose to work with due diligence as an initiative and 22% chose to update their code of conduct.

But asking for more compliance and setting new requirements for suppliers is not always a smooth process. 25% of the companies fear that their current suppliers might not be able to meet new requirements or be open to sharing more information.

The gap analysis identified a pattern: many brands producing in Europe reckoned that they were covered in terms of compliance, but they will still need to be able to document everything from working conditions to REACH compliance in the future.



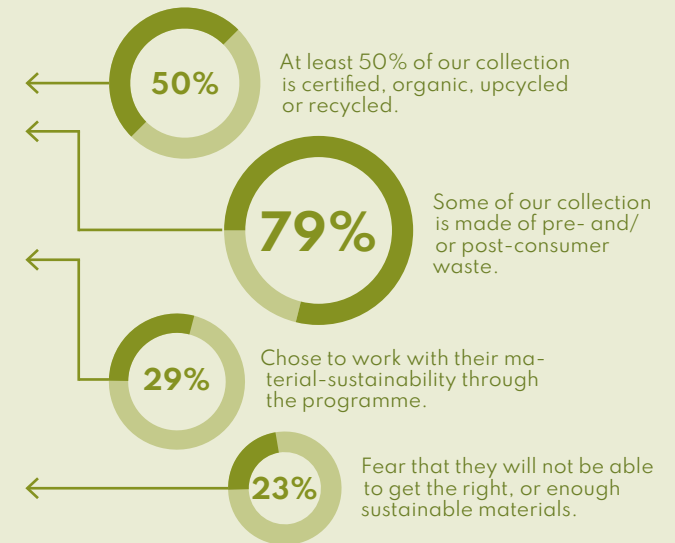
materials and certifications

It is evident from the survey and gap analysis that **many companies are already transitioning to new and more environmentally friendly materials.** 50% say that “At least 50% of our collection is certified, organic, upcycled or recycled”, and 79% say that some of their collection is made of pre- and/or post-consumer waste.

Nevertheless, 29% chose an initiative involving materials and 29% are looking into updating their certifications, with product and/or material certifications being the main focus of interest. This indicates that **companies are very interested in using certifications to document their material sustainability.**

23% state that material availability is a major concern, either in terms of getting enough of the desired materials (organic or recycled) or of getting materials of a good enough quality.

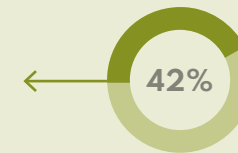
Certifications and materials are also one of the areas that many companies are asking their suppliers about in order to find out which materials and certifications they might be able to offer.



circularity is not top of mind

“**Less than half of the companies are considering circularity in their design process**, which does represent a major opportunity to close the production loop and minimise waste.” Copenhagen Fashion Week noted this when looking through the survey results and the gap analysis and action plans confirm it.

Circularity is not at the forefront of people’s minds in most of the companies and it was not a popular initiative to work with in the programme. Moreover, **companies seem to differ in their understanding of circularity**, with some mentioning it in connection with recycled materials and others linking it to longevity in design. But very few express an in-depth understanding of the scope of circular transition.



Some of our collection is designed for circularity (refurbishment, ease of cyclability, modular/changeable components, multiple purposes/versatility, biodegradability/compostability)



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

THE FINDINGS FROM THE GAP ANALYSIS AND SURVEY DESCRIBE THE COMPANIES' STARTING POINTS, AND THE FINDINGS FROM THE ACTION PLANS DESCRIBE THEIR **FUTURE FOCUS**. TOGETHER THESE TWO PARTS SHOW HOW THE COMPANIES HAVE AND WILL WORK WITH **SUSTAINABILITY**.

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY AND GAP ANALYSIS

At the start of the programme, all the companies completed the CFW survey, either alone or with their consultant. They then used the answers to draw up a gap analysis, taking stock of the areas in which they were already making progress and those in which they were not taking action or lacked documentation.

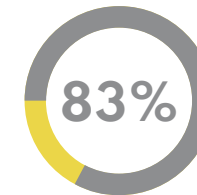
It is important to note that the goal was never for one company to answer yes to all the questions; instead, the questions provided a framework for self-assessment of one's company and generation of a 360-degree overview. Both the survey and the gap analysis were divided into six focus areas, so it seems relevant to review the findings for each area. In the survey, the companies answered predefined questions. In the gap analysis they used their own words to describe their sustainability work.

Expanded findings of the survey and gap analysis are available in the appendix.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

When it comes to strategy, the survey shows that 83% of the companies work strategically with sustainability, although only 38% have a long-term sustainability strategy. The gap analysis supports this and shows that almost all the companies have sustainability initiatives. Although one-third have a strategy, only 27% say that circularity is embedded in their strategy. When the companies use their own words, circularity does not seem top of mind for many cases.

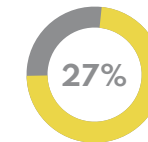
According to the survey, 85% of the companies do not destroy unsold clothes. However, it appears from gap analyses that many companies consider that being an order-producing company is the same as actively working to reduce overstock. This is a limited view as it does not consider overstock at retailer level.



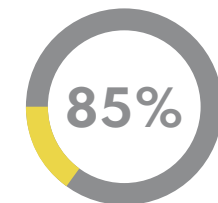
We work strategically with embedding sustainability and international standards on human rights, environment and climate into our business.



We have a long-term (5 to 10-year) sustainability strategy in place that guides our business practices.



Circularity is embedded in our strategy through adopting a full life cycle perspective of our products (for example, explicit mention of circular material flows for collections).



We do not destroy unsold clothes.

The area in which fewest companies are working is that of science-based targets. Only 6% have science-based targets in place. In general it appears from the gap analysis that very few have actual goals for their sustainability work, perhaps because they do not know their baseline.

DESIGN

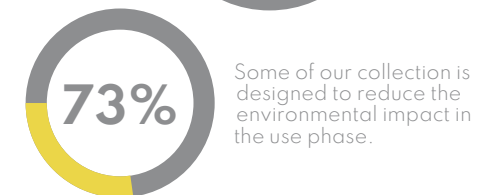
90% of the companies say that they design to increase the quality and value and 73% say that some of their collection is designed to reduce the environmental impact in the use phase. It is also evident from the gap analysis that designing good-quality, long-lasting products is a focus for most; apart from this, they have little to say about how the design process helps to reduce the environmental impact.

Copenhagen Fashion Week also reflects that “less than half of the companies are considering circularity in their design process, which does represent a major opportunity to close the production loop and minimise waste.”

SMART MATERIAL CHOICES

It seems that almost all companies are changing their material mix in some way. 79% say that some of their collection is made of pre- and/or post-consumer waste, and 50% say that more than 50% of their materials are certified, organic, upcycled or recycled. For most of the questions in this part of the survey, more than 50% of the respondents answered yes.

It was also evident from the gap analysis that materials were an established focus for the companies. Some of the most frequently used phrases in the gap analysis were “preferred materials list” and “restricted substance list”. This indicates that even companies without these documents are aware of their



importance. However, 56% have a preferred materials list, making it a widely adopted tool.

Nevertheless, one of the areas in which most companies want to do more also falls into this category. In the survey, only 10% said that "We use assessment tools to monitor and minimise negative impacts throughout the entire garment lifecycle". Quite a few companies mention that they want or need some sort of LCA, CO2e emissions inventory or impact assessment. However, it is not clear whether they have a sufficient understanding of what exactly they want or need or what the different terms means.

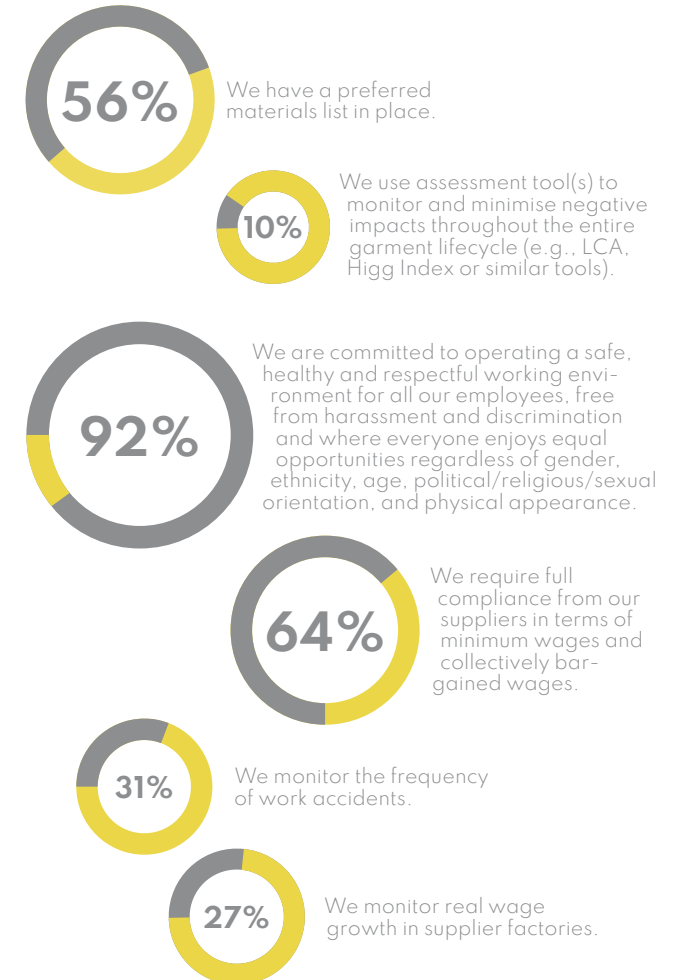
WORKING CONDITIONST

The question to which the largest number of companies said yes relates to working conditions. 92% claim to be "committed to operating a safe, healthy and respectful working environment for all our employees." However, the qualitative survey indicates that activity in

this area varies widely, from shallow to sufficiently documented.

When it comes to compliance, 64% say they require full compliance from their suppliers in terms of minimum wages and collectively bargained wages. But here it is also evident that required compliance does not always equal documented compliance, and few companies monitor work accidents (31%) and real wage growth (27%).

Another frequently used term in the gap analyses was "code of conduct". This shows that most companies understand the importance of a good code of conduct and many have worked with this tool for years. However, some are just starting out and others express an interest in having theirs updated through this programme.



Quite a few of the companies in the programme produce in Europe and therefore trust that their suppliers comply with EU law on working conditions and chemicals. While not all companies that produce in Europe adopt a relaxed approach to due diligence, a trend in this direction is evident in the gap analyses.

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Many companies state that communication on their sustainability initiatives is inadequate. The survey shows that half (50%) educate and inform their customers about sustainable practices on multiple platforms, **but only 38%** say that in-store and online customer service staff are informed about their sustainability strategy. However, from the gap analysis it seems clear that both external and internal communication is a need and a desire for many companies.

Another aspect of consumer engagement is customer feedback. Here it seems that most companies are already listening. 79% process customer feedback and loop data into the design and development process, although they may not do this consistently or via a defined process. When looking at the documentation, Copenhagen Fashion Week found that few had an analytical process for this.

SHOW/PRESENTATION

Only four of the 48 companies host fashion shows, which means that the presentation part of the survey was most relevant for the participating companies. 44 companies chose to fill out this part.

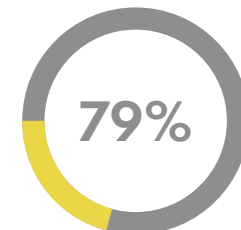
72% say that they promote the value of existing collections. Copenhagen Fashion Week looked at the explanations behind this question and reflected: "It seems that most brands have acknowledged the importance of not reducing all past styles when new collections come



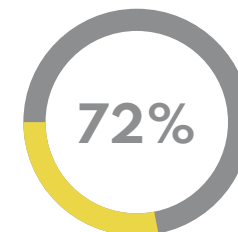
We educate and inform our customers about sustainable practices on multiple platforms, e.g. online and in-store.



Ret til 48%: Our in-store and online customer service staff are informed about our sustainability strategy.



We process customer feedback and loop data into our design and development process.



We promote the value of existing collections. You can promote the value of existing and past collections by, e.g., not reducing all past styles when new collections are out or by carrying over styles to forthcoming seasons etc.

out. Most companies either do not operate with 'seasons' or they have carry-over programmes in place to ensure the collection does not have to go on sale. However, an element that stands out is that only two companies back their answers up with data."

Few companies think about food and make-up in their presentation activities - 30% offer organic food and 23% use organic or natural make-up supplies.

It was evident from the gap analysis that most companies did not regard this area as relevant to their business; the replies/results should be seen in this light.



FINDINGS FROM THE ACTION PLANS

After using the survey and gap analysis to obtain an overview, the companies worked on an action plan and chose several initiatives to tackle during the programme. Almost all the companies had many areas that they could work on and wanted to address, i.e., many relevant gaps. However, they were instructed to choose 1-3 initiatives to work on through the programme. These were prioritised on the basis of importance and the potential for completing the work within the scope of the programme.

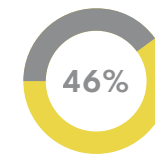
Through the chosen initiatives and the risks and limitations associated with them, we can gauge what the companies find most important in their sustainability work and what they perceive as the biggest obstacles.

MAIN INITIATIVES CHOSEN BY THE COMPANIES THROUGH THE PROGRAMME

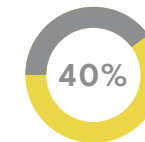
There are as many different initiatives as there are companies, but they can be grouped into 16 themes or different types of initiative.

The most popular types of initiative were:

- Producing a communication plan, which 46% of the companies chose to do. Some companies need an overall strategic plan, while others need a more operational approach with a focus on product texts and webpage messages.
- Developing a sustainability strategy, something 40% of the companies worked with. Some chose to include sustainability in their existing company strategy, while the majority chose a separate strategy for their sustainability work. The timeframe for their strategies varies between two and 15 years.



Made a communication plan through the programme.



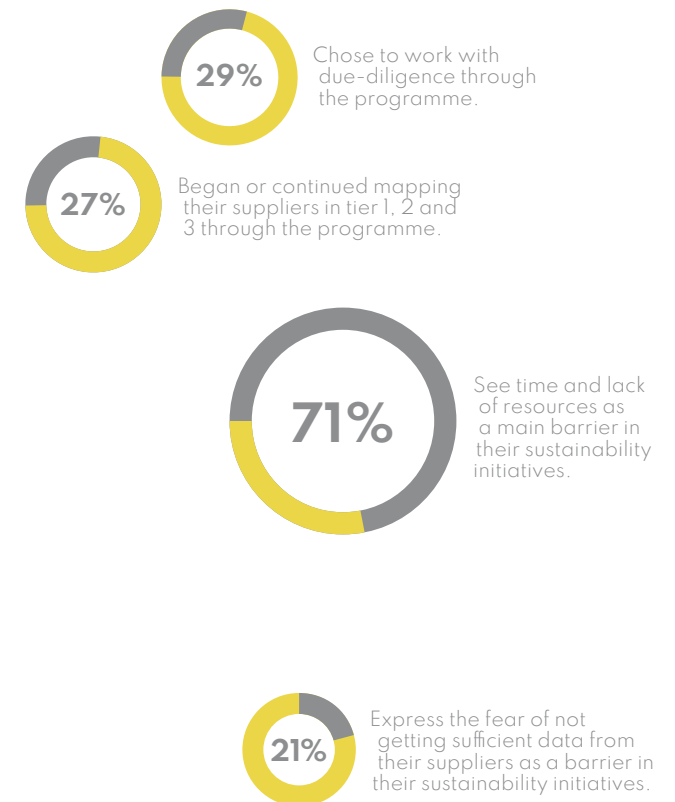
Made a sustainability strategy through the programme.

- Working with due diligence and a code of conduct is something 29% chose to do. Establishing or improving a due diligence process is different for each company, but for all it involves a series of actions, including establishing a routine and working more systematically with suppliers.
- Starting to map their suppliers. 27% of companies chose to start mapping their Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers and sometimes even those in Tier 3. This mapping explores the conditions stipulated by each supplier, their access to materials, and their certifications and auditing strategies.
- Planning their documentation. 21% of companies chose to work with this. Many are still unsure how to document their existing efforts or lack any documentation at all.

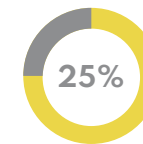
MAIN BARRIER TO THE SUCCESS OF THESE INITIATIVES

In the action plans for their initiatives, the companies were asked to reflect on potential risks to their initiative or limitations on its success. The main obstacles were:

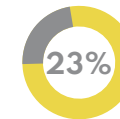
- Time & internal resources, with 71% of companies citing time as the biggest risk. Some companies refer to their generally busy working environment, while others do not have the option of having a dedicated person working on sustainability.
- Fear of not getting the right data from suppliers. Half of the companies seem uncertain about whether they can obtain the right data and documentation from their suppliers. Some seem unclear about whether suppliers have the required data, while others fear that suppliers might not want to share it.



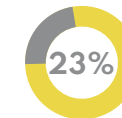
- Strict requirements for suppliers. 25% of the companies express the concern that their current suppliers might not be able to meet these new requirements. As part of their journey towards greater sustainability, some companies realise that they will have to set stricter requirements for their suppliers. This can also be part of a certification process.
- Budget and finance, which 23% of the companies note as a possible risk or obstacle. The problem may be the increased cost of materials, the cost of certification or the added cost of more time-consuming processes.
- Availability of materials and lack of access to sustainable materials is a concern for 23% of the companies. They fear that they cannot get enough of some materials, especially organic cotton and recycled materials.
- Fear of greenwashing. 19% of the companies explicitly state this as a risk in their communication efforts. This risk is linked to not being able to get the correct documentation from suppliers, but also reflects incomplete knowledge of marketing law.



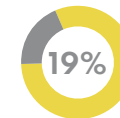
Express the fear of suppliers not being able to meet new requirements, as a barrier in their sustainability initiatives.



Mention budget as a barrier in their sustainability initiatives.



See material availability as a barrier in their sustainability initiatives.

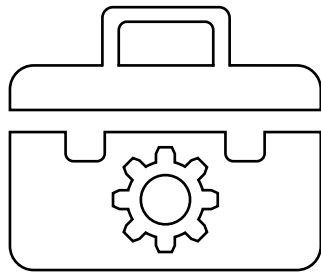


Express fear of greenwashing in their communication efforts related to sustainability.



RECOM MENDATIONS BASED ON THE RESULTS

RECOMMEN- DATIONS BASED ON THE RESULTS



Impact benchmarking tools specifically designed for SMEs

Through the programme, we found that many companies lack both a baseline for their own impact and an industry baseline. Without such baselines it is hard to set future goals. However, if each company develops its own baseline without a common tool, the results can be almost impossible to compare. We therefore recommend the adoption of a baseline tool accessible for SMEs in the fashion and textile industry.

We acknowledge that building or deciding on a common tool can be a long process, and in the meantime an overview of existing frameworks and tools for measuring impact and establishing a baseline would be the next-best thing. LDC recommends that such an overview be developed and distributed widely.

A common understanding of what sustainability documentation looks like

The future will demand more documentation. So much is clear. But what does sufficient documentation look like? In this programme, the chosen self-assessment survey had some obvious limitations in not making it clear how to sufficiently document each question. Again, if each company is left to figure out how to document its efforts, it will be hard to compare the results; a common framework for documentation is therefore needed. LDC recommends that such a common understanding is sought.

An insight into consumer's expectation of certifications

From this programme it is evident that many companies work with certifications, while even more plan to do so in the future. But many are still struggling to choose the right ones. What seems to be lacking is an understanding of which certifications are most widely known



and preferred by consumers. Insights into this could help companies choose and enable them to make best use of their limited resources. LDC recommends that such research is conducted.

A set of commonly agreed guidelines for sustainability communication

With communication being the most frequently chosen initiative and hence the main challenge within the programme, there is a clear interest in guidance. However, every communications expert will know that there are currently very few industry-wide standards for good and credible sustainability communication. This highlights the need for common guidelines and good examples, developed in collaboration between sustainability experts, leading sales platforms, business organisations, fairs, and legislators.

New guidelines on green marketing have just been published by the *forbrugerombudsmand*. However, they show little understanding of the complexity of the industry, and a common understanding of these guidelines is needed.

Publicly available best-case examples of sustainability strategies

The CFW framework is not the only one that requires fashion companies to have a sustainability strategy in place. In fact, we expect this to be a common demand very soon. However, it is clear from the programme that many companies have limited experience of developing a sustainability strategy. LDC recommends a common platform with best-practice examples of sustainability strategies including baseline description, time frame, areas of goalsetting, action plans, follow-up, etc.



Companies must invest time and resources in building their competences

It is clear from the data that the many of the new requirements will demand new skills and competences from the companies. LDC recommends investing time and resources in building the right competences in-house and embracing the many interesting competence programmes available. CSR, sustainability & circularity can no longer be expected to just be one person's job, so all roles within the company need these competences.

However, we recommend more targeted competence programmes dedicated to strategy development, data management and impact goal-setting for the lifestyle industry.

Accelerating circularity

There is a cross-sector need to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. However, to do this most effectively, a common understanding of what that means for the fashion and textile industry is also needed. There is a risk that circularity is too often linked only to fibre recycling, making the transition seem out of reach for many. But the circular economy is also based on keeping products in use for longer, and many companies could start designing with circular use in mind and explore circular business models.

LDC recommends that the Danish fashion and textile industry at large agree on principles for circular design, production and business models and start setting common goals.

This is in no way an exhaustive list of recommendations, but these suggestions are the most pressing ones.



AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE ON THE FINDINGS FROM IN FUTURUM

ON THE FINDINGS FROM IN FUTURUM

BY FREDERIK LARSEN,
PhD, Co-founder

THE PROGRAMME and the data provided by the participating companies have offered valuable new insight into the work that Danish fashion companies are doing on sustainability and how they have engaged with the CFW framework.

The development of the framework is outlined in the appendix, but in this section In Futurum, as the knowledge partners behind the framework, offers some analytical perspectives on the findings.

The perspectives address the individual company level, the use of frameworks for sustainable development and the potential for the Danish fashion industry.



WORKING WITH A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK: SOME POTENTIALS AND CONCERNS

The survey responses and the gap analyses have given us an insight into the 48 companies' way of working. This is valuable data on what the companies perceive as important, what initiatives they already engage with and how they assess their own efforts. The results also indicate what the companies need in order to develop a more sustainable fashion industry.

In completing the survey, there is a risk that companies are motivated to answer yes to questions in an effort to show their commitment to or interest in a specific topic, and not necessarily because they are already working in that particular area. One example of this is the question about whether the company's business model challenges resource consumption through decoupling or degrowth. The implications of a degrowth business model in fashion are significant and they chal-

FOR MANY FASHION COMPANIES, MEASURING THEIR PERFORMANCE IS AN ESSENTIAL STEP IN THEIR SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY, BUT ACROSS THE INDUSTRY THE LACK OF RELIABLE TOOLS IS A BARRIER.

lenge most conventional ideas of how fashion companies work. It is therefore surprising that 43.8% of the companies have answered yes. (This concern is expanded on in appendix 7.)

THE RISK OF DATA-DRIVEN APPROACHES AND THE USE OF TOOLS

The interest in using data and working with assessments across the product life cycle represents a wider trend. For many fashion companies, measuring their performance is an essential step in their sustainability strategy, but across the industry the lack of reliable tools is a barrier. The pressure to include more data on

sustainability performance may lead to companies investing in misleading and inaccurate tools. The interest in life cycle assessments (LCAs) is an example of this: the promise of a tool that provides reliable measurements of a product's environmental impact is alluring, but the reality is that few LCAs are able to provide relevant and comparable information.

The gap analyses show that certifications are important to many of the companies, and that companies either work with certifications and standards or are interested in them. Certifications are a hugely important tool for creating transparency in the supply chain, enforcing environmental standards and building trust with partners and customers. Certifications, however, do not in themselves ensure that the product fulfils its sustainability potential; this is due partly to the scope of the various certifications and partly to the impact of the use and disposal phases of the product's lifecycle.

COMPANIES CAN GREATLY IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF THEIR PRODUCTS BY BASING DESIGN, MATERIAL AND SOURCING CHOICES ON AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONSUMER EXPERIENCES WITH THE PRODUCT AND BY ANALYSING THE PRODUCT'S DURABILITY IN USE.

It is therefore highly important for companies to support their focus on certifications with a strategy for changing the handling, marketing, use and disposal of their products.

The risk of focusing efforts on assessment tools and certifications is that the underlying problems such as shortened product life, inflated production and consumption quantities, resource waste and price pressures, to name but a few, are overlooked.

STRENGTHENING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

There is scope for considerable expansion of circularity as few companies address the full life cycle of their products. This is evident both in the companies' direct answers to circularity questions and in their seemingly limited understanding of the scope of the design and consumer engagement questions.

A new awareness and language is needed for the circular potential to be reached and for brands to understand that its importance is similar to that of CSR and materials. Focusing on consumer relationships is one way of engaging with a product beyond the point of sale. Companies can greatly improve the environmental performance of their products by basing design, material and sourcing choices on an understanding of consumer experiences with the product and by analysing the product's durability in use.

While many companies say that they work with longevity, and quite a few state that they use mono-materials, it is still clear that there is no real understanding of the principles of design for circularity. And when looking at the overall landscape, it might be because it is also not a clear concept for the sourcing landscape. While the companies apparently have a better understanding of what a due diligence process might involve (although they still struggle with this), they show little understanding of design for circularity. This is also evident in the lack of vocabulary around this area. The above example on decoupling is also useful here also: 43.8% of the respondents answered yes to this question, but only 27.1% report that they do this through embedding circularity in their strategy. While the numbers do not provide conclusive answers, they indicate some confusion around the concept of the circular economy.

Looking at the landscape surrounding the businesses may yield clues as to why circularity is not well established. There are not many public resources in Danish to help the companies. And in the context of international demands from e-commerce shops, circularity is not at the forefront. However, the circular economy provides a highly useful framework for fashion companies seeking to change the current fast and linear value chain.

POLICIES ON DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Although some companies address social issues in their supply chains, the knowledge of and engagement with diversity and inclusion across the value chain is lacking. This is not an issue limited to the fashion and textile industry, but as companies that rely on global supply chains and that market products as lifestyle and identity indicators, having clearly defined policies is crucial.

The survey answers indicate that most of the companies regard anti-discrimination as a priority, but the results and in particular the descriptions provided suggest that companies believe their daily actions and values are proof enough of their efforts. In a future that demands more documentation, these daily actions need to be written down – and implemented in all aspects of the company. It might be understandable for small companies to operate on the basis of verbal communication of values, but larger companies need to address these issues more formally.

Diversity and inclusion seem to be a blind spot for many Danish fashion companies and for industry organisations as well. This may be due partly to the reluctance to acknowledge the structural problems in the industry and to assume responsibility for something that is larger than the individual company. Stating that a company is, for example, committed to a non-discriminatory work culture or to mar-

keting diversity in campaigns is not enough to ensure an inclusive industry. Another barrier may be the fear of addressing what many believe to be a complex issue and running the risk of public exposure.

THE NEED FOR NEW COMPETENCES

Developing a sustainability strategy requires different skills and a more analytical method than what many companies may be used to. The support for this can come in many forms and should come from all actors connected with the industry. However, it could also be accelerated via a clear, ambitious public strategy for a greener, more just and circular fashion industry nationally and internationally. For the companies to meet the demands of the future, new competences are needed. This report hints at a few. The competences can be brought in either through consultants or through hiring. Companies, trade organisations and educational institutions all need to be aware of these new competences.

- **DATA & MATERIAL SPECIALIST:** The future demands data, and it seems that the companies understand this demand. But data literacy in the business is low and the available tools complicated. However, other industries have faced and risen to the challenge of gathering better data, so this industry can as well, with the right competences supported in the industry.
- **CIRCULAR DESIGN KNOWLEDGE:** To fulfil the potential of the circular economy, the industry needs new design knowledge. We are already seeing a shift towards increased attention to this area in education and training, so perhaps a new generation of designers will bring this new view into the industry. However, we cannot wait for this, and so further training of current designers could accelerate the transition.
- **POLICY-WRITING:** The analysis shows that many companies lack documentation of practices they already implement. With the demand for documentation steadily increasing, policy-writing is a skill that some larger companies should consider having in-house. It is evident that the industry relies heavily on experience and practice rather than instructions and processes.
- **ANALYTICAL VIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICE:** Data and feedback could be readily available in this digital age, but merely collecting data does not help if companies do not know how to analyse it. The report indicates that there could be a significant opportunity for best-practice sharing across the industry.

ANCHORING SUSTAINABILITY
IN COMPANY STRATEGIES IS AN
IMPORTANT NEXT STEP, AND **THIS CAN**
BE SUPPORTED BY A VARIETY OF ACTORS
IN AND AROUND THE INDUSTRY.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

The findings in this report show that the industry is engaging with sustainability and that there is huge potential for further development. Anchoring sustainability in company strategies is an important next step, and this can be supported by a variety of actors in and around the industry. Another hugely important step will be to promote a common approach and language. Bearing in mind the limitations outlined in this report, it is clear that the CFW framework offers such an approach. When creating the framework, the ambition was to establish a common direction by setting requirements and offering a tool for exploration

and knowledge building. The work already done by CFW through promotion and educational seminars initiated this effort, and the FTK programme has supported it by engaging 48 companies in the framework, many of which are not part of the CFW show calendar, and by providing webinars and workshops explaining and expanding the six focus areas. Other industry organisations are currently continuing this work and international actors are aligning with the framework.

The CFW framework has been praised for presenting a common direction for the industry and is currently being adopted by other organisations. The work in the programme also demonstrates the need for a common vocabulary. Many companies are unsure what certain concepts mean. Here the work that CFW have already done could be built upon and translated for broader use in the Danish industry. However, it is not clear where the responsibility for building, maintaining and

facilitating such a vocabulary lies, although there are potentials in cross-industry partnerships that include public actors.

In the future, Danish fashion and textile companies will face new challenges from new regulations, heightened public and political attention, ongoing global supply chain difficulties and growing customer and consumer demands for transparency and responsibility.

**STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC WORK,
COMMITTING TO A COMMON
VOCABULARY AND BUILDING KNOW-
LEDGE WILL HELP COMPANIES MOVE
TOWARDS THE COMMON GOAL.**

This will require the companies to be equipped with the right knowledge, tools and support to address these challenges. It is clear from the survey and gap analysis and from working

with the companies that there are many areas in which they lack knowledge that is already available. But it is hard to look for what you do not know. As this industry has not had close links to academic communities in the past, there is a need for new academic knowledge to reach the companies.

As part of a reactive cultural industry, fashion and textile companies are used to change and to adopting new ideas. This adaptability can be used to help companies to meet new challenges and push sustainable development in the industry. But the direction will have to be clearly defined if the companies are to move towards a more just and responsible industry. Strengthening strategic work, committing to a common vocabulary and building knowledge will help companies move towards the common goal.



APPENDIX

1. BACKGROUND - WHY THE PROGRAMME WAS INITIATED

In August 2020, the government set up a forum for the restarting of Danish exports and established eight restart teams. (This was on account of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which many thought was almost over by then.) One of the teams dealt with fashion and textiles, and it came up with three recommendations. The taskforce and the “Future Textile Requirements” programme are the result of one of these recommendations.

In the report for the forum for restarting Danish exports, emphasis is placed on restart funds being linked to a green restart; funds are therefore earmarked to stimulate the economy for green purposes, but with the overall purpose of improving Danish exports and competitiveness within small and medium sized companies.

By the end of 2020, Lifestyle & Design Cluster was appointed as the secretariat for both the taskforce and the programme. The “Future Textile Requirements” programme was developed during the spring of 2021 and discussed with the taskforce throughout. In this period a partnership with Copenhagen Fashion Week and In Futurum was also established.

The programme was to be modelled on the “Green Circular Transition” programme in which Lifestyle & Design Cluster is an operating partner. “Green Circular Transition” helps companies transition to a circular business model, and many good tools and procedures were already in place for this.

2. THE “FREMTIDENS TEKSTILKRAV” PROGRAMME

Based on the recommendations from the restart team, the intention was to create a programme that would ensure the holistic development of sustainability skills in the industry. This would improve the industry’s position in relation to an upcoming green transition and also improve its export opportunities.

Building on Lifestyle & Design Cluster’s experience from previous programmes, a programme was designed to offer companies an individual development process with an external consultant. It also featured networking and the exchange of experience between the participating companies.

2.1 Programme structure

1. Application: First the companies applied and were selected based on their motivation, potential for development and available resources. The requirements for this programme were:

- Size: small or medium-sized company, at least one year old (up to 250 employees)
- Must have at least started on a sustainable transition
- A strong desire for change, and willingness to engage employees at all levels
- Ready to work intensively with the programme for 250 hours across four months
- In the business of producing fashion, textiles, footwear, accessories or sportswear products.

2. Approval & matching with consultant: Once the applications had been received, Lifestyle & Design Cluster scored all the companies using a process from the “Green Circular Transition” programme. After approval, individual meetings with all the companies were held to prepare



them for the programme and to match them with consultants. Each company would be offered three potential consultants based on their application and needs and would then choose the preferred consultant themselves.

3. Sustainability gap analysis based on CPHFW survey: The first thing the company and the consultants worked on was filling out the CPHFW’s sustainability requirements survey and translating the replies into a gap analysis. In this, they described the company’s progress and potential for development and assessed its current level of documentation.

4. Mid-way workshop: With input from the consultants, Lifestyle & Design Cluster put together workshop groups with the brands that have the same identified “gaps” – i.e., companies that need to work on the same challenges. The mid-way workshops were half-day online seminars.

5. Action plan for filling the gaps: On the basis of the gap analysis, the consultant and the company drew up an action plan for becoming more sustainable on a wide range of parameters from CPHFW’s requirements and other frameworks. This action plan can either constitute the company’s sustainability strategy, if it does not have one, or be a practical complement to it. The action plan must include both how the company intends to make real progress and how it will document this and/or document things it is already doing.

6. Working with a focus area: For the companies to achieve real sustainable improvement, the consultant in collaboration with the company will work on implementing or changing one focus area. This must be an area of focus that makes the company better able to meet the demands that foreign customers will soon make.

7. Final workshop/conference: To round off the programme, a final conference will be arranged. At the time of publication this conference has not yet taken place but has been planned.

3. CHOOSING THE FRAMEWORK

When developing the programme, different approaches to assessing the companies and framing the areas of development were discussed. The taskforce decided to adopt the framework developed for Copenhagen Fashion Week as part of its sustainability strategy of effecting change in the industry through a holistic and flexible system of requirements and points.

This framework was chosen because a holistic framework was needed and it was in line with requirements of international retailers, customers and future legislation. Copenhagen Fashion Week's 2023 Sustainability Requirements was the best fit and was developed in a Danish context, which also helped the choice.

The requirements were analysed on the basis of other publicly available requirements, such as Higgs BRM, and thus chosen. For the purpose of the programme, CFW developed an alternative version of the show requirements for non-show brands.

4. THE CFW REQUIREMENTS FRAMEWORK

BY COPENHAGEN FASHION WEEK

In early 2019, Copenhagen Fashion Week announced that it intended to set requirements for brands showing at Fashion Week in the future. A strategic process was then initiated and the 2023 Sustainability Requirements were presented in early 2020. They are based on state-of-the-art research and thorough reviews and input from independent industry experts, academic researchers, activists and professionals. They were developed in close collaboration with Copenhagen Fashion Weeks's knowledge partner In Futurum. [All the experts and advisors involved are listed online here.](#)

The requirements will come into effect in January 2023. The 2023 Sustainability Requirements therefore represent an essential part of Copenhagen Fashion Week's Sustainability Action Plan, which aims to drive comprehensive change in the fashion industry by targeting brands that wish to showcase as part of CPHFW's official show schedule.

The framework is based on a holistic approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of economic, social, environmental, cultural, ethical and technical aspects of sustainability. It therefore covers the following six focus areas: strategic direction; design; smart material choices; working conditions; consumer engagement; show/presentation (presentation being specific to the Grøn Genstart project).

In adopting the plan, all the focus areas must be considered and included to reflect the holistic approach. In other words, one cannot simply use one focus area of the 2023 Sustainability Requirements and disregard others; they are all connected.

On a technical note, CPHFW and Ramboll translated the framework into a self-assessment survey divided into seven parts and powered by SurveyXact. In the first part, the survey determines whether the respondent meets the minimum standards of the six focus areas of the 2023 Sustainability Requirements. Afterwards, the respondent is guided through all the additional points of the focus areas. The additional scoring system allows companies to determine their individual position in relation to their sustainability efforts, but it will also illustrate the companies' development over time, as companies are expected to fill in the survey season after season. The score is calculated using a weighting system that considers impact, level of ambition and transformation potential.

The respondents can answer the survey themselves or be supported by others. The language of the survey is English.

For the *Fremtidens Tekstilkrav* programme the survey was used as a self-assessment tool. The scoring system was not yet developed at the start of the programme, so the companies were only able to count their own "yes", "no" and "not relevant" replies.

5. COMPANIES AND ADVISORS

Companies

In total, 48 textile companies participated in the programme. While this is not a quantity that has any statistical validity, it is still interesting to look at the results from these 48 – partly because they represent a very diverse range of products, company sizes, sustainability ambitions etc.

The 48 companies are (in alphabetical order)

Brands of Scandinavia	Storm Textil	Our Units	Kjellerup Væveri
by basics	Uno image	Pleasant	Lene Bjerre Design
Contrast Company	YABYUM CLOTHING CO	Our Units	Mammut Hoffmann
DAY ET	Brands4Kids	Pleasant	mp Denmark
Green Comfort	CD Company of Scandinavia	Sebra Interiør	nordic basic wear
hscph	Copenhagen Cartel	Sui Ava	Petit Crabe
LAKOR Soulwear	Dear Denier	Wood Wood	Repbasics
Liewood	GripGrab	Zo24	Sisters Point
MESSAGE	JUST FEMALE	Bruuns Bazaar	Underprotection
Munthe	laøhlé	CHOPAR	VER de TERRE
Nybo Workwear	Liiteguard	Day Birger et Mikkelsen	
Planet Nusa	Minimum	ELSK	
roccamore	Noa Noa	Han Kjøbenhavn	

In the following, all the companies have been anonymised.

The programme includes companies that produce women's ready-to-wear, outerwear, outdoor clothes, childrenswear, sportswear, workwear, shoes, accessories, home textiles and swimwear.

The companies range from those that have just started their sustainable transition to others that have been founded on the basis of sustainable values. There are companies with over 100 years of history behind them and a few that are still considered start-ups.

Consultants

21 CSR and sustainability consultants were chosen for this programme. They participated in a two-day workshop to familiarise them with the survey, the framework and the programme. These 21 consultants would be the closest confidants of the companies, so it was important that they understood the tools.

From these 21, 17 were ultimately chosen by the companies; some worked with only one company, others with up to 14 companies. On average one consultant worked with 2-4 companies.

The consultants' expertise ranges from strategic focus to working conditions, materials, communications and design. All were pre-approved using the criteria for the "Green Circular Transition" programme and chosen for their extensive expertise in working with textile and fashion companies.

The consultants that were chosen by the companies were:

56nb	Green Moves	Sourcing House	Transition ApS
Capung	In Futurum	Sustainacompany	MililestonePro
CIRCULAR MINDED	Rambøll	Tekstilrevolutionen	
Closed loop	Rotundo	Vugge til Vugge ApS	
Compliance House	Secondhand First	Worldperfect	

6. EXPANDED FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN SOLELY BY COPENHAGEN FASHION WEEK.

The 18 minimum standards

To be eligible to apply for a show or presentation at Copenhagen Fashion Week, brands must comply with a set of minimum standards outlined in the first part of the survey. The minimum standards are spread across the six focus areas.

TOTAL RESPONDENTS MEETING ALL MINIMUM STANDARDS: **4**

TOTAL RESPONDENTS NOT MEETING ALL MINIMUM STANDARDS: **44**

AVERAGE MINIMUM STANDARDS MET: 11 OUT OF **18**

This section takes a closer look at the respondents' minimum standards to determine their main strengths and weaknesses. The standards are ranked from top to bottom based on the number of companies that live up to the standard:

Top-down ranking of the minimum standards	Focus area	yes	no	I don't know	% fulfilling the requirement
We are committed to operating a safe, healthy and respectful working environment for all our employees, free from harassment and discrimination and where everyone enjoys equal opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, political/religious/sexual orientation, and physical appearance	Working Conditions	44	4	0	91.7%
We design to increase the quality and value of our products economically and materially, and inform our customers about this	Design	43	44	1	89.6%
We do not destroy unsold clothes	Strategic Direction	41	7	0	85.4%
We work strategically with embedding sustainability and international standards on human rights, environment and climate into our business	Strategic Direction	40	8	0	83.3%
We find a second life for our samples by e.g., reusing or recycling them or have digitized this process	Design	40	8	0	83.3%
We are committed to exercising due diligence in our supply chain according to international guidelines and standards and work with our suppliers to ensure e.g., freely chosen employment, secure employment or no child labour	Working Conditions	36	12	0	75.0%
We do not utilize single-use plastic packaging but offer recyclable, recycled, biodegradable/compostable or repurposable alternatives	Consumer Engagement	36	11	1	75.0%
We do not use single-use plastic hangers, garment bags or other types of single-use plastic clothing protectors and materials backstage		36	11	1	75.0%
All food and beverages are served in recycled or reusable/recyclable packaging, including cutlery, tableware, and straws	Show/Presentation	32	12	4	66.7%
We have a list of restricted substances in place, following the requirements of the EU REACH Directive, and engage with our suppliers to ensure compliance	Smart Material Choices	32	15	1	66.7%
We include diversity and equality in our management approach and actively consider these aspects when hiring staff, especially for management positions	Strategic Direction	30	16	2	62.5%
We have a preferred materials list in place	Smart Material Choices	27	21	0	56.3%
Our set design is zero waste	Show/Presentation	25	18	5	5.1%
At least 50% of our collection is certified, organic, upcycled or recycled	Smart Material Choices	24	23	1	50.0%
We educate and inform our customers about sustainable practices on multiple platforms, e.g. online and in-store	Consumer Engagement	24	23	1	50.0%
Our in-store and online customer service staff are Informed about our sustainability strategy	Consumer Engagement	23	24	1	47.9%
We are a signatory of the Danish Fashion Ethical Charter and consider diversity and inclusivity when casting models	Show/Presentation	18	28	2	37.5%
We offset the carbon footprint of our show. Offsetting the carbon footprint of your show means that you have a climate partner with whom you evaluate the carbon emissions of your show and offset this amount of CO2.	Show/Presentation	0	4	0	0.0%*

* Only four brands answered this questions, as it only applies to "show" brands

The survey of 48 SMEs found that over 90% are committed to operating a safe, healthy and respectful working environment and almost 90% design to increase the quality and value of their products economically and materially. At the same time, a strong emphasis is put on strategic decisions. Most companies are already committed to embedding sustainability and international standards on human rights, the environment and the climate in their business. When analysing the qualitative answers in this section, it becomes evident that the companies' primary focus lies on codes of conduct and certifications to integrate sustainability on a strategic level.

On an individual level, the analysis shows that none of the brands are currently offsetting the carbon footprint of their show or presentation; this therefore represents a low-hanging fruit moving forward.

Deep dive on one question

We will look in a bit more detail at the first minimum standard, which 44 companies claimed to be meeting ("We are committed to operating a safe, healthy, and respectful working environment for all our employees, free from harassment and discrimination and where everyone enjoys equal opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, political/religious/sexual orientation, and physical appearance."):

ACCORDING TO THE SURVEY, BRANDS SEEM TO HAVE TROUBLE WITH THE SCOPE OF THE **TOP-RANKED REQUIREMENT** DEALING WITH THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR EMPLOYEES.

Some brands mention the efforts they are making with their suppliers; some describe their efforts with their employees and others mention both. Overall, the level of commitment varies widely: insufficient answers come from companies that have not formalised their commitments in employee handbooks, policies, codes of conduct etc. Instead, they show goodwill, which is not sufficient especially when it comes to accountability. Below are two examples from the survey where companies do not provide evidence of the information or elaborate on it:

COMPANY A:

“Yes we have a very open and respectful working environment. The company is growing and everybody have good opportunities. The management has an open and modern leadership style. We do not work with scheduled MUS conversations or conduct surveys. A good feed-back culture is more important.”

COMPANY B:

“We are committed to operating a safe, healthy and respectful working environment for all our employees.”

Here are some examples of answers that cover this minimum standard more adequately (anonymised responses from the survey):

COMPANY C:

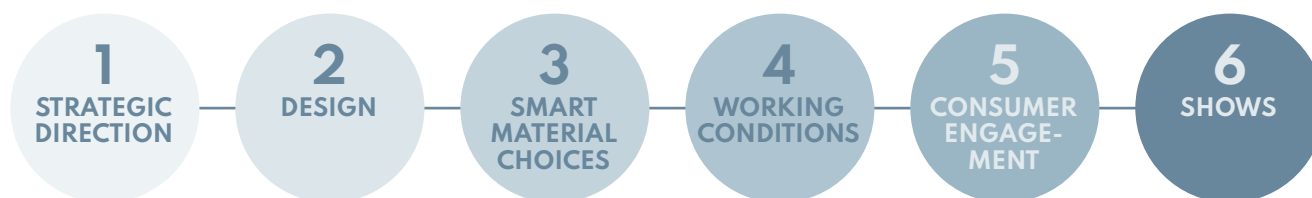
“In our Code of Conduct we explicitly commit ourselves to operating a safe, healthy and respectful working environment for all our employees, free from harassment and discrimination and where everyone enjoys equal opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, and political/religious/sexual orientation. We plan to update the Code to also explicitly include considerations about physical appearance.”

COMPANY D:

“This is an important issue to us, a point in our employee handbook, and something we hold ourselves responsible for at our head office. Our handbook states that any discrimination/harassment based on abovementioned should be reported to management and can have consequences for the employment of the discriminator/harasser.”

The six focus areas

With our knowledge partner, In Futurum, we defined six focus areas, based on a full value-chain perspective, to categorise the sustainability requirements into a manageable system for the admission application. The focus areas are intended to help brands focus their efforts by breaking down certain sustainability-related topics into digestible chunks. The six focus areas are not to be seen as standalone pillars in a brand's strategy but rather as enablers that connect and create mutual synergy to achieve the greatest positive impact due to their alignment.



As fashion and sustainability encompass a multitude of aspects, the six focus areas touch upon economic, environmental, cultural, social and ethical issues. For this reason, the sustainability requirements were developed to permit flexibility and cover the multifaceted approaches that brands use in working with sustainability. In the following, each focus area is described in more detail and contains a list of the requirements ranked from top to bottom based on how many companies are working on that topic/bullet.

Strategic direction

Embedding sustainability in the overall business strategy will help brands set milestones, keep track of their progress and measure impacts. Hence, having a strategy in place will allow companies to understand the interconnectedness of all the aspects that distinguish responsible and caring business practices. The strategic direction is closely linked to e.g. the target audience, markets, product offerings and price points, with no one-size-fits-all solution for sustainable business practices.

Top-down ranking of the additional strategic direction action points	yes	No/ I don't know	% answering yes
We engage in partnerships and with experts to expand our knowledge to accelerate our impacts and find new solutions	42	6	87.5%
Our business model avoids end-of-season overstock	41	7	85.4%
We trace as a minimum our tier-one suppliers and disclose information	38	10	79.2%
We engage in knowledge sharing activities with other brands or stakeholders who share our sustainability ambitions	32	16	66.7%
Our transportation and logistics are optimised to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	24	24	50.0%
Our business model challenges resource consumption through de-coupling or de-growth	21	27	43.8%
The UN Sustainable Development Goals guide our business practices	20	28	41.7%
We have a long-term (5 to 10-year) sustainability strategy in place that guides our business practices	18	30	37.5%
We offer on-demand production to eliminate overstock	18	30	37.5%
Some of our energy comes from renewable resources for local operations (office, shops, warehouse).	18	30	37.5%
We invest some of our revenues in new technologies, research, or accelerator programmes	17	31	35.4%
We offer free repair services to our customers	15	33	31.3%
Circularity is embedded in our strategy through adopting a full life cycle perspective of our products (for example, explicit mention of circular material flows for collections)	13	36	27.1%
We have assessed and optimised our water usage	13	35	27.1%
We promote and invest in land restoration to reverse climate change and protect biodiversity	12	45	25.0%
We offer customers resell, rental or sharing services.	11	37	27.5%
We report on our sustainability goals and progress publicly and transparently	8	40	16.7%
Some of our energy comes from renewable resources for distant operations (stores, production, logistics).	7	41	14.5%
We have online and/or in-store take back scheme(s) in place.	6	42	12.6%
We have science-based targets in place to reverse climate change	3	45	6.3%

Overall, most companies engage in partnerships with experts and knowledge-sharing activities with other brands or stakeholders to further their sustainability efforts and try to avoid overstock as an efficient means of decreasing end-of-season sales. While half of the companies trace Tier 1 suppliers, only a few trace Tier 2 or Tier 3 suppliers. The results show that only very few of the participating companies report publicly on sustainability goals and progress and have science-based targets in place to reverse climate change. Strategic initiatives that target customers as a mean of giving collections a longer life, such as having online and in-store take-back schemes in place, or offering resale, rental and sharing services, is something only a few brands work with.

Deep dive on transportation emissions

Regarding the transportation optimisation requirement (“Our transportation and logistics are optimised to reduce greenhouse gas emissions”), it seems that most brands have acknowledged the heavy carbon footprint of air freight, most of them having shifted to sea or land transportation. Moreover, an element that stands out is the optimisation of full shipments, minimising weight, and relocation of production to Europe to reduce distances.

VERY FEW COMPANIES HAVE DATA TO BACK UP **THE EXACT CARBON FOOTPRINT** OF THEIR TRANSPORTATION.

Below is an example of a more elaborate response.

COMPANY A:

*"We send production by truck from Italy and Portugal, the shipments are optimized so the shipment is done once or max twice a month and the same truck collects the production from the 3 factories in Italy. In Portugal we produce 1 style and we make 1 shipment from here. Our logistic services use GLS mainly and are compensated directly. Our impact is 0,45 kg of CO2 per package. That is ca. 400-500 kg of CO2 per month including all customer order shippings. Energy: Office, El 1,476 kwatt hours/month average 2021, 100% wind energy
2) Shops and warehouses- 100 % wind energy
3) Production: 1 factory in Portugal uses 100% renewable energy, the 2nd factory in Italy 100 % certified renewable energy, the 3rd factory uses 33% renewable energy, the 4th factory in Italy does not use renewable energy but we have made a commitment together with them to convert to 50 % renewable energy within 2023."*

And two examples of less elaborate answers:

COMPANY B:

"We ship by sea if possible."

COMPANY C:

*"We try to collection different orders to avoid more transportations.
We need to work further with this."*

Deep dive on business models that challenge resource consumption

Another action point to be elaborated on with examples concerns having a business model that challenges resource consumption through decoupling or degrowth ("Our business model challenges resource consumption through de-coupling and de-growth") which most companies address by striving to extend the lifespan of products by improving the durability. Moreover, most

brands highlight supporting degrowth by not promoting sales and not following the seasons. Only a few brands mentioned the following strategies: using a make-to-order production system, and improving materials and recycling processes.

Two examples which elaborate further are:

COMPANY A:

“Our brand is based on an idea of slow fashion, we do not do seasons, we do not do sales. We try to make the best product and once we believe the product is ready to be launched, we keep producing it so our customers can find it again and again. We research and develop the best materials; we keep on working on improving our materials. We can make a new colour where we will only make a small production, f.example if we find a material that has been rejected by one of the big fashion houses we can use the rejected material and only make the items that come out. We also do limited series that we number, we believe that if the customers knows that only a few items where produced they will also take more care and ensure the product has a longer life. We provide product care information to the customers so they can give the product a longer life.”

COMPANY B:

“We try to replace conventional cotton, that uses extreme, amounts of fresh water (a scarce resource), with our own developed fabric (red. specific brand name removed for anonymity) - to save fresh water. Also we use recycled ocean waste in our production, to reduce the need for materials made from oil based and virgin materials.”

Examples that are less adequate are:

COMPANY C:

“We urge consumers to buy less and buy better”

COMPANY D:

“Slow fashion, higher quality, product lifecycle”

NONE OF THE COMPANIES MENTIONED ARE USING A SECOND-HAND OR RENTAL BUSINESS MODEL, OR OTHER SPECIFIC CIRCULAR INITIATIVES OR IMPLEMENTED POLICIES.

Design

A range of actions taken within design aim to minimise a product's negative environmental and social impacts throughout the value chain and can be approached from various angles, mainly based on a product's intended use and the brand's business model. Decisions made in the design and development stage not only cover a product's direct features but also consider their end of use.

Top-down ranking of the additional design action points	yes	No/ I don't know	% answering yes
Our design approach connects the product's intended use with appropriate material choices and end-of-use considerations	42	6	87.5%
Some of our collection is designed to reduce the environmental impact in the use phase	35	13	72.9%
Our design approach considers body inclusivity (sizing, shapes, adaptive fashion)	33	15	68.8%
We upcycle leftover fabrics or have a plan for leftovers and/or production scraps	24	24	50.0%
Some of our collection is designed for circularity (refurbishment, ease of cyclability, modular/changeable components, multiple purposes/versatility, biodegradability/compostability)	20	28	41.7%
Our design approach eliminates waste in the production process through e.g. zero-waste cutting or 3D knitting	14	34	29.2%
Our design considers innovative technologies, e.g. 3D design, 3D printers or lasers	14	34	29.2%

The results within design choices display a strong focus on designing products with their end use in mind to reduce their environmental impact. Yet most of the companies are only starting to focus on innovative technologies, such as zero-waste cutting, 3D printers and 3D knitting. It therefore remains to be seen how progress on digitisation will lead to changes in traditional design processes in the future and this will be worth keeping an eye on.

This is closely connected to smart material choices, the next focus area of the framework.

ANOTHER MAIN DRIVER OF IMPROVEMENT IS THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY CIRCULARITY AND UPCYCLING MODELS. **LESS THAN HALF OF THE COMPANIES CURRENTLY CONSIDER CIRCULARITY** IN THEIR DESIGN PROCESS; THIS REPRESENTS A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY TO CLOSE THE PRODUCTION LOOP AND MINIMISE WASTE.

Deep dive on the intended use of products

Looking at the first highlighted action in more detail (“Our design approach connects the product’s intended use with appropriate material choices and end-of-use”), most of the companies state that they focus on high-quality products when designing and thus materials are often mentioned together with longevity, functionality and durability. However, only very few are in the process of including end-of-use considerations in their design approach. Overall, only a few companies go into actual actions, concrete goals and strategies in any depth. Most of the companies give very high-level answers, making matters very difficult to verify for a third party.

Three examples which elaborate further are:

COMPANY A:

“Our materials are always chosen to secure a comfortable and appropriate user experience. We actively work with natural and regenerated mono-materials in most of our collection to simplify potential recycling. Many of our fabrics, especially those bearing a GOTS-certification, are tested for durability.”

COMPANY B:

“We use a material blend that is excellent for nylon tights and furthermore both material components are recycled. The Polyamide and Elastane blend is also synthetic and both fibers recyclable. We have started our take-back system and recycling initiative where end consumers can send their worn-out tights to us or drop them off in one of our recycling bins at one of many recycling partners instead of throwing them out. All the collected tights are used for our research in how to recycle nylon tights, in the same specific blend, into new tights.”

COMPANY C:

“We consider the full life circle of the product and the intended use and use the appropriate material for the product. From raw material, colours, dyes, finish until the possibility for repair, resell and recycling.”

Examples that are less adequate are:

COMPANY D:

“This is common sense and goes for all products.”

COMPANY E:

“We need to work further on this - but we have demand and dialog with customers about this.”

COMPANY F:

“We design what is possible in terms of our sustainability principles.”

COMPANY G:

“All products must have a functionality.”

Deep dive on body inclusivity

We now look at the second highlighted action point in more detail (“Our design approach considers body inclusivity (sizing, shape, adaptive fashion”). Many companies state that their styles can be worn by everybody/fit different body shapes/sizes. But again, only a few of those companies actually describe what steps they take in their design approach to accommodate body inclusivity. Some examples include offering plus sizes, unisex styles and using materials that can be stretched.

WHEN IT COMES TO BODY INCLUSIVITY, **IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR COMPANIES TO SIMPLY STATE THAT THEY TRY TO CONSIDER DIFFERENT SIZING** ETC. THERE NEED TO BE SPECIFIC ACTIONS/STEPS IN THE DESIGN APPROACH TO MAKE SURE BODY INCLUSIVITY IS CONSIDERED.

Two examples which elaborate further are:

COMPANY A:

“Our 3D knitting technology for both nylon tights and activewear gives the products very high stretchability, therefore each of our 3 sizes cover multiple clothing sizes ranging from 36-46 EU.”

COMPANY B:

“98% of all styles are adjustable in silhouette to accommodate several body types. - Trousers are adjustable in lengths. - Design and pattern making team participated in Danish study of body shape (scanning of body types) for optimizing garment fit to meet today’s body types and market needs. In workwear segment, the end-user seldomly get asked, when it comes to fit/details/comfort. - Marked dialogues/meetings with end-users.”

Examples that are less adequate are:

COMPANY C:

“We have styles which can be worn by everybody.”

COMPANY D:

“It is a developing area to widen our target audience.”

COMPANY E:

“We try to make garments that cares to different body sizes/shapes.”

Smart material choices

With the planet’s resources becoming increasingly scarce and planetary boundaries being exceeded, smart material choices play an integral role in responsible business practices. Choices related to a brand’s material consumption and production processes have the highest environmental impact in the value chain, which is why the fashion industry requires change at scale at a speed not yet seen.

Top-down ranking of the additional smart material choices action points	yes	No/ I don't know	% answering yes
We have sought expert knowledge to guide our material choices e.g. through consultancy, industry reports, innovators, accelerators or fairs	39	9	81.3%
Some of our collection is made of pre- and/or post-consumer waste	38	10	79.2%
Some of our fabrics/materials are sourced close to our target markets by minimising transportation between sourcing, production and consumption	34	14	70.8%
We eliminate coatings and finishes if the product's intended use does not require them to perform	34	14	70.8%
We are exploring new generation sustainable materials to improve our sustainable material mix	32	16	66.7%
Some of our collection is designed with mono-fibres in mind	30	18	62.5%
We consider the five freedoms of animal welfare when sourcing materials from animal origin	28	20	58.3%
We ensure that our supply chain is deforestation-free *Deforestation-free supply chains ensure that no forest ecosystems are destroyed for the cultivation of agricultural commodities. This can be achieved through e.g. living up to forest protection laws, international standards, a traceability or monitoring systems	26	22	54.2%
We source raw materials from regenerative agriculture *Regenerative agriculture is defined as a system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem services	14	34	29.2%
We use assessment tool(s) to monitor and minimise negative impacts throughout the entire garment lifecycle (e.g., LCA, Higg Index or similar tools)	5	43	10.4%

The results in this section reveal a strong focus on seeking expert knowledge. When looking at the results in relation to the minimum standards, knowledge-sharing likewise ranked high, indicating that many companies have discovered the benefits of being transparent, engaging in partnerships and seeking advice if needed.

On a different note, the survey result confirms that only very few companies currently use assessment tools to monitor and track their impacts. One reason for this could be that this can be an expensive and resource-heavy process. When selecting materials for products companies are generally asked to consider trade-offs, i.e. to compare one material to another.

Deep dive on deforestation-free supply chains

Looking at the first highlighted action point in more detail. (“We ensure that our supply chain is deforestation-free. *Deforestation-free supply chains ensure that no forest ecosystems are destroyed for the cultivation of agricultural commodities. This can be achieved through e.g. living up to forest protection laws, international standards, traceability or monitoring systems.”)

For example, a few brands only mention FSC-certified packaging materials. This would be assessed as insufficient as it doesn’t shed light on the remaining supply chain, especially raw materials.

Two examples which elaborate further are:

COMPANY A:

“We source some Lenzing fibres and have a policy signed by our suppliers in regard to deforestation.”

COMPANY B:

“Any plant-based fiber we use, either for products or packaging, is FSC certified. We use Lenzing cellulose fibers, which ensures that the fibers are made with the protection of forests and eco-systems in mind, and that the supply chain lives up to international standards. We are working on getting even more low-impact fibers from Lenzing to remove viscose from our collections.”

Examples that are less adequate are:

COMPANY C:

“For the viscose we are sure. But not for the rest”

COMPANY D:

“We ask our suppliers to be FCS certified.”

ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTION ARE IN GENERAL EVASIVE; **THEY DO NOT COVER ALL ASPECTS OF DEFORESTATION IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN** BUT ONLY PROVIDE A SNAPSHOT.

Deep dive on regenerative agriculture

The second highlighted action point is “We source raw materials from regenerative agriculture. *Regenerative agriculture is defined as a system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem services”. Most brands interpret regenerative as referring simply to organic fibres or fibres with well-trusted certifications. However, simply being certified – for instance, GOTS, TENCEL or BCI – does not automatically ensure that the fibre comes from regenerative agriculture.

One example of a reflective answer is:

COMPANY A:

*“We are setting this up at present, with the partnership we have with *leather company* we are making a project where we buy directly from sustainable farms that have free range cows or use the Allan Savory method as their farming method. We have started the project and making the samples, and we expect to produce with the raw materials by the end of 2022.”*

Less adequate answers are:

COMPANY B:

“We source a little bit of organic natural fibres and Lenzing viscose fibres.”

COMPANY C:

“For the viscose we do, otherwise for our fleece we don’t”

Working conditions

The fashion industry’s business practices put pressure on the planet, but they also have significant impact on the human rights of people working in the industry, whether in global supply chains or in stores across the world. Building upon human equality, we want to challenge existing social inequalities and the negative impacts of employment in the fashion industry. Copenhagen Fashion Week strongly believes that respectful, safe, secure and inspirational work environments lay the foundation for valuing employees and also drive motivation, reflecting the link between the social and environmental potential of sustainable practices.

Top-down ranking of the additional working conditions action points	yes	No/ I don't know	% answering yes
We require full compliance from our suppliers in terms of minimum wages and collectively bargained wages	31	17	64.6%
Some of our collection is sourced from countries with a rating of less than 7 on the Labour Rights Indicators ten-point scale	29	19	60.4%
We have a complaints mechanism in place to gather feedback and take action	24	24	50.0%
We actively promote gender equality and diversity among partners and suppliers	24	24	50.0%
We educate our employees on social and environmental sustainability by offering mandatory training programmes and/or educational material	20	28	41.7%
We monitor the frequency of work accidents	15	33	31.3%
We monitor real wage growth in supplier factories	13	35	27.1%

Working conditions turned out to be one of the focus areas that require greater attention and a collective push forward. While around 60% of the companies do claim to require full compliance in relation to minimum wages and collectively bargained wages from the suppliers, only a few monitor real wage growth in their supplier factories. This demonstrates the complexity of this topic.

The results also show that only a third of the companies monitor work accidents. The majority state that they only monitor in-house work accidents through their safety manager and do not yet have any audit programme in place to monitor supplier factories.

ONE OF THE RELATIVELY “**LOW-HANGING FRUITS**” IS INVESTING IN EMPLOYEE EDUCATION AND TRAINING, WHICH CURRENTLY ONLY 20 OUT OF THE 48 COMPANIES DO. THIS CAN BE THROUGH EITHER MANDATORY TRAINING PROGRAMMES OR THE FREQUENT DISTRIBUTION OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL.

Deep dive on compliance and minimum wages

The first marked action point in this area that will be backed up by a few examples is “We require full compliance from our suppliers in terms of minimum wages and collectively bargained wages”. Here many brands cite the use of certification such as GOTS as a way of complying with minimum wage standards or mention that they have a code of conduct in place. A code of conduct is a good first step but, as some brands also report, this can be furthered by e.g. audits for more rigorous compliance.

COMPANY A:

“We implemented our code of conduct in 2020, and our suppliers have all signed the agreement. It includes paragraphs regarding payment of minimum and living wages as well as the right to collective bargaining. Our suppliers get 3rd party workplace assessment audits, and we also visit them yearly to do our own audit and review of working conditions among other things.”

Deep dive on gender equality

The second action point relates to gender equality (“We actively promote gender equality and diversity among partners and suppliers”). Again, a code of conduct is mentioned by most brands as a means of tackling this issue. A code of conduct can be a good place to start to formalise strategies or policies around this topic but it is even more important to live values that allow for equality and diversity in the workplace. In practice there could be major discrepancies between what is stated on paper and what actually happens. This action point could be supported by brands working more clearly with concrete targets or policies.

Only a few companies provided more insightful answers that go beyond the mention of a code of conduct.

COMPANY A:

“We have a Code of Conduct that our suppliers must sign and comply with. We furthermore have female empowerment as a part of our business strategy spilling over in both our initiatives, charity, and communication. Moreover, we have clear hiring policies in instruction both internal HR and external headhunters to never ask potential employees about their political/religious/sexual orientation. We also have a no-dress code policy to further encourage the individuality of our employees. We have gender and diversity included in our Code of Conduct.”

In addition, some companies give very vague and/or insufficient answers that don't allow for further conclusions.

COMPANY B:

“Work in progress”

COMPANY C:

“BSCI member”

Consumer engagement

Critical discussions in the industry frequently revolve around the fast consumption of fashion. Clothing, footwear and accessories are piling up in landfills globally, constantly driving faster fashion cycles. Copenhagen Fashion Week is acutely aware that this issue is deeply rooted in societal, behavioural, psychological and economic values and urgently requires consumer engagement. As a result, we encourage brands to use their voices to rethink current business models and to inform their customers.

Top-down ranking of the additional consumer engagement action points	yes	No/ I don't know	% answering yes
We process customer feedback and loop data into our design and development process.	38	10	79.2%
Our product labels include clear care instructions featuring information on washing, caring, mending, drying, repairing, recycling and disposal.	34	14	70.8%
We offer workshops or educational material to our customers on, e.g., product repair.	20	28	41.7%
We offer our customers the opportunity to co-create products.	18	30	37.5%
We actively discourage price reductions e.g. by not participating or taking a stance against Black Fridays or end-of-season sales.	18	30	37.5%

While most companies state that they process customer feedback and loop data into their design and development process, only a few of the brands offer customers the opportunity to co-create products to minimise inappropriate purchases and to engage with their customers more closely. When looking at the quality of the answers in relation to co-creating products with the customer, we find that most answers are vague: companies state that they process customer feedback to create products, which leads us to conclude that they are not entirely familiar with the scope of this action point.

Deep dive on customer feedback

On the other hand, some companies provide good examples: for example, company A describes how it has a design contest with customers and puts the best design into production. Company B describes how it offers customers the option of designing their own products with the desired print and colours. This calls for a stronger definition and the promotion of best practices to distinguish the two actions. While processing customer feedback could lead to technical improvements, such as addressing where products seem to wear out quickly, allowing for co-creation engages the customer in the design process more closely (allowing for choices in colour, shape or material etc.).

Examples of more descriptive responses on how customer feedback is processed are given below.

COMPANY A:

“All complaints are handled directly through our support chat/e-mail portal. We collect product ratings from customers, which are shown publicly and taken into consideration when we review our services or for further product development. Besides this we have conducted qualitative studies including user’s use practice and experience with fit and quality. We have a short way from consideration to action, when it comes to acting on feedback or complaints.”

COMPANY B:

“If we receive feedback from customers on a specific product, we take their comments into considerations in future alterations and new products. Furthermore, our products are tested in intended use-situation (training, e.g. crossfit) by customers and other future users who provide feedback on fit, comfort and functionality.”

And below are some examples of statements that make it difficult to determine how feedback is used.

COMPANY C:

“Successively feedback meeting with customers”

COMPANY D:

“We collect feedback and actively use it for new products”

Deep dive on price reduction policy

The results also show that the vast majority of the companies participate in Black Fridays and end-of-season sales. And, from the qualitative answers it is apparent that only a few companies take an active stand against price reductions or are very focused on Black Friday, which doesn't reveal how they approach price reductions during the rest of the year.

A stronger stance against Black Friday or aggressive sales is shown by these companies:

COMPANY A:

"We closed our webshop for last years Black Friday, and actively discourage our dealers to reduce prices, but instead we swap styles"

COMPANY B:

"We take a stance actively not participating in Black Friday, end-of-season-sale and mid-season sales. This is also practiced by many of our independent retail clients."

Show/presentation

Fashion fulfils numerous functions in our daily lives, ranging from protection against the elements to expression of our identities. We enjoy fashion and responsible design. The fashion week platform generally exists to support, showcase and leverage craftsmanship, creative talents and innovation. The fashion presentation, whether a show, campaign, event, film or other happening, is an opportunity to support, showcase and leverage craftsmanship, creative talents, innovation and to communicate a company's values.

44 brands chose to fill in the presentation part of the survey while four answered the show section of the survey, which is more relevant for brands who wish to apply to showcase at CPHFW. Generally, most brands who answered the show section address most of the aspects relating to

show production. Within the presentation part, brands focus predominantly on environmental aspects rather than social ones.

Top-down ranking of the additional presentation action points	yes	No/ I don't know	% answering yes
We promote the value of existing collections. You can promote the value of existing and past collections by, e.g., not reducing all past styles when new collections are out or by carrying over styles to forthcoming seasons etc.	32	12	72.7%
Our merchandise is e.g. reusable, minimal.	30	14	68.2%
We are committed to reduce the environmental impact of our presentations by e.g. minimising traveling to shooting locations, not flying in our cast etc.	30	14	68.2%
Sustainability is an integral part of our partners, sponsors and suppliers' businesses	21	23	47.7%
Our casting actively considers Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) principles.	21	23	47.7%
Our presentations actively promote the longevity of our products by e.g. discouraging seasonal sales	20	24	45.5%
We use our presentations to communicate our actions on social and environmental issues.	19	25	43.2%
We assess the impact of our presentation format holistically. That means addressing the climate and environmental impact, as well as social issues like inclusion, diversity and working conditions.	16	28	36.4%
Our presentations provide educational insights for the wider public by e.g. informing about materials used for the collection, addressing timely socioeconomic issues etc.	14	30	31.8%
We only offer organic food and snacks – preferably vegetarian/vegan, local and fair trade.	13	31	29.5%
Our makeup and hair artists use organic or natural supplies.	10	34	22.7%
Our selected production facility complies with green building standards on indoor climate, water and heating that provide energy from renewable sources. Green building standards include the following certifications: BREEAM, LEED, DGNB.	4	40	9.1%

Top-down ranking of the additional show action points	yes	No/ I don't know	% answering yes
Sustainability is an integral part of our partners, sponsors and suppliers' businesses.	4	0	100.0%
We promote the value of existing collections. You can promote the value of existing and past collections by, e.g., not reducing all past styles when new collections are out or by carrying over styles to forthcoming seasons etc.	4	0	100.0%
We do not provide goodie bags.	3	1	75.0%
Our merchandise is e.g. reusable, minimal.	3	1	75.0%
We use digital instead of paper invitations.	3	1	75.0%
We only offer organic food and snacks – preferably vegetarian/vegan, local and fair trade.	2	2	50.0%
Our makeup and hair artists use organic or natural supplies.	1	3	25.0%
Our selected production facility complies with green building standards on indoor climate, water and heating that provide energy from renewable sources. Green building standards include the following certifications: BREEAM, LEED, DGNB.	0	4	00.0%

The survey results show that all companies, whether they are show brands or not, must overcome the same challenges in this focus area. One such challenge is the failure to consider organic local products – not only in relation to food and beverages, but also in relation to other products used in presentation and show productions. Another is the fact that almost none of the brands consider that the selection of the production facility complies with green building standards. Yet half of the companies claim that sustainability is required to be an integral part of partners', sponsors' and suppliers' businesses. Answers in this focus area reveal great potential for adjustments moving forward.

Deep dive on promoting existing collections

With regard to promoting the value of existing collections (“We promote the value of existing collections. You can promote the value of existing and past collections by, e.g., not reducing all past styles when new collections are out or by carrying over styles to forthcoming seasons etc.”), it seems that most brands have acknowledged the importance of not reducing all past styles when new collections come out. Most companies either do not operate with “seasons” or they have carry-over programmes in place to ensure the collection does not have to go on sale. However,

an element that stands out is that only two companies back up their answers with data. Company A states that “90-95% of their collection is rerunners”. Company B also states that they “don’t have seasons on their webshop and 50% reruns. They focus on all-year collections”.

Below are a few examples that would call for a more elaborate response.

COMPANY A:

“All collections can be sold in several years +10 years.”

COMPANY B:

“We sometimes upgrade our existing collections by optimizing functionality/model/quality/colour.”

COMPANY C:

“We have an increasing number of continued products.”

The survey data – remarks and limitations

It is important to emphasise that this survey has not been developed to measure the sustainability efforts of the industry. Instead, it is a self-assessment framework that enables companies to approach sustainability on an individual level.

This report is a “snapshot” of the current sustainability efforts of 48 Danish companies that vary in size, segment and product level. The survey results can therefore not be regarded as representative of the Danish textile and fashion industry as a whole, and the sample size does not enable us to deduce industry-wide trends. For a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the industry, the survey would have to be distributed amongst a larger representative sample (10% of the industry) covering a set of unbiased characteristics, such as segment, size, etc.

However, the report outlines how many companies meet the minimum standards today, and it sets out all the additional action points in a ranking system broken down by focus area.

One of the biggest takeaways is that companies approach sustainability very differently. For example, while some look towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals and formulate their sustainability efforts and goals in written strategies, others simply describe their actions as “the way we do it” or “part of our mindset”.

However, it appears that most companies have no long-term (5-10 year) sustainability strategy in place that takes a holistic look at the value chain and defines the company’s direction. Such a strategy could represent a first formalised step in continuing with their sustainability efforts on a company-wide level, integrating all departments.

7. ADAPTING THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

To adapt the framework for the purpose of the programme, a reporting format was developed which included a tool for creating a gap analysis based on the companies' responses to the survey. The tool includes an overview of the minimum requirements the companies meet at the time of filling out the survey, as well as an overview of the additional questions to which the companies have answered yes or no. The reporting format was developed to aid the companies, but the gap analysis tool was submitted to Lifestyle & Design Cluster and forms the second part of the data collection for this report.

In Futurum helped create the reporting tool and made these comments on the adaptation of the framework:

“As a self-reporting tool, the survey does not assess the level of sustainability in the companies, and the answers do not provide documentation to compare or analyse the effect of different approaches. What they do provide is valuable data on what the companies perceive as important, what initiatives they already engage with and how the companies assess their own efforts. They also provide indications of what the companies need in order to develop a more sustainable fashion industry.

The ambition with the framework was to present a common direction that adopts a full life cycle perspective on products, that is industry specific and accessible to SMEs. The design of the framework and the questions reflect the fact that sustainability is not something you achieve as an individual company; it is a global effort. Therefore, the survey is not presented as a check list that you can complete, but a series of (sometimes mutually excluding) focus points that allows companies to describe their individual efforts.

In filling out the survey, there is a risk, however, that companies are motivated to answer yes to questions in an effort to show their commitment or interest in a specific topic, and not necessarily because they are already working with the particular area. This will influence the assessment of how the companies work currently, but is also likely to impact future answers, since as the companies gain more knowledge and engage in more areas their answers may not change from *no* to *yes*.”

8. FINDINGS FROM THE GAP ANALYSES

8. FINDINGS FROM THE GAP ANALYSES

After filling out the survey the companies translated the results into a gap analysis covering the same six strategic areas. In the gap analysis the companies summarised in their own words what areas they are working with and where there is potential for development. This gap analysis was performed with the guidance of the consultants.

Overall it is evident that companies had most to say in the areas of smart material choices and working conditions, and have worked the most in these areas prior to the programme.

Strategic direction

Many companies address sustainability through initiatives dispersed across the company rather than by working with sustainability strategically. The findings indicate that there is potential for a strategic approach, and some consultants report that the work with the framework has helped some companies understand the need for a strategic focus.

From the gap analysis it is also evident that many companies will use the programme to develop a strategy. This was to be expected, both from the focus of the survey and because the programme put a lot of emphasis on analysis and action plans.

Minimising overstock

From the gap analyses it seems that many companies consider being an order-producing company to be the same as actively working to reduce overstock. However, this is a limited view as it does not consider overstock at the retailer level.

Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are not a widespread tool within the fashion and textile industry. However, some companies are adopting them and starting to incorporate them into their strategies.

The gap analyses revealed an interesting trend. Companies either had a strategy in which three or four carefully chosen SDGs were embedded or they did not mention the SDGs at all. This can be considered positive, as it seems the companies that do work with SDGs (though a minority) understand them, while the companies that do not are not using them lightly or casually. It also indicates that the SDGs are not a priority for most, since they were sometimes not mentioned at all.

Front-running companies want to stay in front

This programme attracted quite a few “sustainability front runners” – perhaps more than is representative of the Danish industry as a whole.

What is interesting is that these companies are constantly pushing themselves in terms of both social and environmental sustainability. They are also seeking more ambitious certifications – such as B-corp – for their entire operation and experimenting more actively with innovative materials.

Among these companies there is a slight trend: while they started with green ambitions, the groundwork of due diligence and compliance – such as code of conduct, chemical testing etc. – may lag somewhat behind. They are value-driven and do not always place the biggest emphasis on written policies. However, most of these companies have good partnerships with suppliers and could easily establish the right policies and procedures to meet future requirements.

Design

From the gap analysis it seems that only a few companies address the full life cycle of their products and have integrated a circular economic approach to their business model and design development.

This is evident both in the companies’ direct answers to circularity questions and also in their seemingly limited understanding of the scope of the design and consumer engagement questions. A new awareness and language is needed for the circular potential to be reached.

Longevity

Many companies see it as part of their design philosophy to make durable products with a long lifespan. Some even explicitly choose materials for durability. But very few test for durability and longevity.

This is where we see a big difference between workwear and fashion products. While workwear companies work with very strict quality requirements and know the exact durability and longevity of their products, most fashion companies just trust that the choices they make ensure longevity.

Smart material choices

The survey shows that the area of smart material choices is one with which most companies have already worked. From the gap analysis it is also clear that materials are a focus from many. Some companies understand that they need to work more strategically with this area, which suggests that more education on this area might be relevant and popular.

Working with data and assessment tools is a desire for many.

Certifications

In the gap analysis, many companies mention certifications – ones they have themselves, ones their suppliers have, or ones they are looking into. These are the most frequently mentioned certifications (in order of frequency):

1. GOTS (Global Organic Cotton Standard)
2. GRS (Global Recycling Standard)
3. Oeko-Tex (Confidence in Textiles)
4. BSCI (Business Social Compliance Initiative) (Also mentioned by its other name, Amfori)
5. SA8000
6. FSC
7. B-corp
8. SEDEX
9. Swan Label
10. Blue Sign
11. BCI

Most companies are interested in certifications, both as a tool for becoming more sustainable and to document what they are doing. Some focus on one or two, while others look for a wide range of certifications. This can also be reflected in customer types and expectations.

Many companies have already mapped which certifications their suppliers have, and know that in order to communicate these, they need to be certified themselves. Mapping the certifications available from your suppliers can be a good first step in a certification-seeking process, because it can help you determine which would be easily obtained.

FSC

While many companies mention FSC in their packaging or paper hangtags, only one company accounts for their viscose/lyocell materials. In that one case, they exclusively buy certified fibres from Lenzing, ensuring they are deforestation free.

Either combating deforestation is not a priority for companies, or they are unaware of all the points in their supply chain where this is a problem, such as in connection with viscose and leather.

Life cycle assessment

Quite a few companies mention that they want or need some sort of LCA, CO₂e emissions inventory or impact assessment. However, it is not clear whether they have a sufficient understanding of what exactly they want or need, or what the different terms mean.

Working conditions

The area traditionally associated with corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a very prominent topic in the gap analysis – perhaps because many companies identified gaps here through the survey. Many companies want to work with their compliance foundation and processes and see these as a first step in their sustainability work.

Code of conduct

Most companies understand the importance of a good code of conduct. Many companies have worked with this tool for years, some are just starting out, and others express an interest in creating or updating a code of conduct through this programme.

While most companies have or intend to have a code of conduct, very few follow up on the set requirements. This indicates that they see the CoC as a static document and not a working tool to be followed up on, reported on or updated regularly.

It is worth mentioning here that 14 companies are working with a consultancy that places great value on basic due diligence work; this may be why so many companies stress the importance of a code of conduct. However, the trend extends beyond those companies and is also apparent in many companies working with different consultants.

Made in the EU

Quite a few of the companies in the programme produce in Europe and therefore trust that their suppliers comply with EU law on working conditions and chemicals. While not all companies that produce in Europe adopt a relaxed attitude to due diligence, a trend in this direction is evident in the gap analyses. Many also equate production in Europe with low-emission transport. However, there are many ways apart from just the distance your goods travel to optimise transportation and set requirements for logistics companies.

9. FINDINGS FROM THE ACTION PLANS

Based on the action plans submitted by the companies, we have chosen to focus on two key data findings.

1. The concrete initiatives that the companies have prioritised working with during the programme. These provide an insight into what they prioritise as being most important right now and what they consider it possible to achieve within the scope of the project. The companies have on average chosen between one and five initiatives.
2. Risk and limitations in relation to achieving the goals of the initiatives. This provides an important insight into the barriers that companies see when working with sustainability. With both of these parameters, we have had the opportunity to determine which initiatives and barriers were the most frequent.

The initiatives chosen by the companies

Some companies chose to combine several initiatives under one scheme, while others were very specific and described individual actions as individual initiatives. For companies that chose to combine initiatives under one scheme, we tried to count it under several of the headings below to get a more in-depth picture.

These numbers are not reported by the companies but are based on a qualitative reading. They thus depend on the level of reporting that the companies have undertaken, and this varies greatly. So does the language that they use for the initiatives.

Initiative	Explanation	Number of companies who chose this:	% of all 48 companies
Sustainability strategy	Covers all types of plans and strategies that gathers the company's sustainability work. Some develop a separate sustainability strategy; others include it in the company's existing strategy. The time frames range from 2 to 10 years.	19	39.6%
Communication plan	Both communication plan and communication strategy are mentioned here, regarding both internal and external communication. This also includes checking and reviewing current communications to update their documentation regarding green claims.	22	45.8%
New Materials	This covers all types of initiatives involving materials. It can be a material strategy, sourcing and searching for new materials as well as development and research.	14	29.2%
Code of Conduct	Applies to both implementation and updating of a Code and Conduct	11	22.9%
Due Diligence	Due Diligence covers several processes within supplier management and working environment at suppliers and it is often also the creation of a process that the companies want.	14	29.2%
CO2 calculation / LCA	Applies to all types of calculations that companies plan to make. Some focus on a broad environmental data, others lifetime data while others again on CO2 reporting.	10	20.8%
Supplier mapping	Covers all types of survey mapping among the company. This can be for the purpose of certifications, environment and climate risks, compliance, etc. This is often also implicit in several other initiatives, or in preparation for other mentioned initiatives.	13	27%
Documentation Plan	Initiatives where the primary focus is collecting documentation on existing initiatives. Primarily as a basis for improved communication.	10	20.8%
Employee Involvement*	Initiatives that are specifically about including and educate employees so that they take a more active part in the company's sustainability work.	7	14.6%
Sustainability report	Differs from a sustainability strategy by focusing on reporting and publishing the company's current efforts and continuous improvements.	4	8.3%
Circular Actions	Covers everything from more recycling, repair service, take back and other similar initiatives to make the business more circular.	4	8.3%
Chemistry procedure	A test program or a compliance procedure that ensures that the company complies with the REACH regulation. For several companies, this work is under materials and / or certifications.	3	6.2%
Certification	Initiatives with the aim of obtaining a certification, either the first or additional certifications. This can also be the preparation state of mapping and determining relevant certifications.	14	29.2%
Environmental management	The development of procedures that help suppliers optimize on their environment and climate impact.	3	6.2%
Energy production	Prepare for or initiate the production of renewable energy for facilities in DK or abroad.	1	2%
Packaging	Initiatives containing more sustainable packaging materials.	1	2%

* Even though few companies list employee involvement as a separate initiative, there are several that mention it as part of other initiatives, especially in relation to strategy and communication, where involving employees is seen as very important.

MAIN TYPES OF INITIATIVE

Communication plan

Almost half (45.8%) of all companies used the project to develop a communication plan or strategy. Although many companies chose to work with this, they varied widely in how they approached it. Some companies need an overall strategic plan, while others need a more operational approach with a focus on product texts and webpage messages. This variation also reflects the size and maturity of the companies' general communication departments.

While many companies chose to implement both a sustainability strategy and a communication plan, that is not always the case, although it might appear so from the numbers. In fact, many companies have a need for only one of the two.

Sustainability strategy

All the companies in the programme were tasked with producing an action plan for their most important sustainability initiatives. This action plan was to be broken down into short-term, medium-term and long-term actions. In addition, 39.6% of companies chose to draw up a strategy for their sustainability work. Some chose to incorporate sustainability into their existing company strategy, while the majority chose a separate strategy for their sustainability work. The time-frame is anything from two to 15 years.

It is unclear to what extent these strategies include quantitative goals. Some companies express difficulty with setting specific targets, because they do not know their current baseline (more about this under "Supplier mapping").

Due diligence process including code of conduct

29.2% of the companies chose to work with their due diligence process, and 22.9% specifically mentioned implementing or updating their code of conduct.

Establishing or improving a due diligence process looks different for each company, but for all it involves a process of actions, establishing a routine and working more systematically with their suppliers.

Supplier mapping

Supplier mapping is for many seen as foundation for establishing a baseline. 27% of companies chose to start mapping their Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers and sometimes even those in Tier 3. This mapping explores the conditions stipulated by each supplier, their access to materials, their certifications and auditing strategies and their willingness to change/improve. When all this is mapped, it is easier for the company to properly plan its sustainability strategy and actions. A supplier mapping is also the first step in a risk assessment, which some companies show an interest in performing.

It seems clear that many companies cannot set quantitative goals for their sustainability strategy because they lack a baseline, which can only be obtained through supplier mapping. This indicated a low awareness of the actual level of sustainability in these companies' supply chains.

Documentation plan

For some companies, a big first step is simply deciding how to document and report on sustainability. This is evident in companies that have introduced small, scattered initiatives but do not have a clear strategy. 20.8% of companies chose to work with this. Many are still unsure how to document their existing efforts or lack any documentation at all.

The risks/limitations seen by the companies

N.B.: These numbers are not reported by the companies but based on a qualitative reading. Thus, they depend on the level of reporting that the companies have undertaken, and this varies greatly. So does the language that they use for the risks and limitations.

Risk / Limitation	Explanation	Number of companies expressing this:	% of all 48 companies
Time	It is seen as a risk that the individual employees do not have enough time for development on top of other tasks. Pressured organizations / Tight deadlines are also mentioned here.	34	70.8%
Internal Resources	Some companies use this term instead and it covers both time, finances and skilled employees.	11	22.9%
Data from Suppliers	There is a concern about whether the suppliers can and / or will provide the data or documentation that the companies want. This includes both the working environment and the climate / environment.	24	50%
Strict requirements for suppliers	A concern about whether one's existing suppliers can / will live up to new strict requirements. This refers to both the working conditions and the environment.	12	25%
Budget / Finance	Some initiatives may require larger expenses and therefore the budget / economy is mentioned as a potential constraint for especially smaller companies.	11	22.9%
Changing legislation / standards	The fact that some legislation is not yet in place, or that international standards can change, is seen as a risk in relation to making a future-proof strategy.	5	10.4%
Customer support	That customers do not support initiatives can be a risk.	2	4.2%
Material availability	Both concerns about being able to get enough of especially organic / recycled materials and the uncertainty regarding whether there are more sustainable alternatives at all are mentioned here.	11	22.9%
Fear of Greenwashing	This limitation is particularly evident in relation to communication.	9	18.8%
Internal Culture	A risk based on whether the company's internal culture can handle a major change.	3	2.3%
The size of the company	This concern is mainly based on whether the company, due to its small size, has enough power to be able to make demands.	2	4.2%
Support from the management	A risk based on a concern about whether management will back up initiatives that require more time and / or an extended budget.	6	12.5%
Employee competencies	It can be seen as a limitation if the employees do not have the right competencies to perform a given action / strategy.	5	10.4%
Physical space	If measures require a large area (eg energy production), the lack of this can be seen as a limitation.	1	2%
Support from collaborators	Primarily a concern based in communication, where a company fears for lack of support from collaborators.	2	4.2%

MAIN RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

Time & internal resources

70.8% of companies cite time and/or internal resources as the biggest risk and obstacle to succeeding with their sustainability ambitions. Some companies refer to their generally busy working environment, while others do not have the option of having a dedicated person working on sustainability.

Since these risks were expressed in the context of the initiative they chose to work with during the programme, these numbers might also indicate the limited time available within the programme, since most companies had only four months to work on the initiatives.

Data from suppliers

Half of the companies seem uncertain about whether they can obtain the right data and documentation from their suppliers. Some seem unclear about whether suppliers have the required data, while others fear that suppliers might not want to share data or documentation. Generally, this indicates a low level of transparency and data-sharing between the companies and their suppliers. However, many companies are only just starting to request more data/documentation and thus do not know at what level their suppliers wish to share information.

This relates to environmental data, certifications and rules on working conditions.

Strict requirements for suppliers

As part of their journey towards greater sustainability, some companies realise that they will have to set stricter requirements for their suppliers. This can also be part of a certification process. 25% of the companies express the concern that their current suppliers might not be able to meet these new requirements.

For some companies this can delay their efforts as they may not be able to easily change suppliers and do not feel they have the leverage to make many new demands at once. Other companies see this as a natural development, and while finding new suppliers might delay a process somewhat, they seem willing and open to the change.

However, most companies express a desire to bring their suppliers with them on their sustainability journey and help them implement improvements.

Budget/finance

22.9% of the companies note budget as a possible risk or obstacle. The problem may be the increased cost of materials, the cost of certification or the added cost of more time-consuming processes. The initiatives that the companies choose are primarily within their budget, so the issue is most evident for companies that are still exploring new initiatives, tools or certifications.

Material availability

A lack of access to more environmental friendly materials is a real concern for 22.9% of the companies. They fear they cannot get enough of some materials, especially organic cotton or recycled materials. Most who express this concern have not fully explored it yet and base their concern on expectations.

Other companies are unsure whether a better material even exists. They have specific qualitative requirements for their materials and have not yet found a more sustainable alternative that can replace their existing high performing materials.

Fear of greenwashing

Companies that choose to work with communication need to consider their message in relation to greenwashing. 18.8% of the companies explicitly cite this as a risk in their communication efforts. This risk is linked to not being able to get the correct documentation from suppliers, and also to incomplete knowledge of marketing law.