

Ruth Strange

**(Writer and Researcher
for the Ethical Consumer magazine)**

The environmental impact of the fashion industry

24 June 2020

3 sections:

- 1. Presentation (including interactive polls!)**
- 2. Comments & Questions**
- 3. Breakout rooms for responses
(feedback using chat box)**

www.ethicalconsumer.org

ethical
consumer

Ethical Consumer co-op, in Manchester, since 1989

**Website, social media, magazine every 2 months:
product guides ranking biggest companies and
alternatives – Best Buys, Recommended, Avoid.**

Articles, News pages, Beyond Consumerism...

**High Street Clothes Shops, Ethical Clothes Shops,
Online Retailers, shoes, trainers, energy, dairy...**

Less than £3/month subscription! All the stories....

Fast Fashion - issue 180

ethical
consumer



Fast Fashion figures

ethical
consumer

Textile industry – produces more greenhouse gas emissions than all international flights and shipping combined.

Clothing industry annual carbon footprint close to whole EU.

Average UK consumer buys 60% more clothes than 15 years ago, but keeps them half as long.

Collections doubled. Clothing costs 50% less in UK 1995-2014. Less than 1% recycled to new.

Encourages overconsumption, waste.....

POLL 1!

Fast Fashion figures

ethical
consumer

POLL 1

On 21st June, how many styles on the clothing website 'Pretty Little Thing' were listed as 'New In This Week'?

- 153
- 353
- 653
- 953
- 1153

(And the answer is 1153!)

Environmental Audit Committee: Fixing Fashion

Named least engaged clothes manufacturers: TKMaxx, Amazon, Missguided, JD Sports, SportsDirect.

Recommendations for legislation:

POLL 2!



Fixing Fashion: a House of Commons report

POLL 2

Which of the following recommendations of the 2019 *Fixing Fashion* report were rejected by the UK government?

- Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP) should be made mandatory for all retailers with a turnover of more than £36 million.
- Ban incinerating or landfilling unsold stock that can be reused or recycled
- A charge of one penny per garment on producers in order to raise investment for better clothing collection and sorting in the UK

(and the answer is - all of them!)

Textile issues –

**Viscose production – chemicals in wastewater
(including bamboo unless organic)**

**Cotton – it's not natural! (unless organic) – one of
most heavily sprayed crops**

**Microfibres – especially fleeces. Guppy bag, wash
lower temperature/spin cycle, full load**

POLL 3!

Poll 3

Which part of fashion consumption do you think has the biggest
climate impact?

- Fibre production
- Fabric production
- Garment production
- Distribution and retail
- Consumer transportation
- Laundry

(And - perhaps surprisingly - the answer is fabric production)

Our clothing sector ratings include....

ethical
consumer

Supply chain policy

Cotton sourcing policy (e.g. workers rights, pollution, and controversial technology, such as genetic modification)

Toxic chemicals (clothing)

Animal rights (silk, down, merino, angora, leather)

Operations in oppressive regimes/ Non-disclosure

Tax avoidance, excessive pay, e.g. GAP, TKMaxx

What do we recommend?

ethical
consumer

Organic cotton – up to 94% less greenhouse gas emissions than other cotton. Also criteria on dyes, forced labour.

Recycled fabrics

Linen, hemp – lower impact

Extend life of clothes – swap and repair

Education about impacts of price-only buying

See Ethical Clothes Shops guide!

Not just about the product...

ethical
consumer

Its not just about the product. You might find more organic cotton on the high street, but...

**its about the company ethos, and business model....
Profit driven, or mission driven?**

E.g. garment workers and Covid-19:

<https://traidcraftexchange.org/fast-fashion-crisis>
<https://cleanclothes.org/news/2020/live-blog-on-how-the-coronavirus-influences-workers-in-supply-chains>

Hidden costs....

ethical
consumer

Clothes may be cheap but humanity pays elsewhere, in health issues from all kinds of pollution, in low wages, in loss of tax, in climate change...we need to demand better legislation

Need joined up thinking, to see connections...

Peer support? Fashion Revolution, Stitched Up...

Lots of inspiring campaigning, creative responses...

Comments & Questions

Raise hands physically or in participant box

Put comments in chat if you want

Three questions to explore

- 1. Changes you'd most like to see?**
- 2. Local connections you can make?**
- 3. Things you'd like to publicise / share / take action on?**

Try a go-round to begin