Sustainable Products
Helping our customers make sustainable choices

We want to bring sustainable fashion to the mainstream. That’s why we strive to make our clothes responsibly and sustainably, and to make sustainability highly visible in our collections. This means we’re always looking to make the best choices we can for our customers, so they don’t have to choose between what’s sustainable and what’s not. We focus on a variety of sustainable and recycled fibre sources, pioneer new circular fashion products, and ensure that the workers in our supply chain are treated with dignity and respect. In 2019, 64% of the clothing offered in our stores was more sustainable and certified or verified to credible third-party standards.\[^1\]

\[^1\] We define more sustainable raw materials as the proportion of raw materials sourced under a third-party certification. This includes, but is not limited to, certified organic cotton (OCS or GOTS), cotton placed as orders sourced under BCI, viscose sourced under the Canopy Style Initiative, certified recycled polyester (GRS, RCS, or equivalent), down sourced under the Responsible Down Standard (RDS), etc.

In 2019 we made a slight shift in our reconciliation methodology to better reflect our intentions and our efforts to source more Better Cotton. In previous years, we reported the volume of Better Cotton according to the Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs) received, not the volume of products we ordered. As a result, our tracking of Better Cotton did not represent our attempts to source more Better Cotton each year. Therefore, the 2019 Better Cotton share per placed orders sourced under BCI was 60%. This is part of our overall 64% more sustainable materials.

This year, we made good progress towards our 2020 goals by sourcing 94% of our cotton more sustainably, with significant movement in our uptake of Better Cotton.\[^1\] We have
also expanded our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ collection and collaborated with our supply chain to produce the world’s first Platinum level Cradle to Cradle Certified™ denim fabric.

[1] Note that in 2019 we made a slight shift in our reconciliation methodology to better reflect our intentions and our efforts to source more Better Cotton. In previous years, we reported the volume of Better Cotton according to the Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs) received, not the volume of products we ordered. As a result, our tracking of Better Cotton did not represent our attempts to source more Better Cotton each year. Therefore, the 2019 Better Cotton share per placed orders sourced under BCI was 60%. Per BCCUs credited, it was 51%.

Our ambition

Offering the most sustainable choices

C&A demonstrates our commitment to sustainable and circular products by providing our customers with a wide variety of choices. Our 2020 goals put us on the right track to achieving this ambition. We strive to:

• Offer the most sustainable products we can, made with respect for those in our supply chain.
• Always use credible, peer-reviewed third-party standards to manage the integrity of our claims.
• Conduct due diligence on the ground.
• Continue to drive supply and demand for certified organic cotton and Better Cotton.
• Source sustainable raw materials and use fewer less sustainable raw materials where possible.
• Always respect animal welfare.
• Pioneer circular fashion solutions and continue to incorporate circular design principles into our design and production.
• Collaborate with other leading brands, initiatives, and innovators to drive sustainable and scalable change.

Our 2020 goals for sustainable products

100% of our cotton will be more sustainable by 2020.
67%

of all our raw materials, such as cotton, viscose and polyester, will be from more sustainable sources by 2020.

Continually increase Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products in our retail stores.

Partner with Fashion for Good to support circular innovations in our supply chain.

**Our 2019 performance**

**Towards 100% more sustainable cotton**

Cotton is the raw material we use the most worldwide, making up 57% of the materials we use. In 2019, we significantly increased our share of more sustainable cotton by accelerating our uptake and reconciliation of Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs). In 2019, the Better Cotton share per placed orders sourced under BCI was 60%. Our certified organic cotton share in 2019 was 34%, due to our continued focus on traceability, connections at the farm level, and placement of organic cotton in our collections. We intend to increase our share of certified organic cotton in the coming years as we strengthen our programme and approach. Note that in 2019 we made a slight shift in our reconciliation methodology to better reflect our intentions and our efforts to source more Better Cotton. In previous years, we reported the volume of Better Cotton according to the Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs) received, not the volume of products we ordered. As a result, our tracking of Better Cotton did not represent our attempts to source more Better Cotton each year. Therefore, the 2019 Better Cotton share per placed orders sourced under BCI was 60%. Per BCCUs credited, it was 51%.

**Towards more traceable cotton**

Another important step forward is the groundbreaking Fashion for Good-initiated Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot in which we participated with C&A Foundation, the Organic Cotton Accelerator (OCA), Bext360, Zalando, PVH Corp., and Kering. This collaborative, pioneering initiative uses new technology to trace organic cotton in textiles through the value chain, which is valuable to ensuring the integrity, quality, and purity of organic cotton — and can be used to make sure it is not blended with conventionally grown cotton at any stage, if so desired.

Because the apparel supply chain is fragmented and complex, it is challenging to trace garments to their origins. The pilot is evaluating blockchain technology to enable traceability. The approach allows for efficient integration of data from multiple sources in the supply chain and the use of machine vision, artificial intelligence, micro-biome sequencing, and on-product unique markers to guarantee integrity and quality.

At the farm, the solution’s digital trail creates transparency by verifying the material and ensuring the fair price brands are paying reach the farmers. The digital trail also simplifies
transactions for farmers and enables banks to provide loans. At the consumer level, the technology sheds a light on the suppliers and manufacturers behind a final product, increasing transparency. So far, the pilot has focused on the cotton spinning process. The next step will trace through to dyeing and finishing, and finally to the consumer.

Read more about our work on certified organic cotton
Read more about our work on Better Cotton

100% responsibly sourced down

All of our down continues to be certified against the Responsible Down Standard (RDS).

Read more about our work on responsible down and feathers

Protecting natural resources

Viscose is our third largest fibre by volume and makes up 8% of the raw materials we use. This year we continued to source 100% of our viscose from suppliers that are considered low risk for sourcing from ancient and endangered forests identified in the 2019 CanopyStyle Initiative Hot Button Report.

On a global level, we have taken our commitment to responsible man-made cellulosics even further by committing to the Changing Markets Foundation Roadmap, released in 2018. The roadmap marks an important milestone towards responsible viscose and modal fibre manufacturing and outlines the steps needed to address these challenges.

Read more about our work on man-made cellulosics

Sustainable materials
Increasing our offerings

We are proud of what we’ve achieved in 2019: making significant progress towards our target of sourcing 100% more sustainable cotton by 2020 and increasing the sustainability of our raw materials to 67% by 2020.
This year, 94% of the cotton we sourced and 64% of the raw materials we used were more sustainable, partly due to significant increases in the Better Cotton share per placed orders sourced, which grew to 60% in 2019.

**Why sustainable materials are so important**

Our clothing is made from a wide variety of raw materials, including cotton, polyester, viscose, wool, linen, and leather. In particular, C&A strives to drive change in how cotton, polyester, viscose, and cashmere are grown and manufactured. To ensure the materials we use to make our clothes are more sustainable, we strive to source them from farms and work with manufacturers that use fewer natural resources, respect nature and people, and protect the welfare of animals. From sourcing fibres and dyeing fabrics to cutting and sewing clothing, we're working hard to reduce the impacts of our materials and design more innovative products.

**The range of impacts for different materials**

![Graph showing CO₂ emissions per kg of fibre for cotton, polyester, and viscose, as well as water use in litres per kg of fibre.]

**Who we’re working with**
How we’re working to make sustainable materials the norm

Using the most sustainable materials possible in our products is one way we ensure our customers feel good and do good. We believe in making our clothing responsibly: creating products that are the best they can be, while supporting the welfare of those in our supply chain. To do this, we:

- Set targets across the business, so everyone has a stake in ensuring our materials meet the highest standards.
- Create strong policies on key impact areas like water use, biodiversity and climate change.
- Conduct due diligence that goes beyond simply relying on third-party standards.
- Work with stakeholders and industry leaders who champion best practice to make our products the best they can be. And we don’t stop there – we encourage others in the industry to join us in extending positive outcomes far beyond our businesses.
- Use industry and multi-stakeholder-developed standards and initiatives rather than develop our own standards and initiatives. We believe common frameworks at a global level are the only way of shifting the whole industry towards best practice.
- Work to reduce the water and chemical use, carbon, and waste impacts of the apparel industry, while ensuring people’s rights in our supply chain are protected.

Read more about cultivating supply and demand for organic cotton in China

More sustainable cotton

Overcoming challenges toward our goal

Our 2020 goal is to ensure that all of our cotton is more sustainable — either sourced as certified organic cotton (Organic Cotton Standard, OCS, or Global Organic Textile Standard, GOTS), Better Cotton, recycled cotton, or transitional cotton (transitional cotton is produced by farmers during the time of conversion to organic certification, usually 3 years). As we near our goal, we realise that achieving the last several percent to 100% more sustainable cotton may be challenging.
Over the last year as we reached 94% more sustainable cotton, we have encountered challenges that could affect our ability to reach our final goal of 100% more sustainable cotton. The challenges we are working to overcome in 2020 include:

1. Reconciliation of Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs): There are technical constraints associated with the reconciliation of BCCUs. In addition, it is also difficult to reconcile BCCUs of small orders.
2. Changes in fibre mix due to changes in fashion trends: New trends could cause a shift in our supply chain, requiring additional on-boarding of suppliers.
3. The organic cotton supply is limited: Less than 1% of cotton is grown as organic and our share increase could be limited by supply.
4. Identifying a safe source of recycled cotton: Recycled cotton could contain chemicals that do not comply with our standards.
5. Creating a stronger connection with transitional farmers: We currently have a limited engagement with farmers who are converting to certified organic.

**Why focus on cotton?**

**Strong policies support a more sustainable world.**

Cotton is used by nearly everyone, every day, and supports 250 million people’s livelihoods [SOURCE: BCI]. Cotton also makes up 57% of the materials we use in our clothing, so it’s where we can have the biggest impact with the right interventions.

Conventional cotton farming and production processes have a much bigger impact than more sustainable cotton. This is why we follow strict policies to ensure the integrity of our more sustainable cotton fibre from farm to store, and commit to sourcing only more sustainable cotton by 2020:

- **Water use and policy:** A regular cotton T-shirt takes 2,700 litres of water [SOURCE: WWF] to make, most of which is needed to grow the cotton. Cotton grown organically needs 91% less freshwater than when grown conventionally, because most of it is rain-fed [SOURCE: Textile Exchange]. Our policy for organic and BCI cotton is to enforce the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria on water stewardship. Adherence to these principles is managed through the Better Cotton Assurance Programme. For organic cotton, our policy is for farmers to follow water stewardship requirements as defined in the USDA National Organic Programme §205.200 and the European Commission Council Regulation 834/2007, Title II, Article 3. These production standards are certified under the Textile Exchange Organic Content Standard (OCS) or the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), by third party certification bodies.

- **Pesticide use and policy:** Conventional cotton uses around 5% of all the herbicides and 16% of all insecticides applied globally in agriculture [SOURCE: International Cotton Advisory Committee]. This poses risks to the environment and to farmers’ health. Organic cotton eliminates the application of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. To ensure pesticides are not used in organic cotton farming, we follow a zero synthetic pesticides policy for certified organic cotton as defined in the USDA National Organic Programme §205.105, the Indian National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) section 3, and
where applicable, the EU Regulation for Organic Production and Labelling 834/2007. These practices are certified against the OCS or GOTS standard by third party certification bodies. For Better Cotton, we adhere to the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) guiding principle of minimising the harmful impacts of crop protection practices in the Production Principles and Criteria, including the BCI Pesticides List Classification.

- **Greenhouse gas emissions**: Organic cotton produces 46% fewer GHG emissions than conventional cotton [SOURCE: Textile Exchange]. Our policy for GHGs is to follow the Science Based Target Initiative and our goals, approved in 2019, for absolute GHG reductions to avoid a global temperature rise of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

- **Labour issues and our policy**: Forced and bonded labour is a key challenge in the cotton industry. The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) has a strong focus on ensuring decent work, covering freedom of association, non-discrimination, abolishing child labour and forced labour, and safeguarding health and safety. BCI has also set up an expert Task Force on Forced Labour and Decent Work to review selected elements of the Better Cotton Standard System. Based on this review, the Task Force will produce recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the system in identifying, preventing, mitigating, and remediating forced labour risks [SOURCE: BCI]. Our policy for safe and fair labour is our Supplier Code of Conduct, which covers safe and dignified work from farm to store.

- **Biodiversity policy**: Biodiversity is an outcome of more sustainable cotton production and the application of the BCI and national production standards at the farm level. To facilitate biodiversity at the farm level, our policy is to require that both BCI and national production standards for organic cotton be followed and certified at the farm level. For Better Cotton, our policy requires that all farmers abide by Principle 4 of the BCI Principles and Criteria, which are audited by BCI on a periodic basis. For certified organic cotton, we require farmers to comply with the National production standards’ (NPOP, NOP, and EU) principles of effective management of soil fertility, facilitating wildlife habitats, and maintaining agro-diverse crops at the farm level, which is in the heart of organic cotton cultivation. Our position on biodiversity in organic cotton production is supported by national production standards and certified against the OCS and GOTS standards.

- **Supply issues**: Cotton farmers are moving away from cultivating cotton in favour of more profitable crops such as tobacco, soybeans, or pulses, partly due to plunging cotton prices and difficulties accessing quality seeds [SOURCE: OCA]. Growing more sustainable cotton provides them better access to markets as well as training and learning opportunities to adopt more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable production practices.

Read more about certified organic cotton

Read more about Better Cotton

**Where our cotton is grown**

Cotton is a shrub that is native to tropical and subtropical regions all over the world, including the Americas, Africa, Egypt, and India. Currently, 90% of the certified organic cotton used in our garments comes from India, where small holder farmers grow cotton and other staple crops using organic farming practices. In recent years, we have worked with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in China to cultivate new sources of transitional cotton in the Binzhou region in Northern Shandong Province.

Read more about certified organic cotton
Read more about Better Cotton

Our 2019 actions

Continue working towards our 2020 goal for 100% of our cotton to be more sustainable.

Increase Better Cotton uptake in all our retail markets.

Our 2019 performance

Progress towards our 2020 goal

This year we reached 94% more sustainable cotton, of which 34% was certified organic cotton and 60% was Better Cotton. Our one-year increase from 71% in 2018 is due to the following actions:

• Better reconciliation processes for Better Cotton:

• We have improved how we reconcile orders with Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs) claimed.

• This includes a slight shift in our methodology to better reflect our intentions and our efforts to source more Better Cotton. In previous years, we reported the volume of Better Cotton according to the BCCUs received, not the volume of products we ordered. As a result, our tracking of Better Cotton did not represent our attempts to source more Better Cotton each year.

• For example, in 2019, we placed orders for Better Cotton products that represented 60% of the total cotton pieces ordered. According to the BCCUs credited, the percentage of
Better Cotton products was 51%. The 9% difference is a direct result of the technical constraints associated with the reconciliation of BCCUs and not a representation of our intentions to source more Better Cotton.

- Training of our suppliers in the BCI process: We have invested time in educating our suppliers in how BCI and the Better Cotton Traceability System work.
- Better connection with organic farm groups in Pakistan: We have developed relationships with farmers and farm groups to secure organic cotton.
- Exploration of new organic sources: We have identified additional countries where organic cotton production is increasing

**More sustainable cotton as a % of total cotton sourced**

*From 2012 to 2016, this included REEL cotton

**Leading in more sustainable cotton**

C&A was listed in the Textile Exchange Leaders Circle for more sustainable cotton and ranked #4 in the WWF/PAN Sustainable Cotton Ranking  [SOURCES: Textile Exchange; WWF, PAN, and Solidaridad]

**Signing the Prince of Wales Cotton Communiqué**

In 2017, we joined the Prince of Wales Cotton Communiqué, the first cross-standard initiative for more sustainable cotton. The communiqué, set up by the Prince of Wales International Sustainability Unit in partnership with Marks & Spencer and the Soil Association, asks brands and retailers to procure more sustainable cotton and to pledge to source 100% sustainable cotton by 2025.
Our own goal is to be sourcing 100% more sustainable cotton by 2020 and, as the world’s top buyer of certified organic cotton and third top buyer of more sustainable cotton, we have the opportunity to share our learnings with our industry and to encourage collaboration between sustainable cotton standards. To this end, we have contributed to the CottonUp guide — supported by Laudes Foundation — by publishing a case study on our journey towards more sustainable cotton. The interactive CottonUp guide addresses three major topics related to sustainable cotton: why it’s important, what you need to know and do, and how to get started.

**Tackling climate change**

Organic cotton reduces the global warming potential of cotton production by 46% [SOURCE: Textile Exchange] and is therefore a key component of our climate change strategy and the development of our science-based targets.

Read more about our action on carbon and climate change

**Supporting cotton workers in our supply chain**

Buying organic cotton has a direct positive impact on the health and safety of people in farming communities who are no longer exposed to hazardous chemicals. We also have a history of taking concrete steps to support cotton workers when required. More than 10 years ago in 2007, we signed the Cotton Pledge against forced labour, committing to end the practice of forced labour in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan.

Likewise, C&A does not buy any apparel from manufacturers based in China's Xinjiang province and we have not contracted any fabric or yarn mill located in this region either. We are working together with a number of major brands to better understand the current situation in the Xinjiang Region and to define the actions that need to be taken to ensure an effective due-diligence process in particular with regards to Chinese cotton production.

We do not tolerate any kind of forced, bonded or prison labour, or any kind of unauthorised subcontracting in our supply chain. This is clearly laid out and communicated through our Supplier Code of Conduct and checked using regular audits by our Sustainable Supply Chain team. All of our suppliers are required to sign and comply with our Code of Conduct as part of our contractual relationship and purchasing agreements.

Read more about how we support cotton workers in our supply chain

**Making more sustainable cotton the norm**

Since our journey to more sustainable cotton started more than 10 years ago, it has been a cross-functional effort, embedded in our day-to-day activities. Driven by targets, owned by the business, and reported on at the highest level, more sustainable cotton is a central commitment for C&A. Our efforts reach beyond our operations: we seek to improve cotton agriculture, the lives of farmers, and the environment. We are doing this by increasing global demand for organic cotton and Better Cotton, as well as building capacity from the ground up – from the grower to the garment maker – across our supplier network.
We believe in creating more sustainable cotton products for our customers without passing on any additional cost or making the choice difficult for them.

Our more sustainable cotton timeline

Certified organic cotton
Maintaining our leadership

Organic cotton has been at the heart of our sustainable materials strategy for more than 10 years. It is significantly better for the environment and the people who work with it. We are committed to buying and selling organic cotton and taking a stronger role in supporting the organic cotton sector, and have developed a leadership position in scaling our procurement of certified organic cotton. Since 2005, we have increased the number of certified organic cotton garments from 1 million to almost 157 million pieces through 2019.

Organic cotton also protects soil quality, biodiversity, and water supply, while preventing
water pollution. And it’s safer for farmers and their communities’ health. From the grower to the garment maker, our organic cotton supply chain is certified to the Organic Content Standard (OCS) or Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and never blended with conventional cotton. This means that any C&A product in the store labelled with our BIO COTTON seal is guaranteed and certified by OCS and GOTS that the supply chain of the cotton has been thoroughly monitored from source to the final product.

Read more about communicating with customers

**Our 2019 performance**

**Our evolution in certified organic cotton**

For 2019, our certified organic cotton share was 34%, a slight decrease from 2018. In lieu of increasing the share of organic cotton, we have focused primarily on traceability and our internal buying processes to ensure the high integrity of our organic cotton claims. Actions taken in 2019 include:

- Improving internal systems to track Transaction Certificates and improve ease of reporting
- Directly connecting with farm groups and farmers in Pakistan to secure fibre prior to production, which incentivises farmers to remain with organic cotton throughout the transition process
- Piloting the Organic Cotton Accelerator's Farmer Engagement and Development programme (FED) to ensure payment of premiums to farmers
- Investigating transitional cotton to define potential future sources
- Participating in the world's first Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot (OCTP) with Fashion for Good, connecting blockchain technology with physical tracers

For the ways in which our use for organic cotton helps to reduce our carbon and water footprints, view the Climate and Water chapters of this report.
How we maintain integrity

**Ensuring the certified organic cotton we buy is really organic**

We do our utmost to secure the integrity of our organic cotton – going beyond certification and what’s required legally, with due diligence and third-party assessment. These additional checks include organic seed screening, seed linkage with organic farmers, training of farmers and ginners, supply chain mapping, and yarn spinner nomination. Going forward, we will be continuing our testing of organic cotton for genetically modified organism (GMO) contamination at the farm level (with the help of CottonConnect) through due diligence and third-party assessment.

**Case Study**

**Supporting the extension of organic cotton farming in China**

We continue our work with CottonConnect at Binzhou farm in China’s Shandong Province to create scale for organic cotton in one of the only organic cotton projects currently underway in China.
It takes three years to transition cotton crops to fully organic. As part of this project, C&A China committed to buy cotton during these transition years, which are challenging and risky years for farmers as they move from conventional to organic crops. This commitment was made before the sowing season, providing farmers with market access, additional incentives, and financial security. In addition, C&A China offered to pay the farmers a premium to secure their income and compensate for any loss of yield during the transition process.

In 2017, C&A China bought the entire crop produced by all 105 farmers involved in the project: around 80 metric tons. The cotton was used to make 147,000 T-shirts and 60,000 pairs of jeans, the first of which reached stores in April 2018 around Earth Day. In-store communications helped customers identify the new products made with this transition cotton. During 2018, C&A China expanded the project to a total of 300 farmers, purchasing 90 metric tons of in-transition cotton to produce 144,000 T-shirts and 80,400 pairs of jeans. We also worked with farmers to improve their harvesting technology and prevent the accidental introduction of foreign fibres, which can affect quality and lead to wastage during spinning and cutting.

In 2019, Binzhou farmers produced 80 metric tons of cotton to make 100,000 pieces of clothing for sale by C&A China in 2020.

**Collaborating to address market challenges**

Less than 1% of cotton produced globally is organic, and the sector faces challenges such as a lack of availability and access to quality non-GMO seeds, few incentives for farmers to transition, limited access to the market, and lack of supply chain traceability and transparency. Despite a growing demand for organic cotton, farmers are moving out of production, and the whole sector is at risk if the industry is unable to address these issues effectively. So, we are continuing our work to strengthen the organic cotton sector, working with trusted partners to create a common vision for the sector.

Since 2014, we have supported the Organic Cotton Accelerator (OCA), which aims to create an organic cotton market that benefits everyone, from the farmer to the customer. C&A is a founding partner (and serves on the Board of Trustees) and Laudes Foundation is providing core financial support. With our fellow OCA affiliates – brands, retailers, non-profit organisations, and social enterprises – we’re working to find the best ways to
strengthen the organic cotton sector and support healthy supply and demand. Plans include:

- Making better seeds available.
- Improving the business case for growing organic cotton.
- Promoting best practices throughout the organic cotton supply chain.
- Improving integrity and market transparency.

**Successfully tracing organic cotton with innovative technologies**

The pioneering Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot successfully combines on-product markers and blockchain technology to track organic cotton from farm to consumer – a first in the apparel industry. The multi-stakeholder projects was initiated by Fashion for Good in collaboration with C&A Foundation[1], and the Organic Cotton Accelerator, with support from C&A, Kering, PVH Corp., and Zalando, with Fashion for Good innovator Bext360 as the leading technical partner.

**A collaborative effort from farm to consumer**

Emerging technologies are beginning to offer brands the tools they need to efficiently and reliably verify materials, but until now these have not been successfully applied in the garment industry. The Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot was initiated in 2018 by Fashion for Good and the partner organisations to test and validate on-product markers in combination with blockchain technology as a traceability solution in real-world practice. Details of the pilot were announced earlier last year prior to in-field testing, which concluded this past summer.

The unique collaborative nature of the pilot project was key to its successful outcome. The partner organisations provided expertise to direct the pilot as well as financial support to
fund project activities. C&A was instrumental to the project, leveraging our supply chain - Pratibha Syntex Limited, a vertically integrated manufacturing facility from farm to fashion in India supporting in-field trials, as well as our retail expertise - to fully explore production from fibre to garment available in stores across Europe.\footnote{[2]}

**Exploring new practises with cutting-edge technology**

The lead technical partner, Bext360 blockchain integrated the technologies of supporting technical partners Haelixa, Tailorlux, IN-Code Technologies, and Corebiome, whose DNA, invisible fluorescent, and microbiome\footnote{[3]} technologies, respectively, were applied in tracking the organic cotton. After enduring the harsh manufacturing processes of spinning, chemical treatments, high temperatures, and dyeing, the DNA and invisible fluorescent tracers emerged intact to positively identify the cotton in consumer-ready garments in retail outlets. E-Code NFC tags\footnote{[4]} provided by IN-Code Technologies enabled additional verification by way of unique digital data points collected through production. Deploying machine vision and artificial intelligence to automatically catalogue and grade the quality of the cotton, the Bext360 blockchain platform can then track each transaction through the entire value chain.

"The success of the Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot provides a positive impulse towards traceability and transparency in the value chain. We’ve gathered sufficient insights and evidence to support the case, in terms of technical as well as operational viability, for the wider implementation of the process in the organic cotton industry. In addition, the process shows enormous potential for further expansion to include other fibres in the fashion supply chain."

Katrin Ley, Managing Director of Fashion for Good.

Current traceability systems, though reliable, rely largely on paper-based trails of certification as well as various, separate systems to manage the chain of custody. The new process explored in the Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot creates a digital and physical trail that increases reliability of traceability by combining the immutability of blockchain with on-product markers that verify the identity of the fibre. This method comes closest to full traceability of the origin, purity, and distribution of the cotton within the current landscape. At the consumer level, the solution can be used to communicate which suppliers and manufacturers have worked together to create the final product.

**Transparency in the value chain**

In recent years, there has been increasing pressure for transparency along the fashion value chain from both consumers and governments. Simultaneously, greater awareness of the social and environmental impact of the fashion industry has catalysed intense interest and positive action towards more sustainable practices. Organic cotton promotes healthy soils, healthy ecosystems, healthy people, and thriving farming communities and is consequently a key fibre in the sustainability strategies of fashion brands worldwide. It offers a lower ecological impact – reducing exposure to insecticides, pesticides, and other chemicals, than conventional cotton production, which involves some of the highest use of pesticides and incurs a heavy water footprint. By having fully traceable organic cotton, the hope is to grow its use in the industry while increasing awareness of sustainable products.

**Future potential and awareness**

Since July 2020, the Fashion for Good Experience in Amsterdam – a consumer-facing
museum focused on sustainable fashion and innovation – features an organic cotton T-shirt from the very supply chain in this pilot project. By scanning a QR Code, visitors can discover the journey of the cotton in the T-shirt. Besides the exhibition in the museum, the Experience will host events around transparency and traceability to educate consumers about their importance. Insights from the pilot will be shared to raise awareness of the significance of organic cotton as well as the benefits of a transparent supply chain.

[1] In January 2020, C&A Foundation became part of Laudes Foundation.

[2] In C&A stores in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain.

[3] The extraction process using microbiome tracing was inconclusive in this pilot, having no current precedent for extracting biome material from seed or lint cotton. Test data from soil samples taken from participating farms provided promising insights into the future potential for this technology.

[4] Near Field Communication tags are tiny electronic chips which can store and transmit information using radio frequencies that can be read over short distances by a device or smartphone.

Supporting organic cotton farmers

In 2019 to 2020, C&A Foundation[1] supported almost 50,000 farmers adopt organic cotton cultivation practices with support from partners such as Cotton Connect, Rare, and Action for Social Advancement (ASA), among others. In 2019 alone, the foundation provided over €7 million for social and environmental programmes in India, China, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Brazil.


Today, as Laudes, the foundation it continues to support various multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Organic Cotton Accelerator, Cotton 2040, and Organic and Fairtrade Cotton Secretariat, to create an enabling environment for sustainable cotton in addition to improving farmers’ incomes and livelihoods. Higher farmer incomes not only benefit farming communities, but also pave the way for greater scalability in organic cotton.

[1] In January 2020, C&A Foundation became part of Laudes Foundation.

Where next?

Bolstering the organic cotton industry

Industry initiatives must align on global standards to provide the vision and drive needed for the organic cotton industry to thrive. It is only through collective action that we will be able to capitalise on the growing enthusiasm for organic cotton – and ensure that together we can take the sector to a position of greater strength.

Advancing transitional cotton

In 2020, we will continue to evaluate new transitional organic cotton projects to develop stronger relationships at the farm, farm group, and ginning level. Direct engagement will allow us to increase our commitments and ensure that farmer premiums are paid.

Further evaluating traceability approaches

Building upon our work with Fashion for Good to conduct the world’s first Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot, we plan to take the learnings from the study to understand how to scale blockchain and physical tracers in our supply chain.

Connecting with customers

Since early 2018 when we launched our first global customer-facing sustainability communications platform, #WearTheChange, we have communicated with customers in stores, online, and through special events about our more sustainable products and their environmental benefits. We plan to continue communicating our more sustainable cotton products to customers throughout 2020 under the #WearTheChange umbrella platform.

Read more about communicating with customers

The Better Cotton Initiative
Better for farmers and the environment

C&A joined the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) in 2015. While maintaining our leadership and share of organic cotton, we also accelerated our share of Better Cotton in 2019.

Better Cotton is produced in 23 countries and reaches 1.6 million farmers, with a goal to include 5 million farmers and represent 30% of global cotton production in 2020. The initiative trains farmers to produce cotton in ways that respect the environment, boost their incomes, and strengthen the industry. To earn a Better Cotton licence, farmers must demonstrate that they adhere to six principles:

- Minimising their use of harmful pesticides
- Using water efficiently
- Caring for the health of the soil
- Conserving natural habitats and biodiversity
- Preserving and caring for the health of the fibre
- Promoting decent work

These principles help to significantly reduce the impact of growing cotton. The standard can be applied to farms of all sizes and complements other standards for sustainable cotton. While it does not replace our commitment to organic cotton, sourcing Better Cotton is not only vital to our cornerstone commitment of sourcing 100% more sustainable cotton by 2020, but is also a prudent approach to mitigate impacts where organic cotton is not feasible or available. It can be produced in greater quantities than organic cotton because the process advocates a more ‘inclusive’ approach alongside other farming methods. It works via a mass balance system, meaning that each unit of Better Cotton we buy supports the production of a unit of Better Cotton somewhere in the world. It also means that the costly segregation process is not necessary, making Better Cotton easier to adopt in the chain, and as a result, is more scalable.

In 2019, 60% of the cotton we bought was sourced as Better Cotton, supporting better social and environmental conditions on the ground and contributing more rapidly and extensively to transforming the industry for the better.

What is mass balance and why does it make sense?
BCI works using a **mass balance system**, which encourages suppliers to buy and use more Better Cotton in a cost-efficient manner because it does not require complexities that result in costly physical segregation along the supply chain. Mass balance means what comes out must balance with what went in. For example, if a retailer places an order for finished garments like T-shirts and requests one metric ton of Better Cotton be associated with this order, a cotton farmer somewhere must produce one metric ton of cotton to the Better Cotton Standard. This is then registered on BCI’s supply chain system and credits for the order are passed through the supply chain for that same weight in cotton, from one factory to the next. The result is the equivalent amount of cotton that the farmer produced as Better Cotton, but it has been mixed in with conventional cotton in its journey from field to product.

**Membership in the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund**

As well as driving demand for Better Cotton through procurement, we also want to be a part of its future. We are part of the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund, which exists to propel BCI towards its 2020 target to train over five million farmers by 2020. This will support increasing supply and speed up implementation.

[Read more about Better Cotton](#)

**Our 2019 performance**

**Better Cotton as a % of total cotton sourced**

![Graph showing Better Cotton as a % of total cotton sourced from 2017 to 2019]

**Creating a market in Brazil**

Although Better Cotton is grown in Brazil, few Brazilian suppliers and retailers buy it so most of it is exported. By working with our biggest spinners and engaging our supply chain, we accelerated uptake significantly in just over three years, allowing Better Cotton grown on our doorstep to be used locally. We were the first brand in Brazil to engage our supply chain on the use of Better Cotton and over the last 2 years, we have increased the number of BCI members and Better Cotton Platform users to over 60 companies.

**Promoting uptake in Mexico**
We have been working with supply chain partners in various regions to help develop our supply chains as they move towards procuring more sustainable cotton. For instance, C&A Mexico accelerated its sourcing of cotton as Better Cotton by providing training to suppliers and internal teams during 2018 and 2019. C&A also encouraged spinners in Mexico to become members of BCI. We now work with eight spinners in Mexico that have an active BCI membership, including four that either acquired or renewed their membership as a result of efforts by C&A Mexico. Over the last 2 years, these efforts have been fundamental to maintaining the share of cotton sourced as Better Cotton at 46% — nearly half of all cotton sourced by C&A in Mexico.

**Helping drive industry-wide change**

By joining the Better Cotton Initiative – along with many mainstream industry partners – we are increasing demand for cotton made in better ways. At the end of 2019, retailer and brand member sourcing of Better Cotton accounted for 6% of global cotton consumption. In 2019, BCI experienced a historic level of uptake as 150 retailers, including C&A, and brand members sourced more than 1.5 million metric tons of Better Cotton, and Better Cotton production grew 40% over the previous year.

Read BCI's [2019 annual report](#)

**Where next?**

In 2020, we are working hard to account for the total volume of Better Cotton procured. As stated previously, a number of challenges could present difficulties in achieving the last few percentage points toward our goal. We will therefore focus on the following actions:

1. **Further improve reconciliation**: We made good progress in 2019, and will continue to focus on reconciliation of small orders and fractions of BCCUs.
2. **Keep up with fashion trends**: When fashion trends change, it is possible that we may change suppliers. All new suppliers will need to be on-boarded into the BCI system.
3. **Overcome lack of BCI members in Mexico**: C&A continues to be one of the only brands in Mexico sourcing Better Cotton. Because of the lack of demand in Mexico, suppliers often charge prohibitive premiums that are not in line with the Better Cotton principles and are duplicative of our Volume Based Fee.
Going forward, we anticipate working with BCI and our suppliers to ensure reconciliation of BCCUs to most accurately reflect our efforts to source more Better Cotton and track our progress at sourcing more Better Cotton as accurately as possible within the well-known technical constraints.

Other sustainably sourced materials
Sourced with respect for people, nature, and animals

Our clothing is made from a wide variety of raw materials, including natural fibres such as cotton, down, linen, and wool, as well as synthetic fibres such as polyester, and man-made cellulosics like viscose. Ensuring they’re more sustainable means the materials are grown and manufactured in ways that use fewer natural resources, respect nature and people, and ensure the welfare of animals throughout the supply chain.

We want our customers to feel good about the clothes they buy at C&A. We started our journey with more sustainable cotton – our most-used material – and are using what we’ve learned to develop and implement best practices for other sustainably sourced materials. Our 2020 goal is for 67% of our raw materials to be more sustainable.

In 2019, we made good progress against that goal, achieving a total of 64%. The vast majority of this progress has been driven by our work in more sustainable cotton. While we are confident that we will achieve our 2020 goal, over the past several years we have identified the following challenges to eventually increase the share to 100%:

1. Cost-effective source of recycled polyester: The price of recycled polyester is 10 to 20% higher than virgin polyester, depending on the volume purchased. We continue looking for cost-effective ways to incorporate more recycled polyester into our clothing. This includes working with Fashion for Good and the chemical recycling start-ups from their programmes to help scale technologies to bring costs down, while increasing the availability of chemically recycled polyester.
2. Scalable recycling technologies for mixed fibre fabrics. For instance, with cotton and polyester blends, no scalable or cost-effective chemical recycling technologies are available. We work closely with Fashion for Good, which identifies promising start-ups whose technologies (in this space) can be scaled.

**Why we focus on man-made fibres**

- 14.2kg of CO$_2$ is generated to make one kilogram of polyester fibre [SOURCE: WWF] and demand has been growing rapidly since the 1990s at 7% every year [SOURCE: Water Footprint Network].
- 120 million trees are felled each year to make cellulosic fabric in the clothing we all wear [SOURCE: Canopy].

**Why we focus on animal welfare**

Animal welfare is a key issue for our customers and C&A as a business. The mistreatment of animals is still prevalent across the world and materials can be hard to trace back to the farm where the animals were born and raised. Animal-based materials appear in a number of our products, from the down in our jackets to the wool in our sweaters, and we work hard to ensure that these materials do not come from mistreated animals. We also offer our customers the choice to select a synthetic substitute and always have an alternative in-store.

**Our 2019 actions**

- Continue progress towards our 2020 goal for 67% of our raw materials to be more sustainable.
- Continue sourcing 100% RDS-certified down
- Continue increasing the uptake of recycled fibres in Europe and China.
- Participate in the Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA), an international organisation working towards a sustainable cashmere supply chain.
Our 2019 performance

100% Responsible Down Standard-certified down

We have been sourcing 100% RDS-certified down since 2016. In 2019, we brought 479,000 products containing down to market, all certified to RDS.

Read more about down and feathers
Read more about man-made cellulosics
Read more about polyester

Who we’re working with

Textile Exchange, Canopy, Changing Markets Foundation, ZDHC

Collaborating to make sustainable raw materials the norm

To meet our 2020 targets for raw materials, we have formed or joined partnerships with leading industry stakeholders seeking to implement change faster and more effectively. We use tried and tested, independently audited initiatives to improve our performance. Once we have achieved those best practice standards, we seek to collaborate further, taking the industry with us along the way.

Reducing the use of virgin plastics

C&A has joined the Circular Polybag Pilot launched by Fashion for Good, a platform for sustainable innovation we have partnered with since 2017. This is the first pilot of its kind in the fashion industry that focuses on scalable solutions to address the issue of plastics. The solution being evaluated in the pilot involves manufacturing a clear recycled polybag using a high percentage of polybag waste, including ink and adhesive contaminants. The pilot aims to validate and further implement this new supply of waste for recycled content polybag production, returning the recycled bags back into circulation within the supply chain.

Although polybags are of course not used in our clothing, they are common in the fashion industry, where they are used to store, transport, and protect garments, footwear, and accessories. Our engagement on this project is one of several routes C&A is exploring to reduce the use of virgin plastics industry wide, including in our supply chain and our stores.

Read more about this innovative Fashion for Good project
Animal-based fibres
Protecting animal welfare and the environment

C&A is committed to protecting animal welfare and the environment where animals are raised. To this end, we uphold the Five Freedoms for animal welfare and environmental standards when there is potential for significant impact.

How we approach animal welfare

Our policy on animal welfare states that we will:

- Expect our suppliers to abide by the internationally-accepted Five Freedoms for animal welfare.
- Never use products for which animals have been slaughtered or harmed in any way for their skin, fur, or feathers.
- Strive to increase traceability from the farm to the final product.
- Only use raw materials that come from animals used for meat production.
- Never accept materials from exotic, threatened, or endangered species, as defined by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list of threatened species.

Our approach is collaborative, working hand in hand with others who are tackling similar issues. We set, define, and implement industry level solutions with animal welfare organisations, fellow brands, retailers, our suppliers, and independent auditors.

We also actively listen, welcoming challenges and criticism that can help us improve. Ensuring high standards of animal welfare means that the apparel industry must be accountable for the promises we make.

Read more about how we engage with our stakeholders

For the last 10 years, we have worked hard to eradicate animal welfare issues from our supply chain. We started banning fur in the 1990s and have been a Fur Free Retailer since 2013. To date, we have banned the following materials and practices:

- Live-plucking and force-feeding geese and ducks for down and feather production
The use of angora, real fur, and mohair
- The practice of mulesing merino sheep
- Bovine-based leather from India, or leather with hair attached from China or India

Read our animal welfare policy here

How we approach environmental protection in animal agriculture

We recognise that animal welfare is not the only impact of animal-based fibre production. For several animal-based fibres, including wool and cashmere, we apply industry standards such as the Textile Exchange's Responsible Wool Standard (RWS). This standard focuses on improving environmental resilience and increasing regenerative agriculture through rangeland stewardship and best practices in land management at the herder level.

Our 2019 performance

Maintaining our Responsible Down Standard-certified supply chain

C&A continues to source 100% RDS-certified down for all of our collections that contain down or feathers.

During the year, we continued applying our findings from 2017, when we conducted additional due diligence visits to RDS-certified supply chains to determine where further improvements could be made. Our visit showed that, in the future, we should rely less on local legislation to define our minimum requirements, instead supporting RDS to make sure it sets minimum standards that can be applied in markets where legislation is not stringent. We should also strengthen the standard requirements over time to ensure continuous improvement in animal welfare practices and include training modules to drive awareness among suppliers. This work continued in 2019.

Read more about responsibly sourced down

Safeguarding animal welfare in cashmere production

For the last few years we have focused on cashmere with the Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA), a non-profit international organisation working with the extended cashmere supply chain, from herders to retailers.

Currently, more than 25 international brands and retailers have joined SFA, united in a goal to implement the Sustainable Cashmere Standard to preserve and restore grasslands, ensure animal welfare, and secure livelihoods. The SFA provides an excellent forum to jointly identify actions that address three main objectives:

- Environmental resilience in cashmere-producing regions
- Improved long-term prospects for herding communities that rely on cashmere markets
- Assurance of animal welfare within cashmere production

Ceasing the use of high-risk fibres
We believe animals can be treated with dignity and respect. In several cases, we have detected higher risk in some animal-based fibre categories, leading to our decision to cease their inclusion in our products. Currently, we have identified fur from the Angora rabbit and mohair from the Angora goat as fibres no longer used in C&A collections.

Where next?

We will continue our work with SFA to extend sustainable and humane practices throughout the entire cashmere supply chain.

Responsibly sourced down
Safeguarding the welfare of geese and ducks

Down and feathers make up a small percentage of the fibre used in C&A collections. However, feather and down harvesting can result in unnecessary harm if not done with care and respect for geese and ducks. All of C&A’s down and feathers are certified to the Responsible Down Standard (RDS) to ensure the humane treatment of geese and ducks.

What is the RDS?

The Responsible Down Standard (RDS) is an independent voluntary global standard owned by Textile Exchange and certified by Control Union. It is designed to be a global benchmark for best practice, preventing practices such as force-feeding and live-plucking and creating strict requirements on issues like food and water quality, outdoor access, animal health, and hygiene. It also allows us to trace fibre from farm to end product. The standard currently covers more than 500 million birds and is supported by more than 60 brands.

In 2019, the new version of the RDS was launched, with enhancements to the standard and certification process. Key changes include:

- Euthanasia of sick or injured birds to prevent suffering is now mandatory on the farm.
- Stunning before slaughter is now mandatory at the slaughter site.
Stronger criteria related to handling, record keeping, and training of workers are required. Observation of parent farms in industrial goose supply chains, where the highest risk of live-plucking occurs, are now required. All minor requirements are now mandatory (previously only 50% were required). The document was restructured to provide clearer guidance for farms, suppliers, brands, and certification bodies.

**How does it maintain traceability?**

Every time RDS-certified down changes ownership, a transaction certificate is issued, identifying the material from the source to the final product. The process is audited at every stage of the supply chain. We undertake this process so our customers can feel confident that the material in their clothing was made to meet the standard’s requirements.

**Our multi-dimensional auditing of welfare practices**

No standard is a guarantee, so we ensure that feather and down harvesting is audited and certified by an independent third party at least annually. We also conduct our own visits to these farms to observe practices and conditions on a periodic basis.

Recently, we conducted visits to RDS-certified supply chains in order to better understand how the standard was implemented and where improvements could be made. We were pleased to confirm that RDS is effective in preventing many harmful practices, including force feeding and live plucking – practices we have banned for a number of years. However, we also found that the standard could be improved to ensure requirements are detailed enough in countries where animal welfare legislation is less strong.

We have shared the findings of our investigation with Textile Exchange, and have been working with them over the past two years to drive improvements to the standard. We are also consolidating our down supply chain to work with fewer suppliers. C&A remains committed to the RDS as the best way to source our down responsibly.

**Where next?**

After the release of RDS 3.0, we intend to continue sourcing all of our down and feathers in alignment with the new standard.

**Recycled polyester and other fibres**

**Overcoming challenges**

Polyester is made from petroleum derived from crude oil, a finite non-renewable resource, and accounts for 19% of the material we use. Since the 1990s, demand for polyester has grown at a steady rate. Because polyester is an important material in our collections and we are committed to reducing our impact from fossil fuel extractions, we will increase our
use of certified recycled sources over time.

**Our 2019 performance**

**Increasing products containing recycled fibres**

Over the past several years, we have steadily tested small collections that contain recycled polyester certified to either the Recycled Claim Standard (RCS) or the Global Recycled Standard (GRS). In 2019, C&A Europe sold 556,000 pieces with recycled polyester, 85% more than the number sourced in 2018. While the number of pieces is small in relation to the total number we sell, we are committed to further increasing our share of recycled polyester products by overcoming the following challenges:

- **Managing recycled polyester costs:** Recycled polyester currently carries a 10 to 20% higher price than virgin polyester, depending on the volume purchased. We are working with Fashion for Good and the chemical recycling start-ups from their programmes to help scale technologies to bring costs down while increasing the availability of chemically recycled polyester.

- **Addressing contamination:** Polyester source material can become contaminated with unknown substances. We continue looking for sources and solutions to help ensure recycled polyester is free of unwanted contaminants.

**Continuing our journey with recycled fibres**

We are working continually to increase use of recycled fibres in our products. This not only includes recycled polyester, but also nylon, cotton, and others. In 2019, for instance, C&A Europe sold 102,000 pieces containing recycled cotton, a 7% increase over 2018. In Mexico, C&A sold more than 14,600 pieces containing recycled cotton in Men’s, Ladies’, and Youth T-shirts.

One way we are continuing to move forward is by participating in Fashion for Good’s chemical recycling working group which is identifying innovators for chemical recycling of post-consumer waste. In addition to preventing this waste from reaching landfill, incorporating post-consumer waste also increases the quality of the recycled materials.

**Read more about circular fashion**
Where next?

**Increasing uptake of recycled polyester**

We are working to increase the volume of recycled polyester in our clothing. This includes collaborating with Fashion for Good to identify innovators and technologies for recycling polyester using chemical recycling methodologies. We have also been exploring the use of recycled cashmere, and anticipate launching recycled cashmere products later in 2020.

**Preferred man-made cellulosics**

**Focusing on conservation and environmental protection**

Viscose (also known as rayon), modal, and lyocell are derived from cellulose made from the dissolved wood pulp of trees. They account for 7% of the materials used at C&A during 2019.

CanopyStyle research has found that, increasingly, forests are being used in the manufacture of dissolving pulp to produce fabrics such as rayon/viscose, modal, and lyocell. In fact:

- More than 150 million trees are logged every year and turned into cellulosic fabric – if placed end to end, those trees would circle the earth seven times.
- Between 2013 and 2020, it is expected that the number of trees being logged every year and turned into fabric such as viscose will have doubled.
- Dissolving-pulp (the base material for rayon/viscose) wastes approximately 70% of the tree and is a chemically intensive manufacturing process.
- Less than 20 percent of the world’s ancient forests remain in intact tracts large enough to maintain biological diversity.
- Forests in Indonesia, Canada’s Boreal and temperate rainforests, and the Amazon are being logged for next season’s fashion and apparel. [SOURCE: Canopy]
Protecting endangered forests

To support the conservation of Ancient and Endangered Forests in the production of viscose, we are working with the CanopyStyle Initiative. Through this initiative we have committed to assessing the sourcing of cellulose-based fibres and eliminating fabrics made of pulp from Ancient and Endangered Forests, and other controversial sources.

Our actions include:

- Showing a preference for suppliers who are working to preserve endangered forests or use Forest Stewardship Council- (FSC)-certified methods, including those that have been awarded 'green shirts' in the CanopyStyle Hot Button Report.
- Training and engaging suppliers on the CanopyStyle Initiative, encouraging them to conduct verification audits and share their results publicly.

Suppliers are audited by CanopyStyle and their results are published to verify they are not sourcing fabrics made of pulp from Ancient and Endangered Forests, and other controversial sources. To date, CanopyStyle has confirmed through audits that 28% of the global production of man-made cellulosics is at low risk of sourcing from ancient and endangered forests. Canopy also released the ForestMapper tool, which enables us – and suppliers – to view where Ancient and Endangered Forests are located, and make more informed decisions when purchasing viscose fabrics.

Committed to responsible viscose production

Viscose production may result in environmental degradation if our suppliers' manufacturing processes are not well controlled. In 2018, the Changing Markets Foundation authored a roadmap towards responsible viscose and modal fibre manufacturing, outlining the steps needed to address these challenges. C&A committed to improve chemical and environmental practices in cellulose fibre production using the best practices identified in the roadmap, and to helping suppliers remediate current challenges. This includes working with Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) on their development of standards and protocols for the viscose industry, collaborating with like-minded brands, and working directly with suppliers on continuous improvement plans. The areas of focus as outlined in the roadmap include regulatory compliance, human rights, raw materials from responsibly managed resources under our Canopy commitment, biodiversity, waste minimisation, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, water impacts minimisation, prevention of water pollution, and other considerations.
Our 2019 performance

Sourcing from suppliers that value conservation of forests

CanopyStyle's Hot Button Ranking and Report serves as the primary fibre sourcing analysis tool for the fashion industry. It includes more than 200 brands, retailers, and designers committed to eliminating the use of Ancient and Endangered Forests in viscose and other cellulosic fabrics. It also gives preference to textiles made from innovative fibres by the end of 2020. The Hot Button Ranking rates the largest global producers of viscose and cellulosic fabrics according to their raw material sourcing practices, and highlights product development with lower impact, as well as producers showing leadership in supporting global forest conservation solutions.

A 'green shirt' designation, the highest rating, as well as a 'yellow/green shirt', signal that these producers have met or are on the path to meeting the requirement to eliminate sourcing from Ancient and Endangered Forests by the end of 2020. The viscose used in C&A collections is sourced from only three suppliers: Birla and Lenzing for staple fibre and Enka for filament — all of which earned 'green shirts' in the Hot Button report.

Currently we source from these factories (2020 update):

**Birla**

- Grasim Industries Limited (SFD) , Nagda Birlagram - 456331, Nagda, Madhya Pradesh, INDIA
- Grasim Industries Limited (Grasiline Division) , District - Haveri - 581123, Karnataka, INDIA
- Birla Cellulosic (A Division of Grasim Industries Limited), Birladham, Village: Kharach, Gujarat, INDIA
- Grasim Cellulosic Division (A Unit of Grasim Industries Limited), Plot No. 1, GIDC Vilayat Industrial State, PO - Vilayat, District - Bharuch - 392012, INDIA
- Birla Jingwei Fibres Co. Limited, Chenjiahua Taiping Town, Fancheng District, Xiangyang City, Hubei Province, CHINA
- Thai Rayon Public Company Limited, 36 Moo 2, Ayuthaya - Anthong Highway, T. Posa, A. Muang Anthung - 14000, THAILAND
- PT Indo Bharat Rayon, Desa Cilangkap, PO Box No. 9, 41101 Purwakarta, INDONESIA

**Lenzing**

- Lenzing Fibers, Werkstrasse 2, 4860 Lenzing, AUSTRIA
- Lenzing Fibers, Industriegelände 1, 7561 Heiligenkreuz, AUSTRIA
- Lenzing Nanjing fibers co.,Ltd. Hongshanfinen chemical industry park,Nanjing 211511,Jiangsu,CHINA
- Lenzing Fibers Inc. 12950 Highway 43 N Axis, AL 36505, USA
- Lenzing Fibers Grimsby Ltd. Energy Park way Grimsby DN31 @TT, UK
- Lenzing Fibers, P.T South Pasific Viscose Desa Cicadas,Purwakarta 41101,west Java , INDONESIA
- Lenzing Biocel Paskov a.s, Mistecká 762 ,73921, CZECH REP.

**Enka**
Additionally, C&A Brazil has been working since 2018 to raise awareness amongst the supply chain about the importance of choosing viscose fibre which does not come from endangered forests, and of the need to select the best origin of this raw material. In 2019, approximately 65% of the volume of viscose used for C&A Brazil products came from suppliers who, through a commitment letter, were made aware of and engaged with this important cause.

**Sourcing from suppliers committed to responsible viscose production**

In 2019, Changing Markets categorised brands in their *Dirty Fashion Report* to determine which are leading the transition to working with suppliers that minimise environmental impacts. In the categorisation, C&A was listed at the #3 position in the 'frontrunner' group with nine other brands.

**Cutting carbon through more sustainable viscose**

We estimate that our sourcing of more sustainable cellulose in 2019 avoided 57,157 metric tons of CO\(_2\)e (tCO\(_2\)e) emissions compared to conventional cellulosic fibres, a 45% lower impact than conventional cellulosic fibres.

Read more about how we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions

**Where next?**

Globally, we will continue working with suppliers to eliminate the sourcing of fabrics made from controversial sources and train suppliers on the Canopy Style Initiative. We will also continue working with them to adopt the practices in the Changing Markets Foundation roadmap for cleaner viscose production and continue working with ZDHC on standards for assessing performance that will help to drive further improvement in fibre production.

**Circular fashion**

**Doing more good**

In a circular model, products are designed and developed with their next use in mind. They are produced with pure materials, using safe chemicals. This way, fibres can be reclaimed at the end of the garment’s use to be reused or recycled into new clothing, carpets, or other products – or safely returned to nature through composting. Social justice, including safeguarding health and safety and fair labour, water stewardship, and the use of renewable energy, are also an integral part of the circular model.
Why circular fashion is important

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation detailed the challenges and opportunities of a circular economy in A New Textiles Economy. The report demonstrates the growing momentum in the industry to move towards a circular economy, and gives us all a strong environmental, social, and business case for doing so:

• In 2015, around three-quarters of the plastic used in clothing ended up in landfill or was incinerated.
• Less than 1% of the material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing, equivalent to a loss of more than $100 billion of materials a year.
• The textile industry’s share of the global carbon budget will rise from 2% in 2015 to 26% by 2050 if it continues on its current path. Moving away from a linear and wasteful system is crucial to keeping within the 2ºC global warming limit set by the Paris Agreement on climate change.
• With current production systems, the weight of plastic microfibres in the oceans could increase to 22 million tons by 2050. That’s equivalent to two-thirds of the fibres currently used to produce garments every year.
• 20% of industrial water pollution globally is attributable to the dyeing and treatment of textiles.

The case for circular fashion
Our vision

We believe in circular fashion. Our vision is one of a restorative circular economy, where nothing is wasted in the creation or disposal of our clothing.

To address the challenges of the linear fashion model, we have developed a strategy with three major elements to address the six enablers of a circular economy in the fashion industry:

1. By creating innovative products that are designed according to circular economy principles, we will be able to phase out substances of concern and only use good materials, make effective use of human and natural resources, and move to renewable and recyclable inputs that can radically improve recycling rates.
2. By further developing our garment collection scheme in the retail markets where we operate, we will be able to make sure that garments can be collected, sorted, and eventually recycled at scale.
3. By supporting partnerships that help accelerate the transition to a circular economy and supporting innovations that will enable circularity, we can help transform the apparel industry.

For a closer look at our circular fashion strategy, view this video.

The six enablers to a circular fashion industry
Our 2019 actions

Continue our partnership with Fashion for Good, focused on incubating and accelerating circular technologies in the apparel industry.

Drive industry alignment through Make Fashion Circular initiative from Ellen MacArthur foundation.
Launch another major innovation and pioneering achievement in our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Platinum denim.

Expand our take-back programme.

**Our 2019 performance**

In 2019, we focused on the following areas, where we demonstrated concrete results:

1. Fostering our partnership with Fashion for Good to pilot circular economy technologies in our value chain
2. Creating additional innovations in Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products
3. Expanding our in-store takeback programme, 'we take it back'
4. Executing our commitments under the Ellen MacArthur Foundation Jeans Redesign Project
5. Engaging on policy

**Piloting fashion for good innovations**

- **Reverse Resources:** This year we partnered with Reverse Resources, which sets up transparent trading and tracing of cutting scraps from textile manufacturers to recycling plants. In the C&A supply chain, they focused on setting up segregation and labelling of waste in supplier facilities and the process of handling the waste by collectors. This maintained the highest market value and best waste quality for recyclers, in turn providing the best price return for the supplier. The project also evaluated the increase in factory earnings as a result of segregating textile leftovers. We will also create a trace report of the waste for the recycler, and analyse the potential for cost savings and means of securing trust in the data accuracy to maintain those cost savings.

- **Circular polybag project:** The Circular Polybag Pilot is exploring a solution to reduce the impact of single-use polybags in the fashion industry. Orchestrated by Fashion for Good in partnership with adidas, C&A, Kering, Otto Group, and PVH Corp., with Cadel Deinking (an innovator from the Fashion for Good Accelerator Programme), the pilot is a first in the apparel industry to trial a truly circular solution for polybags. Using polybag waste, Cadel Deinking’s innovation facilitates the creation of high-quality, recycled-content polybags — a solution that brings us closer to creating a truly closed-loop system.

- **SeaChange:** The SeaChange process is designed to address challenges associated with concentrated industrial waste and to oxidise the chemically resistant, non-biodegradable organic materials and microplastics present in apparel wastewater. The process aims to enable treatment of 100% of wastewater while eliminating sludge production and mitigating GHG emissions. Initiated and coordinated by Fashion for Good, the pilot project included several partners, including C&A, supporting SeaChange to conduct a field evaluation of the SeaChange system at the effluent treatment plant of Arvind, a dyehouse, near Gujarat, India. The pilot demonstrated the technical viability of the SeaChange technology to process sludge.

- **Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot (OCTP):** This groundbreaking pilot was initiated by Fashion for Good to test and validate on-product markers in combination with blockchain technology as a traceability solution in real-world practice. Fashion for Good, C&A Foundation, and the Organic Cotton Accelerator collaborated with partner organisations C&A, Kering, PVH Corp., and Zalando. C&A was instrumental to the project, leveraging our supply chain to fully explore production from fibre to garment. Invisible fluorescent,
(synthetic) DNA tracers and microbiome technologies were applied in tracking the organic cotton through spinning, chemical treatments, high temperatures, and dyeing. The DNA and invisible fluorescent tracers emerged intact, positively identifying the cotton in consumer-ready garments and demonstrating that the blockchain platform can track transactions through the entire value chain. Read more about the OCTP

- **SMARTEX**: This innovative system aims to reduce textile defects to 0%, avoiding textile waste during production. It uses machine vision algorithms and machine learning to improve defect detection rates in knitted fabrics. We are collaborating with SMARTEX to help our suppliers decrease textile defects and further eliminate waste during fabric production.

- **PreSize**: PreSize is a three-dimensional body scanning technology that uses any smartphone’s camera input to find the best fit to a user's individual body. Unlike other smartphone fit solutions, PreSize is completely web-based and uses a video of the consumer to estimate key points of the body, ensuring a higher level of accuracy in measurements. C&A is piloting this technology in our on-line store.

**Increasing innovations in Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products**

This year we launched the world's most sustainable denim fabric, Cradle to Cradle Certified™ at the Platinum level. The first ever Platinum level Cradle to Cradle Certified™ fabric is made with 100% rapidly renewable resources and is fully recyclable. We have also launched more collections that feature Cradle to Cradle Certified™ items. In addition, all Cradle to Cradle Certified™ T-shirts sold by C&A are certified at the Gold level.

**Expanding 'we take it back'**

This year, our 'we take it back' programme grew to additional stores in the retail markets, providing our customers with even more options to recycle unwanted clothing and contribute to the circular economy. In Europe, stores and an online collection option in Germany and France collected 1,397 metric tons of unwanted garments for reuse or recycling as part of the ‘we take it back’ programme. In Mexico, where the number of participating stores grew from 10 in 2018 to 34 in 2019, about 8.5 metric tons of clothing were collected in 2019.

In Brazil, where 157 C&A stores participate, Movimento ReCiclo, as the programme is known, collected more than 16.5 metric tons of items. Of this, 70% of the pieces were deemed to be in good condition and 30% were sent for recycling. The pieces in good condition went to Centro Social Carisma, an organisation that handles distribution for reuse. The pieces that cannot be used anymore were sent to Retalhar, which is responsible for the reverse manufacturing process, including sanitizing the items, removing trims, and defibration. The resulting material is used primarily in the automotive industry.

As an employee engagement strategy, in early 2020, the Movimento ReCiclo programme devised a challenge for employees at the head office. The goal was for employees to bring in clothes they no longer used — to 2,020 pieces in three weeks. Employees exceeded this target, bringing in more than 2,700 pieces for donation or recycling.

**Jeans Redesign project**

This new project applies circular economy principles to provide positive outcomes for
people and the environment. The Jeans Redesign project aims to demonstrate action, focus innovation efforts, and increase transparency, and members of the fashion industry worked together to develop shared guidelines that represent a new level of ambition. C&A is committed to the Jeans Redesign guidelines.

Engaging on policy

Both within the European Union and in the member states, C&A has been active in shaping policy around the circular economy. We will continue our efforts as work on the European Green Deal and Product Environmental Footprint progresses, including member state actions.

Read more about our circular fashion products
Read more about our in-store take-back programme
Read more about product innovation

[1] In January 2020, C&A Foundation became part of Laudes Foundation.

Accelerating change through Fashion for Good

In March 2017, Fashion for Good – founded by Laudes Foundation[2] – was launched in Amsterdam, with C&A as one of its first brand partners. In 2018 and 2019, we continued our work with Fashion for Good to help transform the apparel sector by supporting:

- The Fashion for Good Accelerator Programme to help start-ups grow
- The Scaling Programme to scale up innovations and encourage their widespread adoption
- The development of the open-source Cradle to Cradle toolkit to help guide companies in developing Cradle to Cradle Certified™ apparel
- The Fashion for Good Experience, the world’s first interactive museum for sustainable fashion innovation, which has already received more than 70,000 visitors

As a multi-stakeholder organisation, Fashion for Good’s single focus is to transform the apparel sector, making ‘good fashion’ the norm by convening brands, producers, retailers, suppliers, non-profit organisations, innovators, and funders to make this happen. Fashion for Good serves as an innovation platform that provides promising start-up innovators with access to mentoring, funding and a global network of organisations that they need to scale and grow their innovations. It also acts as a convener for change, bringing together a circular apparel community, building a good fashion movement, and creating freely available resources. The initiative has gained tremendous momentum, with over 110 innovators and more than 60 pilots facilitated so far.

Read more about our partnership with Fashion for Good

[2] This work was started by C&A Foundation and continues under Laudes Foundation.

Who we work with

Laudes Foundation, Fashion for Good, MBDC, McDonough Innovation, Cradle to Cradle Product Innovation Institute, Circular Economy 100, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Fashion
Circular fashion products
Continually driving innovation

Building upon our successful and scaled launch of Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products in 2017 and 2018, this year we accelerated our innovations and our reach into the supply chain to deliver the world’s first Platinum level Cradle to Cradle Certified™ denim fabric. We have also expanded production of our Gold and Bronze level products to Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Brazil. In addition, our 'we take it back' programme grew, providing our customers with even more opportunities to contribute to a circular economy.

Ingredients for circular fashion

As we have developed our circular fashion strategy, we have identified two important focus areas to create the right ecosystem for innovation. These two areas have guided our approach and allowed us to be more effective in our delivery:

First, we must have the right principles for action. Our key principles for collaboration and innovation are to ensure that the technologies we bring to our supply chain and the production of our clothing:

1. Only use good materials
2. Effectively use human and natural resources
3. Ensure that renewable and recyclable inputs are used

Second, we must foster collaboration to accelerate and scale innovation. The partners we work with share C&A's values and have been effective catalysts for collaboration in the industry.

1. Circular innovation principles

In the search for an approach to our circular innovation principles, we evaluated the universe of approaches to circular economy in the industry and identified that currently there is only one credible, peer-reviewed standard for circularity — the Cradle to Cradle
Certified™ Product Standard.

The Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Product Standard is the only holistic, third-party standard able to certify circular products. It verifies and certifies all aspects of product manufacturing, from the sourcing of raw materials through the chemicals, water, or energy used in manufacturing and how the product is designed for material reutilisation, to the social conditions in the value chain.

The standard is organised around five criteria, each of which is assessed at a particular level:

1. Material health
2. Material reutilisation
3. Renewable energy
4. Water stewardship
5. Social fairness

At C&A, a Gold level-certified product goes beyond the standard's minimum requirement, as Platinum level is achieved for some criteria. As a result, our Gold level Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products are made with:

- 100% optimised safe materials and chemicals (mostly biological)
- 100% renewable energy
- 100% recycled water (or discharge of drinking water quality)
- 100% social fairness

Read more about the Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Standard

To learn more about our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ clothing, view this video.
2. Fostering collaboration

We also evaluated organisations that foster collaboration in the fashion industry around circularity. We identified four organisations that share C&A’s values and understand the application of a circular economy in the apparel industry, while serving as an effective catalyst for collaboration:

- **Ellen MacArthur Foundation**: In 2018, we joined the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s Make Fashion Circular, which aims to accelerate the transition to circular fashion by driving collaboration between industry leaders and other key stakeholders. We contribute to the Make Fashion Circular initiative through working groups in which we share our knowledge and lessons learned implementing our circularity strategy, and where we also have opportunities to hear from others to inform our own strategy going forward. Additionally, C&A participates in the Ellen MacArthur Foundation CE100, a global platform that brings together companies from multiple sectors, innovators, and regions to advance the transition to a circular economy.

- **McDonough Innovation**: McDonough Innovation supports product concepts and solutions that embed sustainable principles into product development. The organisation cofounded Fashion for Good with Laudes Foundation[1] and has advised C&A during development of our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products.

- **Fashion for Good**: Fashion for Good is the global initiative that aims to transform the fashion industry from the linear ‘take-make-waste’ model to a circular approach that is restorative and regenerative by design. Fashion for Good convenes apparel retailers such as C&A, as well as producers, suppliers, non-profit organisations, innovators, and funders. The initiative offers practical action in the form of support, funding, and roadmaps, and fosters the necessary sector-wide collaboration and action to make circular fashion a
reality. C&A was one of the first corporate partners of Fashion for Good following the initiative’s launch by Laudes Foundation. Since then, many other brands, including adidas, BESTSELLER, CHANEL, Galeries Lafayette, Kering, Otto Group, PVH Corp., Stella McCartney, Target, Zalando, and others have joined Fashion for Good.

**Eco Intelligent Growth:** This independent organisation is accredited to assess products against the Cradle to Cradle Certified™ standard programme, and has verified alignment of our certified products with requirements of the Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Product Standard.

1. **Developing additional Cradle to Cradle Certified™ fibres and trims:** We also continue engaging producers and suppliers to grow our toolbox of other certified...
materials, which will allow us to further diversity our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ offerings in the future. We have continued working with partners to develop nearly 200 Cradle to Cradle Certified™ or assessed dyes, inks, and process chemicals; fibres such as modal, lyocell, or elastane; and trims and embellishments such as buttons, zippers, and rivets. With these components ready for commercial use, over the past few years we have been able to evolve our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products from plain T-shirts to include:

- Prints and embellishments that allow designers more liberty in designing fashion our customers want, and
- Men's and Ladies’ Cradle to Cradle Certified™ jeans in which every component, from the cotton fibres and denim fabric to the buttons and zippers, are verified.

**Sharing our learnings, open source:** In order to scale our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products, it is imperative that we offer our experiences, open source, so manufacturers and brands can avoid pitfalls and benefit from our learnings. Therefore, we have provided freely available resources for developing Cradle to Cradle Certified™ apparel for clothing manufacturers and fashion brands. They cover all the elements of the Cradle to Cradle Products Programme, from chemicals to social fairness, as well as a roadmap and a complete list of materials. Together, they can enable fashion brands, retailers, and manufacturers to get started on the development of truly circular products. To date we have worked with Fashion for Good to provide these useful resources:

- **Cradle to Cradle Certified™ How-To Guide**, based on our experience creating certified T-shirts.
- **Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Assessed Materials Almanac**, which specifies materials and ingredients that have been evaluated for Cradle to Cradle™ certification with regard to material health available for use in the fashion industry.
- **Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Denim Guide**, which includes lessons learned by C&A and Fashion for Good while developing the first certified Gold jeans.

**Expanding our in-store take-back programme**

This year we expanded our in-store take-back programme to more stores and launched an online programme in France. Read more [here](#).

**Finding innovative ways to save water**

In Europe and Mexico we’ve developed innovative denim collections made with less water. This year we continued our Saving Water Programme, which features waterless finishing for denim production, saving up to 65% of the water used in production.

Read more about our water footprint

**Partnerships to advance circular fashion in 2019 and beyond**

During the year we continued our ongoing collaborations with key organisations committed to circular fashion.

- **Ellen MacArthur Foundation**: During the year we teamed with Ellen MacArthur Foundation and others in the fashion industry on a set of Jeans Redesign guidelines that promote further innovation in circularity and increase transparency, and we began selling
the first products developed under the guidelines in our European stores.

- **McDonough Innovation**: We collaborated to continue updating the *C2C Certified™ Assessed Materials Almanac*, developed in concert with McDonough Innovation, Fashion for Good, and others, to include even more materials, trims, components, and chemicals. Based on the Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Product Standard, the manual provides an overview of materials and processes assessed for Cradle to Cradle™ Material Health.

- **Fashion for Good**: We've made significant progress in piloting Fashion for Good startups. Read more about these innovations in circular fashion.

- **Eco Intelligent Growth**: This organisation assessed our Platinum level Cradle to Cradle Certified™ denim, an industry first. They also supported us in assessing local suppliers in Brazil for alignment with the Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Product Standard, which enables us to launch additional certified products in Brazil.

**Where next?**

**Evolving our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ approach globally**

We have delivered more than 4 million Cradle to Cradle Certified™ pieces to date, alongside campaigns showcasing the products. After the successful launch of our Cradle to Cradle Certified™ items, we are reviewing product positioning to determine where it is most commercially relevant and important to our customers. This includes looking at customer interest and scalability across our regions. In 2019, we continued monitoring our campaign results across markets to understand if and when we need to revisit and refine messaging to sustain enthusiasm and customer awareness.

We will also continue focusing on a number of new innovations in materials, trims, components, and chemicals to expand our portfolio of Cradle to Cradle Certified™ products.

**Further innovation to create ‘good fashion’**

We will continue our close involvement with Fashion for Good and other partners, participating in various pilots to develop proof of concept, including:

- Participating in the Transparency Working Group to build upon the learnings of the Organic Cotton Traceability Pilot and expand into other fibre sources.

- Supporting the Fashion for Good Accelerator Programme to help start-ups grow, with a number of new pilots in chemical recycling, rental, leasing, and repair. Developing a portfolio of suppliers seeking financial support to implement circular technologies through the Good Fashion Fund in India and Bangladesh.

- Developing a portfolio of suppliers seeking financial support to implement circular technologies through the Good Fashion Fund in India and Bangladesh.

- Collaborating in Fashion for Good’s Circular Polybag Pilot with other brands and innovators.

**Delivering impact through our partnerships**

Through our partnership with Ellen MacArthur Foundation, we plan to launch our Jeans
Redesign Project collection in 2020 and continue to engage in the Make Fashion Circular action platform. In addition, we always seek inspiration from circular economy experts like Bill McDonough through our work with McDonough Innovation and their network of partners, such as Eco Intelligent Growth, MBDC, and EPEA.

**Product quality and safety**

*Delivering high standards*

Our customers’ health, safety, and enjoyment of our products is fundamental. We work hard to ensure product quality and safety, aiming to meet or exceed industry standards, legal requirements, and our customers’ expectations. We also collaborate with others in our industry to raise standards across the apparel sector.

**Our approach**

Our Quality, Assurance and Development teams in head offices, sourcing hubs, and at suppliers oversee every aspect of product safety and quality. They examine our goods to determine their physical, chemical, and mechanical properties as well as measurements and workmanship. For babies’ and children’s clothing, safety criteria receive specific attention. Product testing is carried out by C&A and in cooperation with external laboratories like SGS, Intertek, and Bureau Veritas, to ensure our collections meet the latest legal, chemical, and safety standards, to ensure our collections meet the latest legal, chemical, and safety standards. The team also helps our suppliers, factories, and colleagues understand safety risks and coordinates with legal bodies and industry associations.

**Quality down to the last detail**

These inspections take place during and after production so we can determine whether the product matches our requirements. Workmanship, measurements, and safety checks must be passed before items are allowed into C&A stores.
Auditing of our production units
These quality audits ensure that only appropriate production units that meet all our requirements are allowed to produce garments for C&A according to all our quality standards.

Product sample inspection
Whether a certain product can be sold at C&A is determined after a sample of the item has been examined according to stringent criteria, such as workmanship and physical properties (resistance to tearing, shrinkage, colour fastness), chemicals, and various legal safety requirements (for example, small parts or restrictions on the use of cords that could pose a danger to babies or children). Once these and other criteria have been met, an item may be manufactured for C&A.

Quality and conformity inspection
These inspections take place during and after production so we can determine whether the product matches our requirements. Workmanship, measurements, and safety checks must be passed before items are allowed into C&A stores.

Structured quality and due diligence checks
To provide the greatest possible safety for our customers, C&A also performs random due diligence checks on products to ensure they meet our expectations.

Activating our restricted substance list
To support the development of safe clothing with no hazardous chemicals present, we have implemented a restricted substances policy. We are also active members of voluntary industry groups such as the Apparel & Footwear International RSL Management (AFIRM) Group and Cooperation Against Dangerous Substances in Shoes (CADS).

In addition, approximately 25% of our collections in Europe achieved the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 rating, an independent testing and certification system for textile raw materials, components, and end products. This confirms that our fabrics, yarns, components, and trims have undergone a rigorous test for harmful chemicals.

Garment manufacturers apply poly-fluorinated compounds (PFCs) to garments to repel liquids and stains. However, research by organisations like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has indicated a link between PFCs and damage to human health and wildlife. Globally, we eliminated PFCs from all products as of 2015.

Towards zero discharge of hazardous chemicals
The C&A Chemical Policy also contains the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) Manufacturing Restricted Substances List (MRSL), which focuses on the elimination of hazardous chemicals in the supply chain. To help ensure the chemicals used in making C&A products are safe for people and the planet, we are also implementing the ZDHC Roadmap to Zero framework. This includes applying the ‘clean factory’ approach, encouraging the elimination of hazardous chemicals across production for all brands, not just C&A’s production. C&A is a founding member of ZDHC, a coalition of 122 contributors with a shared commitment to zero discharge of hazardous chemicals in their supply chains.

Read our public commitment to ZDHC
Moving towards chrome-free leather
We don’t use a lot of leather in our products. But when we do, we want to make sure it is produced responsibly. One way we do this is by striving to buy leather for our clothing that is chrome-free tanned.

Ban of Polyvinylchloride (PVC)
PVC is a plastic which may be used in, for example, prints or as synthetic leather. Due to its negative environmental profile, C&A has forbidden the use of PVC for all products.

Recalling potentially unsafe products
We had no product recalls across our retail markets or licensees in 2019.