

## FAST FASHION KILLS



Experts believe that in order to reduce the environmental impact of fast fashion, the fashion industry must undergo a huge transformation. Water pollution from the fashion industry is the result of textile factories dumping untreated toxic wastewaters directly into waterways. The fashion industry produces 10% of global carbon dioxide emissions every year, while it is estimated to use around 1.5 trillion litres of water annually. Textile dyeing is also the second largest polluter of water globally and it takes around 2,000 gallons of water to make a typical pair of jeans. According to the United Nation, a single pair of jeans requires a kilogram of cotton. Cotton is typically grown in dry areas, therefore manufacturing one kilo requires almost 7,500–10,000 litres of water. That is approximately ten years' worth of drinking water for one person.

Fast fashion refers to low-cost clothing that is bought and discarded quickly as fashions change. It becomes one of the things perceived to be worsening the problems, such as the £1 bikini sold by the firm Missguided last year.

According to the expert, the industry's water consumption, carbon dioxide emissions, textile waste, and usage of chemicals and substances not only pose environmental risks, but also health risks to those who engage in it. A single European textile-finishing company, for example, utilises almost 466g of chemicals every kilogram of textile.

Currently, developing countries produce more than 60% of global clothing exports because the cost of production is lower and environmental laws are less strict in the United States and the European Union. As a result, manufacturing countries suffer from pollution because waste water is dumped into streams, polluting rivers where people in this country fish and live.

Therefore, many environmentalists are urging the fashion industry to change and identify ways for it to become more environmentally friendly. Some of the suggested strategies to save the planet include using renewable energy, finding advanced recycling technologies, and limiting the usage of non-biodegradable petrochemical-based fibre that dominates the fashion industry.

They also said that the industry should focus on producing higher-quality, longer-lasting things, while expanding ideas such as clothing rental and new approaches to resale. They also emphasised the fashion industry should avoid using non-biodegradable materials that have been processed with harmful chemicals. Rather, invest in fabrics like linen and organic cotton, which use less water to produce than non-biodegradable alternatives.

It is not the first time that fast fashion solutions have been proposed, but all have been rejected by the government. People in the United Kingdom buy more clothing per person than anyone else in Europe, including nearly twice as much as Italians, who are better known for their fashion sense.

In addition to emphasising the importance of higher quality and clothing rental services, it is important to purchase secondhand clothing. While demand continued to rise, industry-led initiatives to reduce environmental costs were unsuccessful.

Carry Somers, the co-founder of the campaign Fashion Revolution, also stressed concern about the use of chemicals in the fashion industry, especially in clothing made outside the EU, where it is difficult to know what substances have been used.

Prof Steve Evans, a Cambridge University expert in industrial sustainability, praised the research as well. However, he stated that it was unclear what proportion of the industry's environmental damage was due to fast fashion in particular. Stakeholders must also work together to fight the problem.

Nonetheless, Evans argued that reducing fibre production in the future does not mean a lack of new clothes when clothing can always be rented or resold. It may be fast fashion from the perspective of the fashionista but it is slow from the perspective of the planet.

Adapted from: Davis, N. (2020). Fast fashion speeding toward environmental disaster, report warns. **The Guardian**. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2020/apr/07/fast-fashion-speeding-toward-environmental-disaster-report-warns>