Sustainable textile production: Policies and certifications transforming the global landscape

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Victor Durand, the Head of Operations at Ever Dye, discusses how the company meets the new standards for sustainable textile production

The textile and apparel industry is undergoing significant transformations driven by a growing demand for sustainability, transparency, and accountability. Over time, a wide array of policies, regulations, and certifications have emerged, shaping how textile products are produced, marketed, and consumed, especially in the Fashion Industry.

These measures address the industry's critical challenges, including environmental degradation, resource depletion, labour rights violations, and waste management. This article explores the chronological evolution of these initiatives and how they collectively push the industry toward a more sustainable and responsible future, showcasing how EverDye could become a leader in these changes.

Early foundations: The emergence of industry certifications

In the early stages, a range of certifications began to form the foundation of sustainable practices in textiles, providing a framework for companies to follow and a clear way for consumers to make ethical purchasing decisions.

- OEKO-TEX®: Ensuring safety and sustainability (1992)
  OEKO-TEX® was among the first to provide comprehensive certifications for the textile industry. Its STANDARD 100 label, certifying that textile products are free from harmful substances at all stages of production, quickly gained importance. Over time, additional labels were introduced to ensure other production areas were accounted for.
- Bluesign® Sustainable chemistry (2000)
  The bluesign® certification emerged, focusing on minimising textile production's environmental and social impacts, especially regarding the responsible use of chemicals. Key goals included eliminating harmful substances from the supply chain, reducing resource consumption, and promoting fair labour and safe working conditions.

- GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) (2006)
    - The GOTS certification became one of the most stringent global standards for organic textiles, demanding compliance across the entire production chain. GOTS requires products to contain at least 70% certified organic fibres, prohibits hazardous chemicals, and enforces social criteria, ensuring consumers support ethical and sustainable production.
- ZDHC (Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals) (2011)
    - The ZDHC initiative began in 2011 to eliminate the discharge of hazardous chemicals in the textile industry. By providing a global platform for chemical data sharing and wastewater monitoring, ZDHC helped establish consistent standards for safer chemical alternatives across the supply chain.

European legislation and regulatory milestones

As the need for sustainability became more urgent, governments began to take a more active role in shaping the industry through policies and regulations that increasingly required manufacturers to adopt greener practices and ensure greater transparency.

- REACH Regulation: Chemical Safety in Textiles (2007)
    - The REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals) regulation, adopted in 2007, became a cornerstone of the EU's effort to address chemical safety. It focuses on eliminating harmful chemicals, reducing hazardous substance exposure, and promoting safer alternatives to protect health and the environment.
- EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (2022)
    - The EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, introduced as part of the European Green Deal in 2022, marked a major shift toward a circular economy. The strategy focused on ensuring textiles were durable, repairable, and recyclable and called for phasing out fast fashion and maximising recycling to minimise textile waste. This strategy encouraged businesses to rethink their production and operational models in favour of more sustainable approaches.
- Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (2022, effective 2026)
    - Scheduled for implementation by 2026, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation introduces criteria for durability, reusability, and repairability, reduces carbon footprints, enhances recycling, and includes digital product passports for material composition and environmental impact. These regulations create a stronger incentive for manufacturers to design eco-friendly products and give consumers access to transparent product information.

Groundbreaking Legislation : Adopted or on the way

- The New York Fashion Act

    Proposed in 2021, the New York Fashion Act would require companies with revenues over $100 million to disclose at least 50% of their supply chain, prioritize transparency in areas like labor practices and chemical use, and report on environmental and social impacts. If passed, it could set a global standard for sustainability, pushing brands worldwide to adopt more responsible practices.

- AGEC Law (Anti-Waste and Circular Economy Law)

    The AGEC Law, effective in 2020 in France, aims to reduce textile waste and promote circularity. It requires brands to collect used textiles, adopt sustainable production practices, and imposes stricter regulations on unsold goods and recycling, supporting broader EU sustainability goals.

- Anti-Fast Fashion Law

    A proposed tax on ultra-low-cost fashion brands like Temu and Shein seeks to target companies that produce high volumes of cheap, disposable clothing with harmful environmental and labor impacts. This law aims to encourage more responsible production practices within the fast fashion sector.

Seizing opportunities for sustainable textile production

As these policies and certifications unfold and become more stringent, they present both challenges and opportunities for companies. Businesses that proactively align with these evolving frameworks will:

- Build greater consumer trust through transparency.
- Gain a competitive edge by adopting sustainable practices early.
- Innovate with eco-friendly materials and processes.

EverDye meets and exceeds these sustainability objectives, positioning itself as a frontrunner in the transformation of the textile industry. Their room-temperature dyeing process significantly reduces energy consumption and carbon footprints compared to traditional dyeing methods.

Moreover, the company uses bio-based pigments, aligning with the growing demand for eco-friendly solutions. EverDye's processes also conform to REACH and ZDHC standards, ensuring the elimination of harmful chemicals and promoting safer, more sustainable alternatives. By adopting these cutting-edge technologies, EverDye is adhering to current regulations and setting new benchmarks for industry sustainability.

The textile industry's future lies in embracing these changes, viewing them not as burdens but as opportunities to redefine the sector. By balancing profitability with responsibility, companies like EverDye can contribute to a more sustainable and ethical future, benefiting from both compliance and leadership in an increasingly conscientious market, helping brands and textile manufacturers attain their sustainability objectives.

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