



Taking the “right” steps

Fashion is keen on becoming more sustainable and many sneaker and young-minded footwear brands are aiming to get the attention of Gen Z, which is more sensitive to the environmental cause, with green initiatives. Is this a trend or a serious commitment? What is for sure is that cool ideas, new manufacturing techniques and fresh initiatives are mushrooming in recent seasons and bring new energy to the market. Let's hope they also do good to our planet.

Some renowned brands started taking action a few seasons ago. Among them there are, for instance, Adidas x Parley recycling marine plastic debris for its shoes and Nike's Flynit reducing production waste of about 65% when compared with traditional manufacturing processes. SI collected some more recent examples.

Chew less, recycle more

The sneaker brand Gumshoe was born in 2018 and exhibited at the Milanese B2C show **WSM-WhiteStreetMarket** in June 2019. Its shoes' soles are made with recycled chewing gum scraped off Amsterdam's streets. In the Dutch city, 3.3 million pounds of chewing gum get stuck on its streets every year. Thanks to this new project every 2.2 pounds of discarded chewing gum is used for producing four pairs of shoes. Twenty percent of the gum is mixed with natural rubber in a special compound called Gum-Tec used for producing the shoes' soles. Thanks to the special mix they don't stick to the ground or melt in warm temperature conditions.

Pick your apple shoes

Womsh—whose name stands for Word Of Mouth Shoes—is an Italian brand of zero-impact and recyclable sneakers founded in 2014 by entrepreneur Gianni Dalla Mora.

The brand has recently launched its Apple Skin vegan line made with a special material containing 50% apple fiber, a material obtained from apple remains from the food industry, and 50% polyurethane.

Womsh, while constantly investing in new low-impact material, is also involved in various initiatives that care for the environment. The company is committed to compensate the CO2 produced throughout its shoes' lifecycle by planting trees, according to the Lifegate Zero Impact project. In the last five years Womsh planted and preserved a number of trees whose extension can be compared with a 12,000 sq. meter area of equatorial forest.

These shoes' uppers are made with leather's leftovers from slaughter of European origins and only tanned in Europe. Starting from s/s 2019 Womsh has achieved a special recognition as it is the first worldwide company using metal-free tanned leathers according to the Itex Standard 100 certification.

The company also recycles old Womsh shoes for producing rubber tiles used for kids' playgrounds. In 2018, for instance, it recycled 1,500 pairs of shoes.

The vegan shoe that smells like lemon

Lemon Jelly, part of Procalçado SA group, a Portuguese footwear specialist and sole manufacturer for some of important footwear brands, is a colorful fashion brand of plastic boots that smell of lemon and guarantee temperature stability, humidity and odor control.

Starting from f/w 2019-20 Lemon Jelly got the “PETA Approved Vegan” recognition for all of its products and also launched its new sustainable Wasteless Range selection. This last selection of boots—only available in black, white and gray hues—has its uppers made with 100% recycled post industrial waste plastic, side elasticized panels made with a 70% recycled PES thread, inner linings made with 70% recycled plastic bottles, sewing threads made with 100% recycled polyester, insole uppers also made from 100% recycled plastic bottles and insole foam out of 90% recycled polyurethane, while its outer soles are made with recycled thermoplastic rubber.

By 2020 the company aims to reach zero-waste production by recycling its production remains

entirely into new footwear.

The circular sneaker

More virtuous examples populate the fashion market. Wao, a newborn sneaker brand by Dress To Live, was founded by Giovanni Gallucci, an entrepreneur from the Marche region footwear district. His company is committed to be directly responsible for the disposal of his brand's used shoes once they are dismissed. For this all sneakers are made with 100% natural materials that can be recycled as part of a circular economy model.

Their upper construction is made with wood and hemp fiber. The insole is made of cork and coconut fiber, while biological cotton is used for label and laces. All materials used are usually left rough and unrefined or alternatively colored by using natural dyes extracted from tinctorial plants.

Also soles can be recycled as they are made of 99% natural rubber and 1% of an excipient which, when combined with the acids contained in the compost, they biodegrade 80% in two years.

A new model entirely made of 100% nylon recycled from fishing nets was also recently launched.

How an icon turns eco-friendly

During the last edition of **WhiteStreetMarket** in Milan, Converse announced the launch of some new eco-friendly variants of its iconic sneakers. By July 5, 2019 it will launch Converse Renew Canvas, a shoe model whose uppers are made with 100% recycled polyester PET bottles.

By August it will start selling the Converse Renew Denim, a Chuck 70 model whose uppers are made with recycled denim that was hand-selected from second-hand jeans. By s/s 2020 it will also launch the Converse Renew Cotton sneaker whose uppers will be made with 40% of cotton previously used for old Chuck Converse.