MANIFESTO

REGENERATIVE FASHION: SUSTAINABLE BY NATURE

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THE OPPORTUNITY BEHIND THE CHALLENGE

Today's fashion industry has the chance to become a defining example of how to transition big business towards a circular bioeconomy[1] that is inclusive, and climate and nature-positive[2]. This is due to its size[3] and potential to be based on sustainable biobased solutions.

In an industry that is at present characterized by linear, extractive and fossil-based[4] value chains, which have hugely negative consequences in terms of climate change and biodiversity loss, there is finally a chance to rewrite the next chapter in a way that puts sustainability at its heart.

Through the present **Manifesto for Regenerative Fashion**, the members of the SMI Fashion Taskforce have committed to changing the path of the fashion industry towards the creation of a more regenerative industry.

Regenerative Fashion is about holistically addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis while generating equitable and inclusive prosperity along its value chains. At the same time, it sets out to support the local and indigenous communities responsible for creating regenerative landscapes[5].

Restoring harmony between Humanity, Nature and the Environment is at the core of Regenerative Fashion as its aim is to reconcile science, innovation and local traditions with the search for wisdom, beauty and spirituality.

Regenerative landscapes are the starting point for Regenerative Fashion - the basis for circular bioeconomy value chains. Regenerative landscapes are resilient, inclusive, biodiversity-rich and deforestation-free. They produce a diversity of goods and services such as food, energy, and biomaterials, as well as ecosystem services (including carbon sequestration). Regenerative practices empower local and indigenous communities, support their prosperity and respect their ancestral rights.

Regenerative fashion landscapes can be created by:

- **Supporting holistic mosaics of interdependent ecosystems and land uses** such as protected primary forests, pastures, agroforestry systems, regenerative agriculture and sustainably managed forests which provide for a diversity of biobased textile materials. These include organic cotton, sustainable wood-fibers, wool, leather, cashmere, and silk while delivering crucial ecosystem services links to water, food, energy, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
- **Empowering local and indigenous communities** to design, manage and benefit in a fair way from the ecosystem services and the fashion value chains rooted in their

[1] A circular bioeconomy relies on healthy, biodiverse and resilient ecosystems and aims to provide sustainable wellbeing for society at large. This is achieved through the provision of ecosystem services and the sustainable management of biological resources (plants, animals, micro-organisms and derived biomass, including organic waste) and its circular transformation in food, feed, energy and biomaterials (e.g. for the fashion industry) within the ecological boundaries of the ecosystems that it relies on. The circular bioeconomy is powered by renewable energy and includes, and holistically interlinks, the following systems and sectors:
-Land and marine ecosystems as well as green infrastructures such as urban forests and trees and the services they provide in cities
-Primary production sectors
-Economic and industrial sectors relying on biological resources and nature-based solutions. Source: Palahí, et al. 2020. Investing in Nature as the true engine of our economy: A 10-point Action Plan for a Circular Bioeconomy of Wellbeing. https://doi.org/10.36333/k2a02

[2] Climate- and Nature-positive refers to economic activities that result in the removal of more emissions than those they release to the atmosphere while protect natural ecosystems and enhance biodiversity within their value chains. More at: https://doi.org/10.36333/k2a02

[3] The fashion industry contributes $2.4 trillion to global manufacturing and employs 300 million people worldwide.

[4] Due to the dominating role of synthetic fibers and the high fossil inputs required in the production of cotton.

[5] Landscapes that are ecologically resilient and healthy, socially fair and inclusive, economically sustainable and equitable.

landscapes.

- **Implementing regenerative practices**[6] shifting from high-external input dependent industrial farming towards integrated ecologically-based systems that enhance biodiversity and improve the carbon and water cycles by optimizing human-animal-plant interactions that minimize soil disturbances, increase plant diversity, and enrich soil nutrients.

Commitment

SMI Fashion Taskforce brands commit to a progressive shift towards **Regenerative Fashion** – a circular biobased industry that is inclusive, climate- and nature-positive.

In particular, brands commit to:

- Protect nature and biodiversity within and beyond the brands' value chains.
- Promote circular bioeconomy supply chains and regenerative landscapes and practices.
- Engage local and indigenous communities to ensure that their rights are respected, and that they are involved in the design and benefits derived from regenerative landscapes and value chains.

6 Practices include diverse crop rotation, multi-species cover crops, no-till and low-till farming, rotational grazing, agro-silvopastoral systems and sustainable forest management.

REGENERATIVE EXAMPLE: AGRO-SILVO-PASTORAL SYSTEMS

Agro-silvo-pastoral systems have the potential to be a paradigmatic example for **Regenerative Fashion landscapes** that are climate- and nature-positive, while providing a diversity of bio-materials such as cotton, wood-fibers, wool, cashmere, silk, leatherand natural dyes as basis for sustainable fashion value chains and inclusive prosperity for the local communities.

Regenerative agro-silvo-pastoral systems build soil health and carbon content, increase water quality and biodiversity, and improve the resilience of ecosystems. Regenerative practices reduce reliance on synthetic inputs like fertilisers and pesticides, which are linked to pollution and eutrophication, and account, for instance, for around 70% of the emissions in conventional cotton cultivation. Improved farming practices and reduced synthetic inputs in cotton cultivation are estimated to cut around 50% of greenhouse gas emissions and increasenet revenue for farmers[7]. In wool production instead, most emissions are related to methane release by sheep[8], which can be compensated through agroforestry systems and grazing management.

Figure 1. Conceptual representation of a regenerative agroforestry design consisting of diversified perennial lines (including mulberry silk trees) intercalated with cash crops blocks (tea and cotton) in between lines. The design is modular and elastic and can be adapted to each farmer's preferences and to local environmental requirements. Design by Pretaterra

[7] Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *The Nature Imperative: How the circular economy tackles biodiversity loss* (2021)

[8] Brock, Pip & Graham, Robert & Madden, Patrick & Alcock, Douglas. (2013). Greenhouse gas emissions profile for 1 kg of woolproduced in the Yass Region, New South Wales: A Life Cycle Assessment approach. Animal Production Science. 53. 485-508. 10.1071/AN12208

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