

BRANDS SPEAK

Fairtrade brands are no doubt important supply chain actors who play an active role in helping our producers obtain better trading conditions. We interviewed 03 renowned brands from Germany and Norway, who produce high quality Fairtrade certified ethical and sustainable fashion wear. We framed a set of common questions which our stakeholders would love to hear from them and this is what the brands had to say.

BRANDS FASHION- GERMANY



In conversation with Dr Uli Hofmann, Managing Director/ CEO Brands Fashion

www.brands-fashion.com

Q. Tell us about your brand journey and what makes it sustainable. You partner with various certified labels. Do you find them complimentary or compatible with each other?

A. Brands Fashion is social, green fashion in the field of workwear, merchandising and promotion and makes fashion for brands. We are convinced that paying stable prices for cotton – which is the basis of our business – is indispensable for a sustainable development of the textile industry. This has enabled us to convince an increasing number of customers such.

Brands Fashion is a huge multiplier for Fairtrade in the workwear industry. In order to fulfil this role, our long-term concept is to actively encourage existing customers to switch to clothing made from Fairtrade- and GOTS-certified organic cotton and to acquire new customers for them.

In the B2C market, we have succeeded in launching SHIRTS FOR LIFE, our own eco-fair fashion label, which returns one sustainably generated Euro per sold part directly to the School for Life educational initiative in Thailand. This represents the closed cycle of our social concept.

In addition to our ecological orientation through GOTS certification, the social and economic focus that Fairtrade provides as a meaningful complement is particularly important to us! Knowing that farmers receive a safe price for their cotton and that cooperatives can set up wonderful social projects with additional premium money takes away the fear felt by many textile importers. The long-term concept of establishing sustainability throughout the value chain is currently led by Brands Fashion's pioneering work in the innovative Fairtrade Textile Production Programme.

Q. How long has Brand Fashion been working with Fairtrade and what was the one facet that got this partnership started?

A. Already since the end of 2015, we have been working continuously to persuade more and more customers to buy Fairtrade-clothing. The market launch and delivery of the first Fairtrade-products began in 2016. The first fair SFL collection was launched in autumn 2016 with 25 styles. Just one year later, there were 80 individual Fairtrade-styles.

The reason for starting this partnership with Fairtrade is that the majority of our cotton products are produced in India, Bangladesh and Indonesia - countries that are often criticized for their working conditions. In these countries we have got to know many long-standing, professional production sites, reliable partners and committed people who accompany us on our sustainable path. We strongly promote sustainable production in these countries and regret very much that textile companies or our customers react to bad press by trying to avoid production in these countries. We want to change course and promote development through regular exchanges with Fairtrade and close cooperation with suppliers.

Q. How many Fairtrade Cotton Producers in Asia does Brands Fashion source from? What is the annual volume off-take and how do you see the trend going forward?

A. In 2018 the annual purchase volume was around 2600 tons of Fairtrade-cotton which this year accounted for 60% of all cotton sourced by Brands Fashion. Regarding the future of the trend, please see below under question 5

Q. What are your global sales volume of Fairtrade garments both Online and Retail? Do you see a trend in consumer awareness and preferences for ethically sourced products?

A. Our global sales volume of Fairtrade-products increased from 532.624€ in 2017 to 1.174.188€ in 2018 which makes an increase of more than 120%.

At Brands Fashion Fairtrade-products accounted for 6% of all products sold in 2017 and for 11% of all products sold in 2018. Moreover, we managed to increase the number of customers purchasing Fairtrade-products from 16 in 2017 to 23 in 2018. This development underpins our perception of a trend towards more sustainable apparel production, including greater interest in Fairtrade-products.

Q. How do you think big brands can influence the purchasing power of consumers and thereby support cotton producers to better access the global market?

A. Big brands have the advantage of purchasing great quantities, reducing fix costs and getting better prices. This is why mostly big brands are capable to offer e.g. Fairtrade-products at affordable prices. Our vision is to free sustainable clothing from the image of a luxury good. Fairtrade- and GOTS-certified apparel must become the new “normal”.

Q. What is your next exciting project with Fairtrade?

A. In order to make our supply chains even more transparent and fair, we maintain intensive contact with our suppliers and exchange information productively with Fairtrade. Clearly - the holistic sustainability of the entire supply chain from the cotton harvest onwards must be efficient, safe, socially compatible and ecological. It is precisely for this reason that, together with GIZ, Fairtrade and two other labels, we have started a pilot project to introduce the Fairtrade Textile Production Programme in India and would like to become a pioneer and role model for the whole textile industry.

With this innovative standard, we are committed to transparency and fair working conditions throughout the entire textile supply chain. In this way, Brands Fashion shows that a textile importer is capable of establishing fair trade beyond the sourcing of Fairtrade-cotton. In addition, together with producers such as Sags Apparels from Tirupur, we are converting our entire production to 100% Fairtrade and maintaining long-term business relationships with our suppliers in order to achieve economic security for both sides.

