

#BeatPollution



TRANSFORMING THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Building Transparent and Traceable Value Chains

The problem

The textile supply chain is complex, with multiple actors involved at each stage in the process. Ensuring the supply chain is transparent and traceable is therefore a challenge. Currently, only **21% of brands disclose their supplier lists** beyond their direct manufacturers, making it difficult to trace inputs. And due to the informal nature of the many business relationships in the sector, they are often not tracked, and they can constantly change.

The quality of supply chain data and its availability are limited. For example, primary lifecycle data on energy, water and emissions are often missing or generic, leading to uncertainty and reliance on data sourced by others. Greenwashing risks and methodological inconsistencies also persist. More standardized methodologies like the **Product Environmental Footprint (PEF)** or **Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)** can substantially mitigate these barriers, as they set standard rules to calculate environmental impacts — thus enhancing comparability and reducing methodological ambiguity across LCA results.

Did you know?

The Textile Industry in Tunisia represents

30% of total industrial employment, making it the country's largest source of industrial jobs

What is InTex?



The InTex programme, part of the **UNEP Textile Initiative**, works with governments and SMEs in countries where textiles are a key economic driver, encouraging a shift from a linear take, make and dispose process to a more sustainable, circular model. The programme does this by supporting national-level policy changes that enable a shift towards circularity. It also helps companies understand the impact of the resources they are using, spurring them to optimize production processes, reduce environmental harms and change the way they do business. This gives businesses a competitive edge.

The textile industry is a cornerstone of Tunisia's economy, providing stability and contributing significantly to the country's socio-economic balance. Yet, this is an industry with a big environmental footprint, from its use of land and water to the emissions it generates, as well as its impacts on human health. But positive change is happening, and there is a lot of opportunity for real impact.

By the numbers

To date in Kenya, South Africa and Tunisia



32 SMEs

applied UNEP's eco-innovation methodology



10 LCAs

conducted following the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) method



230 company representatives

trained in LCA and circularity concepts



5,100 tonnes GHG

emissions savings estimated in Tunisia and South Africa



10% hazardous chemicals

reduction estimated in Tunisia



25% waste

reduction on average



USD 4 million

estimated savings

The environmental and financial impacts are annual estimates, assuming full implementation of the measures identified through InTex.

What SMEs can do

Choices made across the textile value chain — from raw material extraction and production to product disposal — directly shape environmental outcomes. **Understanding and tracking** each of these choices is a foundational step toward more **informed, responsible decision-making**.

Businesses can quantify their hotspots, meaning areas where improvements are most needed to reduce pollution, by coupling traceability data like supplier level blockchain or digital product information systems with LCA-based findings. With better data in hand, companies can introduce optimization measures, track improvements over time and communicate verified environmental performance, reducing greenwashing risks. Brands could **increase transparency by disclosing and systematically tracking supplier lists** that go beyond their direct suppliers.

Increased transparency and traceability in the textile sector can help businesses **mitigate reputational, regulatory and environmental risks**, as well as **enable responsible sourcing** that can meet stakeholder and consumer expectations.



Did you know?

UNEP InTex helps SMEs lower their environmental impacts through Life Cycle Assessments, for improved transparency, access to better data, support more informed decisions and reduce greenwashing risks.

Case study



“Through the InTex programme, the Product Environmental Footprint study helped us put in place more transparent and organized systems to monitor production impacts, introduce optimization measures and be better prepared for compliance.”

Siwar Jguirim, Environmental Manager, Demco

“Transparency and traceability are key to systemic change in the textile sector. Actions taken by small businesses, backed by science and knowledge, can have a butterfly effect.”

Naouel Merji, Director, International Center for Environmental Technologies of Tunis (CITET), InTex Implementing Partner in Tunisia

Denim company tackles transparency in its supply chain

Demco is a Tunisian apparel manufacturer specializing in denim, exporting all of its products to Europe. The LCAs carried out by Demco with UNEP InTex support followed the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) method for Apparel and Footwear. The PEF findings helped Demco systematically quantify the environmental performance of their men's jeans, from raw material production to disposal. The analysis nudged them to collect accurate life cycle data and helped them craft targeted improvement measures.

To address the main hotspot of raw material production that was identified through the PEF study, conducted as part of the InTex programme, Demco resolved to work with their raw materials suppliers to make changes and improvements. This included developing its own environmental code of conduct, with the **aim that 50% of sub-contractors and suppliers sign the code by 2026, 80% by 2028 and 100% by 2030**. Demco is also now part of the **Denim Deal**, an initiative focusing on scaling circularity in the denim industry, including through the use of at least **20 % post-consumer recycled cotton in denim production by 2030**.

As part of another hotspot related to manufacturing, the Demco team were trained in the safe management of chemicals. The business then implemented a **fully automated chemical dosing system** and **centralized the digital management of dyeing and washing processes**. This improved the internal traceability of the resources and materials they use and contributed to the increased availability of quality data, fulfilling the increasing requirements from buyers for disclosure and better environmental performance.

How SMEs benefit

The SMEs that work with the InTex programme receive **trainings and technical support** to calculate their Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and innovate their business strategy. Through this process, SMEs gain better data on their products and their value chains to be able to make more informed decisions, enabling them to improve and credibly communicate their environmental performance.

InTex assists companies in **shifting their mindset, helping to forge new strategic partnerships and enabling systemic change** through concrete solutions for participating SMEs and, by extension, the sector overall. SMEs also benefit from exposure to international networks and expertise, learning from the latest developments in circularity and sustainability. The programme results show the real-world potential of low-cost sustainability measures in textiles — proving that environmental action and business profitability can go hand in hand.

UNEP's InTex programme, funded by the European Union and the Government of Denmark, works with governments and textile SMEs to reduce the environmental impact of textile products and the way companies do business, using life-cycle approaches.