

US company Ralph Lauren unveils zero wastewater cotton dyeing system



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Ralph Lauren has unveiled Colour on Demand, a new dyeing platform meant to transform how the fashion industry colours cotton. It makes the process more sustainable, more effective and faster than ever before. The platform will produce the first scalable zero wastewater cotton dyeing system, to enable recycling and reuse of all water from the dyeing process.

Every year, trillions of litres of water is used for fabric dyeing alone, generating around 20 per cent of the world's wastewater. This untreated wastewater is polluting and traditionally required rigorous, lengthy and costly treatment to make the water reusable. Designed to help address water scarcity and pollution caused by cotton dyeing, Colour on Demand is a new system composed of a set of technologies that will

enable the recycling and reuse of all water from the dyeing process, establishing the world's first scalable zero wastewater cotton dyeing system.

In addition to significant water savings, Colour on Demand dramatically reduces the amount of chemicals, dye, time and energy used in the cotton dyeing process. Further, for the first time in the industry, Colour on Demand also provides a more efficient and sustainable way to colour cotton at any point in product manufacturing, rather than at the outset. This will enable significantly shorter lead times for making product colour decisions.

“Traditional colour dyeing is one of the most polluting practices in our industry, and as a global brand, we recognised the need to create a scalable solution,” said Halide Alagöz, chief product and sustainability officer at Ralph Lauren. “Colour on Demand significantly reduces the environmental impact of dyeing cotton, and as an added benefit, will enable us to better balance inventory and meet personalised consumer demands faster than ever before.”

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Ralph Lauren brought together four leading innovators in their respective fields - Dow, a leader in materials science; Jeanologia, a leader in sustainable solutions for garment and fabric finishing, with high expertise in garment dyeing and close loop water treatment systems; Huntsman Textile Effects, a global chemicals company specialising in textile dyes and chemicals; and Corob, a global technology leader in dispensing and mixing solutions - to reimagine each stage of the colouring process and join this shared mission to create a more sustainable and efficient system for cotton dyeing.

As part of the first phase of Colour on Demand, Ralph Lauren optimised the use of Ecofast Pure Sustainable Textile Treatment, a pre-treatment solution developed by Dow for cotton textiles. When used with existing dyeing equipment, Ecofast Pure enables the use of up to 40 per cent less water, 85 per cent fewer chemicals, 90 per cent less energy and a 60 per cent reduction in carbon footprint compared to traditional cotton dyeing processes. Ralph Lauren is integrating this process into its supply chain and will launch product using this technology later this year.

“Water scarcity and pollution are important issues for the fashion industry and through our partnership with Ralph Lauren we are working towards addressing these challenges,” said Sheila Bonini, senior vice president, Private Sector Engagement at World Wildlife Fund.

“Technology has the ability to accelerate change at a scale that matters, so it’s exciting to see Ralph Lauren establishing innovative new models that transform outdated practices and can deliver measurable outcomes for people and planet. This is exactly the kind of leadership we need to see from the fashion industry.”

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