

Case Study

THE BENEFITS OF CLASSIC GREEN INNOVATION IN BUSINESS

Country:	United Kingdom
Title of the case study:	Reducing the impacts of clothing
Geographical scope:	Primarily UK, plus all nations where fibres, textiles and garments sold into the UK market are produced.
Main partners involved:	WRAP, UK Governments, clothing retailers & brands, clothing suppliers, re-use organisations, detergent manufacturers.

Short description

Building on original stakeholder engagement work by Defra, WRAP is delivering an approach to reducing the environmental impact of clothing purchased and used in the UK. This is called the [Sustainable Clothing Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#). The work aims to:

- identify the priority products and materials;
- identify parts of the product lifecycle which have high environmental impact, termed “hotspots”;
- identify and agree actions with stakeholders to reduce “hotspot” impacts;
- develop an agreed method for identifying baseline impacts and measuring change in impacts; and
- secure sector-wide commitment to delivering actions that have a large impact.

Currently, WRAP is taking SCAP to a new phase, involving formal commitment to delivering real reductions in impact by 2020. This was launched in June 2013 - the [SCAP 2020 Commitment](#) - to support the clothing design, production, retail, re-use and laundry sectors in delivering a reduction in carbon, water and waste footprints by 2020 from a baseline of 2012. The first step is for the major players to quantify their 2012 baseline impacts and prioritise their own actions. At launch, the SCAP 2020 commitment included 22 founding signatories from the clothing sector, representing a third of UK clothing retail by value and volume. The initiative is open to more signatories and the aim is to increase the numbers. These signatories have committed to agreeing targets by the end of 2013.

The commitment requires signatories to meet environmental improvement targets by delivering a selection of activities from the following actions of the commitment, which focus on:

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|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ impact measurement | ■ supply chain impacts | ■ consumer information |
| ■ fibre choice | ■ product lifetimes | ■ product re-use |

In addition, WRAP has worked with the clothing retail sector to develop other resources such as a consumer-facing brand, and a common approach to specifying clothing lifetimes.

1. Measurement of the original baseline of consumption and production

[WRAP's research](#) shows that each UK household's clothing has an average carbon footprint of 1.5 tonnes of CO₂eq and a water impact equivalent to 240,000 litres (90% of which is in overseas production, often in countries with water stress or scarcity). This was summarised in WRAP's "[Valuing Our Clothes](#)" report. WRAP has developed a tool to enable companies to measure the impacts of their product portfolio with reasonable accuracy based on life-cycle inventory data and provide a basis for setting targets for reduction.

2. Green innovation implemented, timeframe and cost of the measure

WRAP launched the SCAP2020 sector commitment to enable partners from all parts of the supply chain, (fibre and textile producers, garment manufacturers, retailers, collectors and recyclers) to take action. The SCAP2020 Commitment involves companies operating in the UK. However, since 90% of the supply chain for this sector is outside the UK this commitment will have a significant international impact.

To date, the cost of WRAP's work is approximately £2 million (since 2011). Estimated costs for implementation support through to 2020 are £4 million. Delivering the planned reductions will save around £3 billion across the supply chain and would deliver a Return on Investment of over £400 per £1 spent. Note that savings would occur across the global supply chain and payback is estimated at 2-3 years.

3. Quantified figures reflecting the situation after implementation of the initiative

Reduction in environmental impacts: by end 2013, the SCAP2020 signatories will develop targets for delivery by 2020. Early analysis suggests the potential to reduce carbon, water and waste footprints by 15% each by 2020. This will deliver approximately 5 million tonnes of CO₂(eq) reduction, 1 billion m³ of water use reduction and 250,000 tonnes less waste in the global clothing supply chain.

Increased economic benefits/reduced costs/increased profitability: WRAP's preliminary research suggests that new business models for "trading in" clothes for re-sale will have a positive impact on the UK economy, improving its balance of trade and contributing £1 billion to UK GDP by 2020. WRAP has identified incentivised trade-in as, financially, the most promising option for an [alternative business model in the clothing sector](#).

Enhanced social benefits: these will be realised through greater value creation for charity clothing collectors, and improving the funding for charitable organisations.

4. Main social and environmental effects

The main benefits are the reduction in carbon, water and waste footprints of UK clothing (currently around 5% of the global carbon footprint of UK goods and services). It will also lead to less competition for land and water in developing countries by extending product lifetimes to reduce the growth in demand for fibre.

5. Why is this case study a success? How can it be replicated?

The SCAP demonstrates delivery of major change requires collective action of a range of stakeholders. It has:

- Provided a forum for businesses, governments, NGO's and charities to discuss overall direction and common goals, putting aside competition and commercial sensitivities. It has allowed partners to develop collectively a clear strategic framework for change, which can be communicated to suppliers and consumers.
- WRAP acts as the independent convener of these agreements. This role is seen as crucial by all partners.
- Developed a common evidence base providing a sound basis for action.
- Developed a common and robust measurement method. WRAP has enabled stakeholders to measure baselines reliably and identify best options for improvement.
- Developed a communication campaign (to be launched later in 2013) that will encourage consumers to extend the life of their clothes, reduce the impact of laundry and donate or sell clothes for re-use and recycling when they have finished with them.

To replicate, other nations could build a similar platform for engagement and use the resources developed by WRAP, where appropriate, to provide consistent requirements of the global supply chain. This is particularly important for global brands, who prefer consistent action across nations and continents. This initiative is moving into its delivery phase so it will take another year or so to confirm its cost-effectiveness. However, the early progress has encouraged the Nordic countries to investigate replicating this approach over the coming 12 months.