

PRIMARK®

# WATER

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**Primark Environmental Insights 2021/22**

## WHY IT MATTERS

**Growing populations and economies, changing lifestyles and global climate change are putting increasing pressure on our water resources. Water is a critical natural resource within the fashion industry – from the irrigation of the cotton fields to the dyeing and finishing of our fabrics and materials. It is vital that we manage it effectively.**

**Ensuring our suppliers' factories manage their water use effectively and control their wastewater responsibly is crucial for helping to reduce our environmental impact as a business. Given our history of engaging directly with the farms within the Primark Sustainable Cotton Programme (PSCP), we also know how crucial water is for growing cotton and the importance of managing this resource effectively.**

### **Our commitments and partnerships**

We've committed under Primark Cares to protecting life on the planet. Given the fundamental role that water – and therefore water stewardship – plays within this, we recognise that more needs to be done.

Our own Wastewater Testing Programme was launched in 2017 within our tier two supply chain in Bangladesh. We followed this in 2019 by rolling out supplier remediation programmes for Wastewater Testing failures in 2019. In partnership with the other members of the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) Foundation – a non-profit organisation committed to sustainable chemical management within the fashion industry – we supported the development of global wastewater guidelines for the fashion industry in 2018.

In 2021, we joined the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) which drives, recognises and rewards good water stewardship performance globally. As a funding member of the AWS, our aim is to spur change in the fashion industry through this initiative. Our intention is that future programmes will identify areas for improvement in water efficiency and recycling in our supply chain and allow our suppliers to implement the AWS standard. This includes encouraging suppliers to reduce water consumption in their factories and looking at opportunities to recycle and reuse water, and improve the quality of wastewater effluent.

In addition, we're working with Apparel Impact Institute (Aii) through the ongoing Clean by Design (CbD) efficiency programme, to reduce water consumption and the overall environmental impact of our suppliers' facilities. Read more about this [here](#).

As signatories to Textiles 2030, a voluntary initiative led by WRAP, we've committed to reduce the aggregate water footprint of new products sold by 30%. This builds upon our previous commitment under WRAP's Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP) 2020.

# OUR APPROACH

This year, we've appointed a new Water Stewardship Manager, as part of the Environmental Sustainability team, and we're developing a strategy to promote the principles of water stewardship throughout our supply chain: using water in a socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial manner.

We're currently working to expand our existing efficiency programme within suppliers' factories and introducing new ones to recycle and reuse water, and to minimise our impact on available water within a catchment, especially in water scarce regions.

We're also focusing on promoting more responsible water management practices across our top suppliers. It's a significant undertaking, but tools such as the Higg Facility Environmental Module ([Higg FEM](#)) are giving us greater insight into water reuse and recycling across our supply chain.

We are also deploying mapping tools such as the WWF Water Risk Filter to identify catchment risks. By combining our operational and catchment risk data we can focus our efforts on making improvements that contribute towards the operational efficiency of the business while reducing our impact on the environment. Good water stewardship will also improve Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for communities and help to improve biodiversity.

## What we're doing

### AWS Implementation Accelerator

As a funding member of AWS, we're committing additional resources to help develop the alliance and support its projects. One example is a two-year scalable programme, which will initially look at water stewardship in textile management across 15 facilities in Bangladesh. In line with our broadened water stewardship strategy, the AWS Implementation Accelerator will conduct a site and catchment-focused review of water governance and efficiency at these 15 selected supply chain facilities. Based on the findings, the AWS standard will be applied in areas identified for improvement, to encourage these facilities to elevate their performance within the factory and beyond. This is our first programme focused exclusively on water stewardship and will help to steer our approach going forward.

### Wastewater Testing Programme

Our Wastewater Testing Programme helps us verify that facilities are adhering to the ZDHC Wastewater Guidelines and enables us to monitor the chemical composition and parameters of discharges. We require our suppliers to test their wastewater to the ZDHC Wastewater Guidelines version 2.0 and disclose test results on the ZDHC Gateway.

The majority of key factories in Bangladesh tested their wastewater in 2021 and the results were encouraging. There were no breaches of legal limits and 94% of facilities met the more stringent ZDHC Wastewater Guidelines. We're working on remediation with the small number of facilities that did not meet the limits outlined in the ZDHC guidelines.

### Reducing water usage in the Primark Sustainable Cotton Programme

Nearly a decade ago in 2013, we launched our Primark Sustainable Cotton Programme (PSCP) with 1,251 women farmers in Gujarat, India.

Working in collaboration with agronomic experts CottonConnect and a local grassroots organisation the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), our objective was to understand and reduce the environmental impact of our cotton; support the livelihoods of cotton farmers; and explore how we could change the way we sourced cotton.

Since then, through CottonConnect, the programme has expanded to Pakistan and Bangladesh where we work with other local partners, the Rural Education and Economic Development Society (REEDS) in Pakistan and Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) in Bangladesh. Up to the end of August 2022, we have trained 252,800 farmers in more sustainable cotton production methods through our programme across India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.<sup>1</sup>

Cotton farmers are trained over three years to reduce their use of water and dependence on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, in addition to learning new skills such as seed selection; land preparation and sowing; crop management and harvesting.

As we look to the future, we are moving towards supporting more regenerative farming practices within the PSCP, building on existing practices adopted by farmers in PSCP such as inter-cropping; reducing reliance on synthetic and chemical fertilisers and pesticides; and increasing use of bio-fertilisers. Our aim is to promote farming methods that go further to support biodiversity and strengthen the resilience of local ecosystems. Under Primark Cares, we have committed that farmers within our PSCP will adopt more regenerative practices by 2030. Our work is already underway with almost 3,000 farmers having participated in a pilot programme in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Read more about our PSCP [here](#).

### Identifying ways to reduce water usage during manufacturing

In addition to improving water efficiency in the production of cotton, the main raw material in our clothes, we're also exploring how to reduce water usage in the manufacturing process.

Denim manufacturing can involve the use of water intensive processes to turn raw material into finished garments. We're working with [Jeanologia](#) through their Environmental Impact Measuring (EIM) programme to measure and help to reduce the environmental impact of denim finishing, including the amount of water used during production. We're also encouraging our suppliers to use Higg FEM, which helps these factories measure their overall environmental impact and identify ways to continuously improve their performance.

In 2021, we produced our first ever [Cradle to Cradle Gold Certified®](#) mom jeans – made with 100% organic cotton and using manufacturing methods that use less water.

1. This includes farmers that are currently being trained and those that have completed training under the programme.

# OUR PROGRESS

We have worked with the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE) in China since 2016 to improve the environmental performance of tier one and tier two factories in our Chinese supply chain. This non-profit environmental research organisation has developed an online database and tool called Blue EcoChain, which offers instant updates on suppliers' environmental performance.

We're also using Blue EcoChain to encourage our suppliers to manage their environmental impact in key areas such as water use. Since 2018, we have consistently been ranked as one of the 10 most transparent firms operating in China on the IPE and Natural Resources Defence Council's (NRDC) Corporate Information Transparency Index (CITI).

IPE Achievements	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Primark ranking on IPE amongst brands in China	29th out of 267 brands	6th out of 306 brands	7th out of 438 brands	6th out of 538 brands	6th out of 589 brands
Number of sites Primark has reviewed through IPE's database	462	623	1000+	1500+	1500+
Number of priority sites that have disclosed Pollution Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) data on IPE	3	19	38	70	122

# GLOSSARY

<b>Aii</b>	Apparel Impact Institute. A collaboration of brands, manufacturers and industry associations that have come together to select, fund and scale high-impact projects to improve the sustainability outcomes of the apparel and footwear industry.
<b>AWS</b>	Alliance for Water Stewardship. A global membership collaboration comprising businesses, NGOs and the public sector.
<b>CbD</b>	Clean by Design. An approach to green supply chain efficiency which brings together multinational apparel retailers and fashion brands to improve upon environmental impacts in their factories across the globe.
<b>Higg FEM</b>	The Sustainable Apparel Coalition's Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) informs manufacturers, brands, and retailers about the environmental performance of their individual facilities, empowering them to scale sustainability improvements.
<b>WRAP</b>	Waste Resources Action Plan. A climate action NGO working around the globe to tackle the causes of the climate crisis and give the planet a sustainable future.
<b>ZDHC</b>	<p>ZDHC is a multi-stakeholder organisation comprising over 170 contributors from across the industry including brands, suppliers, chemical suppliers, and solution providers.</p> <p>The Roadmap to Zero Programme, by ZDHC, leads the fashion industry to eliminate harmful chemicals from its global supply chain by building the foundation for more sustainable manufacturing to protect workers, consumers and our planet's ecosystems.</p>

Links to other resources

[Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs \(IPE\)](#)