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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Ministère de l'Emploi,  
de la Cohésion sociale  
et du Logement

ethical

fashion



For some years, fair trade has experienced strong development in France and globally. If presently it only represents 0.03% of the world's transactions, it still holds considerable potential for France if one notes the level already attained in Northern Europe, the United Kingdom or Switzerland. Though fair trade mainly concerns food stuffs (coffee, tea, cocoa, fruit juice, rice, bananas), it is open to arts and crafts and fashion, and also service industries, including fair trade tourism. Fair trade products are primarily distributed in specialized circuits often managed by activists, but are now also entering mass distribution.

Considering consumers' increasing ethical standards and the ongoing support by non-governmental organisations, fair trade will soon leave its present emerging market status to become an established market. In this transitional period when initiatives and participants proliferate, fair trade leaves no one indifferent, and even attracts the interest of distributors and labels. The flip side of fair trade's rapid success is the risk of « hijacking » and a loss of references for the consumer.

It is in this context that France, conscious of the risks and careful to inform consumers, hoped to put into place a normalised system establishing some rules for fair trade practices.

Thus, the Délégation Interministérielle à l'Innovation, à l'Expérimentation Sociale et à l'économie Sociale (DIISES) was directed to create, with AFNOR technical support, a reference document defining generic guidelines for fair trade practices.

After almost four years of work, the standards commission, composed of experts (representatives from fair trade organisations, consumer associations, mass distribution and government) has reached an "agreement" on fair trade terminology definitions. This document represents an agreement (IWA) and not a norm. As a first common reference, the text's value is in furnishing consensual definitions coherent with international references - a minimum base for standards.

The resulting definitions reflect three principles:

- *balanced commercial relationship between partners;*
- *assistance to organisations, manufacturers and / or workers who participate in fair trade;*
- *informing and sensitizing the consumer, client and general public to fair trade.*

Furthermore, a national commission for fair trade (CNCE) "*responsible for acknowledging the persons or legal entities who safeguard fair trade conditions as defined in the law of 2nd August, 2005*", will from now on establish general fair trade guidelines and recognize the organisations fulfilling these conditions. Thus, any person or legal entity designated by the Commission may publicly claim the « CNCE certification », a guarantee for consumer confidence.

As part of the mission's scope, the DIIESES also encourages fair trade participants to assume a position assuring continued competitiveness, especially concerning products or services with the greatest value added. To put it simply, it is important to go beyond the "activist purchases" of basic products (coffee, bananas...) or of those undergoing minimal transformation (chocolate, etc...) towards a market response to the most demanding of consumers' expectations. Thus, DIIESES sponsors and participates in events related to textiles and ethical fashion, emblematic products necessitating quality.

- **The African Fibre and Material trade fair** in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), whose objective is to develop exchanges between Northern Hemisphere buyers and Southern Hemisphere manufacturers and to provide market access to small manufacturers adhering to sustainable development in the textile sector.
- **The Ethical Fashion Show**, a professional trade fair in Paris offering participants a unique opportunity to present their creations to fashion industry professionals from around the world, as well as to French and international press.
- **PRÊT À PORTER PARIS**®, key international fashion trade fair (twice a year - Paris, Porte de Versailles), providing both commercial and media-related visibility to creative ethical brands through the launching of the fashion hall SO ETHIC

In presenting the first "Ethical Fashion Memorandum", the DIIESES hopes to enlighten everyone wishing to make thoughtful purchases by considering the social and environmental impact of a product's manufacturing conditions.

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## Ethical fashion

### from coffee to cotton

During the first Ethical Fashion Show of November 2004, Olivier Delbard, Associate ESCAP – EAP Professor (*École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris*) recalled, “sustainable development in the textile manufacturing chain presents three obligations. Economically it must furnish a response as appropriate for North - South exchanges as for Southern local and regional markets, and faced with a “total export” risk, it is important to provide long-term stability for populations.

Socially, fair trade must integrate social costs to benefit education and health, the two main developmental pillars for the poorest countries. Environmentally, it must guarantee an ecological process reflecting the “necessity for development for less advanced countries”.

To these three requirements we might add a fourth - the cultural dimension. It is essential to favour diversity with exchanges in expertise and technology from North to South, and vice versa”.<sup>(\*)</sup>

(\*) Discourse from the Ethical Fashion Show 2004 Round Tables.

### can ethics and fashion be reconciled?

From a fair trade standpoint, fashion has long been considered antinomic to fairness and ethics. Fashion - a symbol of futility in a society of consumer paroxysm - maintains values that in principle are not fair (everyone does not have access) and not ethical (textile industries are particularly accused of social injustice in countries with inexpensive labour).

Next, as fashion is synonymous with short term and versatility and dedicated to brief seasonal cycles, it appears difficult to associate it with sustainable development which involves medium and long term implications and focuses on sustainable ecology.

Now however, we are forced to admit that it is time to recognize the phenomenal potential of the Southern societies' creativity.

But whether fashion or coffee, it is not the product that is fair or ethical, it is the underlying commercial exchange. It is possible to reconcile the irreconcilable, in fashion as in other domains.

Guillaume Sainteny, Head Lecturer at IEP (*Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris*) and member of the *Conseil National du Développement Durable*<sup>(\*)</sup> explains that for this to happen, it would be necessary to affect the different levels of the production chain: the manufacturer, the distributor and the consumer.

At the manufacturing level, the craftsman must maintain a privileged position in the fashion industry and preserve the importance of quality handiwork, which has greater value here than in other sectors.

At the distribution level, it is necessary to assure the product's traceability (the present problem is in intermediaries too numerous to control, as well as the sharing of profits.) And finally, at the consumer level (individual social responsibility), it is necessary to democratize fashion and luxury goods consumption and encourage growing accessibility for these two industries".<sup>(\*)</sup>

(\*) Discourse from the Ethical Fashion Show Round Tables 2004

## **what is the difference between ethical fashion and fair trade fashion?**

Ethical fashion, as in other sectors, is defined by its relationship to fairness and sustainable development.

One could say that the commonly accepted fair trade standards are the ones confirmed in Deputy Antoine Herth's<sup>(\*)</sup> Parliamentary Report using the Fine Group definition from 2000:

"Fair trade is a commercial partnership founded on dialogue, transparency and respect with the goal of achieving the greatest fairness in international commerce. It contributes to sustainable development by providing the best conditions of exchange and guaranteeing manufacturers' and salaried workers' rights, particularly those in the south. Fair trade organisations (with consumer support) play an active role in influencing manufacturers, in raising public awareness and in leading a campaign for changes in the regulations and practices of conventional international commerce." Fair trade fashion incorporates the idea of fair commercial relations based on transparency and respect. Its principle objective is to provide work with decent pay to craftspeople and cooperatives in developing countries, and thus to support their long-term development.

Ethical fashion, by its nature, is limited to the domain of human rights in the work place. It refers to the idea of social quality and justice: the prohibition of forced labour and child labour, the absence of racial or sexual discrimination, the right to form unions, and the respect of hygiene and safety standards...<sup>(\*\*)</sup>

Fair trade involves a degree of heightened requirements in the measure that it includes the North – South dimension, thus supposing that the entire textile chain respects fair trade rules. This is presently difficult to achieve, as it requires

that all links in the chain be certified, and that the entire chain be found in developing countries. Furthermore, "while fair trade is currently based on relatively small manufacturers organised in cooperatives, the practice adapts best to relationships with industrials." Nathalie Ruelle, IFM (*Institut Français de la Mode*) professor – consultant, wonders "up to what point does the Max Havelaar example – an excellent fair trade success – apply to T-shirt sourcing for a 500-person company?" (\*\*\*)

In the first step of the long process towards sustainable development, fair trade fashion appears to be gaining ground, becoming more accessible and taking part with greater ease in a market economy. Its limits, however, come from its principles – respect of ILO (*International Labour Organization*) standards. Manufacturers assuring the best social practices are generally the largest and so small manufacturers risk exclusion from the system unless they are assisted in their path towards respect for social requirements.

Fair trade and ethical fashion also differ in the selective approach of their goals. There are contradictory examples: a Moroccan textile factory, which is not a cooperative, cannot participate in fair trade commerce even if the workers receive decent wages and social conditions are respected...and an African cotton producer who finds it impossible to adhere to the humanitarian and social demands will be excluded from the ethical fashion concept. This antagonism is accentuated by the fact that fair trade fashion is historically concerned with the North-South relationship, while ethical fashion in principle includes all countries with the possibility of forming commercial relations in the textile chain. Thus, an ethical T-shirt is not necessarily fair trade. A T-shirt in cotton fibre and thread coming from Greece, knitted and finished in France, and also manufactured in France, can earn the "ethical" label based on consumer assurance that the production workers have correct conditions. And yet, following the logic that it doesn't benefit small manufacturers in the South, it is not fair trade.

The two concepts of fair trade and ethical fashion are of different essences, but are nevertheless complementary. They both participate in the context of a process towards sustainable development that takes into account the "three aspects of social equality, economic efficiency and environmental quality" (\*) and they both "respond to current needs without compromising future generations' capacity to meet their own needs". (\*\*\*)

(\*) The quota systems date from 1961 when "rich" countries negotiated a progressive opening of their borders to textile products from "poor countries" in order to safeguard their industries, threatened by the low salaries practiced in the developing countries.

(\*\*) Source: IFM.

(\*\*\*) Source: Eurotex.

(\*\*\*\*) *Rapport Brundtland* 1987 published by the *Commission des Nations Unies, on l'Environnement et le Développement* (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)).





# Economic angle

## what is the context for fashion in 2006?

The French textile market is experiencing a rather difficult situation along with exacerbated competition. The introduction of labels on the market that design, produce and distribute has created competition for independent boutique networks.

Today France possesses Europe's second most important clothing industry, after Italy and equal to Germany.<sup>(\*)</sup>

Clothing and textile expenses have remained stable since 1995, and according to the IFM (Institut Français de la Mode), sales have progressed in value of 0.4 % in 2005, and the 2006 previsions hover around +0.5% But the sector doesn't profit from the consumption increase (on the contrary, pushed by lower prices, the market is losing value), contrary to other areas like communication, health, housing... Even more serious, the French budgetary coefficient for clothing is one of the lowest in Europe.

During the last 20 years, the fashion terrain has been completely shaken up: increasingly accessible products and increasingly competitive distribution networks (boutiques, mass distribution, specialized chains, mail order, internet...) Consumers, both mature and over informed, have the impression that all products are alike.

(\*) Source: *Union des Industries Textiles* 2004.

## what are the specifics of the textile chain?

Fashion by essence is one of the most globalized sectors and the most apt for exchanges. The textile industry also possesses one of the longest and most complex production chains in manufacturing industry.

The textile industry is heterogeneous, grouping several sub-sectors: raw material production, semi-finished products (threads, fabrics, knits) and finished products (clothing, furnishings, professional articles...). The textile chain starts with the production of raw materials, followed by fibre manufacturing and then spinning (throwing / texturizing). Next comes weaving (for woven fabrics), knitting (for knitted fabrics) or the production of non-woven fabrics. The "finishing process" (pre-treatment, dyeing, printing, coating-finishing with washing and drying) completes the fabric treatment. The different materials for finished garment manufacturing are also added to these processes.



## will there be a war on chinese textiles?

Since 2003 China is the uncontested world leader in the textile / clothing market: they are the leading global exporter for clothing (28% of the market), the world's leading machine purchaser, and the number one cashmere, cotton and silk producer in the world. Since 2003 China has also replaced Turkey as the main clothing provider to France. Given this rise in Chinese textile power, the UIT (*Union des Industries Textiles*) has attempted to form a strategy of dialogue with this powerful partner. China must respect the WTO (*World Trade Organization*) rules: antidumping, intellectual property...under threat of corrective commercial measures (including the WTO textile – clothing safeguard clause).

The Middle Kingdom is able to remain independent, as it possesses all the textile chain steps (from raw material to final production) with very low labour costs: an average monthly salary of 90 euros for 70 to 80 hours of work per week<sup>(\*)</sup>. The majority of other textile producing countries (excepting India and a few others) must import raw materials, which renders them less competitive.

(\*) Source: *De l'éthique sur l'étiquette*.

## will the end of quotas aggravate the situation?

The WTO agreement (*World Trade Organization*) on textiles and clothing was adopted in Marrakech in 1994 and ended on the 1st January, 2005.<sup>(†)</sup> Since that date, import quotas have been abolished in 126 categories of products, representing 60% of European and American imports. This measure permits China and also India and Pakistan to offer more products at prices defying competition. The end of quotas is, on the other hand, a disadvantage for countries such as Tunisia, the Mauritius Islands or the Dominican Republic...which have built a textile industry by making efforts in the ethical process (as Cambodia) and benefited from the export quotas applied to such manufacturing countries.

In the Euromed zone, the countries in the Mediterranean basin particularly suffer. The Moroccan first 2005 trimester market share for importing pants to the European Union dropped from 9 % to 7 %.<sup>(\*\*)</sup>

Europe also is acutely concerned with a million jobs at risk of suppression.<sup>(\*\*\*)</sup> The United Kingdom and France will be the most affected. The phenomenon of suppressed jobs, already a major trend for several years, will be strongly accentuated in the first 2005 semester.

(\*) The quota system goes back to 1961 when "rich" countries negotiated the progressive opening of their borders to textile products from "poor countries" to safeguard their industry which was threatened by the low salaries wages practiced in developing countries.

(\*\*) Source: IFM.

(\*\*\*) Source: Eurotex.

China is considered the big winner with quotas ending. According to the World Bank, China could take control of 50 % of the world's exports between now and 2010. Professionals are worried, and the first figures are alarming. The first nine months of 2005 saw a + 500% in import volume for pullovers from China to the European Union<sup>(\*)</sup>, and + 400% for men's pants, and in the first trimester of 2005 + 700% for shoes<sup>(\*\*)</sup>. During this period, countries like Tunisia, Morocco, the Mauritius Islands, and the Dominican Republic...but also Europe (especially the United Kingdom and France) recorded appreciable drops in their exports.

(\*) Source: *Institut Français de la Mode*.

(\*\*) Source: *Union des Industries Textiles*.

Raw materials (like cotton, rubber...) are subject to world stock prices. Even with inexpensive labour, for numerous professionals the sales price of Chinese textile products is inferior to the cost price. This system of selling at a loss is of course fatal.

The beneficiaries of the large deflationist trend are essentially the hypermarkets, as few distributors were able to immediately reflect the lower prices on their price tags, and announced this measure for 2006. One IFM study reveals that general public prices fell in 2005, albeit less than in 2004. The June 2005 agreement signed between the European Commission and the Chinese Ministry of Commerce re-established quotas until 2008 on about ten products, allowing a slowing down for certain imports. In other instances the Chinese have decided to raise export taxes, permitting a slight correction to the price differences, as at the same time, customs duties have dropped. Will these measures be sufficient? It is too early to answer and judge the impact of the liberalisation of exchanges, but numerous professionals fear that the competitive pressure of prices will worsen. This is already the case at the business-to-business level: hypermarkets and speciality stores group their large purchases (transportation costs are continually rising) with a few suppliers in order to negotiate the best conditions.

## where to find raw materials?

In the United States, Turkey, India, Peru, Bangladesh...the countries presenting less risks than China. In Europe, the Eastern countries are the main sources for textile supplies.

Concerning cotton, in addition to the United States (a disputed topic, as American cotton growers are accused of over-subsidization by Africa and the WTO) the world's leading exporters are China, India, Uzbekistan and Western and Central African regions. African countries have difficulty competing in a market where currencies, below production costs and heavily subsidized, are collapsing.





However, Western and Central Africa are focusing (cf. below, the Max Havelaar label) on fibre quality with reduced environmental impact as compared to the intensive agriculture in China, the Aral Sea region, or the American cotton belt. And the “African Fibres and Materials for Fair Trade” trade fair strives, as its main objective, to establish the basis for a “fair trade” certification in Africa.

## why does fair trade and ethical clothing seem more expensive?

Contrary to the majority of imported products, fair trade clothing corresponds to criteria of quality and respect for employees' work in the manufacturing countries...which raises the resale price. Next, they are not manufactured or sold in sufficiently large quantities to align with the price of other textile products.

Price is a real brake to the growth of fair trade products. The difference for the consumer is a large margin of 10%-20% more expensive. Ethics are quality and quality has a price. Here is a price break-down example:<sup>(\*)</sup> a « non-fair trade » shirt manufactured in Nepal will have a resale price of 12 euros, of which 1.5 euros go to the manufacturer, whereas a “fair trade” shirt, also made in Nepal, will have a total cost of 20 euros, of which 3.34 euros will go to the manufacturer. In a contrasting example, on an Internet site you can find a fair trade multi-pocket pant for 35 euros, and this price remains well below that of a similar pant by a label carrying and benefiting from the considerable cost of publicity.<sup>(\*)</sup>

(\*) Source: *La Vie*, April 25, 2005.

## why do different fair trade products have different prices according to the distribution method?

“*The more you buy, the less you pay*”. The commercial mass negotiation principle is also valid for fair trade. The result is that the same T-shirt will generally be sold for less in a supermarket than in a fair trade boutique. And often, in order to seduce the client, manufacturers and distributors don't reflect the price difference on certified products right away.

A psychological threshold exists, and on this point, the textile sector has an advantage, as the notion of fair price is more negotiable than for food. Fashion is composed of impulse buys, not mechanical purchases dictated by current consumer habit. This is at the same time an advantage (the consumer will accept paying more for an ethical garment that pleases him, rather than another) but also an inconvenience (infrequent purchases are less indispensable.)



Mass distribution acknowledges that when fair trade textile product volume increases, prices will drop further. Development in ethical fashion should then use mass distribution if it wants to conquer a target larger than the 10% of consumers currently contributing to fair trade commerce.

## is ethical fashion economically viable?

Ethical fashion can provide a niche solution to the textile quota problem. It is true that the deflationist trend, accentuated by the liberalisation of quotas doesn't favour the ethical textile suppliers. On around 30 billion euros of sales in the French fashion industry in 2003, ethical fashion represented less than 1%. Both a little and a lot at the same time, this wealth could be a powerful arm to fight poverty.

As in all emerging sectors, ethical fashion encounters difficulties. In fact, for IFM<sup>(\*)</sup> Professor Nathalie Ruelle, *"it's an illusion to say that the game is half won. The media interest around events such as the certification of fair trade cotton by Max Havelaar (cf. below) should not make us forget reality: it's a dangerous path from coffee to textiles"*. The fact is that coffee (and certain agricultural products like bananas) are everyday products, not very expensive (even with varying prices), and undergo minimal transformation. This is far from the case of textiles which, given the long production chain, are more difficult to certify.

Otherwise, (cf. below), the fair trade textile chain poses certain problems concerning spinning. For example, too low quantities of products don't interest spinners. The fair trade cotton part of the 2004 – 2005 harvest is only 700 tonnes of the 23 million tonnes on a world-wide scale.<sup>(\*\*)</sup>

One could reasonably think that ethical fashion is a real opportunity for market protection (Morocco, Tunisia...) and development. Its standards of social and environmental quality as well as its intrinsic value, position ethical fashion products in a segment of the middle-to-high range which generates higher profit. It thus permits a redistribution of riches to different participants in the textile chain and creates a first-class economic lever.

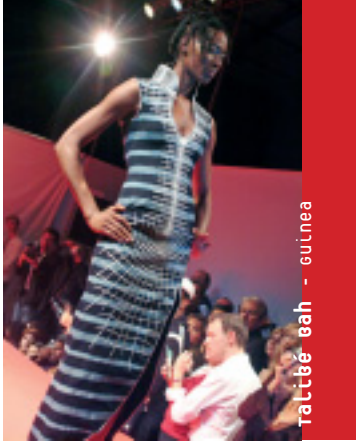
(\*) Interview for this guide, June 2005.

(\*\*) Source: RESIS (Réseau d'Information stratégique pour les entreprises), April 2005©.



# environmental angle





The stakes in ethical fashion are primordial for the environment: using the least polluting raw materials, recycling wastes and prioritizing sustainable products....[\*]

## How to pollute less?

### > By favouring natural, raw and / or the least polluting materials

This is the first step in the long process of reducing the textile chain's environmental impact. Industrials could prefer natural vegetal or biodegradable animal materials - fibres such as linen, generally from Egypt and the Baltic countries in Europe; hemp (the best ecological fibre); but also wool - underused in fashion - for its alternative uses (housing insulation); or silk from China... and next would come organic cotton without chemicals or GMOs (cotton represents around 1/3 of textile materials.)

Besides the natural materials, industrials could also use man-made or synthetic fibres: viscose, polyamide (from petroleum) and Ingeo (from corn starch.)

Between the reputedly "natural" fibres from plant or animal origins, and the often scorned artificial fibres, (though they could be produced in the interest of sustainable development), it can be difficult to see clearly. To be ecologically certified with a CE standards label, *"cotton must come from a culture using no fertilizer and no pesticides (...). Organic fields, which are regularly allowed to lie fallow, are "nourished" exclusively by plant compost and animal fertilizer (...). The fibre must receive no chlorine bleaching, no colouring by dyes containing heavy metal, and no finishing treatments".*<sup>(\*)</sup>

Though organic cotton production is still marginal, it could rapidly develop due not only to ethical concerns, but also thanks to the value added to the raw material, the organic cotton market resists competition better.

(\*) cf. Good behaviour code from the Ethical Fashion Show.

Currently at 6,000 tonnes per year, or 0.03% of total cotton production, organic cotton production (concentrated in the United States and Turkey) could reach 5 to 10%<sup>(\*)</sup> in a few years.<sup>(†)</sup> Bamboo fibre, very much in fashion, is not a straightforward material either. In reality it's a man-made material "*cellulose generated partly from bamboo pulp, which according to the procedure used, could be qualified as viscose or cellulosic fibre*".<sup>(‡)</sup>

Its problematic is similar to that of soya, with its silky handle, but which cannot be named a natural vegetal fibre (as it is created from soya bean protein), but is defined as "a man-made protein fibre". The lenpur is a cellulosic fibre made from North American white pine coming from cultivated woods, and yet does not have a "green product" image. Three times more hydrophilic than cotton with a soft fresh handle, it has the disadvantage of being expensive.<sup>(§)</sup>

Hemp (*cannabis sativa*) is a natural vegetal fibre with numerous ecological virtues: its cultivation requires less water than linen or cotton, (the third most water consuming culture on earth, after rice and wheat), and even enriches the land.

Other so called "natural" fibres include nettles (made from the plant's bark), still anecdotal, and their sister ramie, a Chinese herb used even less in clothing.<sup>(¶)</sup>

Corn is at the heart of debates: "coming from biodegradable vegetal material that is renewable annually, corn fibre has been presented as an alternative to the petroleum products used in the chemical-fibre industries".<sup>(¶)</sup> But sceptics maintain that its transformation requires chemical operations and the corn used is genetically modified. Another "man-made" fibre is Lyocell, an organic-certified viscose product by Lenzing.

(\*) Source: "*Les ambiguïtés de la mode des fibres naturelles*", Stéphanie Athané - "*Journal du Textile*" February 26, 2005, in an article produced with the help of the study "*Les Textiles du Futur*" from Expertise Textile.

(\*\*) Source: *Le Figaro* "*L'éthiquement correct gagne nos armoires*", article by Caroline Rousseau and Céline Thiano, March 24, 2005.

### > By reducing the negative environmental effects of the textile chain on a global scale

The alarming observation is that fashion engenders serious ecological disturbances. Cotton cultivation (3% of cultivated surfaces) requires more than 25% of the pesticides used in the world,<sup>(†)</sup> and undergoes chlorine bleaching. Yet despite this, cotton (one third of the world's fibre consumption) retains the image of a natural, ecologically correct fibre in public opinion.

The pollution produced by textile activities is principally due to substances contained in the raw materials. The most important impact on the environment is due to salts, detergents and organic acids. Dyes (cf. below) represent a less significant problem.

(\*) Source: "Bref Textile : document européen de référence sur les meilleurs techniques disponibles" - IFTH.

But the transformation of raw materials also has negative environmental effects. Principle concerns are the quantity of water used and discarded and the chemicals it contains. In Europe on average, more than 10 litres of water are necessary to dye and / or finish one kilo of textiles.

Energy consumption, wastes and olfactory nuisance comes next in the order of worries. Cotton producing countries experience troubling sanitary crises: pollution, decreasing water tables, and worker contamination during the harvest...

### > By avoiding toxic wastes (solvent, dyes)

A study on "The Security and toxicity of clothing/textile products" in 25 European countries<sup>(\*)</sup> gives the numerous toxic sources: dyes, but also pentachlorophenol, heavy metals (nickel, cadmium...), asbestos, benzene...the list is impressive. All the partners in the chain must be vigilant in recycling toxic wastes (solvents, dyes, bleaches...), and must also work in cooperation with the businesses treating their wastes.

(\*) Expertise Textile – La Fédération publication, September 2004.

Dye use receives a lot of media. Up until 1856, only natural dyes were used. With the advent of synthesized colours, numerous azoic colours based on benzidine and its derivatives arrived, and their highly toxic nature was denounced.<sup>(\*)</sup> The dangers are serious: colour discharge onto the skin, colours assimilated in the organism, a concentration of amines in the bladder, risk of cancer.

European manufacturers have progressively stopped the use of azoic colours and have obtained a European harmonization concerning their ban. A 2002 directive<sup>(\*\*)</sup> established the threshold limit in aromatic amines concerning textile or leather articles which could come into direct and prolonged contact with the skin or mouth.

Other actions have been led to improve the politics of sustainable development in the French textile industry, especially with efforts in eco-cooperation (analysis of the life cycle of T-shirts); the creation of a data base on the environmental and energetic impacts of finishing processes; and the creation of a data base on dyes and auxiliary textile products. French and European textile industries are thus already implicated in sustainable development. But this is not the case for developing countries (China, India, Korea, Brazil, Mexico...) which, for example, still use azoic colours. A control campaign led in October 2004 by the UIT (*Union des Industries Textiles*), the IFTH (*Institut Français Textile et Habillement*) and the *Fédération de l'Ennoblement Textile*<sup>(\*)</sup> of more than 8,000 products used in French finishing treatments concluded that French manufacturing corresponds



to public health rules, but on the other hand, 20% of the articles analyzed did not conform. French professionals fear that with the end of quotas, there will be a rise in importation of textiles using dangerous dyes. They urge four urgency measures: consumer information, reinforced controls of imported products on European Union borders, the promotion of certain quality labels (*Oeko-tex*, *Ecolabel Textile Européen*, *Contact Peau*) and the immediate establishment of a European certification (CE) logo for all textile products.

(\*) Source: "Les textiles importés en Europe, une nouvelle menace pour les consommateurs?" slide show - UIT.

(\*\*) Directive 2002/61/EC July 19, 2002.

## HOW TO HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, FAIR TRADE AND ETHICS GUARANTEES?

### > By government commitment

Fair and ethical trade represents a real political gamble (cf. below, normalisation work). Countries have abandoned their responsibilities for too long. But large-scale fair trade commercial development implies an engagement from all concerned countries. At the DIIESSES (\*) initiative, a working group formed by AFNOR has begun a process to normalize fair trade protocol. To accomplish this, AFNOR was given the responsibility of creating a document defining generic criteria for fair trade and serving as a basic reference. A network of experts from fair trade organisations, consumer associations, and representatives from mass distribution and the administration was put in place in a DIIESSES-led working group. After almost four years of work, the normalisation commission concluded an "Agreement" defining fair trade terminology. It is considered an Agreement (IWA) but not an exact norm, and the text is not an official constraint for any participants requesting it.

It does, however, constitute a first common reference. The DIIESSES also leads diverse actions concerning fair trade's traditional sectors, and its new sectors such as fashion.

Other ministerial departments are also involved in this process. In the textile and clothing sector for example, the ministry of foreign affairs is forming a project ("FSP (\*\*)) *Commerce Équitable*) in three African countries: Mali, Senegal, and Cameroon. The objectives target the fair trade cotton economy (fibre quality improvement, traceability verification, reinvigoration of the African textile chain, insurance of commercialization, help to manufacturers in production chain

(\*) Délégation Interministérielle à l'Innovation, à l'Expérimentation Sociale et à l'Économie Sociale.

(\*\*) Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire.



management...) and guarantee social conditions (better pay for the manufacturers). The Ministry also participates in fair trade emergence with the *Fibre Citoyenne Program* (cf. below). Numerous local associations are also deeply involved in supporting these values.

### > By the work of associations

For around thirty years, international solidarity associations and consumer and environmental defence associations have been using their power to put pressure on businesses. The boycott is the strongest arm, but is not efficient in France. In the 1990s new, less radical forms of action appeared; media campaigns aimed at consumers (like that of the *UFC – Que Choisir*<sup>(\*)</sup>), and businesses to sensitize them to ethical practices, like that of the *collectif de l'éthique sur l'étiquette*.<sup>(\*\*)</sup> Since its 1995 beginnings, this organisation has led seven campaigns on the themes: "*Libère tes fringues*", "*Pour l'école, consommons éthique*", "*On ne solde pas les droits de l'homme !*", "*Jouez le jeu pour le respect des droits de l'homme au travail dans l'industrie du sport*"...

Certain multi-national organisations accused during various different scandals went on to use official channels to control the social policy of their suppliers. Suppliers must accept an engagement for the respect of certain rules: prohibition of child labour, a limit for maximum hours worked, assurance of a decent salary, improvements to the work space, prohibition of certain products that are poisonous for the environment... Note that in 2004 Gap announced a working condition audit of 3,000 of its suppliers; and in Spring 2005 Nike published a list of its 2,000 subcontractors and a report on social responsibility. The problem nevertheless remains the assurance of respect for contracts and ethics codes in the industry - when controls are performed are they done so in a serious fashion?

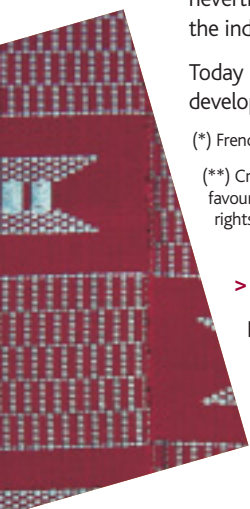
Today large textile group strategies often take into account sustainable development imperatives and adopt a more socially responsible behaviour.

(\*) French consumers advocacy organisation.

(\*\*) Created in 1995, today the organisation groups 43 associations for international solidarity, acting in favour of the respect of human rights in the work place, and the recognition of citizens' information rights concerning the social quality implications of their purchases.

### > By the organisation of public events

Public events, whether general (*quinzaine du commerce équitable, semaine du Développement Durable*) or sector specific (the Ethical Fashion Show<sup>®</sup>, "African Fibres and Materials" trade fair) also have an important role in raising public awareness and the recognition of government and non-government organisations.



## > By the creation of labels

Since 2003, Belgium has an official "social" certification, attributed by a multi-party commission and controlled by an independent organisation. In Switzerland one finds independent labels (Imo and BioRe), and in the Netherlands (Skal, specifically for textiles)...

The only "fair trade" label present in France is Max Havelaar<sup>(\*)</sup> (attached to FLO International), which until the present has only applied to fair trade food products, but since March 2005 concerns cotton. The label now covers 12 textile production chains, or 480 certified products, representing a total of 78 brands. Fair trade cotton is not only the most significant non-food certified item, but France is a pioneer in this initiative. Specific fair trade cotton standards were validated by FLO International in Paris 2004.

(\*) Max Havelaar oversees the industrial and commercial aspects of the textile chain and the cotton group Dagrís handles cotton production, transformation and logistics. The project received institutional support and financing by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the *Centre pour le Développement de l'Entreprise*, an organisation with equal participation from the European Union and the African-Caribbean-Pacific countries.

In the beginning the Max Havelaar label applied only to cotton coming from four West African countries: Mali, Senegal, Cameroon and Burkina Faso. All the West African manufacturers (fifth cotton exporter worldwide) are organized in cooperatives.

The eight Max Havelaar certified labels for fair trade commercialization are: Kindy, La Redoute (Active Wear and Soft Grey labels), Armor Lux (Breton textile manufacturer), Hydra (cotton hygiene products), Célio (men's ready-to-wear), Hacot et Columbier (household linen manufacturer) and Eider (sports clothing manufacturer). To acquire the certification, the label must use a minimum of 80% fair trade cotton in its textile chain. As this cotton is sold for twice as much as "classic cotton", the businesses have agreed to absorb the difference.

Enjoying recent notoriety, Max Havelaar is now eager to announce new products for the Autumn/Winter 2005 La Redoute collection - 200,000 T-shirts made with certified fair trade cotton, which represents 5% of the mail order volume of ready-to-wear items. The collection is comprised of 12 articles: women's, men's and children's T-shirts under the Active Wear label; and men's T-shirts under the Soft Grey label, with sale prices between 18 and 23 euros. In another initiative, Kindy, the sock manufacturer has almost 25,000 pairs of Canadian Forest socks at Leclerc, Cora and Système U. The label's goal is to sell 400,000 pairs of fair trade socks in 2006 amongst the 80 million of their other current products. This winter Kindy also plans on launching Mariner, a fair-trade cotton underwear line targeted to department stores.

Besides these eight French labels, 16 intermediary actors (cotton businesses, importers, spinners...) have been certified, and the project involves 3,300 manufacturers. In April 2006, one year after the launching, Max Havelaar and their partners tallied the sales figures for the label. La Redoute announced the sale of 110,000 children's, women's and men's certified cotton T-shirts under the labels Active Wear and Soft Grey. Since Spring 2006 the group has also developed a line of certified household linens. 23 brands are now grouped under the label. Max Havelaar anticipates that in 2006, 28,000 Mali, Senegal, Cameroon and Burkina Faso producers will furnish 4,000 tonnes of cotton fibre. In 2005, there were only 6,100 producers with a volume of 700 tonnes.

Mali, Senegal, Burkina-Faso and Cameroon, where the certified fair trade cotton producers are found, do not produce GMO cotton. In Western and Central Africa, only the Burkina State has authorized some isolated environmental tests. Fair trade cotton clothing and organic cotton coming 100% from Western and Central Africa will be the only consumer guarantee of no GMOs.

### yamana "fibre citoyenne" program (\*)

This is not a fair trade label, but rather an ethical certification aimed at achieving a socially responsible textile production chain.

By volunteering to adhere to a socially responsible code, textile businesses benefit from a *Fibre Citoyenne* logo, a guarantee for the client that the business takes part in the process towards sustainable development. The businesses promise to respect "here and afar" the main criteria (concerning the health of all concerned) and the progress criteria (sustainable development) throughout the entire production network. The different steps for progress are predetermined ("contract of objectives"). At each step of manufacturing, the social and environmental impacts are verified and evaluated by a committee of representatives from professional textile organisations, public service and civil society.

Though presently limited to the "image and work clothing" market, the *Fibre Citoyenne* Program is valid for all the economic actors in the chain: clients (businesses placing orders, local collectives, citizens); distributors (retailers, wholesalers, importers); and producers (manufacturers, subcontractors). It concerns western businesses and those in developing countries equally. In France, Yamana received government support and convinced professionals, notably the *Union des Industries Textiles*, to participate in the project. The Association tested the program in partnership with the ILO (*International Labour Organization*) in a carpet manufacturing workshop in Afghanistan. The manufacturers took the risk and put into action a plan conceived with the local partners, who by respecting social and environmental guidelines, were attributed a "social certification", allowing them to showcase their products, in competition with those of Pakistan.

Besides Afghanistan, Yamana is present in India, Morocco and Tunisia. In France, around ten small-to-medium sized businesses are already active in the *Fibre Citoyenne* Program. They are united under the auspices of a *Comité de Veille et de Validation*. This is an ambitious project as it requires effort from government and private enterprise at the same time, and that all of the enterprises, French or foreign, be transparent. The most difficult principles (to be integrated progressively into the public market) to quantify and therefore verify, concern social conditions in certain countries.

(\*) Created in 1999, the association's objective is to apply social and environmental criteria to the textile production chain, from raw materials to the final manufacturing.

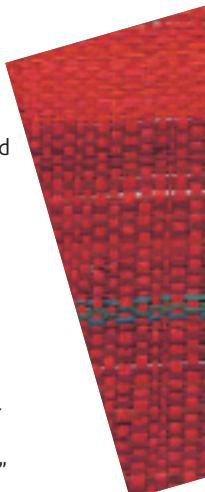
### > By normalisation

In the absence of the fair trade norms, French norms already exist for products and services (ISO 9001 and ISO 1401) with international references from the United States such as SA 8000 (Social Accountability 8000), the clothing-specific WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production), and the FLA (Fair Labour Association). These norms are founded on an evaluation of environmental and social quality. The WRAP certification is the most common in the textile industry.

Certification of raw materials is (cf. above) one step, yet admittedly insufficient. Without global certification, confusion persists: who wove the cotton, who dyed it...? Normalisation is an important leap in the textile-clothing industry, where there is a proliferation of norms characterizing products (22 norms were published in 2003, and 19 were going to be in 2004).

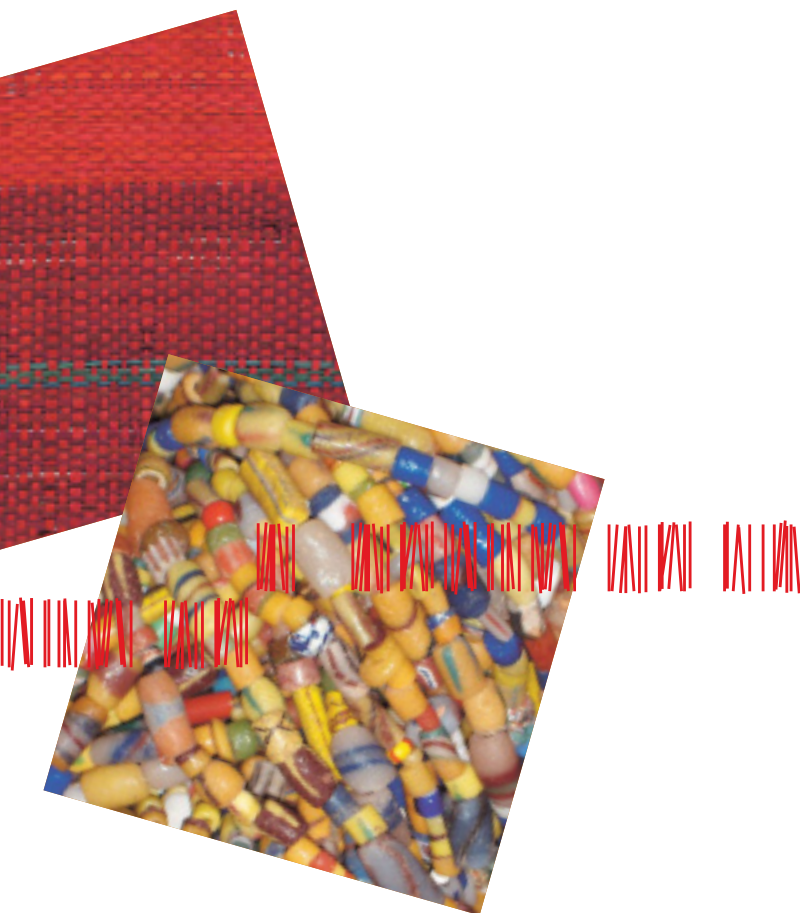
The creation of fair trade certification is a difficult process as it is complicated to form a consensus between countries, commercial structures, consumer associations and mass distribution networks.

However, Deputy Antoine Herth's report and his "40 propositions supporting fair trade" presented in early May 2005, advocates "with AFNOR, a renewal in the work of the Commission de Normalisation presided by the *Délégué Interministériel à l'Innovation sociale et à l'Économie sociale*", in July 2005 in order to "draft a document defining generic criteria for the fair trade process, furnishing a possible consensus for all concerned and serving as a reference base for the future." This objective was partially fulfilled with the adoption of the AFNOR published "Accord" at the end of 2005.



At the same time, the report calls for (in Proposition 24) the creation of a National Commission for Fair Trade (CNCE), "composed of all the fair trade participants", and whose mission would be to define the criteria for agreement and to produce an opinion leading towards a ministerial agreement on the organisms responsible for control of conformity of the fair trade actors' behaviour. Those voluntarily adhering to this path would submit to a control by an authorized organisation to obtain the official qualification of the fair trade title.

At present, this has been accomplished - the CNCE "responsible for recognizing persons or legal entities who respect fair trade conditions as defined in the law of 2nd August 2005", will from now on establish the fair trade general framework and recognize organisations corresponding to these conditions. This way, all persons or legal entities recognized by the Commission may publicly claim the certification "Recognized by the CNCE", an assurance of confidence for the consumer.





socio-cultural  
angle

PHOTODISC



## How to safeguard cultural patrimony and encourage creation?

### > By helping local artisans without imposing our own vision

This is the fundamental problem of fair trade in general and of fashion (by its very essence, the creative domain) in particular. Only a united fashion community, in harmony with sustainable development and respecting the planet and mankind, can be the protector of expertise and culture. For developing countries the principle objective is to come out of poverty. They must therefore be connected to the commercialization of their products beyond their borders. But, taking into account cultural and social differences, they must also be helped to develop activity in their own countries. In France, public awareness continues, and the topic is in the news. Interest in world cultures is increasing (a phenomenon proven by Africa's main designers in the Africa Remix Exhibition on African artists at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Spring / Summer 2005; by the Africa Instinct Exhibition in department stores in Spring / Summer 2006; and the multitude of general press articles on the inter-continental influences in fashion...), as well as in fair trade clothes, which are conquering more and more buyers. Fair trade fashion has become "cool".

### > By reconciling ethics and aesthetics

Creativity is the sine qua non condition for ethical fashion's future. If we use organic fair trade cotton to manufacture a badly cut garment that has no market, that is to say, meets no clients' expectations, it will never work. Far from caricatures of ethnic costume, ethical fashion is defying clichés to gain ground in all sectors, from designers to mass distribution, and seducing the greatest number of admirers. Ethical fashion is first and foremost fashion. This affirmation was not evident until the recent past, but now designers throughout the world are the living proof of a successful partnership between ethics, sustainable development and creativity...The designers exhibiting at the Ethical Fashion Show were proof. There are numerous examples: Misericordia in Peru, who manufactures athletic clothing in an atelier linked to an orphanage and sells to conceptual fashion stores (Colette); the French-Ivorian jeweller, Mickaël Kra, who after working for luxury goods (Balmain, Ferraud...) created a "Petite Couture" collection, working with Namibian bush women in South Africa. The British company Just employs Bangladesh artisans to work with Jamdani silk...Without forgetting Coopa-Roca who, since 1987, allows women in a Rio slum to produce embroidery and hand-crafted creations (bought by Paul Smith, C&A...). In the large western capitals, initiatives are also abundant: Bono, the leader of the group U2 and his wife Ali launched Edun, "a fashion label with a real conscience" in New York and London in 2005. Dov Chaney, a Los Angeles designer, exports his "American Apparel" concept to Europe.





Initiatives aren't lacking in France either: Veja manufacturers the first "ecological tennis shoe" from natural rubber harvested in the Amazon and organic cotton cultivated and spun in the cooperatives in the south of Brazil, while respecting fair trade standards. Ideo, another ready-to-wear fair trade clothing label founded by Rachel Liu and Antoinette Giorgi in 2002 is made of organic cotton or recycled polyester, in partnership with Indian businesses. Then there's Ekyo, a sportswear label in organic cotton, bamboo fibre and certified Oeko-Tex dyes, who donates 10% of their profits to an environmental protection association. The label *Les Racines du Ciel* revisits historical Japanese kimonos and creates timeless fashion. Little Ones (also French) develops a clothing collection for children from recycled materials...

Independent businesses are not the only project initiators. Cultural and humanitarian organisations are also incubators of concrete actions. The *Chambre des Beaux Arts de Méditerranée*, whose vocation is to promote cultural activities, a sustainable development factor contributing to safeguard the common cultural memory heritage, has created a "Produits Culturels de Développement" certification for the arts and crafts trades on a Euro-Mediterranean level. This concept is supported by the European Commission and UNESCO. In different but no less interesting initiatives, certain French charitable organisations have launched a label made from used clothing. The second-hand garment is used as a raw material and customised. Programs supported by government authorities also contribute to designers' renown.

Thus, MAE (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*) financially supports activities led by the Cosame<sup>(\*)</sup> Program of the *Assemblée permanente des chambres de métiers* which exists primarily to develop apprenticeship programs between French artisans and African designers. The Ministry has also financed the first stage of a project led by a French designer (Katherine Pradeau) whose objective is to create a bi-cultural collection between artisans in Nigeria and France.

(\*) [www.cosame.fr](http://www.cosame.fr)

Good and beautiful at the same time, ethics are becoming chic. The movement from ostentatious values (logos, labels...) toward more personal ones in phase with the problems of humanity and the planet should help ethical fashion leave its niche status. Awareness is changing, as proven by the success of the Ethical Fashion Show. Ethical ready-to-wear development will depend on sales volume. Ethical fashion must enter into the mass economy if it wants to develop. Veja currently only produces 4,500 pairs of tennis shoes, which is insufficient in terms of quantity. "To date, ethical concerns are criteria for evaluation of the offer but (...) are relatively insufficient "for consuming", admits Nathalie Ruelle<sup>(\*)</sup> "At the same time, non-ethical practices could be sanctioned strongly





by consumers, and ethical fashion becomes, via this negative, one of the elements in the basic contract concerning consumption”.

The IFM (*Institut Français de la Mode*) professor explains that this will lead to a contradiction: the big labels and brands have the means to put an ethical sourcing system into place, but the risks are considerable due to their strong visibility and consumer demands. On the contrary, smaller labels with fewer suppliers and less media exposure can accomplish this more easily, yet don't possess the means; and the set up of such systems is less useful in their case.

(\*) Source: "éthique dans le textile-habillement; utopie ou réalité" by Nathalie Ruelle, *Repères Mode* 2003, IFM.

## Luxury and ethics

Ethical fashion cannot deny the support from the luxury goods industry. As ethical protocol is not new in haute-couture, luxury labels are far ahead.

Certain luxury houses already use organic cotton, as they work with craftspeople from all over the world, but their communication is not along these lines. Luxury enterprises don't want to preach ethics which offers them no advantages. They already have their own sufficiently strong value system.

Ethical fashion has inherent requirements. Not only must it respect to the best of its ability environmental and working conditions for those participating in product manufacturing; but it must also allow local artisans to remain master of their creativity. In the face of today's uniformity, only diversified creation can save fashion. In crediting the designer's name, ethical fashion showcases the originality of the articles and their cultural particularities, and participates in the protection of intellectual and artistic property.

According to international studies,<sup>(\*)</sup> counterfeit copies represent more than 5 % of world commerce, and 60% of copied products come from China. For example, the prints and design of textile models created in African counties are in fact widely copied and manufactured at low prices in countries with low social standards.

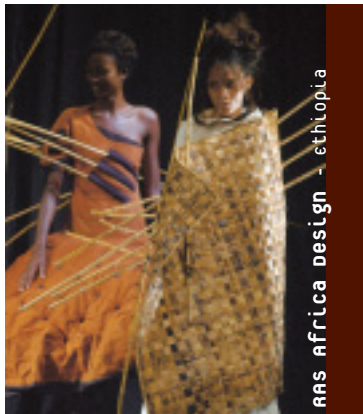
The UIT (*Union des Industries Textile*) participates actively in the anti-counterfeit fight, whether at a national (consciousness raising by the *Comité National Anti-Contrefaçon*), European (European Commission work promoting intellectual



property rights), or international (associations for the respect of creative property rights in particularly fragile countries, such as China, Thailand, Brazil or even Russia) level. One certainty shared by the entire textile chain is that the stronger the creativity, the less the risk of being plagiarized will exist. For this reason, the quality of the products must be pushed towards excellence.

From their side, since 1998 the DIISEES has worked for intellectual property rights for African artisans' models. The principles of solidarity and respect for the work of these populations are becoming widely accepted. Will fair trade allow us to finally leave the "the South manufactures and the North buys" scheme? This is indispensable if we want to achieve horizontal cooperation permitting a fairer sharing of work profits, and provide an end to poverty.

(\*) Source: "Textile Industrie d'Avenir", the letter from Febeltex, No. 1, March 2005.





## textile labels and certification

Certification is only valid when attributed by an independent authorized organisation.

### > SKAL International – Certification Programs

**Sustainable Textile Certification:** Product using 100% certified natural materials (or Regulation (EEC) 2092/91 or USDA NOP).

**Organic Exchange Certification:** Allows traceability of the percentage of certified organic cotton.

**WEB /** [www.skalint.com](http://www.skalint.com)

### > OEKO-TEX 100

Oeko-Tex Standard 100 controls undesirable substances in textiles, guaranteeing the absence of formaldehyde, heavy metals, or dangerous azoic colours.

**WEB /** [www.oeko-tex.com](http://www.oeko-tex.com)

### > ECO-LABEL

**European Union Ecological Label:** A unique system of homologation to help European consumers in identifying products and services favourable to the environment (outside food stuffs and medicine categories).

**WEB /** [www.eco-label.com](http://www.eco-label.com)

### > CONTACT PEAU by ASQUAL

Certification of the absence of dangerous azoic colours. A Contact Peau Certificate has been put in place to respond particularly to certain laws concerning dyes.

**WEB /** [www.asqual.com](http://www.asqual.com)



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- **www.ifoam.org**, information on organic labels.
- **www.ioas.org**, information on organic labels.
- **www.pan-uk.org**, network for actions against the use of pesticides.
- **www.antiapathy.org** (UK), information on initiatives linked to sustainable development (culture and life style).
- **www.ethicalfashionforum.com** (UK), network of designers and industrials working towards ethical fashion.
- **www.ekwo.org**, magazine on Sustainable Development and eco-citizenship.
- **www.pretparis.com**, information on So Ethic - ethical fashion hall at the PRÊT À PORTER PARIS® trade fair.



## **INDEX** (non-exhaustive List)

### **ASSOCIATION MAX HAVELAAR**

Authorized organisation assigning fair trade certification

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**WEB** / [www.maxhavelaarfrance.org](http://www.maxhavelaarfrance.org)

### **COLLECTIF “DE L’ÉTHIQUE SUR L’ÉTIQUETTE”**

Promotion for respect of human rights in the world’s workplaces

53, boulevard de Strasbourg – 75010 Paris

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**MAIL** / [info@ethique-sur-etiquette.org](mailto:info@ethique-sur-etiquette.org)

**WEB** / [www.ethique-sur-etiquette.org](http://www.ethique-sur-etiquette.org)

### **COMITE 21**

French committee for the environment and sustainable development.

132, rue de Rivoli – 75001 Paris

**TEL** / 01 55 34 75 21

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### **FOUNDATION STEP**

Certified organisation – network attributing the fair trade label

Contact France: Yamana 81 bis, rue Gantois – 59000 Lille

**TEL** / 02 20 15 14 50

**MAIL** / [france@label-step.org](mailto:france@label-step.org)

**WEB** / [www.step-foundation.ch](http://www.step-foundation.ch)

### **PLATE-FORME POUR LE COMMERCE ÉQUITABLE (PFCE)**

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**WEB** / [www.yamana-mvd.org](http://www.yamana-mvd.org) / [www.fibrecitoyenne.org](http://www.fibrecitoyenne.org)

## > International Fair Trade Organisations

The FINE Group includes FLO International, IFTA, NEWS! And EFTA

### **FLO (International Fair Trade Labelling Organisation)**

International organisation for labelling and certifying fair trade.

**WEB /** [www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net)

### **FLO-INTERNATIONAL**

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### **IFTA (International Fair Trade Association)**

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**MAIL /** [info@ifat.org](mailto:info@ifat.org)

**WEB /** [www.ifat.org](http://www.ifat.org)

### **NEWS (Network of European Work Shops)**

European network of world shops

Christofsstrasse 13 – D – 55116 Mainz

**TEL /** (+ 49) 6131 9066 410

**MAIL /** [office@worldshops.org](mailto:office@worldshops.org)

**WEB /** [www.worldshops.org](http://www.worldshops.org)

### **EFTA (European Fair Trade Association)**

European network of organisations importing fair trade products.

**WEB /** [www.eftafairtrade.org](http://www.eftafairtrade.org)

### **FAIR TRADE ADVOCACY OFFICE**

43 rue de la Charité – B-1210 Brussels

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## > Government Institutions

### **DIIESES (Délégation Interministérielle à l'Innovation, à l'Expérimentation Social et à l'Économie Sociale)**

14, avenue Duquesne – 75530 Paris 07

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