

MELA

PRESS KIT – 2020



**Melawear questions the status quo
of the conventional textile industry
by creating truly sustainable product
innovations.**



Organic cotton farmers of the Fairtrade Cotton cooperative Nobel Ecotech together with Amit Narke (CEO Purecotz Ecolifestyle Pvt.) and Henning Siedentopp (CEO mela wear GmbH) in Indore, Madhya Pradesh in November 2018.

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Overview

Founded in

2014

Headquarter

Kassel

Legal form

GmbH

General manager

Henning Siedentopp

Number of employees

12

Revenue in 2018

1,2 millionen €

Certifications

Fairtrade Cotton Standard
Global Organic Textile Standard
Grüner Knopf

Products

Women's and men's collection
Backpacks and accessories
Sneakers

Sales partner

250 specialist retailers in Europe in:
→ Sustainable as well as conventional textile retail
→ Online and catalog mail-order trade
→ Outdoor retailers
→ Fair trade retail stores

Production sites

Textiles	→	Umargam, Gujarat
Backpacks	→	Kalkutta, Westbengal
Sneakers	→	Chennai, Tamil Nadu
Cotton fabrics	→	Indore, Madhya Pradesh und Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
Caoutchouc soles	→	Sri Lanka



Milestones

October 2014	→	Foundation of mela wear GmbH with certifications from Fairtrade & GOTS
March 2015	→	Sales launch of the textile collection for women and men
April 2016	→	Launch of the world's first backpacks certified by Fairtrade Cotton & GOTS
August 2017	→	Start of the pilot project for the Fairtrade Textile Standard
April 2018	→	Launch of the world's first sneakers certified by Fairtrade Cotton & GOTS
December 2018	→	Annual turnover of one million Euros
January 2019	→	Launch of the podcast "Step into the future"
September 2019	→	Grüner Knopf certification

About us

From cotton cultivation to manufacturing Melawear produces in India. MELA means „festival“ in Hindi. A festival is an occasion where people get together and connect. That way Melawear creates bridges between continents, customers and producers. At Melawear we've put joint actions for a better future in the center of our business philosophy.

Melawear produces minimalistic backpacks, modern sneakers as well as a textile collection consisting of timeless essentials. The entire assortment is certified by the Fairtrade Cotton Standard and the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). Contrary to the fast fashion trend, all products remain for a longer time within the assortment and thereby facilitate

the establishment of an alternative draft to the fast pace of the fashion industry. While others only speak of the necessity to improve the world, Melawear is taking the initiative since 2014: Melawear is the world's first company to accomplish the production of backpacks and sneakers that fulfil the demanding criteria of the Fairtrade Cotton Standard and the GOTS.

The company realizes its vision of making available sustainable fashion for a variety of consumers through low retail prices, that are comparable to conventional brand products. In this way, Melawear expands the market for sustainable textiles.

Melawear pursues a holistic approach to sustainability.

This means that the company always acts according to the three pillars of sustainability: the social, ecological and economic pillars stand in a balanced triad and are represented in all of Melawear's corporate activities in equal measures. From the company's perspective, the textile industry must make an active contribution to solving the global ecological, social and economic problems it has caused. Thus, Melawear takes responsibility and produces always and exclusively with organic Fairtrade Cotton and according to the GOTS.



In addition, Melawear follows the Cradle to Cradle design concept in order to keep products and their components in eternal material cycles. This design concept pursues the goal of a sustainable circular economy. This means that all materials remain reusable without any loss in value so a world without waste is made possible.

Quality

The Fairtrade Cotton Standard stands for a fair cotton production.

Together with Fairtrade Germany, Melawear contributes to solving social injustices in the textile industry. The fair trade apparel of the Melawear collection is entirely certified by the Fairtrade Cotton Standard. Partner factories and suppliers are controlled by FLO CERT to ensure compliance with the Fairtrade Standard.

The demanding criteria of the Fairtrade Standard amongst others comprise a fixed purchase price for cotton farmers and highest social and environmental standards for the cultivation.

In addition to that, the farmer cooperatives receive a Fairtrade premium that is used for communal projects such as schools or drinking water projects. In this way, the standard grants market access for small farmers from marginalized regions and in this way promotes long-lasting trade relations.

Thus, Melawear supports workers' rights for Indian farmers and factory workers and at the same time creates transparency for its customers.



All Melawear products are certified by the Global Organic Textile Standard and are exclusively made with Indian organic cotton.

The Global Organic Textile Standard is the world's leading standard for the processing of textiles made from organic natural fibers. Through the GOTS, ecological criteria are defined along the entire supply chain and are controlled by independent auditors. From the production of textile raw materials to the environmental-friendly and socially responsible manufacturing to the distribution of the end products the standard covers all stages and thereby offers to the consumers the highest product safety.

The standard prohibits toxic components and defines limit values for components that could harm people or the environment. Thus, Melawear renounces the use of formaldehyde, heavy metals or optical brighteners and in this way does not only significantly protect the skin but also the environment. All ingredients such as dyes, yarns, prints or buckles that are used for Melawear products comply with the ecological criteria of the Global Organic Textile Standard.



Inspired by Cradle to Cradle

Besides the certifications by Fairtrade Cotton and the GOTS Melawear creates products that are inspired by the concept of Cradle to Cradle. The Cradle to Cradle design concept is complementary to the other standards as it considers the use of resources beyond the end of their utilization phase: it stands for continuous material cycles and e.g. uses materials that can be used as nutrients after their use. While the Global Organic Textile Standard restricts the use of certain harmful

substances that are used in the conventional textile industry, the Cradle to Cradle standard in “Gold” level comprises even more demanding environmental criteria: All materials used have to be listed transparently by weight and constituents (CAS numbers). Moreover, more chemicals are prohibited than provided by the GOTS. Also, the Cradle to Cradle product standard “Gold” requires the use of renewable energies in the production.

Melawear continues to optimize its products in order to achieve a closed textile cycle in the future.

Melawear's 2017 T-shirt collection consists exclusively of fabrics dyed with Cradle to Cradle Gold Standard certified dyes in addition to the GOTS and Fairtrade certification. Besides, only yarns certified according to the Cradle to Cradle Gold Standard were used: 160 meters per T-shirt. This improvement enables the textile to be industrially repaired or composted after use. Due to the high certification costs

and the low level of awareness on the market, Melawear products are currently not certified according to the Cradle to Cradle product standard. Especially in the Indian textile industry this form of production was a novelty. That way Melawear creates a special added value during production in India and thus addresses ecological and social problems of the textile industry at their origin.

Innovation

Being a driver for innovation, Melawear continuously works towards an even more environmental-friendly and socially responsible textile production. In this way, Melawear succeeded to produce the world's first backpacks and sneakers that are certified by the Fairtrade Cotton Standard and the GOTS.

Two years of research and development were put into the MELA sneakers as well as consequent collaboration with producers, laboratories and certifiers from India, Sri Lanka, Italy, Spain, and Germany. The sneakers consist of 24 single pieces, each complying to the GOTS. All organic cotton components are not only certified by the GOTS but also by the Fairtrade Cotton Standard. The outsole consists of organic caoutchouc and all foams and paddings are made from GOLS-certified

(Global Organic Latex Standard) organic caoutchouc. Furthermore, a waterborne adhesive without any toxic ingredients was developed for the sneakers. On the long-term, Melawear works on the biological degradability of the sole to create only sole abrasion that is healthy for both humans and the environment.

Melawear's holistic understanding of sustainability has brought forward innovations that go beyond the actual products and their ingredients but that change the entire industry. In collaboration with Fairtrade Germany Melawear is part of the Fairtrade Textile Standard pilot project and in this way supports the establishment of living wages in the entire supply chain and a stronger standing for the workers. In this way, Melawear also takes a stand as a pioneer for more social sustainability.



Melawear is constantly questioning the status quo.

Interview

Henning Siedentopp / CEO



Melawear company founder Henning Siedentopp at a cotton ginning plant near Indore in Madhya Pradesh.

How was Melawear founded?

For me, it has always been a fascinating concept to do good while running a successful business. That is where the idea of founding Melawear stems from, including the objective of offering affordable, fashionable and fully certified sustainable fashion. I realized that only a few fashion brands fulfill those criteria. That's why I was sure that I had found a market where I could realize my understanding of sustainability.

“You can produce sustainably anywhere in the world - you just need the will to do it.”

Why do you produce textiles of all things?

Textiles are the second most important consumer good in Germany and Europe. After food they are the product that people consume the most: very often, spontaneously and in large quantity. Therefore, textiles can have a significant impact in terms of sustainability. Or more specifically:

With their purchase consumers have an impact on topics like working conditions and environmental standards in the textile industry.

The textile industry offered the ideal environment for the establishment a sustainable business like Melawear, since there were hardly any similar concepts in this area. We found these circumstances to be very attractive as it offered a wide field to implement business and product ideas. Moreover, the textile industry is not too complex or too complicated at first glance – so with the help of a good team, obstacles can be overcome.

What are the challenges in the production of sustainable fashion?

In the field of fashion, one can generally say that the sustainability of products, ideas and materials is not thoroughly thought through. Often products are not completely developed and ready for the market. Consequently, one of the biggest challenges is to find out what materials are even suitable at all. It is about identifying, adapting or designing sustainable materials together with the manufacturers and producers. This requires a lot of effort in terms of communication with and commitment to the producers. We then have to buy a relevant amount of products in order for investments to be worthwhile.

In addition, materials and products need to be analyzed in labs and require certifications to make sure that they correspond to the aspired criteria of sustainability. Many things still need development. That is why the supply, the work of the designers and therefore the finished products are sometimes limited.

The price is another challenge. Sustainable materials are usually more expensive than conventional ones. But we are also working on that, because our goal is to remain affordable for our customers.

For many people "fair fashion" is made in Europe and not made in emerging or developing countries. Why did you choose India as your production site?

First of all, I have to say that many production sites in countries in Europe have conditions that are anything but social or ecological. There are plenty of examples from countries like Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania or Portugal where salaries are paid that we would not consider as living wages or where people work under conditions we would not want to take the responsibility for. Production in Europe is not per se sustainable, fair or ecological.

You can produce anywhere in the world in a sustainable way – you just need the will to do so. Melawear consciously decided to produce in the country where the

material has its origin and that is India for our current collection which consists of a 100 percent Fairtrade- and Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)-certified cotton. With 1.3 billion people, India is the largest democracy in the world and the biggest producer of organic cotton. It is the only country that can provide us and other sustainable labels with the cotton quantity we demand and not only being organic but also Fairtrade. In addition to that, India is a country that combines all the processing steps we need.

Unlike the common way, we want to get away from importing raw materials from countries of the global south just to process, refine and sell them to a higher price.

Our approach is to ensure that maximum value is given to the country of origin. We want the Indian economy and Indian employees to profit from our assignments.

Clearly, profits and margins are higher for the producers when a final product is bought and not

only raw materials such as cotton, dyed fabric or yarn. Another advantage of the production in one country are short transport routes. In this way we conduct our business in a more eco-friendly way.

Cotton is the central raw material for Melawear. What is so special about it?

From the very beginning of production Melawear intentionally chose organic cotton from Fairtrade cooperatives. That way Melawear committed itself all along to the use of natural fibers and excluded chemical, synthetic or mixed fibers. Melawear follows a business concept that tries to keep materials in eternal cycles. We want to reuse materials and products after their first utilization cycle, may it be through biodegradability, as a fertilizer or in a return system to gain new materials.

Cotton has the advantage of being a renewable resource and not a finite resource such as mineral oil which is used for synthetic fabrics. Cotton is already established in the mass market, can be used versatilely and provides a pleasant feeling for customers.

We decided against materials and fibers on a petrochemical basis like polyester or recycled polyester and blended fabrics such as lyocell and tencel.

We do not say that materials from any other commodities cannot be sustainable in principle, but we are convinced that natural fiber is generally more sustainable.

We guarantee the highest level of sustainability in the cotton production with the combination of the Global Organic Textile Standard and Fairtrade Cotton.

What is your understanding of sustainability?

Melawear pursues a holistic sustainability approach. This means that, with our business concept and our products, we want to engage with the current discussion about sustainability. Melawear refers to the three pillars of sustainability: the social, environmental and economic responsibility of a company. It is clear to us that we must consider all three aspects in our actions in a balanced relation. This understanding of sustainability is anchored in our business model and we strive to always include the three pillars in our products.

With our approach of a "consistent sustainability" we do not only want our production to cause less harm to the environment or be at the expense of other people, but to actively contribute to a positive and sustainable future.

We want to manufacture our Melawear products in a way that they provide for a global, social balance.

These are tough goals and it is an ambitious business approach – but we face these challenges.

And what does that mean for Melawear as a company?

It is extremely important that the products we create correspond to our sustainability approach. The sustainability of a product is determined at the designing stage. This process requires close communication with our producers, starting with guaranteed purchases from us so they can reliably plan for the future. Sustainability is about paying a fair salary and using organic materials that have been toxicologically tested. To us it is important that our understanding of sustainability does not end with our company but further extends to our producers.

We stand for conscious consumption and for quality rather than quantity.

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Fairtrade Germany. In this way, we want to actively improve social standards in the textile supply chain, including a raise in wages. We are the first company to be paying a voluntary bonus to our producers and to encourage them to increase the wages of their employees by themselves. In addition to that Melawear works in Germany with a logistic partner from a sheltered workshop, the Hipsy gGmbH. Together with Hipsy gGmbH we started the concept of the "FAIRpacker" and they handle all of our logistics. That way we integrate social responsibility in Germany as well.



Melawear was founded in 2014 and launched its first products in 2015. What were the biggest milestones?

A big success was the launch of our Fairtrade Cotton and GOTS-certified backpack in 2016. With the backpack we proved that we are able to implement sustainability in new product segments. Today, Melawear is the only company in the world offering a backpack that is both Fairtrade Cotton & GOTS certified. With its special design and a price below 100 euros the backpack has kept up with the latest trends and has become a huge success. The launch of our t-shirts that were produced with cradle to cradle gold-certified colorings and yarns was another important milestone in spring 2017. At the end of their use, the t-shirts can be composted and then serve as a bio-nutrient. Alternatively, they can be reused as new fabrics within a return system.

Our third milestone was the launch of the world's first Fairtrade Cotton and GOTS-certified sneaker in 2018. We put two years of research and 100,000 euros of funding from our own resources into the development of the sneaker. Again, we have proven that sustainability can be implemented in new product categories. The sneakers are free from any toxic substances and therefore harmless to people's health. In 2018, our third business year, we had a seven-digit revenue for the first time, proving that we were able to generate economic growth in a short time - without investors, only through self- and bank-financing.

How come you were the first company to produce a Fairtrade Cotton and GOTS-certified backpack/sneaker?

Good question. As far as I know there is no other company who have started to implement the same idea that we had, let alone successfully completing the challenge. It is a time-consuming and expensive process. The implementation of a product with such a high level of sustainability needs a lot of commitment and great interest. Luckily, this kind of innovation then gets approval in the market and by consumers. I guess that companies are held back from developing such products because of the complexity of the tasks, particularly the complexity of the sneakers.

You need an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, courage and huge willpower.

When we started developing the backpacks and the sneakers, we did not know whether the product ideas were feasible or economically viable. However, we proved that it can be done in both cases. That is how we differ from others and obviously we are proud of this.

The business philosophy of Melawear is one aspect, but how does your social commitment pay off?

All the cotton used by Melawear originates 100 percent from Fairtrade Cotton cooperatives. This means that we buy the cotton from the farmers for a fixed price. Furthermore, the price contains a bonus that the farmers get for producing Fairtrade and organic cotton. The farmer's cooperatives then decide upon the use of the money. They can spend it on schools, hospitals or water projects for example.

In 2017 we directly paid the producers a voluntary bonus of 10 percent for our textiles, which was a total of 25,000 euros.

The money was split amongst the employees. The ones not earning living wages but minimum wages got a bonus of 40 euros each equaling the costs of nine months of lunch in the subsidized cafeteria of the producer.



Together with textile producer Amit Narke (owner Purecotz Ecolifestyle Pvt.), Melawear is progressively expanding its social standards.

We wanted to set a good example by paying the bonus and we wanted to demonstrate the need for improvement in the entire

supply chain, its social standards and wages. We were able to convince our producer to reach out to other companies and brands so they will hopefully accept higher product prices, as we do. We have also convinced our textile producer to take part in the Fairtrade Textile Standard and to get certified according to it. The standard aims to implement living wages in the entire textile supply chain. The producer has a period of six years to raise the current wages step by step. We contribute to the certification, the audits and the trainings conducted by Fairtrade Germany and on-site partner organizations with time, money and content. That way we want to create strong relations and partnerships with the people producing our textiles.

How can the customers benefit from certifications? Don't they just make the products more expensive?

It is hard for customers to compare and decide whether a textile really is sustainable. We believe it should be fair or organic and in the best case both. To us at Melawear, it is particularly important that consumers can make easy consumption choices in their everyday life. They do not have the time to consider the level of sustainability of a product. With the Fairtrade Cotton standard the consumers have the certainty that the product was manufactured in a supply chain with the minimum social standard of the country and in addition to that pays to the weakest link of the supply chain, the cotton farmers, a fixed price and a premium.

The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) ensures that all the used raw materials, accessories, working materials and chemicals are certified according to this environmental standard and that they are harmless to people and the environment. Toxic chemicals are eliminated or excluded from the beginning. The cultivation of the cotton follows strict organic criteria.

This certification guarantees customers that the company takes responsibility and gets checked by unrelated third parties. It is made visible through a tag at the product.

Who are Melawear products made for?

Melawear products are particularly bought by consumers who pay attention to sustainability. But they are also made for people who focus on good design and affordable prices.

Our products are not only Fair-trade Cotton and GOTS-certified but they can keep up with the conventional equivalents due to an affordable price, good design and high quality. Our colors and product-characteristics are classic and minimalistic. People who find transparency as well as environmental and social responsibility important, can equally identify with our brand as can fashionable consumers who focus on quality and design.



What are your future goals?

It is important to Melawear to reach customers who do not yet buy our products. We do not want sustainable textiles to remain a niche, but to become part of the mass market. We believe that we are particularly successful, also socially and environmentally, when we produce and sell a high number of our products. That way we can improve the conditions in the producing countries and sensitize consumers at the same time. We want to lead the way in the field of innovation.

Therefore, we continuously work on producing even more sustainable products. This means for example that we work on the composition and components of our sneakers' soles to leave a positive footprint. Ultimately, we want to create new products. We are currently working on the world's first Fairtrade Cotton and GOTS-certified water-repellent all-season jacket.

Press coverage

Süddeutsche Zeitung

Handelsblatt

zdf info

Frankfurter Allgemeine

TextilWirtschaft
NEWS | FASHION | BUSINESS

Springer

enorm
Zukunft fängt bei Dir an

FAIRKNALLT
BY MARIE NASEMANN

GREENPEACE
ENERGY

V\|V

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STEP INTO THE FUTURE

The podcast about fashion,
sustainability and social change.



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