



Circular economy and jeans:

Five recommendations



The International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) is a global, independent and non-profit making association, working in the public interest to promote and develop sustainable waste management.

Everybody talks about the **circular economy**

Everybody talks about the circular economy. So does ISWA. In 2015, we published six reports and presented nine key messages on circular economy and resource management. But what does it really take to make the production and consumption patterns of today more circular in practice?

One thing is for sure – all actors throughout the value chain have to work together to create change. Therefore, we gathered a group of manufacturers, designers and waste managers around two specific and tangible cases: jeans and plastic packaging - for cheese that is.

What did we find out? Going from linear to circular calls for new ways to work together throughout the value chain. All aspects of your product, business and ways of doing things must be open to change - even aspects of your business that seem set in stone. The designer's tool box has proved to be very useful, but making the necessary adjustments will doubtlessly drag you through the darkest co-creational agony before you see the circular light at the end of the tunnel – no one said it would be easy!

Did we manage to go more circular? Well, we are still talking, but we are talking to the right people and we came up with five overall recommendations for manufacturers wanting to go circular and matched them with five commitments from the waste management sector to support that movement.

This booklet presents the recommendations and commitments resulting from of the jeans case. Another booklet presents the same for the plastic packaging case.

Design

for reuse and recycling

Mixed-material textiles are difficult to recycle and often end in down-cycled applications. While inexpensive, garments of low quality encourage disposal and replacement rather than repair and reuse. Designers are in a position to improve the sustainability and recyclability of textiles.

Make a difference

- » **Use mono-material textiles in garments where possible**
make it easier to produce high-quality recycled textiles.
- » **Use high-quality textiles and supply repair accessories**
for longer lasting, better clothes.



The waste management sector will test products for recyclability and provide input to the design process

Rethink Resources

consider secondary raw materials

Integrating recycled yarn or textiles made with recycled material into product lines can be challenging, but by demanding recycled fabrics and yarns, brands create a market that textile suppliers can innovate towards and fill. Guaranteeing provenance of recycled material is also a crucial issue in limiting chemical contamination.

Make a difference

- » **Collaborate across the industry**
working together, brands can collect more used textile and create economies of scale and increased transparency.
- » **Design to exploit the qualities of recycled textiles**
make the material part of the design story.

The waste management sector will recover the textiles from the waste streams and make them available to the industry

Cooperate

throughout the value chain

The textile value chain is long and many of its traditional practices are highly resistant to change. Communication takes place mostly between immediate partners. This limits the opportunities for improvement, innovation and cooperation. At the other end, boosting demand for recycled textiles requires communication and cooperation with procurers and consumers.

Make a difference

» **Talk with suppliers and their suppliers**

make them understand what you want to do and why. Don't be afraid to make demands.

» **Talk to consumers and procurers**

drive demand through education and opportunity. Engage the public sector.



**The waste management sector
will engage value chain actors
to jointly develop resource
efficient solutions**

Innovate

keep an open mind for innovation

Recycling textile is not new, but the global industry is in its technological and organisational infancy. New technologies provide better quality yarn and higher quality textiles, while new business models challenge ideas of ownership and cost. Sustainability is disruptive by nature.

Make a difference

- » **Actively seek technology and logistic solutions to improve material recovery**

integrated textile labelling of component materials can ease sorting, for example.

- » **Be open to alternative business models and opportunities**

lend-lease models provide flexibility, while individually tailored clothes promote quality and reduce material losses.

The waste management sector will invest in developing collection, sorting and recycling technologies for the products and materials of tomorrow

Partner up

with the waste management sector

The waste management sector has great experience with end-of-life products - including textiles. Large amounts of textiles currently end in the garbage bin – a lot of material is needlessly lost this way. The waste management sector is a key partner for improving textile recovery and recycling.

Make a difference

- » **Help the waste management sector increase textile collection from household waste**

too much useful textile end up as waste rather than in the recycling system – provide information about proper disposal.

- » **Involve the waste management sector in your product development**

they know what happens at the other end of the value chain - learn from their experience.

The waste management sector will transform itself into a resource management sector

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