

Cal Poly Students Are Motivated by Eco Trends

By Robert McAllister
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The next generation of fashion designers has a heady task to tackle. They have to save the planet.

That was the objective presented before students at **California State Polytechnic University, Pomona** during the second annual **Apparel Merchandising & Management Symposium**, held May 30 at the college's **AGRIScapes** center.

The symposium is presented before the college's graduating class and features industry speakers from leading companies.

The sustainability and eco movement, which has captured the attention of the apparel industry over the past couple of years, has been focused on eco fabrics and fashions. But the panelists at Cal Poly delved into the reasons why the industry needs eco fashions.

Program chair and professor Peter Kilduff led off by painting an alarming picture of the state of the planet.

He said the earth is actually entering into a new stage of extinction, the Anthropocene epoch, based on the degradation of natural resources by man. Citing various studies, Kilduff rallied off a number of anecdotes. For one, he noted that two-thirds of the global population will live in areas with shortages of water by 2025.

In two years, oil production will be on the decline. Animal species are disappearing at a rate between 100 and 1,000 times the norm.

Consumption is one of the major causes of the planet's deterioration.

"We are creating trash faster than the landfills can hold them," he said.

The world's population, currently at 6.7 billion, will hit 10 billion by 2050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That population consumes close to 100 plastic shopping bags a year on average for each person. Those bags clog up landfills and take hundreds of years to degrade.

As for apparel, consumers use 76 million metric tons of fiber



THINK TANK: Howard Gabe of the E.C.O. trade show, Bonnie Julian of Colorep and Peter Kilduff of Cal Poly at the university's symposium on sustainability

each year, and, by 2050, that amount will grow 3½ times, Kilduff said.

"Even cotton uses a huge amount of energy because of the need to wash it," he said. Organic cotton has done a lot to reduce the amount of chemicals into soil, but there is still a lot of waste. According to a British study, consumers put about 66 pounds of clothing into landfills a year. That's 60 percent of all discarded clothing. About 30 percent reaches the second-hand market.

"We are over-consumed," noted Howard Gabe, a former eco retailer and current producer of the **E.C.O.** trade show, held twice a year in Las Vegas. "We need organic and sustainability."

Gabe said as much as the industry does not like to hear it, clothing consumption is part of the problem hindering conservation.

"We go out every season and buy garments that have the quality and characteristics to last us 10 years, but two months later, we need to buy another shirt," he observed.

In previous times, Gabe said, consumers would hang on to a pair of jeans for five to 10 years, but the fashion industry now dictates the need for different washes and cuts and styles. "You have to make the decision [whether to buy new styles]," he said.

"Designers also need to do their research to become more sustainable. Never think you can be 100 percent sustainable. You have to take baby steps."

Bonnie Julian, director of textiles for Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.-based **Colorep Inc.**, went further and said sustainability is not a choice.

"It's survival," she asserted. "There is waste at every level

of this industry. We have to stop the cycle. Look what we've done to China. We went there not because of demand but because of greed," she said, pointing out that many of that country's waterways are now polluted.

Julian's company recently launched **AirDye**, a self-contained textile-dyeing system that uses no water and less energy than conventional systems and creates a permanent application. The system captures all volatile organic compounds and recycles all dyes. The company has started to lease the system to the textile and apparel industries. It also acquired Harrisonburg, Va.-based **TransPrint USA Inc.** to expand its infrastructure.

Kilduff noted that such technologies, as well as swaying public opinion, will be key to cleaning up the earth.

He noted that the U.S. government also needs to step up regulation, which is falling behind that of Europe and Japan. "The governor two years ago helped to enact legislation to reduce emissions, but there needs to be more. There are many barriers in the way."

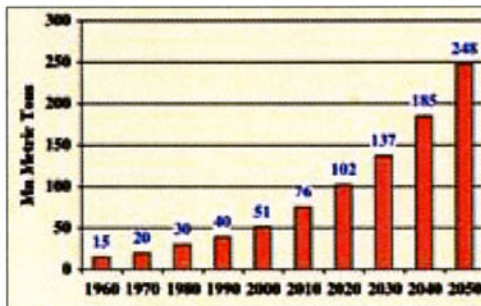
The speakers felt that the current eco movement will not fade in and out like previous ones did. Gabe said the fact that **Wal-Mart** has joined the movement by buying organic cotton farms is one of the indicators.

Outgoing students were motivated by the symposium. Graduate Terra J. Mack said she was impressed by the air-

dye technology coming into the marketplace. Lindsay van Lund said she hopes to gain a job with a company that incorporates sustainable practices, and Ashley Saah said she thinks the global marketplace will take conservation efforts more seriously than it did in the past.

Julian concluded by noting that the new crop of fashionistas should help lessen the industry's footprint, but it will be the coming generations that will have a greater impact. ■

World Fiber Production/Consumption Estimates
Million Metric Tons 1960-2050



SOURCE: PCI Fibres, West Sussex, UK