American biotech company Bolt Threads has announced “the creation of an unprecedented consortium” with major global companies “who have secured exclusive access to its innovative material, Mylo”.

The companies it’s working with include luxury names Kering and Stella McCartney, as well as sport-to-leisure specialists Adidas and Lululemon. They’ll be exclusively using the material that’s made from “infinitely renewable mycelium”.

The material “looks and feels like leather” and the brand partners will start bringing products featuring Mylo to market in 2021.

The company said the Mylo consortium “marks a major milestone in the industry, as global companies come together to invest in material innovation and creative solutions to reduce our environmental impact”.

Mycelium is the branching underground structure of mushrooms and Mylo is created using a “highly efficient grow
process that is intentionally designed to be low-impact, taking less than two weeks to grow, emitting fewer greenhouse gases and using less water and resources than animal leather”.

This deal is said to be the largest joint development agreement in consumer biomaterials to date, “marrying deep science and high design”.

McCartney said of the project: “Many people associate leather with luxury, but since the beginning I always wanted to approach things in a different way because killing animals for the sake of fashion is quite simply not acceptable. Working so closely with Bolt Threads since 2017 has been a career changing experience and I cannot wait to launch Mylo products in 2021.”

Kering chairman and CEO François-Henri Pinault added that “innovation is key to addressing the sustainability challenge that luxury is facing. Finding innovative, alternative materials and fabrics can potentially drastically reduce the environmental impact of our industry over the long term. This is why Kering is actively looking for innovations in this field and it's why we became an early supporter of Bolt Threads”.

Bolt said the process of finding the right brand partners was “highly selective, based on mission alignment and a demonstrated commitment to sustainability”.

By Sandra Halliday