Textile industry takes a toll on environment, says WWF

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The textile and clothing industry, which emits 1.7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, is taking a toll on the environment, according to the WWF Switzerland. In its analysis of the global textile industry with respect to its impact on the nature, the organisation has found that only a few companies pay attention to the environment.

Based on data provided by Oekom research AG, the report classifies 12 companies into visionary, ambitious, upper midfield, lower midfield, latecomers or intransparent categories. The results show that none of the surveyed companies was ranked in the highest classification of ‘visionary’. H&M was classified as ambitious; Nike, Adidas and Mammut were ranked in the upper midfield; VF Corporation (The North Face and Timberland brands), Hugo Boss, Odlo and Calida ended up in the lower midfield; and Triumph, Chicorée, PKZ and Tally Weijl were classified into latecomers or intransparent group.

The clothing industry is responsible for extensive water use and pollution, and produces 2.1 billion tonnes of waste annually, as per the report. Also, global consumption of clothes has doubled between 2000 and 2014. On a global average, every person buys 5 kilogram of clothes per year, but in Europe and the US the figure is as high as 16 kilogram. Overall apparel consumption is projected to rise even further, from 62 million tonnes in 2015 to 102 million tonnes in 2030. This projected increase in global fashion consumption will create further environmental stress and risks.

The report urges the companies to make improvements in the following material aspects: strategy to operate within the planet’s ecological boundaries; climate change; water management and stewardship; raw materials; joint environmental management in the supply chain; chemicals management; investment, stakeholder engagement and responsibility for public policy; and new business models to decouple consumption from resource use.

Consumers can contribute to reduce the industry’s environmental impact by buying less; simplifying their style and wardrobe; by using timeless, high-quality clothes and enriching those with accessories and second-hand items; maintaining their clothes; bringing them to a recycling facility; buying organic, green and high quality items; and creating awareness.