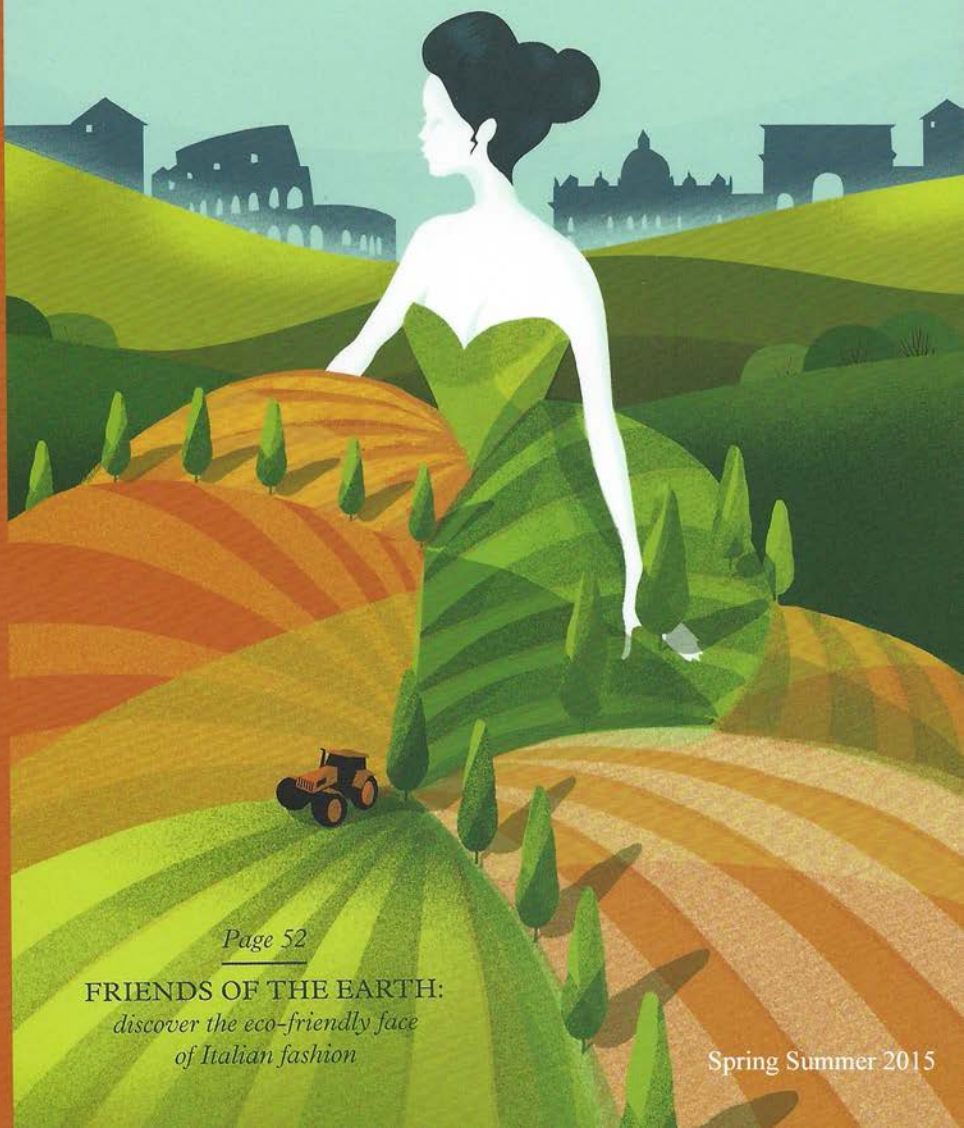


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FRIENDS OF THE EARTH:
*discover the eco-friendly face
of Italian fashion*

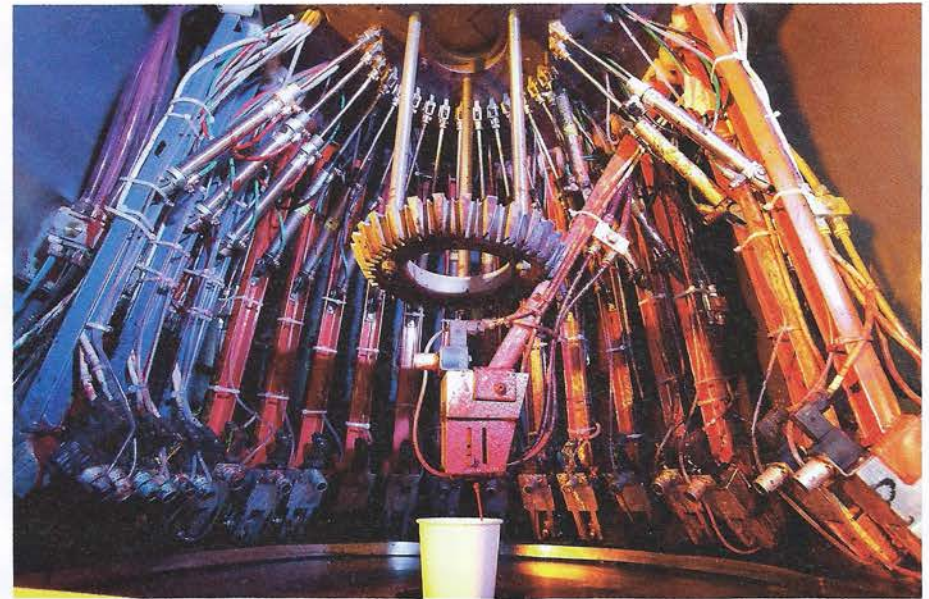
Spring Summer 2015

SUSTAINABLE STYLE

From signing up to Greenpeace initiatives to working with sustainable fabric producers, Italy's fashion industry is becoming increasingly eco-friendly, says *Sally McIlhone*

In recent years, the international fashion industry has increasingly started to embrace eco-friendly processes, fabrics and attitudes. The goal of today's fashion connoisseur is not to own a vast wardrobe of disposable garments, but a well-constructed collection of timeless pieces made using sustainable methods. Sustainability has been recognised as a key issue for both the Italian food and fashion industries, so much so that it is one of the main themes of Expo Milano 2015, which takes place in Milan between May and October.

With the world's population increasing year on year, establishing sustainable food production methods is an issue of vital importance. Italian deli chain Eataly works with the country's farmers, cheesemakers and butchers to ensure it stocks the finest ingredients available, and also tries to minimise its impact on the environment. Eataly is just one of a host of Italian food companies seeking ways to be more sustainable. The Italian fashion industry is following suit, backing sustainable production methods, committing ▶



to Greenpeace initiatives and launching eco-friendly capsule collections.

Milan Fashion Week autumn/winter 2014 saw Italy's Ministry of the Environment present a programme that highlighted the fashion industry's eco footprint. The Ministry, working alongside Connect4Climate, aims to reduce the carbon and water output of more than 200 companies by identifying carbon management practices and supporting low-carbon technology in clothing production.

'The Italian fashion system is committed to combining the quality of its products with a deep concern for sustainability,' says Corrado Clini, former director general of the Ministry of the Environment. 'This means not only adopting strategies and production processes that have a minimal environmental impact, but also – perhaps more importantly – searching for new materials and innovative solutions that enhance the competitiveness of our fashion industry and consolidate its international excellence.'

A number of Italian fashion labels have demonstrated their commitment to combining quality and sustainability in recent years. Alberta Ferretti teamed up with British actress



PHOTO: ANDREA SICINA BARLETTA

Emma Watson to produce a sustainable five-piece capsule collection called Pure Threads in 2011. Gucci launched its Sustainable Soles footwear range in May 2012 and Diesel collaborated with Edun on a denim collection for spring/summer 2013; founded by Bono and his wife Ali Hewson, the Edun label aims to create positive change through its trading relationship with Africa. ▶



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In addition, brands including Valentino and Benetton have signed up to Greenpeace's Detox campaign, which challenges elite clothing labels to eliminate releases of hazardous chemicals into the world's water supply. The commitment on Italy's part extends beyond its largest designer and high-street brands to the fabric manufacturers who supply their materials. The Miroglio Group produces fabrics for the likes of Motivi and Elena Mirò and is committed to sustainability.

'In recent years the Miroglio Group has made important investments in next-generation printing technologies in order to ensure environmental sustainability at the Miroglio ▶



The Italian brands embracing sustainable values range from elite designers and high-street names to fabric manufacturers



Textile plants in Govone and Alba,' says group chairman Giuseppe Miroglio. 'This has led to notable reductions in water and energy consumption and CO2 emissions. As such, we have already begun this process and we plan to continue to pursue this philosophy in a serious and responsible manner.'

Milano Unica, Italy's international textile fair, has become increasingly concerned with exhibiting fabrics from sustainable textile companies in the last five years. One such producer is Canepa, which uses an innovative process of textile finishing. 'This process is based on a biopolymer called kitosan, the result of the recycling of the shrimp shell,' explains Alfonso Saibene Canepa, head of the brand's sustainability programme. 'It is sustainable because the energy and water consumed thanks to this substance is 40% less than in the traditional textile process.'

Aurora Magni, a consultant to Milano Unica, points out that Italian and European mills are subject to strict rules regarding environmental responsibility. 'Yet, important as this might be, it is no longer enough,' says Magni. 'Fashion brands and retailers ▶



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Greenpeace's Detox campaign ensures fashion brands prioritise sustainability

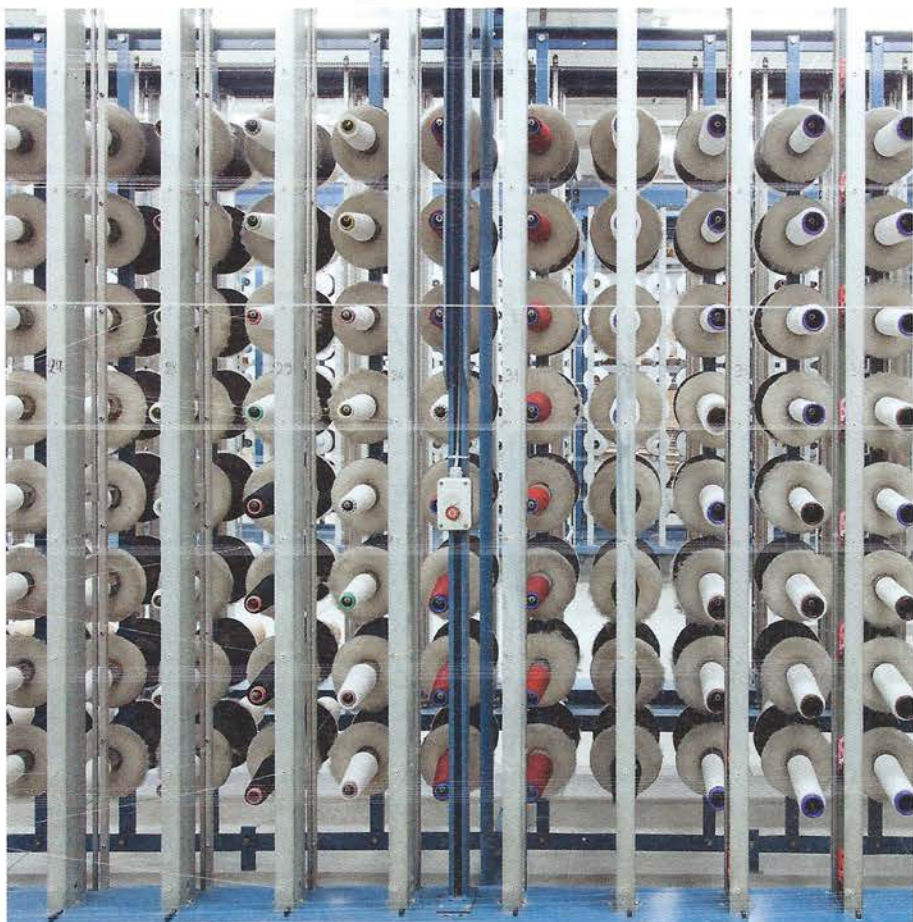


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are increasingly demanding with suppliers, requesting specific guarantees that certain chemical components are totally avoided during the production process.'

Greenpeace's Detox campaign holds fashion brands to account, ensuring they work with the most eco-friendly producers to ensure various sustainable standards are met. Milano Unica helps to connect brands with these ethical suppliers. 'We have chosen the much-appreciated technical catalogue as the tool capable of emphasising the green features of the textile and accessory mills,' says Massimo Mosiello, Milano Unica's general manager. 'In order to be listed in the catalogue,

Sustainability is worthwhile when garments stocked in Rome's leading boutiques are helping to protect the planet

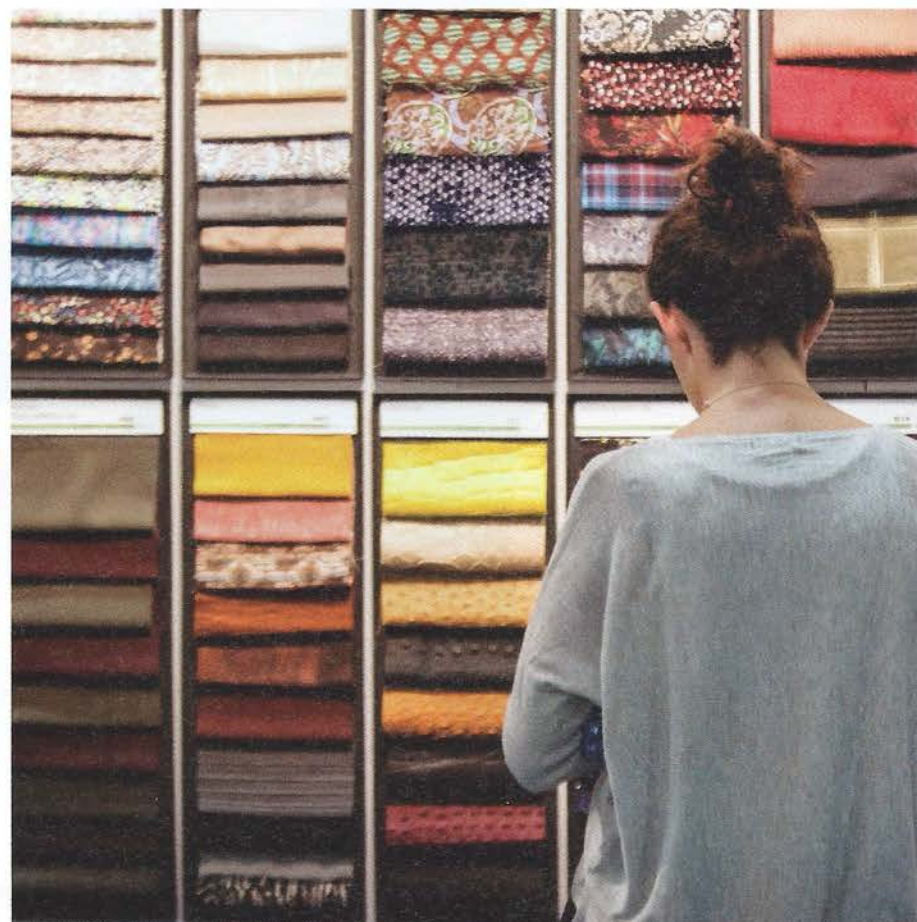


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companies must provide factual information and documents. Our aim is to guarantee clients that any information on fabrics and accessories is real and trustworthy in order to make identification easier.'

Committing to sustainability places additional pressures on brands, but is surely worthwhile if it means that garments stocked in Rome's leading boutiques are helping to protect the planet. 'Many companies have understood the competitive advantage of being renowned as ethical and responsible,' Magni concludes. 'Being an ethical company is far from easy but the market is willing to acknowledge and reward such efforts.' ●