

# Detox interim report II

How seriously are retailers taking responsible fashion?



GREENPEACE

# Introduction

## Don't supermarkets sell food?

Yes, but they sell other things too. An ever-changing selection of cheap clothes, home textiles and shoes has long been a firm fixture on supermarket shelves. It's a concept that works. With shoppers walking past the latest spring collection on their way to the frozen foods aisle, a pair of low-cost trainers can soon find themselves next to a block of cheese in the trolley. With annual textile revenues of roughly one billion Euros each, Aldi, Lidl and Tchibo have joined the ranks of Germany's largest fashion retailers.

## The major clean-up begins

In Autumn 2014, Greenpeace took a closer look at supermarket garments and came to the conclusion that both clothing and footwear harboured no shortage of hazards; in the various spot checks it performed, the commissioned laboratory found chemicals that are harmful to both health and the environment. When

## *Throwaway fashion is out – we need fashion with a future!*

Alexandra Perschau, textile expert at Greenpeace

confronted with the findings, Aldi, Kaufland, Lidl, Rewe/Penny and Tchibo agreed to a rethink, committing to eliminate all hazardous chemicals from their textile ranges by 2020. They also promised to provide information about sustainable consumption. In concrete terms, the idea is to encourage customers to buy more sustainable products and therefore avoid unnecessary clothing and footwear purchases.

## Progress since the first interim report

Actions speak louder than words, so Greenpeace investigated whether the promises made by the

retailers two years ago have led to implementation. Following our first interim report from 2015, the analysis and rankings on the following pages show how the supermarket chains have progressed since then. When compiling the rankings, we considered developments related to the elimination of hazardous chemicals and the transition to slowing and closing the loop. These developments were assessed on the basis of Detox progress reports and other information made publicly available by the companies concerned.

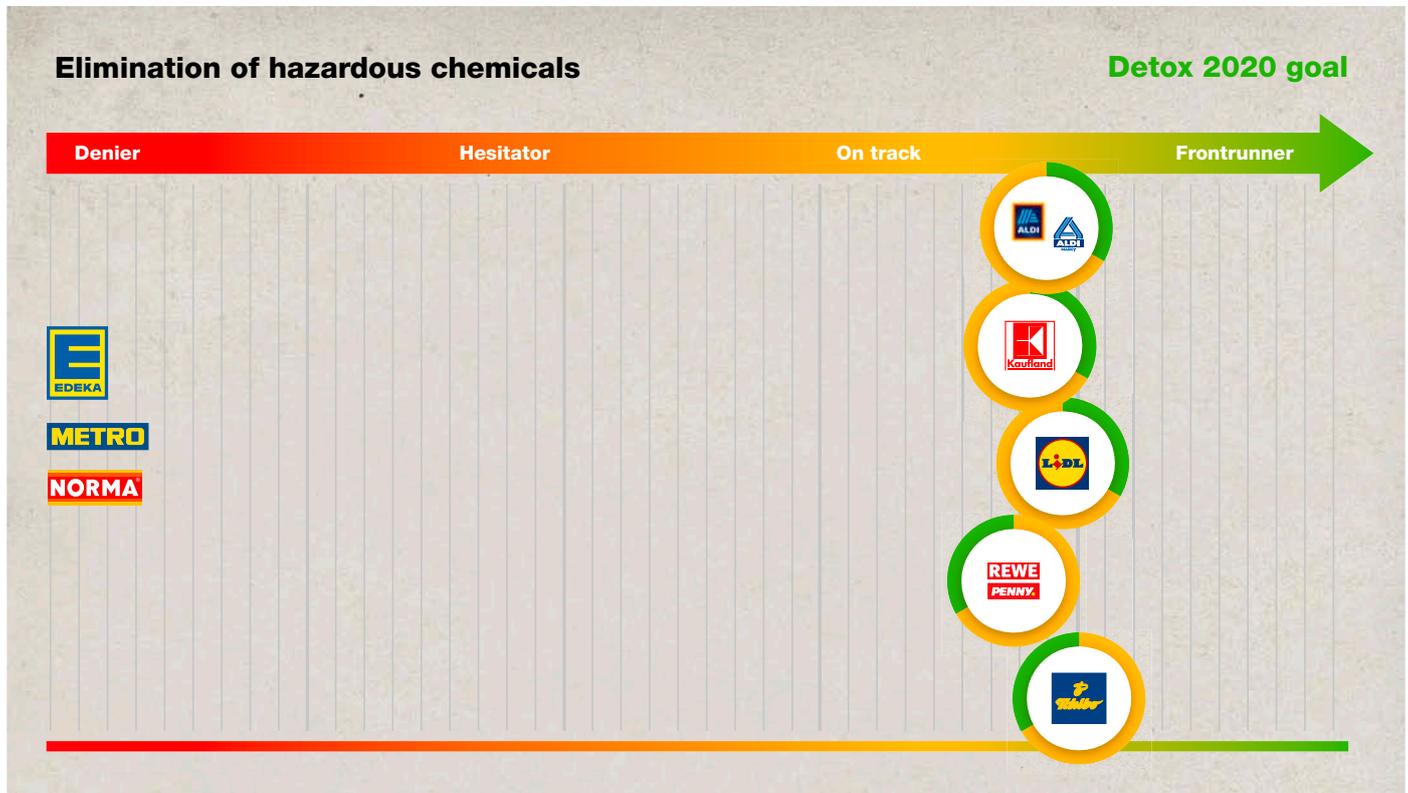
The relevant criteria are published at [www.greenpeace.de](http://www.greenpeace.de).



## Deniers

Other supermarkets such as Edeka, Metro and Norma also stock textile products on their shelves. They are shown as 'Deniers' in the rankings. Unlike Aldi, Kaufland, Lidl, Rewe/Penny and Tchibo, they did not commit in 2015 to cleaning up their textile operations as part of the Greenpeace Detox campaign. Not only have they failed to publish a specific road map for achieving a toxic-free textile range, but they also do not campaign for more conscious and less wasteful textile consumption.

# Findings at a glance

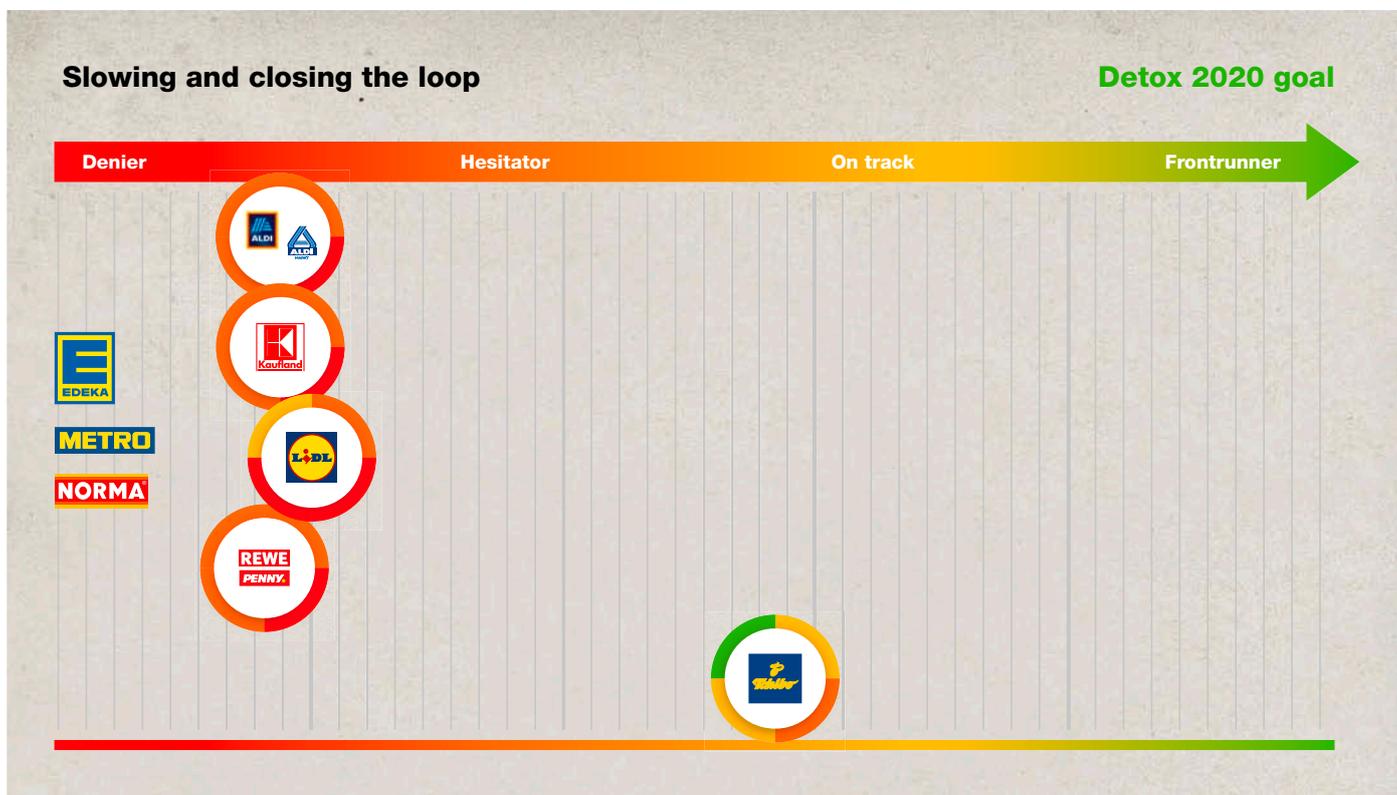


## Encouraging progress in eliminating hazardous chemicals

The good news is that the supermarkets named above are taking their Detox Commitments seriously – and they have all made substantial progress. The individual lists of hazardous substances that are completely banned from textile production (manufacturing-restricted

substances lists, MRSLs) are updated on a regular basis. Tchibo is setting a good example. The company has drawn up an extensive list with demanding detection limits. In terms of the elimination of PFCs (perfluorinated and polyfluorinated chemicals), all the supermarkets have shown that this harmful group of substances can be replaced. The

companies are largely meeting their commitment to publish waste water data from wet-processing facilities in their supply chains. A positive development is the publication of supplier lists. Lidl led the way in January 2017, with Kaufland and Aldi following suit in March 2017. Tchibo has announced that it will publish its supplier list during the course of 2017.



**Room for improvement in slowing and closing the loop**

The ambitious Detox 2020 goal, however, can only be achieved if retailers start to address the problem of the millions of garments that are produced. The supermarkets need to step up their efforts to make the switch from short-lived, mass-market fashion to long-lasting, high-quality fashion. Unlike the other retailers, Tchibo is on the right path – at least conceptually. With a comprehensive strategy that analyses all phases of

the product life cycle and devises measures and time frames, the retail chain is proving that it is possible to incorporate a more complex process of change into a business model. Words must now be followed by much more visible actions. In order to bid farewell to the ‘fast fashion’ model, it is crucial to develop new approaches to all phases of the product life cycle, i.e. production, use and recycling. Product design, for instance, has a decisive influence on the rest of the life cycle for each

individual item. A high level of quality is essential in terms of ensuring a long life. Moving beyond the sale of goods, it is important to develop concepts for loaning and swapping, as well as second-hand wear and upcycling. At the end of a long textile service life, members of the public need functioning take-back systems for returning their garments. After all, it is the companies who are responsible for ensuring that the best possible options for recycling or reusing are available.

# Findings in detail

## Companies in alphabetical order



### Aldi

The two Aldi chains – Aldi Nord and Aldi Süd – are Germany’s leading discount supermarket brand in terms of revenue; together they operate more than 4,200 stores. The two discounters also boast nearly 6,000 branches outside Germany. Aldi Nord operates in eight other European countries, whereas Aldi Süd can be found in six European countries, the United States and Australia.

In March 2015, Aldi Nord and Aldi Süd committed to eliminating the use of

hazardous chemicals in the production of clothing, home textiles and shoes worldwide by 2020 and replacing these chemicals with non-hazardous alternatives. The two retail giants have also communicated this commitment to their suppliers and are training them accordingly.

You can view Aldi’s Detox progress reports here: [www.aldi-nord.de/oekologische-produktionsstandards.html](http://www.aldi-nord.de/oekologische-produktionsstandards.html) [cr.aldisouthgroup.com/de/international-activities/detox-commitment](http://cr.aldisouthgroup.com/de/international-activities/detox-commitment)

#### Strategy

Under the heading of ‘systemic change’, Aldi collated the aspects that need to be tackled from the company’s point of view in late 2015. These are product design, the use of sustainable materials, increased product lifetimes, recycling and

communication with customers on sustainable consumption. While all of the points stated are relevant, there is still no clearly discernible strategy; there is a lack of prioritisation, quantified objectives, specific measures and time frames.

#### Production

No explanation is provided in terms of what specific demands are placed on product design to ensure recyclability. A welcome step is the decision to state the percentage of materials used across the entire range. Accounting for 60 per cent, cotton is the most important material. Synthetic materials – chiefly polyester – make up about 35 per cent. Although Aldi does now have certified cotton garments in its range, it is unclear what percentage they account for<sup>1</sup>. Aldi has, at least, announced that it will devise a cotton strategy in 2017 and back it up with target quantities. Precise knowledge of material composition is an important factor when it comes to assessing product recyclability. Aldi needs to subject its range to closer inspection in this regard.

#### Use

Aldi points out that one area of focus for its Quality Assurance department is to ensure long-lasting textiles. Durability criteria have been devised – and optimisation potential identified – in a research project. Unfortunately, this work is not accessible to the public. It is also unclear whether and how the insights gained are incorporated into quality guidelines and purchasing processes.

### Slowing and closing the loop



<sup>1</sup> The standards are Fairtrade, CmiA, OCS, GOTS. See Glossary, page 17.

### End-of-Life

Aldi has yet to launch any comprehensive measures to facilitate textile take-back reuse and recycling. Talks with service providers are ongoing. In Austria, remnants – i.e. unsold clothes and shoes – are donated to a charitable organisation. When compared with the huge amount of discount selling, however, this measure is small scale.

### Restricted Chemicals List

With its voluntary commitment in 2015, Aldi published a list of hazardous substances (manufacturing-restricted substances list, MRSL2), which it updates on a regular basis (most recently in January 2017). The clean factory approach<sup>3</sup> is followed. Overall, Aldi is doing well in this area.

### PFC Elimination

On 1 January 2017, a comprehensive ban on PFCs in production came into force. Waste water tests conducted in 2016 showed that 78 per cent of facilities were already producing without using PFCs. The clean factory approach aims to ensure that the

entire production facility is clean, thus avoiding the potential for cross-contamination. A case study on replacing PFCs has been published at [www.subsport.org](http://www.subsport.org). Therefore, Aldi is completely on schedule in terms of eliminating this group of substances.

### Transparency

#### (wastewater data and suppliers)

Aldi has published waste water data from 81 per cent of the wet-processing facilities in its supply chain. The target of 80 per cent has therefore been achieved. Furthermore, Aldi published a list of its main suppliers in March 2017.

## Elimination of hazardous chemicals



<sup>2,3</sup> An explanation can be found in the glossary on page 17.



## Kaufland

Kaufland operates supermarkets in eight countries and has nearly 1,200 branches, 640 of which are in Germany. Internationally, Kaufland is present in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Australia. Its textile range focuses on hosiery and footwear, but also includes clothing and home textiles.

In December 2015, Kaufland committed to Detox its range by eliminating all hazardous chemicals in the production of clothing and

footwear by 2020. Kaufland has contractually bound its suppliers to implement this commitment and conducts corresponding training programmes. In addition, the company has set out to increase sales of ecologically sound and long-lasting textile products, the aim being to foster sustainable consumer behaviour.

You can view the Detox progress reports here: [unternehmen.kaufland.de/mensch-und-umwelt/umwelt-und-klimaschutz.html#textilien](http://unternehmen.kaufland.de/mensch-und-umwelt/umwelt-und-klimaschutz.html#textilien)

### Strategy

In its Detox commitment, Kaufland set itself a target to progressively increase its sales of ecologically sound and long-lasting textile products and develop a take-back programme. There are, however,

still gaps in its strategy for boosting sustainability within its range. The process of 'slowing and closing the loop' aims to reduce the speed of changes in product lines and lead to a broader selection of long-lasting and recyclable products. However, there is no road map which specifies measures and timelines.

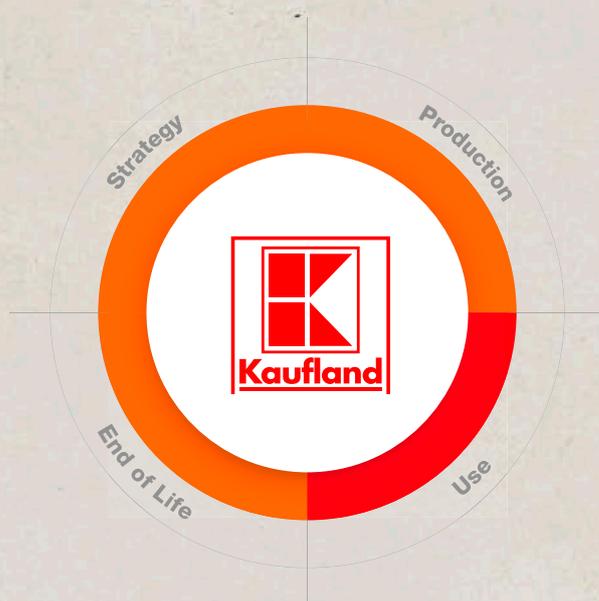
### Production

Kaufland devises product standards to ensure environmentally friendly and resource-saving range planning in the clothing and footwear segments. This includes goods that are certified in accordance with the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)<sup>4</sup> or that contain recycled materials. The company aims to switch over 25 per cent of its own brands by the end of 2017. It is unclear how much progress the company has made in implementing this goal. What's more, no mention is made of what materials are used in which quantities and blends. There is an urgent need for a clear commitment to changed design requirements that take account of recyclability. Furthermore, progress needs to be documented in a more transparent manner.

### Use

There have been no public announcements about specific measures to ensure a longer usage phase. The environmentally friendly and resource-saving range is, at least, promoted by means of newsletters and customer brochures, thus raising awareness of changed consumption options among customers. Nevertheless, there is considerable room for improvement in terms of extending the lifetime of textiles.

## Slowing and closing the loop



4 SeeGlossary, page 17.

### End-of-Life

As promised, Kaufland has attempted to set up a textile take-back system in its network of stores. Due to regulatory obstacles, however, implementation of the system has had to be suspended until further notice. Given the circumstances, it is worth considering whether Kaufland can set up a similar system in its other European locations. After all, the textile take-back regulatory systems are considerably weaker in Eastern Europe than in Germany.

### Restricted Chemicals List

The list of hazardous substances (manufacturing-restricted substances list, MRSL) published by Kaufland in February 2016 as part of its Detox commitment met the agreed standard. An update has already been announced for 2017. Kaufland follows the clean factory approach.<sup>5</sup> Since the commitment was made, the use of chemicals has been audited at 130 wet-processing facilities. The company is doing well in this area.

### PFC Elimination

Kaufland implemented a complete ban on PFCs in production on 1 January 2017. Waste water tests conducted in 2016 showed that 86 per cent

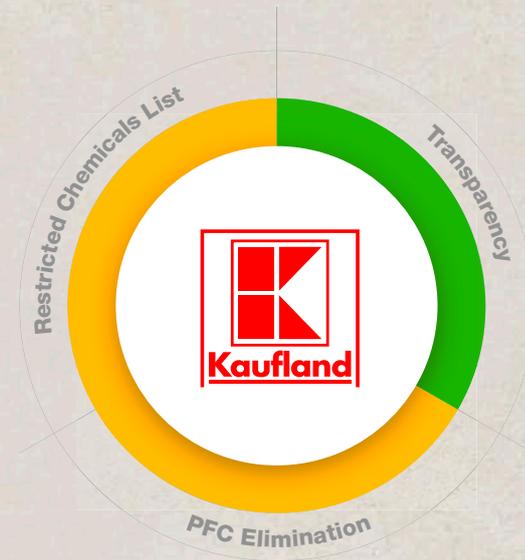
of audited supplier facilities were already PFC-free in their production. The clean factory approach aims to eliminate the possibility of contamination from other production lines. A case study on replacing PFCs has been published on the company's website. Therefore, Kaufland is on schedule in terms of eliminating this group of substances.

### Transparency

#### (wastewater data and suppliers)

The company aimed to publish wastewater data from 80 per cent of its Chinese suppliers by 1 September 2016. This target was met, with data from 84 per cent of the company's Chinese suppliers published by the deadline. Furthermore, Kaufland published a list of suppliers in March 2017.

## Elimination of hazardous chemicals



<sup>5</sup> See Glossary, page 17.



## Lidl

Discounter Lidl operates in 27 countries around the world. Lidl boasts some 3,200 stores in Germany alone, selling not only food but temporary 'non-food offers' – including textiles and footwear. In December 2014, Lidl committed to producing its own-brand textiles and footwear without hazardous chemicals by 2020.

With its 2017 interim report on its Detox commitment, Lidl has published its first comprehensive report, along

with supplementary documentation, as part of its efforts to document the actual and planned implementation of its Detox commitment.

You can view the Detox progress reports here: [www.lidl.de/de/detox-commitment/s7376403](http://www.lidl.de/de/detox-commitment/s7376403)

### Strategy

Lidl is committed to designing its products in such a way that they increasingly meet the requirements of a closed product cycle (closed-loop approach<sup>6</sup>). This means taking account of durability and high quality, re-use and recycling, and considering significantly lower resource consumption and reduced waste levels during the product design and development phase. Lidl is continuing its information programme on sustainable consumption that it

launched back in 2015. While the approach taken by Lidl is a good start, the strategy still has weaknesses and, in particular, also needs to address the following questions: what verifiable targets are being set; what concrete measures and time frames are being pursued; do the circumstances in different countries give rise to different sets of priorities; and how is the issue of slowing the loop being incorporated?

### Production

With a view to implementing recyclable textile products, Lidl is conducting a pilot project to develop a fully circular T-shirt with compostable colour print that is due to be available in stores from 2018. The range also currently includes garments made from Fairtrade cotton, although there is no indication of percentage. There is also no information on which materials are used in the Lidl range in which quantities and in which blends.

### Use

No specific concepts have been announced for the usage phase. The focus of work in this area is on improving product design in terms of durability and quality. No details are given of the criteria used by Lidl to define these terms.

## Slowing and closing the loop



<sup>6</sup> See Glossary, page 17.

### End-of-Life

Lidl has also not outlined any special measures for the end-of-life phase.

### Restricted Chemicals List

Since the publication of its Detox commitment, Lidl has updated its list of hazardous substances (manufacturing-restricted substances list, MRSL7) twice, thus satisfying the requirement for regular revision. Lidl follows the clean factory approach.<sup>8</sup> Since the commitment was made, the use of chemicals has been audited at 130 wet-processing facilities in China, Bangladesh and Turkey. Lidl is making progress and meeting its obligations.

### PFC Elimination

In accordance with its Detox commitment, Lidl has until 1 July 2017 to completely eliminate PFCs from its production chain. Waste water tests conducted in 2016 showed that 93 per cent of supplier facilities were already PFC-free. Furthermore, a case study on PFCs has been published on [www.subsport.org](http://www.subsport.org). The indications are that Lidl will reach the interim target on its journey to toxic-free production.

### Transparency

#### (wastewater data and suppliers)

As far as transparency is concerned, Lidl has met its goals and, as agreed, published waste water tests from 80 per cent of its suppliers with wet

processes (e.g. dyeing and printing) on the information platform of Chinese non-governmental organisation IPE. In January 2017, Lidl also became the first supermarket chain to publish details of its main production facilities for textiles and footwear.

## Elimination of hazardous chemicals



<sup>7,8</sup> See Glossary, page 17.



## Rewe/Penny

The retail arm of the Rewe Group operates in 11 European countries. It boasts nearly 15,000 stores, more than 10,000 of which are in Germany. The Rewe Group not only comprises Rewe and Rewe Center supermarkets, but also discount chain Penny and home improvement chain Toom.

In December 2014, Rewe committed to Detox its supply chain for its own-brand home textiles, shoes and clothing.

Rewe acts transparently and published a comprehensive update on its own website, thus indicating which preliminary targets have already been met.

You can view the Detox progress reports here:

[www.rewe-group.com/de/nachhaltigkeit/gruene-produkte/unser-detox-programm](http://www.rewe-group.com/de/nachhaltigkeit/gruene-produkte/unser-detox-programm)

### Strategy

Rewe published a strategy paper on the closed-loop approach<sup>9</sup> in March 2017. The company is committed to the safeguarding of resources and the promotion of sustainable consumption. However, Rewe defines the term 'closed loop' merely as a production process in which used items are collected, processed and resold as new products. Rewe aims to build up and expand this cycle in the

textile segment. Moreover, customers are being provided with information to help them make 'sustainability-oriented consumer decisions'. This strategy neglects the usage phase of products and the aspect of decelerating changes in product lines. There is also a lack of clear priorities, quantified goals, measures and time frames. The Group is taking a more defensive approach to the challenge by commissioning studies as well as market and competitor analysis. If the company does not wish to be left behind, it needs to demonstrate much more far-sightedness and decisiveness.

### Production

When it comes to production, Rewe has announced that it will work towards long-term partnerships with strategic producers. The Group has also set itself the goal of increasing the share of cotton produced in accordance with CmiA or GOTS<sup>10</sup> standards to 70 per cent by the end of 2017 (2015 level: 56 per cent). In this specific area, Rewe is transparent and ranks second – some way ahead of the rest of the field. The range also includes individual products made with recycled materials, although there is no specific information about percentages. There is also no special labelling or indication of recycled materials. Overall, it is unclear which materials are used, in which quantities and whether they are used as blends. It is also unclear whether, and to what extent, changed design requirements ensure product recyclability.

### Slowing and closing the loop



<sup>9, 10</sup> See Glossary, page 17.

## Use

Rewe claims to offer high-quality and long-lasting garments without defining in specific terms what 'high quality' means or how long a 'long-lasting garment' is supposed to last. Taking responsibility for the usage phase of garments, however, is about more than providing customers with washing instructions and information about material properties. Moreover, Rewe fails to explain how initial measures in the area of upcycling – whether in the form of online instructions or trainee projects – generate learning effects and translate into relevant action.

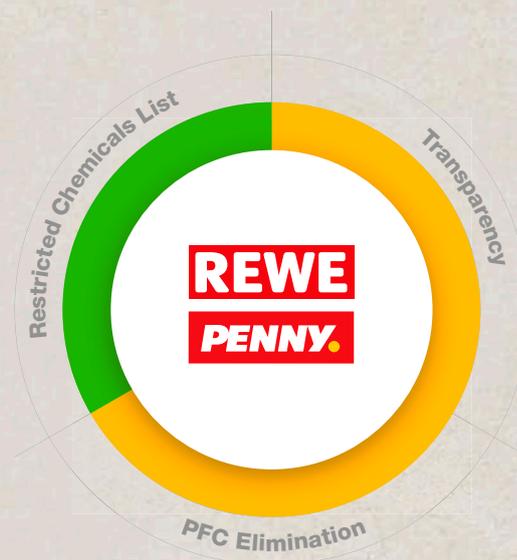
## End-of-Life

In conjunction with the University of Hong Kong, the Rewe Group has produced a study of the economic benefits of textile take-back systems. The Group has now decided to set up a take-back system for garments during the course of 2017 with the help of a service provider. Old clothes will be collected at several hundred Penny sites across Germany. Rewe has not yet released any details of the criteria used to select the service provider, nor has it said whether the goods flows will be precisely documented and published or what will be done with the proceeds generated.

## Restricted Chemicals List

Rewe revised its list of hazardous substances (manufacturing-restricted substances list, MRSL11) in 2016, adding new substances and adjusting thresholds to reflect the current best available technology. The company invests in informational materials, employee and supplier education and comprehensive training programmes

## Elimination of hazardous chemicals



for garment manufacturers. It also follows the clean factory approach<sup>12</sup>, although this could be communicated more prominently. On the whole, Rewe is doing well in terms of chemical management.

## PFC Elimination

Rewe committed to completely eliminate PFCs from production as of 1 January 2017. Corresponding provisions are set out in agreements with suppliers. Waste water tests conducted in 2016 show that 75 per cent of facilities are already working without PFCs. In China, however, the laboratories found PFCs in almost 40 per cent of waste water samples. On the company website, Rewe has published a case study on the substitution of PFCs at a production facility in Bangladesh. By virtue of training and educational programmes, Rewe aims to reliably meet the goals set.

## Transparency

### (wastewater data and suppliers)

In the 2015 interim report, Rewe stated that it had tested water and sludge samples at 80 per cent of its wet-processing suppliers. The target of at least 50 per cent has therefore been achieved. Moreover, all suppliers are now contractually obliged to publish their results on the IPE platform<sup>13</sup> (a database for recording environmental pollution). However, it is still unclear how many suppliers have published their results on the IPE platform in 2016. A positive step is the separate report that compares wastewater data from different facilities, identifies problems and devises necessary measures. However, the company has not yet published a list of suppliers.

<sup>11, 12, 13</sup> See Glossary, page 17.



## Tchibo

Tchibo has nearly 700 stores in Germany and more than 350 in seven other European countries. Tchibo also operates 8,300 depots (shop-in-shop corners) at retailers and supermarkets, offering a wide array of textiles alongside the coffee range.

In October 2014, Tchibo became the first major retailer to commit to Detox by 2020. In contrast to the other supermarkets, Tchibo's commitment encompasses not only clothing and footwear, but its entire non-food

portfolio. The various publications connected with its Detox commitment demonstrate that Tchibo has established itself as a frontrunner.

You can view the Detox progress reports and other relevant documentation here: [www.tchibo.com/servlet/content/1119124/-/starteseite-deutsch/tchibo-unternehmen/verantwortung/gebrauchsartikel/detox.html](http://www.tchibo.com/servlet/content/1119124/-/starteseite-deutsch/tchibo-unternehmen/verantwortung/gebrauchsartikel/detox.html)

### Strategy

Tchibo leads the field, chiefly due to the fact that a comprehensive strategy has been drawn up that examines all phases of the product life cycle and devises measures and time frames on the basis of an examination of potential outcomes. The strategy incorporates the requirements of a closed-loop approach<sup>14</sup> in terms of product design, the use of recycled

and renewable materials, long-lasting products and reuse/recycling. By 2020, all products should be closed-loop-compatible in line with criteria defined by the company. The company also announced its intention to examine how new modes of ownership (e.g. sharing) could be integrated into its business model.

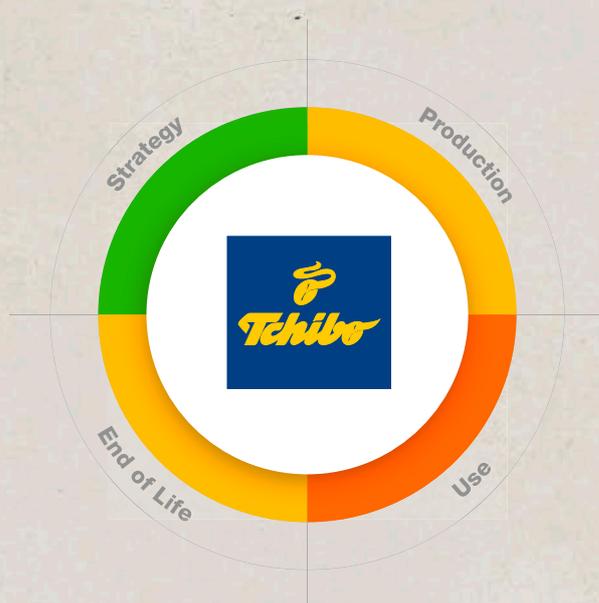
### Production

In order to design recyclable products, Tchibo is currently putting together teams comprising product management, quality management and purchasing experts and tasking them with designing closed-loop guidelines for all product categories. This illustrates the extent to which the approach is strategically embedded in day-to-day operations. In 2016, initial practical experience was gained in the implementation of a closed-loop strategy through the development of a compostable men's top. As the world's third-largest user of organic cotton – and with 80 per cent certified cotton<sup>15</sup> across its entire range – Tchibo occupies first place on this issue.

### Use

Specific measures on warranties, repairs and new, sustainable forms of consumption remain vague. As the Detox commitment applies to the entire non-food segment, Tchibo points out that the warranty provisions and periods for some products go beyond statutory requirements. In some cases, replacement parts can be ordered (furniture) or a repair service utilised (watches, jewellery). Customers are being made aware of sustainable consumption options (in the sense of the closed-loop approach) by means of completed pilot projects. But even the company with the most wide-ranging approach has room for improvement.

## Slowing and closing the loop



<sup>14</sup> See Glossary, page 17.

<sup>15</sup> The standards are Organic Cotton, GOTS, CmiA and BCI. Explanations for each can be found in the glossary on page 17.

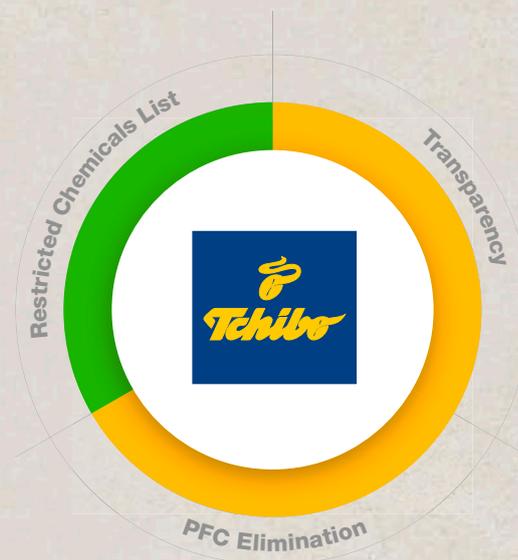
### End-of-Life

Following a detailed analysis of existing take-back systems and their strengths and weaknesses, Tchibo has identified three starting points in terms of improving closed-loop-oriented collection and recycling systems. These are free and easily accessible take-back systems, awareness raising among customers of the issues involved and the charitable use of returned textiles and any sale proceeds generated. In terms of garments, Tchibo has recently started working with the German umbrella organisation FairWertung, whose member charities collect clothing on the basis of social and ecological criteria. This take-back approach, however, still needs to be extended to other countries in which Tchibo operates. In the majority of cases, the collection rates for textiles are much lower in these countries than in Germany.

### Restricted Chemicals List

In order to control the use of chemicals in its supply chain, Tchibo has systematically enhanced its own list of hazardous substances (manufacturing-restricted substances list, MRSL16), adding numerous substances and imposing strict detection limits. As a consequence, Tchibo is also well ahead of the other retailers in this area. The company follows the clean factory approach<sup>17</sup>, which seeks to ensure lasting change in all production processes at wet-processing facilities. By working closely with individual facilities and providing education, training and professional development programmes, Tchibo is demonstrating that its commitment to the approach is credible.

## Elimination of hazardous chemicals



### PFCs Elimination

Even before its Detox commitment, Tchibo had started eliminating PFCs from its supply chain. Its target was to eliminate these chemicals once and for all by July 2016. This ban is now specified in all contracts with suppliers. A PFC case study has already been published at [www.subsport.org](http://www.subsport.org), with other case studies currently being reviewed by the site. Like the other retailers assessed, Tchibo has demonstrated that PFCs can be replaced in production. However, the problem of PFCs is by no means a thing of the past, for example, due to contaminated chemical preparations used in production.

### Transparency (wastewater data and suppliers)

In its Progress Report at the end of 2015, Tchibo announced that it would publish wastewater data from 80 per cent of suppliers. The company released analysis data for 126 wet-processing facilities. These facilities were involved in the production of 86 per cent of textiles sold. While the suppliers have been instructed to publish the data, they are lagging behind somewhat, a problem which is due to be addressed this year. Although a list of suppliers is yet to be published, following discussions with Greenpeace and the example set by competitors, the company has now announced that it will publish a list of suppliers in 2017.

<sup>16, 17</sup> See Glossary, page 17.

# Conclusion

Although Germany's largest supermarket chains are making good progress in terms of eliminating hazardous chemicals, they still have work to do when it comes to slowing and closing the loop for fashion. They have to slow down the fast-fashion carousel and put circular products centre stage. Indeed, these are essential requirements in order to deliver on the Detox commitment by 2020. Surveys and reports published by Greenpeace illustrate that the many existing problems in the textile industry are exacerbated by the huge numbers of garments that are bought, worn and disposed of too quickly. It is unrealistic to meet the current levels of mass consumption with fashion that has been produced in an ecologically sound and socially fair manner. Without substantial changes to their textile operations, Aldi Nord and Süd, Kaufland, Lidl, Rewe/Penny and Tchibo are putting their success in eliminating hazardous chemicals at risk.

## An urgent need for slowing and closing the loop

Clothing can no longer be produced as a throwaway product. An extended lifetime is essential, with retailers playing a pivotal role in this regard. This analysis shows that multiples are still struggling to turn their back on mass-market, low-cost fashion. In most cases, companies are dealing with the problem much too slowly and cautiously. An overall strategy needs to be developed, as isolated, stand-alone measures take up too much attention and will not bring about the necessary systemic change. Tchibo is proving that an overall strategy of this kind is feasible and that a more complex process of change can be integrated into business models. As part of the company's closed-loop approach, all phases of the product life cycle



are analysed, with measures and time frames devised accordingly. It is important to take account of new aspects in all phases ("production", "use" and "end-of-life"). Product design has a decisive influence on the rest of the life cycle for each individual item.

## Quality over quantity

The retailers analysed by Greenpeace claim to sell customers high-quality

products that can be worn for a long time. None of them, however, are bold enough to state openly what they actually mean by 'long'. Assuming that the retailers trust their quality assurance managers, there should be no reason not to do so. Overall, the "use" phase seems to constitute the biggest challenge. Alongside a clear statement on durability, warranties and repair services would be welcome measures. Anyone who

wishes to become a trailblazer has to be bold enough to take the first steps in encouraging new modes of ownership, such as sharing, loaning and swapping.

### Closing the loop

Whenever customers no longer wish to wear clothes or shoes themselves, it is important that the valuable raw materials are not simply thrown away. On the one hand, a functioning take-back system has to be established – and customers have to be familiar with it. On the other hand, the best possible reuse/recycling options have to be made available. Some companies have already developed initial projects, sometimes taking different approaches. Two things are clear: take-back systems make the most sense where the existing infrastructure for gathering unwanted clothing and shoes is insufficient. Equal-value recycling – i.e. the production of new textiles from old textiles – has to overcome a number of obstacles to become a viable option for the fashion industry. It is therefore all the more important to find new owners for the collected garments, such as by redistributing



them as second-hand goods or upcycled products.

### Detox globally

The Detox commitments also apply expressly to the international operations of the retailers. Measures to encourage sustainable consumption cannot just be restricted to Germany. Overall, companies need to internationalise all measures and adapt them where necessary.

### Chemicals: a need for further systematic action

As far as hazardous chemicals are concerned, the retailers have worked hard to keep their promises. They are gradually eliminating the most hazardous chemicals from their production chains. They are publishing extensive lists of all substances that need to disappear from production facilities and are making waste water data from wet-processing facilities accessible to the public. But despite all the bans in the production phase, hazardous substances are still being found in waste water tests. This illustrates the importance of implementing change in the entire factory rather than just on individual production lines. The root-cause analyses, which are mandatory in the event of any samples that give cause for concern, also show that chemical preparations or the water fed into the factory are often contaminated. Therefore, the textile industry and its suppliers – but also politicians and official bodies – still have a lot of work to do to ensure that hazardous chemicals are completely eliminated.

### Discounters as role models for fast-fashion chains

Even though they still have a long road ahead, the retailers analysed here are, at least, starting to lead the way for fashion retailers. While a total of 20 global fashion and sportswear



brands including H&M, adidas and Primark have all committed to Detox by 2020, they have not yet – beyond a few examples – taken enough responsibility for the transformation to slowing and closing the loop. There is even less indication of an overhaul of their business models towards more quality and less quantity. They also need to develop a comprehensive strategy that takes account of all phases of the product life cycle. The focus of the entire strategy – from design and production through to use and reuse/recycling – has to be on minimising negative impacts on people and the environment to the greatest extent possible.

# Glossary

## Manufacturing-restricted substances list (MRSL)

Instead of defining threshold levels for hazardous substances in finished products, Greenpeace has achieved a paradigm shift, namely to eliminate the use of hazardous chemicals during production. To this end, companies use so-called MRSLs, i.e. lists of hazardous substances that are restricted for use in textile manufacturing. Monitoring is based on tests of the chemicals used, wastewater and sludge, as well as monitoring of the finished garments.

## Clean factory approach

The orders placed by retailers do not generally use up the capacity of entire production facilities. If chemicals with less stringent standards are used at the production facility and if textiles are being simultaneously dyed, bleached or washed for other clients, cross-contamination cannot be ruled out. The aim of the Detox campaign is to reduce the level of water pollution caused by hazardous substances in the countries of origin. Therefore, changing production processes from one client to another without risking contamination can only be done when the entire factory operates cleanly. Pursuing this approach is the only way for retailers to ensure that their products are free from toxic chemicals, thus avoiding the risk of lasting damage to their reputation.

## Case studies on [www.subsport.org](http://www.subsport.org)

[www.subsport.org](http://www.subsport.org) is a multilingual platform for sharing information on alternative chemicals and technologies for substituting hazardous substances. Case studies assist other actors in their search for safer alternatives.

## IPE platform

The Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs (IPE) is a Chinese non-profit organisation that set up a database in

2006 to record environmental pollution caused by facilities based around the world. The aim is to provide all stakeholders – particularly populations living in the areas surrounding factories – with access to information about the waste water discharged by factories and the chemicals it contains (Right to Know).

## Perfluorinated and polyfluorinated chemicals (PFCs)

PFCs are used to make textile and leather products water- and dirt-repellent. They are persistent and build up in the tissue and bloodstream of humans and animals. Greenpeace has detected these hormone disrupting and carcinogenic chemicals in numerous tests on textiles, shoes, rucksacks and tents. Thanks to the Detox campaign, the elimination of the entire group of PFCs is gaining more and more ground, including in the outdoor sector. Here, you will find a summary of the key Detox chemical groups that need to be eliminated immediately:

[https://secured-static.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/code/2016/Catwalk2016/pdf/Detox\\_Catwalk\\_Explained\\_2016.pdf](https://secured-static.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/code/2016/Catwalk2016/pdf/Detox_Catwalk_Explained_2016.pdf)

## Closed-loop approach

The closed-loop approach factors in the entire life cycle of a product, starting with the design and the use of raw materials through to production, marketing, sale and the subsequent usage phases up until the end of the product's useful life. The aim is to ensure the most responsible value creation and use possible for people and the environment during all phases, as well as a safe return to the value chain or – if the product will no longer be used by people – to the environment.

## Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)

The GOTS sets out ecological and social criteria for the entire textile value chain. Participating facilities are required

to undergo annual inspections by independent auditors. GOTS-labelled products are also available as special offers at discounters and supermarkets.

## Cotton standards: BCI, CmiA, Fairtrade, OCS, Organic Cotton

Conventional cotton cultivation is associated with various ecological and social problems. A raft of different standards seek to improve the situation on the basis of their respective sets of criteria. These standards include Better Cotton by the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) by the Aid by Trade Foundation, Fairtrade by Fairtrade International and the Organic Content Standard (OCS) from Textile Exchange. Organic cotton stems from organic cultivation and is usually certified in accordance with the statutory requirements for organic products in the EU or the United States.

## Recycling

Recycling only makes sense when it saves energy and resources. This not only means that the process has to have an appropriate energy footprint, but also that it gives rise to high-quality products for which demand actually exists. Old textiles that contain toxic substances should not enter the recycling loop, otherwise, these toxins remain in circulation. Furthermore, textile recycling must not release any problematic chemicals into the environment or cause them to enter products. In line with the motto of 'reduce, reuse, recycle', recycling can only ever be the third-best option. Recycling options for textiles are also still extremely limited. The increasing use of natural/synthetic material blends constitutes a huge problem, as there are still no processes that can deal with blends which have achieved significantly widespread industrial use and that are economically viable.