



SUPREME CREATIONS & BAGS OF ETHICS



HOW TO MAKE YOUR PRODUCTS MORE SUSTAINABLE



A guide on sustainable manufacturing methods.

MAKING A SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT

When designing your tote, pouch, or sustainable packaging, there are many steps in the production process to consider when wanting to make your product as sustainable as possible. This guide will help you to understand the complexities of things such as inks, fabrics, and product shapes, and how all of these affect the overall sustainability of a product. We have over 20 years of experience working within the textile industry, and have pooled our combined knowledge to bring you this easy guide to sustainable production.



INK

Whilst ink may seem like a very small part of your overall product, which inks are used and how they are used can have a big impact on how sustainable the product is.

Dark ink on a light fabric vs. light ink on a dark fabric

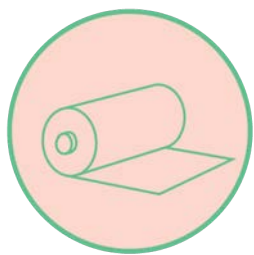
When printing a design onto your product, it is important to consider that a **dark colour** going onto **light coloured base material** will use a **water-based ink**, which is the most environmentally friendly option, as it mainly consists of vegetable-based dyes. A light colour printed onto a dark fabric, such as white onto black, A. uses more ink, and B. uses a different kind of ink - **plastisol ink**. This ink is still REACH compliant but is less vegetable-based, and therefore **not as naturally derived**.



Another thing to consider when printing is the **fabric type**.

A tighter weave fabric such as an organic cotton sateen is less porous. This means it has far less “holes” in it, and therefore not as much ink falls through, meaning **less ink is needed to print**. A **less tightly woven fabric** will have more gaps in the fabric meaning that more ink will fall through, therefore requiring more ink and being a **more wasteful option e.g. Jute**.





FABRIC

What fabric is the most sustainable option?

We offer lots of different types of fabrics to our clients, however some are more sustainable than others. This guide will help you make the best choice for both your product and the planet.

All of our fabrics are grown in **naturally well-irrigated areas**, such as mountainous regions where they will not need as much water to grow, thus saving excessive water consumption.

Cotton - lightweight - GOTS certified, however, is not organic, not so tighter weave and therefore will waste more ink when printing.

Canvas - heavy weight - tighter weave, GOTS certified

Organic Cotton (and organic cotton sateen) - a very tight weave fabric, GOTS certified, organic and therefore grown with no pesticides or chemicals, and does not need as much water to be grown .



Jute - Jute grows without pesticides and fertilisers, loosely woven fabric so may require more ink for printing.

Fairtrade cotton - Fairtrade encourages sustainable cotton production and is the only standard to provide economic benefits, through a guaranteed Fairtrade Minimum Price and additional Fairtrade Premium for seed cotton farmers.

GRS Recycled cotton - recycled cotton that meets global recycling standards - has accurate content claims, meets environmental practices and chemical restrictions.

PPE - polypropylene, a fabric made from thermoplastic polymer (plastic), it is soft and light, but as a derivative of plastic it is not the most sustainable option.

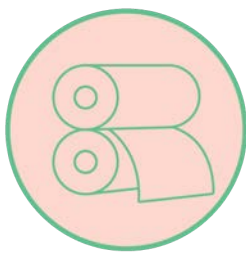
Recycled PPE - a recycled version of the above, still a derivative of plastic and therefore not so good for the planet.

Velvet - characterized by a dense pile of evenly cut fibres that have a smooth nap. Cotton, linen, wool, mohair, and synthetic fibres can also be used to make velvet. Obviously velvet made from natural fibres is a more sustainable option.

Silk - silk is a natural protein fibre, some forms of which can be woven into textiles. The protein fibre of silk is composed mainly of fibroin and is produced by certain insect larvae to form cocoons. Silk is therefore not vegan and has ethical connotations to consider.

Satin - Satin refers to the weave of a fabric rather than the material. Satin can again be made from a variety of materials, natural satin being more sustainable.

So, while each fabric may have pros and cons in terms of sustainability, we can see that an organic cotton sateen uses no pesticides or fertilizers, needs less water to be grown, and is a tight-weave so uses less Ink when printed on, making it the most sustainable option.



PRINTING

You can print in different ways in order to be less wasteful.

Generally **repeat prints** will produce the least wastage as you don't need to worry about the placement of a logo onto the fabric. The whole piece of fabric with the repeat print can be used therefore making less waste.



SHAPE

The shape of your product will also determine how sustainable it is. Bales of fabric come in metres of width and height, if you choose a shape that doesn't fit the dimensions of the fabric, **fabric may be wasted**. For example, if a bale of fabric is 100cm wide, a tote bag with dimensions of a 25cm width means that 4 equal totes can be cut out of one piece of fabric with no wastage. However, if a customer wants a **bespoke size** that may have a 30cm width, this equals 3 totes with 10cm of waste and therefore the most sustainable option is to choose one of those.



OFFCUTS

Incorporating **offcuts** into your product will help further prevent wastage. Offcuts can be used to make contrasting handles, panels, pockets or patchwork design on your product and means that **no fabric is wasted**, therefore improving the overall sustainability of your product.

DECODING SUSTAINABILITY JARGON

GOTS Cotton – what is it?



For a fabric to be GOTS certified it needs several things. Firstly, a certification from governmental organic farming standards is needed to prove the cotton fibre is grown and farmed **without GMO seeds** (genetically modified seeds), and **without the use of any chemicals or pesticides**. The product must be made with **at least 70% organic fibres**.



Farmers also must be certified according to **international organic farming standards**. This also helps with traceability of the cotton. As well as processing and manufacturing criteria, GOTS also has a social criterion that you must meet to be GOTS certified. This includes **no child labour**, working conditions are **safe and hygienic**, no discrimination. No excessive working hours, harsh or inhuman treatment is prohibited. **Ethical business practices** and quality assurance system is put in place. GOTS certified organic cotton means that your product has been ethically sourced, and monitored closely during the production process.

GLOSSARY



Sustainable

Sustainable or sustainability, put simply, means meeting our own needs without compromising the planet, environment, or the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It's something that can be continued or a practice that maintains a condition that does not affect any of these three things. An example of sustainable is the practice of reduce, reuse and recycle.

Compostable

Compostable means that a product is capable of disintegrating into natural elements in a compost environment, leaving no toxicity in the soil. For example, non-animal food scraps are compostable.

Biodegradable

Biodegradable means anything that is capable of being decomposed by bacteria or other living organisms and thereby avoiding pollution. For example, wood and paper products are biodegradable.

Upcycled

Upcycled means any discarded objects or materials that are used in such a way to make a new product in their current state. For example, taking an old chair and adding a new cover to it would count as upcycling.

Recycled

Recycled/recycling means converting waste into a reusable material. An example of this is plastic being recycled to form new plastic or plastic-based materials.

Organic

Organic refers to food/farmed materials that are produced or involving production without the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or other artificial chemicals. Organic certification comes from approved organic control bodies.

Vegan

Vegan refers to things that containing no food or other products derived from animals. Certification comes from places like the Vegan Society.

Fairtrade

Fair trade is an arrangement designed to help producers in developing countries achieve sustainable and equitable trade relationships. Members of the fair trade movement add the payment of higher prices to exporters, as well as improved social and environmental standards. Certification comes from Fairtrade themselves.



REACH Compliant – what is it?

REACH is a regulation of the European Union, adopted to improve the protection of human health and the environment from the risks that can be posed by chemicals, while enhancing the competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry.

REACH stands for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. In essence REACH compliant inks **do not contain chemicals that could pose a risk to human or environmental health.**



Climate change a threat to will become a threat to **all** businesses in the future – we are all in this together. As a company we have to promote our sustainability and try and encourage others to do the same – if we can encourage others to take action, we can increase our role in mitigating climate change. By making small changes like these to your product, you can become a part of a **bigger global change.**

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If you'd like more advice or a quotation from our account management team then get in touch. Call us: +44 (0) 208 459 3260
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