

## Be Seduced to Reduce Pollution

# Slip into Something more Satisfying...

By Marta Swain

Those wishing to help create a more sustainable future for themselves and the world are finding fun, practical ways to enhance the quality of their life. What we eat and how it's grown directly affects our health, as do the ways in which all products we choose to buy are made. Discerning people of all ages have the satisfaction of making informed, conscious choices about clothing that seduces with comfort and style while improving personal, social, and ecological well-being...

Why should we care?

**Some Serious Problems with Apparel:** Few are aware of what goes into the manufacturing of clothing they purchase, but all are affected, indirectly, by an apparel industry that generates huge waste of water, land, and energy, as well as pollution and social injustice. Core to the problem is American consumption of cheap clothes in record numbers. From raw material production through packaging of finished garments--toxic pesticides, dyes and other treatments of crops and clothing cause serious allergies and other health impairments. An estimated 70% of textile effluents and 20% dyestuffs are dumped into water ways, contaminating rivers, lakes, and seas. (The Sustainable Planet: Solutions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Juliet Schor)

One of the worst offenders is conventionally grown cotton...

## Clothing Affects Health

Why is a fiber advertised as "*the fabric of our lives*" actually allowed to threaten our health as perhaps the most unsustainable crop in the world?

Answer: Political lobbies, marketing, and "unconscious commerce"...

Are we buying into it? A typical American high school graduate has seen 350,000 commercials, including two minutes of ads for every 10 minutes of video "news" piped into classrooms. On average, adults see 21,000 commercials per year, 75% of which are paid for by the 100 largest corporations in America.... (who) spend more money trying to get us to buy their products than we spend on all of secondary education in the entire United States. (Paul Hawken, Ecology of Commerce, 1993)

According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, more insecticides are used on cotton than any other crop (24% of all insecticides applied globally, and 60% of all insecticides applied in the US—60 million pounds a year), including some of the most toxic and persistent. "Of the top 15 chemicals used in California cotton farming, 7 of them cause cancer and all but 1 cause birth defects", reports the Sustainable Cotton Project. Approximately 1/3 pound of petroleum-based fertilizers and farm based chemicals go into producing one cotton T-shirt.

The agricultural pesticide industry is worth \$40 billion annually, of which 10% goes on cotton crops. (FAO)

The USDA banned the use of many organophosphate pesticides on food crops due to their high toxicity and link to cancers, reproductive and neurological disorders, but they are still widely used in cotton farming. These same toxic pesticides find their way into our bodies on a regular basis through cotton by-products consumed in large quantities by domestic dairy cattle. (Pesticide Action Network of North America; USDA).

## **The World Wildlife Fund identified cotton as the most fresh water intensive crop in the world.**

1 kilogram of cotton lint requires 29,000 litres of fresh water.

## **Good News about Better Options**

Heroes have been at work (*with* nature), to develop and refine more sustainable apparel options, one of which has been serving human civilizations as food, fuel, and fiber for 10,000 years, and may be the most sustainable crop to create strong, regional economies throughout the US.

Have you heard of Industrial Hemp?

Hemp is playing a significant role to reduce the apparel industry's use of carcinogenic compounds, toxic dyes and solvents as well as unhealthy working conditions they affect. Ecologically sound methods are used to fashion hemp into sumptuously seductive fabrics of great appeal. People of all ages and backgrounds have discovered that hemp blends exquisitely with silk, wool, organic cotton, and tencel; exceptional breathability and insulative qualities make hemp garments more temperature versatile, less seasonal. Hemp and various blends are poised to rival your former favorite fabrics.

Transferring our clothing preferences to include hemp has many earth-friendly advantages.

Hemp:

- \* grows readily without pesticides, herbicides and fungicides
  - \* produces 4 times the biomass as the same acreage of trees
  - \* is a clean burning biomass fuel energy source that could significantly reduce our consumption of fossil fuels and nuclear power
  - \* is the longest, strongest & most durable natural fiber, for producing highest quality paper as well as economical building materials naturally resistant to fire, warping, mildew...
  - \* contains a complete protein of amino acids and essential fatty acids that help prevent cancer, heart disease and high blood pressure
- (see [www.thehia.org](http://www.thehia.org))

Twice in US history, ***landowners were legally bound to grow hemp***, due to its capacity to support economic prosperity; hemp was accepted in lieu of tax. In 1936, political influence from petroleum and forestry interests effectively confused hemp (an agricultural crop) with marijuana, (a drug crop), successfully sabotaging our society's opportunities to benefit from this plant; growing hemp became illegal for the first time in world history.

Fortunately for people and the planet, Republican and Democrat leadership is taking another look at hemp. In "A Renewal of Common Sense" at [VoteHemp.com](http://VoteHemp.com), Eric Rothenburg makes the case for hemp's clear potential to provide economic and ecologic relief to many serious issues facing our nation.

In its World Charter for Nature, The United Nations recognizes that "In the decision making process it shall be recognized that man's needs can be met only by ensuring the proper functioning of natural systems...degradation is caused by excessive consumption and misuse," and that "Competition for limited resources can cause conflict...(while) conservation contributes to peace and cooperation."

Clothing can help you enjoy being part of the solution. Rather than contributing to the costs of buying and selling with no questions asked, apparel production can respect the integrity of people and places of the planet:

**Replacing 55% of the cotton in the approximate 1.4 billion cotton T-shirts sold each year in the USA with hemp, could generate energy savings to provide household power for over 92,000 people; water savings (1,339 billion gallons) could provide household water consumption for over half of the US population for a full year... (<http://calculator.hemptown.com/calculator.html>)**

We all have a present and future stake in the increasingly urgent need to improve health and well-being for our families, communities, and Nature's life support systems. We all make a difference through conscious commerce that encourages inquiry and thoughtful investment in products that both sustain life and enliven spirits. When considering apparel options--invite yourself to expect more, indulge your integrity, and look for a higher return on your investment.

*Marta Swain, founder of Clothing Matters, invested 20 years into research and consulting through "Interplay" workshops that engaged educational and business communities to explore connections between personal, social and ecological well-being, and further understanding of sustainability and its indicators. Since 1996, Swain has promoted sustainably manufactured apparel to address these principles through a world class retail collection in Grand Rapids, MI and Clothing Matters' LogoWear products for corporate identity and organizational/non profit promotion and fundraising. For more information visit [ClothingMatters.net](http://ClothingMatters.net) or call 616-988-8500 (business office) or 616-742-2818 (store).*

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