



KLM 'Upcycling' Discarded Ladies Uniforms

KLM recently supplied 11,000 female staff with new uniforms designed by Dutch couturier Mart Visser. At the same time, around 90,000-kilos-worth of uniforms were discarded. Because KLM pursues a sustainability policy that seeks to strike a balance between planet, people and profit, it is logical that the old uniforms are to be processed in a responsible manner.

Did you know?

Uniforms are usually incinerated to minimise security risks. That is not really a sustainable solution. Recycling also has certain drawbacks. The most important being that existing collection and processing techniques usually cause the quality of raw materials to decline. In practice, this actually implies that recycling is little more than a detour on the way to the rubbish dump. In addition, the cost of recycling must be offset in the price customers pay for the newly manufactured product in shops. If the product is of a poor quality and relatively expensive, very few people will want to buy it.

What do we do?

We have chosen to 'upcycle' the discarded uniforms. Sustainable solutions often demand a cooperative effort. We have therefore teamed up with a group of reliable partners* to run a project proving that it is possible to transform old uniform textile into new raw materials that can be used to manufacture new, high-quality products.

What is the result?

By upcycling 90,000 kilos of textile, we save at least 500 million litres of water, 4,600 tons of CO₂ and 1 million m³ of natural gas, all of which would have been used or emitted in producing the new textile. Furthermore, the volume of pesticides, fertiliser and oil required is much lower. Farmland can also be used more effectively, to produce foodstuffs instead of cotton. An added bonus is that job opportunities are created for less privileged people in our community.

* Frankenhuis & Zn, Alcon Advies, Texperium, Sodexo, Brantjes.com, Agentschap NL, Leger des Heils, D'Andrea & Evers Design, Saxion Hogeschool, Modint.