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This sportswear giant has a complicated relationship with sustainability. Adidas, once recognized as a sustainable company, has lagged behind as the fashion industry reckons with its environmental and social impacts. Read on to find out what Adidas is doing to be more sustainable — and what needs to be done.

**Materials:** After choosing 10 random items, 50% of those used some amount of sustainable materials. The most common sustainable material was recycled synthetic fabric, most typically recycled polyester. One garment used recycled ocean-bound plastic, a material that Adidas has been promoting in some of its advertising. Unfortunately, the use of this material — created by Parley Ocean Plastic — is small in reality. Compared with the amount of new materials Adidas uses, the occasional recycled synthetic is not enough. For its non-synthetics, Adidas has been working with the Better Cotton Initiative since 2018 and it claims that 100% of the cotton it uses is Better Cotton or organic cotton. In February 2020 Adidas was recognized as one of the global leaders in sustainable cotton sourcing. To become more sustainable in its material department, Adidas should continue scaling its use of recycled materials, phasing out virgin synthetics in the process. The brand has pledged to use only recycled polyester from 2024 onward, but it remains to be seen if Adidas will actually be able to fulfill that promise. **(3/5)**

**Production:** Adidas uses the conventional production method — making clothes in advance and then releasing them for sale to consumers. When compared with production methods like made-to-order and small batch production, the conventional process can lead to excess waste and pollution. Adidas abides by the California Transparency in Supply Chain Act and encourages the fair payment and treatment for garment makers. In Adidas Group’s sustainability pledge, it says, “As a buyer, we influence a factory’s ability to pay its workforce their wages in two ways: in the prices we pay for products [and] by sourcing and buying those products responsibly.” However, the company also notes that it does not have direct control over the payment of employees at outsourced factories and ultimately the compensation of garment makers is controlled by the factory owner or manager. There is no information about clean energy use in the supply chain, and there is no tracking system for consumers to trace their products through the supply chain. **(3.5/5)**

**Wearability:** While consumers may theoretically be able to wear Adidas products over and over — especially as athleisure grows in popularity — the product may not last as long as some were hoping. Multiple reviews on almost every product on the Adidas website complain of poor quality. The complaints range from shirts that shrink after one wash to the trademark Adidas stripes falling off track pants. Poor quality does not bode well for consumers looking to wear their clothes for a long time. **(1/5)**

**Inventory:** There are well into the thousands of new items for sale by Adidas. This amount of new inventory contributes to fashion's waste crisis and leads to excessive and unnecessary consumption. Adidas also has hundreds of products currently listed for a discounted price. Discounting contributes further to the consumption and disposal of clothing. **(1/5)**

**Initiatives:** Other than Adidas's work with Parley Ocean Plastic and Better Cotton Initiative, the brand has no widely shared sustainability projects. It has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030, but that is a small promise and won't come to fruition for a decade. Adidas also fell off the Dow Jones Sustainability Index in November 2020 after a 20-year run. This drop off proves that compared to other fashion brands and companies, Adidas is falling behind on sustainability. **(1/5)**

**Rating: (1.9/5)**

Adidas should get credit for its work with recycled plastic and polyester, but that is about it. The brand is not making a noticeable effort to reduce its inventory or increase its quality, contributing to the global waste crisis more than their recycling efforts will be able to offset. To become more sustainable, Adidas needs to continue to be involved in its supply chain, reduce its rate of production, and increase sustainability initiatives beyond plastic recycling.