

The dirty business of making new clothes tries to clean up

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Processing fabric for the latest fashions and other textile-based products today requires thousands of chemicals, some of which are toxic and cause 20 percent of the world's water pollution. To reduce its environmental footprint, the textile industry is making changes, designing safer chemicals and turning to nature to find replacements to potentially harmful compounds, according to an article in *Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN)*, the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society.

Alex Scott, a senior editor at C&EN, notes that the polluting agents used to make clothes include dyes, fixing agents, bleaches, solvents and detergents. These compounds wash into wastewater, which sometimes goes untreated before being released into rivers that flow by the textile factories. Environmental groups say the largely unchecked practices are causing illnesses among nearby residents and are hurting the productivity of local farms.

To address these problems, some clothing manufacturers have pledged to stop releasing toxic substances into waterways by 2020. Chemical firms are stepping in to meet the demand for greener products. For example, Swedish company OrganoClick has developed a degradable waterproofing compound based on biomaterials to replace the current standard, which could be carcinogenic. Textile chemical giant Archroma is selling dyes derived from waste nutshells and rosemary leaves. But more benign agents can be pricier, which could drive up product costs. Ultimately, the question of how clean the textile business can get may be

up to consumers.

More information: Cutting Out Textile Pollution - cen.acs.org/articles/93/i41/Cu...xtile-Pollution.html

Provided by American Chemical Society

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