

California introduces Act for responsible textile disposal and reuse

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California's new Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2023 would require producers to establish a stewardship programme for the collection and recycling of “covered products,” which include any apparel, textile, or textile article that is unsuitable for reuse by a consumer in its current state or condition.

The Act is aimed at facilitating the repair and reuse of clothing and the recycling of textile fibres and will be enacted under Bill SB 707.

Senator Newman explained that the average US consumer discards more than 81 pounds of clothing each year – an amount that has increased 55% since the year 2000 on a per capita basis. Adding, that textiles are now the fastest-growing component of California's landfills, comprising 3% of total landfilled waste, and the fifth-most common material overall.

He said: “If properly sorted and processed, the fibres within most clothing items and textiles are highly suitable for recycling and repurposing into new products. Once passed, SB 707 will establish an extended producer responsibility (EPR) programme for recycling textiles in California under the auspices of CalRecycle and an ensuing advisory body to be created under the statute.”

Under the provisions of the bill, textile producers and other stakeholders will develop a framework for the implementation and management of an end-to-end system to optimise the repair or recycling of all covered products and thereby minimise the importation of their products into our landfills.

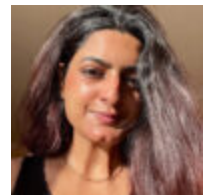
The products to be covered by this legislation are textiles commonly used in households and businesses, including, but not limited to: apparel, accessories, handbags, backpacks, draperies, shower curtains, furnishings, upholstery, bedding, towels, napkins, and tablecloths.

Newman believes one of the many benefits of the proposed Act will encourage Californians to “bring their unwanted clothing and household textiles to thrift stores, charities, and other collection sites for donation”. However, these collection sites will now also be part of a system for sorting and ultimately recycling used textiles that cannot be used or sold again.

“This bill is a step towards sustainable, market-aligned, circular economy,” Newman added.

Last October, California governor Gavin Newsom signed off AB 1817 bill that bans the sale of clothing and fabrics that contain harmful perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) by 2025.

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Shemona is a rookie on the Just Style team and would love to hear from you! She's passionate about sustainability, cinema and anything new and exciting within the apparel industry. If she's not sat at her desk writing, you'll find her in the nearest coffee shop with her book.