

Life cycle of a used T-shirt



1 Delivery

- Unwanted garments collected at H&M stores are sent to a processing plant.
- Clothes collected in Europe go to a plant in Wolfen, Germany. Clothes collected in Asia go to a plant in India.
- The plant at Wolfen has more than 700 employees processing up to 400,000 tonnes of clothing daily.

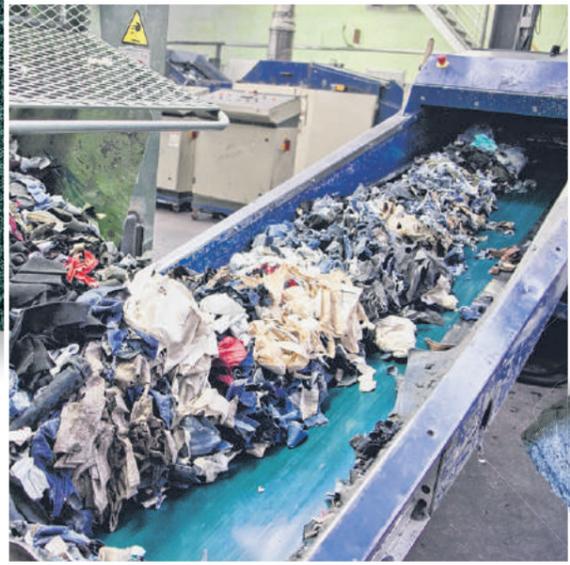
2 Sorting

- Donated clothes and textiles are sorted to sift out electronics and other non-textile materials.
- The textiles are taken to another room via a trolley network consisting of 870 trollies. The network is about 4km long.



3 Categorising

- The textiles are sorted by hand into categories, such as tops, bottoms and jackets. They are further sorted by quality, material, colour and print, then compacted into huge bales (above).
- Clothes of good quality are set aside and sold to second-hand markets worldwide, mainly in Africa and East Europe. About 55 per cent of the donated garments are resold.



4 Shredding

- The bales of fabric are dropped into a huge machine which mechanically slices and chops up the garments. They exit on a conveyor belt (above). Another machine with huge rolling pins further grinds down the fabric.
- The fabric shreds get finer and finer and become fibre, like fluffy lint left in a dryer.

5 Compacting

- The processed textiles, now fluffy fibre, are compacted into small cubes (above), which are used for making cardboard or plastic tarp sheets.
- Processed textiles chopped into rougher fabric strips are used as insulation material in the automobile industry.
- To create fibres that can be spun with virgin yarn to make recycled yarn, the fabric is chopped a lot finer.



Use of recycled yarn

- Used by H&M for its Conscious clothing collection and Close the Loop denim collection.

THE FACTORY BY NUMBERS

Established in
2009
I:CO's recycling HQ is in Germany

Operates in over
65
countries

The Wolfen facility is
89,000 sq m big
Equivalent to 13 football fields

The facility processes about
400,000 tonnes
of recycled items every day

WHAT BECOMES OF THE RECYCLED GARMENTS AND SHOES

Insulation and seat material for cars

Cleaning cloths and towels

Yarn

Cardboard and paper

Fashion items such as bags and accessories