



For immediate release

Apparel & Footwear Industry Calls for Better Product Lifetime Measurement in PEF

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM – 14 OCTOBER 2024 – Leading organizations within the Technical Secretariat of the Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCR) for Apparel & Footwear today expressed concerns about the current method for calculating a product's 'Duration of Service', a crucial factor in determining environmental footprint.

The International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) joined the Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community (COTANCE), the European Footwear Confederation (CEC), and the International Fur Federation (IFF) in calling for a review of the proposed method, which risks having highly damaging effects on the diversity and competitiveness of Europe's apparel and footwear industries and their supply chains.

The Apparel & Footwear PEFCR aims to provide a standardized way to assess the environmental impact of clothes and shoes. However, the rules which determine how long a garment or footwear item lasts – based on a predetermined number of wears – fail to reflect real-world usage, significantly distorting environmental "scores".

The longer a product stays in service, the lower its environmental impact. However, the current version of the PEFCR for Apparel & Footwear caps duration of service values with a series of default number of wears. The values do not distinguish between raw materials and were imported from the Higg Product Module developed by Cascale (formerly the Sustainable Apparel Coalition).

No research supports these default lifetimes, which range from 40 wears for shirts and blouses to 100 wears for a pair of boots. Yet in reality, well-crafted products may be used many more times. Two options exist to extend the default values, a "durability multiplier" and a "repairability multiplier", both entailing significant (costly) testing, and the potential lifetime extension they generate is modest.

Key Dysfunctionalities with the Current PEF CR Method:

- **Doesn't Account for Actual Use:** The current system assigns similar lifespan (in wears) to all products within a subcategory, regardless of quality, design, construction, or care. This penalizes well-made, classic garments that can last for years (even decades).
- **Doesn't Encourage Sustainability:** The current system incentivizes short-lived products made from tough materials such as polyester - as they 'appear' more environmentally friendly under the PEF methodology. This discourages efforts to create longer lasting apparel and footwear, which is what the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the European Union's Green Deal demand.
- **Disadvantageous for Natural Materials:** The PEF CR, as is, sets a *de facto* ranking of materials which penalises, in particular, natural materials which are given a higher footprint than fossil fuel-based raw materials, due to inequalities in the way raw materials are treated in Life Cycle Assessment.

"The current PEF CR methodology fails to reflect the true environmental impact of apparel and footwear products," said Dalena White, Secretary General of the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO).

"Consumers deserve accurate information about the environmental costs of the products they buy. Europe's natural fibres industries, which are economic pillars in many Member States, are committed to sustainability and deserve fair treatment under EU law. It is essential that these PEF rules accurately reflect the environmental merits of Europe's natural fibres industries and avoid the use of tools, such as PEF, that unfairly disadvantage them."

###

Media contact:

Jeannette Cook

IWTO Communications Manager

Email cook@iwto.org

Web iwto.org