Ralph Lauren investment boost eco goals

21 August 2020

Ralph Lauren Corporation has announced a minority investment in Natural Fiber Welding, Inc, a leading sustainable material science start-up that has says it has revolutionised the reuse of natural fibres – such as cotton waste – into patented, high-performance materials.

As a part of the investment, Ralph Lauren will help scale NFW’s patented process and develop first-of-its-kind performance apparel made from natural, sustainable materials.

“We have evolved and progressed our business for more than 50 years because we constantly push ourselves to think openly and differently about how to approach challenges,” said David Lauren, vice chairman & chief innovation officer at Ralph Lauren. “Today, sustainability is an area where this is especially important, and investing with partners to scale innovative solutions is a key part of our sustainability strategy. We are excited to support the work of NFW, a pioneer in this field. Their technology has the power to not only advance our work at Ralph Lauren, but effect positive change across the entire industry.”

Recycled cotton is often unsuitable for use in new cotton apparel due to the short fibres created during recycling. Founded in 2015, NFW has solved this challenge with an innovative process that welds short fibres into longer fibres to create high-performance cotton yarns which can incorporate cotton and other plant-based waste fibres. This patented process transforms these materials in ways that were never possible before, creating an opportunity to reuse post-consumer cotton waste and impart performance characteristics into the fibre. The resulting upcycled material outperforms synthetic fabrics while still retaining the comfortable feel of cotton.

“We are thrilled to have the investment, support and insight of Ralph Lauren, an industry icon whose commitment to timelessness – to true sustainability – is central to who they are,” said Dr. Luke Haverhals, founder and CEO at NFW. “We look forward to working together as we scale our best-in-class technology that has the potential to transform the way companies approach fabric and sourcing.”

Through this investment, Ralph Lauren looks to expand its use of recycled post-consumer cotton, helping to advance the company’s progress towards sourcing 100 per cent of its key materials, including cotton, by 2025 and
Over time, the partnership will enable Ralph Lauren to replace and reduce its reliance on non-biodegradable synthetics, such as polyester and nylon, while scaling the use of more sustainable and upcycled materials.