Sports equipment manufacturer Puma has announced the launch of a circular pilot project to test a biodegradable version of its most iconic shoe, the Suede. No less than 500 people will take part in the "Re:Suede - No Time For Waste" pilot, which aims to optimize waste management in the footwear industry.

The brand has unveiled a new pilot to test a biodegradable version of its Suede sneaker, a model that launched in 1968. Based on new technologies, this special edition will be made from sustainable materials, including Zeology tanned suede, biodegradable TPE, and hemp fibers. Some 500 participants in Germany will be selected to join the scheme, which will launch in January 2022, and will allow participants to wear the "Re:Suede" shoes for six months before sending them back to Puma. The aim is to ensure the durability of the shoe in real-life conditions and to ensure its effective biodegradability.

The sneakers will then be sent to the Valor Compostering B.V. recycling center, owned by Ortessa Groep B.V., based in the Netherlands. "The goal of this step is to determine if Grade A compost can be produced for agricultural use," explains Puma. The brand intends to share the results of this research to enable the entire footwear industry to improve its waste management.

This isn't the first time that Puma has launched a project of this kind. In 2012, the brand previously developed a biodegradable sneaker, launched as part of its InCycle collection. However, this first initiative was discontinued after four seasons due to "low demand and the need for further research and development," according to the manufacturer.

This latest trial forms part of the brand's "Forever Better" sustainability strategy, which aims to reduce waste by 2025 through a variety of solutions, including increasing the use of recycled polyester, and setting up product take-back schemes.