Bestseller is expanding its partnership with “innovator” TextileGenesis to help it “trace man-made cellulosic fibres and direct-to-farm cotton” throughout its supply chain.

The Danish fashion giant, which owns the Jack & Jones and Vero Moda brands, is one of the first fashion retailers to scale the new blockchain solution around traceability after close collaboration with TextileGenesis on several successful pilot projects.

The deal will be implemented this year and will see it tracing the fibres in approximately 25 million garments from raw material to end product.

That’s only around 7% of its total volume, but the figure “will increase steadily in the coming years if this project meets its objectives”.

Senior Project Specialist at Bestseller Sustainability, Danique Lodewijks, said: “Through our collaboration, we can ensure transparency and validation for a significant part of our fibres and products. It feeds directly into our Fashion FWD strategy, and will not only affect Bestseller, but can lead the entire fashion industry in a more transparent and sustainable direction.”

And of course, it also helps it comply with new regulations being brought in. From 2024, the EU is expected to introduce a requirement for each product to have a digital passport, with information about the product’s environmental sustainability.

The company said the new traceability solution is a “major step forward” for it and “for the fashion industry in general”.

Alongside a group of key suppliers, the fashion group is currently embarking on the first part of the platform's implementation phase. The project will require “significant input from the suppliers, who will now have to use TextileGenesis’s new platform. The hope for them is that this becomes an industry-wide tool, equipping them with the capacity to deliver product level transparency in line with the expected EU legislation”
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Bestseller also said it will “gather feedback from the suppliers and with their input our objective is to create a system that is both workable and scalable for the entire supply chain. If this solution works the way it is intended, it would be a profound step forward in supply chain transparency”.

So how exactly does it work? Well, it’s a web-based cloud solution designed specifically for the fashion industry to trace fibres as they move along the supply chain.

With all products being made of multiple fibres that go through a spinning, weaving, dyeing and manufacturing process, the systems register and verify transactions between these processes. It “creates a digital twin (‘Fibercoin’) of every kg of branded or certified material at the source and tracks it across the entire textile value chain, thereby eliminating the need for any PDF/paper-based traceability approaches”.

No material can be double or triple-counted, “thus reducing the counterfeiting or fraud risk across the supply chain – enabling a 'closed loop' traceability system”.

The system is also “relatively energy efficient” as it doesn’t rely on the large servers that characterise some blockchain technologies such as cryptocurrency-based platforms.

By Sandra Halliday