Accelerating Circularity 2021 Review

Mission

The mission of Accelerating Circularity is to establish systems that will use the embedded value and resources in existing textiles for new products, reducing the millions of tons of textile waste annually going into landfills, thereby supporting the reduction of the industry’s environmental and social impacts.

Vision

A world where textiles are in continuous use and the adoption of virgin materials are based on strategic limits.

Overview

Accelerating Circularity (ACP) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 2019.

2021 was the second year of growth and executing our mission through research, planning and engagement on the U.S. trials for mechanical and chemical recycling.

We kicked off 14 U.S. trials with 30 participants, including 10 of the largest global brands. The trials will utilize spent textiles from post-consumer, post-Industrial, pre-consumer and dead stock collections to produce 100% cotton, polyester, Refibra™ and Naia Renew™ fibers from mechanical, chemical and semi-chemical recycling technologies for application to a variety of blended yarns for 6 unique product categories.

Meanwhile, a European project was kicked-off and made progress researching and mapping the landscape as well as identifying potential trial partners and products. We hired new talent, formed new partnerships, and raised more awareness about our work; we contributed valuable insights to the global conversation on circularity. As an organization, we are pleased with the pace at which we are moving despite the challenges imposed by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

We want to thank the Walmart Foundation and our steering committee members for their generous financial support and their commitment to helping the textile industry achieve its circularity goals.

The following are the most notable milestones and accomplishments from the year.

Milestones and Accomplishments
January

- ACP collaborated with Columbia University Masters students to develop a business case for circular models.

February

- Convened practitioners from major trim manufacturers, secondhand material processors, and recyclers to outline issues around the impact of trims on product recyclability

March

- Formalized requirements with collectors, sorters and recyclers for textile-to-textile inputs and outputs published in the Spring Modeling and Linking Report (US)

April

- Analyzed feedstock volumes required to meet commercial minimums on targeted yarn blends and products. Initial estimates called for at least 50 tons of post-consumer feedstock to meet commercial scale trial minimums.

May

- ACP successfully conducted its first independent financial audit
- ACP was taken on as a pro bono client of a US based, multinational law firm
- Small Army Media drove the development of our taglines:
  - “Textiles are too good to waste.”
  - “Putting textiles to good use.”
- Accelerating Circular Europe (ACPE) was officially launched.

June

- Collaborated with GIZ to create a directory of textile-to-textile recyclers, which provides general information about company location(s), technologies, accepted fiber types, and restrictions.

July

- Designed a comprehensive suite of product specifications in collaboration with
stakeholders. Targeted minimum recycled content fractions to test on popular yarn blends using recyclable post-consumer and post industrial sourced fibers (US).

- ACPE program manager hired

- Released *Putting Textiles to Good Use*, which included the first public view of the 12 trial proposals for industry consideration, trial guidelines and scope. More than 200 people registered for the webinar launching the report.

- ACP visited secondhand textile collectors/sorters in New York & New Jersey to learn about different business models in the secondhand textile market, collection methods, sorting priorities, and see sorting operations first hand.

**August**

- Hosted three workshops for prospective trial participants from the entire supply system, each focused on one of three trial product categories: knit t-shirts and fleece, denim, and home. The workshops had 30 - 50 attendees each, and secured initial brand interest across all proposed trials.

- Began the process of negotiating agreements with 29 stakeholders across 12 trials. Negotiations were completed by December with brand commitment to product trials for t-shirts, denim, woven bottom weights, towels and fleece.

**September**

- ACPE formed two focus groups: Footwear and Waterproof

- ACP collaborated with Bard University on a project to help develop a business case for circular models

**October**

- ACP trial partners successfully produced recycled fiber, yarn and woven terry products from branded pre-consumer cotton feedstock using mechanical cotton recycling.

- ACP worked with Millken’s Rapid Prototype Center to spin and run a successful knit-down of poly staple with 30% post-consumer content.

- ACPE made site visits to Lenzing AG and Erema

**November**

- Letter of Intent sent to ACPE working group members as the first step towards the pilot
phase

- ACP specified and placed its first order for two tons of post-consumer spent 100% cotton from an ACP for-profit collector/sorter. Feedstock qualification assessments will commence in February.

- Negotiated a single recycled cotton content formula fit to test across nine trials, five yarn blends, and five yarn weights in coordination with spinners, recyclers, fabric mills, and collector/sorters.

- Created unique supply chains by trial in coordination with all stakeholders and established working pods organized by common fiber, production technology and market types to support and encourage cross team collaboration and learning.

- Stakeholder survey results
  - 90% of respondents believe ACP has a clearly defined mission, project and goals
  - 76% think that the wider textile industry understands that mission.
  - 78% of those surveyed reported new working relationships as a result of their involvement with the project
  - 100% believe that ACP provides a neutral and open environment for the development and discussion of circular business models and is a trusted source of accurate information on textile-to-textile systems.

December

- ACP calculated estimates for prepared feedstock volumes across cotton and polyester to >30 tons of prepared post-consumer feedstock, >35 tons of post-industrial feedstock and four tons of chemically recycled rPET. Calculations were based on trial demand assuming production minimums of 10,000 units per trial.

- ACP qualified post-consumer (pc) polyester samples for mechanical recycling from two sources (one nonprofit, one commercial corporate apparel brand)

- ACP became an ITMA 2023 Supporting Organization

Organizational Growth and Development

New Steering Committee Members:
- Eastman Chemical Company
- Milliken & Company
- NIKE, Inc.
New Staff Members

- Janel Twogood, Project Manager, United States
- Petra Schweiger, Program Manager, Europe
- Lindsay Haynes, Administrative Assistant, US
- Alina Rensch, Administrative Assistant, Europe

Consultants

- Ria Stern (communications strategy)
- Alexis Carey (social media)
- Shelly Gottschamer (supply chain and social impacts)

Stakeholder Engagement

We kept our stakeholders informed and engaged through regular meetings and frequent one-on-one conversations. We provided opportunities for them to contribute their expertise and we listened as they shared their concerns.

Monthly Meetings
Steering Committee
Spent Textiles
Brand and Retailer
ACPE Focus Group: Footwear
ACPE Focus Group: Laminates

Quarterly Meetings
Collaborating Organizations
ACP Board Meetings

Other
Nonprofit Thrift Working Group
POD Meetings for Trial Participants

Media, Communications and Events

Accelerating Circularity continues to leverage a variety of communication strategies to disseminate information and to share our progress with the circular textile community.

Owned Communication Channels

Press Releases
Accelerating Circularity issued four press releases in 2021
Email Campaigns

Through the use of targeted email campaigns, we shared findings from our *Putting Textiles to Good Use* and *Modeling and Linking* reports. We reached an audience of over 2100 stakeholders, with an average click rate of approximately 10.2% across all campaigns. These numbers are up approximately 3% from the previous year.

Web

Accelerating Circularity’s website gained nearly 9,000 unique visitors from approximately 90 different countries in 2021. Our top five pages, in order of views were:

1. Home
2. Our Work
3. Events
4. Opportunities
5. Contact

Social Media

Our social media presence continues to grow steadily.

*LinkedIn:* Followers are up approximately 200% from December 2020.

*Twitter:* Followers doubled from 2020 and impressions have tripled to more than 2500 impressions per month.

*YouTube:* Videos have been viewed 3,263 times since March 2020.

Corporate Reports

Accelerating Circularity was included in Steering Committee member Annual Reports

- Inditex
- Lenzing
- Unifi

Press and Other Third-party Channels
January

● Ecotextile News: Circularity Project Gets $1.2M from Walmart Foundation
● Just Style: Walmart Foundation Injects $1.2M into Accelerating Circularity
● CPSC: Textiles Press - Accelerating Circularity Receives Grant, EON Tracking ID Opens User Platform, and US PIRG Launch Textile Waste Campaign
● Vogue Business: The Hidden Obstacle to Circular Fashion: Chemicals
● Sourcing Journal: Accelerating Circularity Awarded $1.2M Walmart Foundation Grant

February


April

● WWD: Accelerating Circularity Report Models Scaled Circular Supply Systems ● We Forum: 17 ideas accelerating the transition to a circular economy | World Economic Forum ● Greenbiz: From pioneers to fast-followers: Circular metrics are for the masses | Greenbiz

May

● Textile World: Accelerating Circularity Launches European Project: Founding Members Signal Potential For Global Scale
● Innovation in Textiles: Accelerating Circularity in Europe
● Ecotextile News: Accelerating Circularity launches in Europe | Materials & Production News | News
● Just Style: Accelerating Circularity launches European project
● Textile Today: Accelerating Circularity is launching a new project in Europe ● Textile Value Chain: Accelerating Circularity is Launching a New Project Set Up in Europe ●

June

● Fashionating World: Accelerating Circularity launches a project in Europe
● Outdoor Industry Compass: Accelerating Circularity launches European arm with EOG on founding committee

July

● Textile World: Putting Textiles To Good Use: Accelerating Circularity Calls For System Trial Partners
Home Textiles Today: Accelerating Circularity calls for system trial partners

August

- Sourcing Journal: Accelerating Circularity's European Project Tackles Textile Recycling
- Blue and Green Tomorrow: How Eco-Fashion Companies Can Participate in the Circular Economy

September

- Circular Knowledge is Power (Dornbirn)

October

- Innovation in Textiles: Accelerating Circularity to start US trials
- Sourcing Journal: Accelerating Circularity Starts Trials on Textile Recycling and Reuse

November

- ISPO: Latest Circular Economy News for Fashion Industry

Events

January

- Re-imagining Berlin as a circular textile city (Berlin group)
- Progress Over Perfection (Texworld)

February

- Towards a Circular Economy: Sustainability & Innovation Panel (Convergence Tech)
- Presentation: Northeastern University, Global Ethics MBA course, with Kathleen Grevers Director of Education - Fashion Revolution USA

March

- Circular City Week New York
- MAGIC Circular Economy and Recycling

April

- Modeling and Linking Report Launch
- ICIS Accelerating Circularity Presentation
- Presentation: Fashion Revolution Student Ambassador Monthly Meeting
June
  ● BSFL (Brazil) Accelerating Circularity Workshop

July
  ● [Putting Textiles to Good Use Webinar](#)

August
  ● Sourcing Journal Sustainability FAQs

September
  ● [NIST Presentation: Challenges to Chemical and Mechanical Recycling of Textiles](#)
  ● Dornbirn Global Conference Circular Knowledge is Power
  ● ACPE participated in the first Circular Textile Days event in Amersfoort, The Netherlands

October
  ● [World Circular Textiles Day (Video)](#)
  ● [Presentation: Commercializing Circularity and the Importance of Collaboration](#)
  ● Visit to Lenzing Headquarters
  ● Presentation: Kingpins Digital Show Amsterdam
  ● [Presentation: Accelerating Recycling Through Innovation and Collaboration](#)

November
  ● [ITMAlive Panel Discussion: Sustainability and Circularity](#)
  ● Presentation: SYFA Fall Conference
  ● ACPE joined the conference organized by Gemeinschaft für textile Zukunft in Berlin on the topic of "Used Textiles - actors in dialogue"
  ● ACPE Spent Textile working group hosted Circular economy perspectives in the EU Textile sector"
  ● Apparel Importers Trade and Transportation Conference
  ● [Textile Exchange: Home and Hospitality Roundtable](#)
  ● Presentation: Bureau of International Recycling - Textile Session
  ● ACP tour of Unifi’s Yadkinville NC plant
December

- Sustainable Look and Overlay at Events (The Ocean Race)
- Puma Sustainability Stakeholder Dialogue