

RETAIL

## Farfetch joins other luxury retailers in outlining long-term sustainability efforts

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Farfetch has revealed its long-term sustainability goals. Image credit: Farfetch

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Online retailer **Farfetch** is furthering its push towards sustainability by unveiling a set of 2030 goals as part of its "Positively Farfetch" strategy.

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The 10-year plan emphasizes key areas, including Farfetch's carbon footprint, circular fashion and inclusivity. A growing number of luxury brands and retailers are being more transparent about their sustainability efforts, to varying degrees of success.

"Considering the world's trajectory, [Farfetch] should be championing more ambitious and immediate goals," said Diana Verde Nieto, cofounder of **Positive Luxury**, London. "Today the conversation has moved on from being less bad' to actively doing more good."

"It's about absolute reductions on carbon dioxide emissions and transformational actions to achieve net positive impact."

### Positively Farfetch

The retailer introduced Positively Farfetch in 2019, but the rapid growth of its online business during the pandemic has accelerated its environmental initiatives and goals.

"We operate at the intersection of fashion, technology and sustainability," said Thomas Berry, director of sustainable business at Farfetch, in a statement. "These worlds were already merging before the global lockdown, but the move to online is accelerating rapidly as a result.

"Setting some ambitious long-term goals is the logical next step in the company's sustainability journey," he said.

In April, only weeks into lockdown, Farfetch debuted its "Climate Conscious Delivery" effort and began with consultancy EcoAct to offset the carbon emissions of its deliveries and returns. Carbon offsetting is the practice of investing in projects, such as reforestation and wind power, that balance out existing emissions.



Farfetch is working with Thrift+ to offer clothing donation services. Image credit: Farfetch

Farfetch also introduced its handbag trade-in program in the United States in November.

Originally launched in 2019, Farfetch Second Life accepts used lightly used handbags in exchange for store credit, enabling customers to both give their unwanted goods a longer lifespan and invest in more fashion (see story).

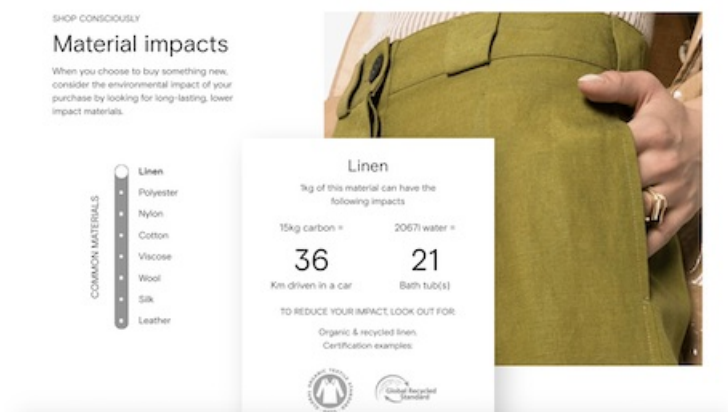
In another move supporting circular fashion, Farfetch partnered with donation service Thrift+ x Farfetch to allow U.K. consumers to give their unwanted fashion to charity in exchange for site credit, letting them do good and get rewarded at the same time (see story).

More than half of Farfetch shoppers, 52 percent, have bought or sold preowned luxury items as of September 2020.

The retailer has set a goal to sell more circular, low-waste products than traditional, linear-made goods by 2030. This may encompass products that are pre-owned, made with recycled materials or made to order.

By 2030, the company has also set a goal to have "100 percent conscious products" available on Farfetch, Browns, NGG and Stadium Good, defining those products as organic, recycled, upcycled, preowned, fair-trade or independently rated as such by ethical groups.

To boost transparency, Farfetch has launched Conscious Edits for womenswear, menswear and children's wear. A fashion footprint tool offers shoppers more information about the the environmental impact of materials or choosing secondhand options.



The Fashion Footprint tool is one way Farfetch is being more transparent about sustainable shopping. Image credit: Farfetch

As an ecommerce platform that does not manufacture its own apparel, Farfetch admits that its logistics network is the largest contributor to its environmental impact. An estimated 44 percent of Farfetch's emissions are related to deliveries and returns.

To combat this impact, Farfetch is examining ways to make its packaging and supply chains more efficient.

New packaging in a wider range of sizes will ensure items will be delivered in appropriately sized boxes or envelopes, reducing emissions and paper waste. The updated designs will also require less tape and use Forest Stewardship Certified materials.

"For Farfetch the impact of running a digital business itself is huge, it's not just about packaging but about carbon," Ms. Verde Nieto said.

The retailer, however, claims that offsetting carbon emissions by financially supporting "environmental projects" is the most economically efficient way to address reduce its impact.

In terms of diversity, Farfetch committed to publishing a data set next year to serve as a framework for future anti-discrimination and inclusivity goals.

#### Sustainable shopping

Farfetch is the latest high-end retailer becoming more transparent about long-term sustainability initiatives.

In 2019, rival online retailer Net-A-Porter introduced a platform dedicated to environmentally conscious apparel and accessories, which has since expanded into other categories.

For the launch of Net Sustain, the retailer designated 26 brands and more than 500 products that meet at least one of Net-A-Porter's five sustainability criteria. Items designated as "Considered Processes" limit the environmental impact during production and protect the health of workers and wearers, while the "Considered Materials" category includes organic cotton and responsibly-sourced wool and down ([see story](#))

This summer, British department store chain Selfridges introduced "Project Earth" with the aim of changing shopping by 2025 through environmentally-impactful materials and circular retail models.

The initiative is also guided by Selfridge's commitment to science-based targets and achieving net-zero carbon by 2050, under the guidelines of the Paris Agreement. Project Earth has a three-pronged approach: materials, models and mindsets ([see story](#)).

"Transparency with the customer becomes holistic when combined with messaging at a brand level," Positive Luxury's Ms. Verde Nieto said. "My suggestion for Farfetch is to be bolder, more ambitious.

"At the end of 2020, we must think in terms of positive impact," she said. "A 10-year view with immediate action and robust reporting is in tall order to shift the whole industry."