Incorporating sustainable business practices at the design and production management stages significantly improves the economic, environmental and social impact of clothes.

Wool and cotton are renewable resources, however both have significant environmental impacts including high water, pesticide and chemical use when conventional farming methods are poorly managed.

Processes for cleaning fibres use considerable levels of energy. Wool scouring is water and chemical intensive and results in water degradation if effluent is untreated.

Spinning is the process by which natural fibres or synthetic cellulose materials are turned into yarn. It is highly automated and labour intensive, Lubricants and conditioning agents applied to the fibres result in hazardous air pollutants and effluent containing toxic substances.

Knitting and weaving are predominantly mechanical processes. Key sustainability issues relate to energy use, solid waste generation and dust and noise.

Fabric processing is the final stage of textile production, and includes the printing and dyeing of textiles and the application of finishes. Processing is a major cause of environmental impacts in this phase – using significant quantities of water, energy and chemicals, and produces substantial amounts of effluent.

The cut make and trim stage of production turns textiles into finished garments, and is highly labour-intensive process. Key sustainability issues relate to labour rights and working conditions.

Selling garments has an impact on the environment. Transporting stock, customer travel, store fit-outs, packaging, lighting and heating, use resources and energy, pollute, and produce waste.

Washing, drying and ironing can account for the greatest energy and water use in the lifecycle of a garment.

Garment production waste can be categorized as pre-and post-consumer. Pre-consumer waste includes by-products from fibre, yarn, fabric and garment production. Post-consumer textile waste includes clothing and household textile waste.