POST EVENT REPORT

VIRTUAL

JUNE 21–23, 2023
ABOUT THE EVENT

The Material Innovation Conference worked to advance the next-gen materials industry by sharing vital expertise and bringing together all key players along the innovation path from concept to commercialization.

With 37 expert speakers from leading brands, investors, next-gen material companies, academics, raw material suppliers, mills, and nonprofits, the event explored opportunities and challenges in accelerating the commercialization of next-gen materials.

196 attendees came together virtually across 3 days to discuss the development and adoption of next-gen materials that can outcompete their animal-derived counterparts, not only in terms of sustainability and ethics, but also performance, price, and aesthetic.

materialinnovation.org/conference — events@materialinnovation.org
Image Courtesy of ModernSynthesis
ATTENDEE OVERVIEW

COUNTRY BREAKDOWN

Australia
Bahamas
Belgium
Brazil
Bulgaria
Canada
Chile
China
Costa Rica
Denmark
France
Germany
Greece
India
Israel
Spain
Italy
Sweden
Netherlands
Switzerland
Norway
Turkey
Portugal
United Kingdom
Singapore
United States
South Korea
Vietnam

INDUSTRY BREAKDOWN

ACADEMIC
27

BRAND
35

COMPONENT SUPPLIER
3

CONSULTANT
7

ENTREPRENEUR/INNOVATOR
9

INVESTOR
16

MANUFACTURER
9

MATERIAL COMPANY
57

NONPROFIT
22

PRESS/MEDIA
8

RETAILER
3
THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

ISA Nextgenmaterials

ECOVATIVE DESIGN

PLATINUM

GOLD

FOUR TAWS

MODERN MEADOW

ModernSynthesis

synchrony

GOZEN BIOWORKS

VON HOLZHAUSEN

SUPPORTING

SUPPORTING

SUPPORTING

SUPPORTING

Image Courtesy of von Holzhausen
Thank you to our conference speakers! We couldn’t have done this without you.
OUR SPEAKERS

CHRISTINE HALL —— Sr. Designer Material Innovation, New Balance
LAUREN BARTLEY —— Sustainability & CSR Director, Ganni
ALAN LUGO —— Product Strategy Manager, Natural Fiber Welding
SARAH KENT —— Chief Sustainability Correspondent, Business of Fashion
CAMILLA MJELDE —— Sustainability and Compliance Director, Trimco Group
JAMES LAFORCE —— Founder and President, LaForce Agency
TRICIA CAREY —— Chief Commercial Officer, Renewcell
AMANDA TURNER —— VP of Product and Impact, ettitude
SYDNEY GLADMAN —— Chief Scientific Officer, MII
NICOLE RAWLING —— Co-Founder and CEO, MII
JOEY PRINGLE —— Founder, Veshin Factory
STEFANO VIGANÒ —— General Manager, Limonta
BROOKE ROBERTS-ISLAM —— Founder and Senior Contributor, Techstyler
LEWIS SHULER —— Head of Innovation, Alpine Creations
YULY FUENTES —— Closed Loop Partners
CHARLINE DUCAS —— The Microfibre Consortium
OUR SPEAKERS

TERESA KRUG —— SVP of Innovation, Circ
MICHAEL SALZBERG —— CEO, CovationBio
DELAINE MAYER —— Head of Partner Success, Genecis Bioindustries
MARTIN LANKES —— AMSilk
THOMASINE DOLAN DOW —— Director of Materials Innovation & Design, MII
MARTIN STÜBLER —— Co-Founder, BioFluff
ZIMRI T. HINSHAW —— Founder & CEO, Bucha Bio
ALEKSANDRA GOSIEWSKI —— Co-Founder, Keel Labs
RANJANI THEREGOWDA —— Environmental Data Scientist, MII
LISE LAURIN —— Founder and CEO, Earthshift Global
KIM BAWDEN —— Technology Commercialization Program Manager, Rochester Institute of Technology
LAURENT VANDEPAER —— ESG Explorer, On
CHRISTINE GOULAY —— Founder, Sustainabelle Advisory Services
BARRY MCGEOUGH —— Global Vice President, Product & Digital Innovation, Wolverine Worldwide
NATE HERMAN —— Senior Vice President, Policy, American Apparel & Footwear Association
MICHAEL COLAROSSI —— Vice President, Product Line Management, Innovation & Sustainability, Avery Dennison
TASHI NYIMA —— Universal Compassion Buddhist Congregation
MALLORY GLADMAN —— Founder, WasteKnot Weddings and Events
“There is an increasing demand of plastic free and sustainable materials in the market. ISA decided to enter the plant-based material market and offer plastic free additional materials beside our already recognized LITE leather. Hence, we established our COSM business unit with the focus on sustainable additional material besides our sustainable leather, LITE leather, without cannibalizing it. Our vision is to provide the market with our next generations to come with more sustainable additional material choices. So we are glad to partner with and support MII to further protect our planet.”

REINER HENGSTMANN — Vice President Additional Materials, ISA Next-Gen Materials

“Material Innovation’s commitment to circularity fully aligns with our mission at Circ -- to power the clean closet. Alongside this year’s exciting panelists, I’m looking forward to discussing the crucial role next generation materials play in achieving a more sustainable future.”

TERESA KRUG — SVP of Innovation, Circ

“It’s an honor to be invited to share insights that will hopefully provide valuable food for thought for all of us working towards a more sustainable future in fashion. A collective passion and action for lowering our impact on the environment and a better understanding of navigating greenwashing are exactly what our industry needs right now. I look forward to a great panel discussion alongside the other experts invited, and hope we'll be able to provide thought-provoking insights that will challenge the status quo and inspire action.”

CAMILLA MJELDE — Sustainability and Compliance Director, Trimco Group

“I believe that clothing and other consumer items will be grown directly from renewable materials in the future. Our use of these objects will likely be very different from our current use. For example, it would be entirely possible to purchase a variety of new pieces of clothing per year, but like a leaf on the forest floor, they could simply be recycled to create the next material. Such a technology could usher in a new era of sustainable fashion.”

MARTIN STÜBLER — Co-Founder, BioFluff
TESTIMONIALS

RENEWCELL

“In this age of innovation for the textile and apparel industry, I am pleased to participate in the Material Innovation Conference to connect, share and learn about the ways we can lower our environmental footprint in a socially responsible manner.”

TRICIA CAREY — Chief Commercial Officer, Renewcell

LAFORCE

“In my nearly 40 years of working with individuals, companies, and brands on how to tell their unique story, I have been the voice saying: “shorter, louder, funnier!” Today, it’s more difficult than ever to get someone’s attention, make them understand something new, and then to translate that understanding into new behaviors. As we introduce next generation materials which are cleaner, healthier, and better for the planet, we have an opportunity to show consumers a better way, rather than just telling them. Maybe the material is the message?”

JAMES LAFORCE — Founder and President, LaForce Agency

LEWIS SHULER — Head of Innovation, Alpine Creations

“I attended last year and coming out of it I knew the Material Innovation Conference was an important event to get on the calendar for 2023. Whenever you have so many material innovators and brand leaders in one place talking candidly about the challenges and solutions you must stop and take note.”

CHRISTINE HALL — Sr. Designer Material Innovation, New Balance
SELECT LEARNINGS

SUSTAINABILITY OF NEXT-GEN MATERIALS
▶ Next-gen materials, on the whole, are poised to be more sustainable than animal-based and petro-chemical based materials.
▶ Environmental impact assessments are complex and many industry players have joined a new coalition to address common industry problems.
▶ There is no one silver bullet solution.
▶ It is necessary to work on progress, not perfection, in advancing a new product.
▶ Sustainability is complicated and simplistic messages are suspect: e.g. not all “plastics” are bad; sustainability is not just about carbon footprint.
▶ Only 4% of materials get recycled and valorized so products need to be designed with end of life in mind and know that they will likely end up in landfills and the oceans.

PATH TO MARKET
▶ Currently, very few materials are “plug and play” and getting them to market takes time and access to existing supply chains.
▶ Price is higher now and is an issue but will come down over time.
▶ There are not enough next-gen materials at scale yet but many companies are getting there: it will happen soon.
▶ Need to go to market with high-quality materials. However, it is also important to understand performance needs of the product and not require more than what is needed.
▶ Shouldn’t try to make next-gen materials shiny and sexy. Sell the science. Need to be honest. There are significant advantages to next-gen materials and we need to focus on those.
**SELECT LEARNINGS**

**PARTNERSHIPS: FASHION BRANDS AND MATERIAL COMPANIES**

- Partnerships are extremely valuable: next-gen material companies learn from brand experience and brands get early access, insights, and influence. This co-developing can advance materials more quickly.
- Brands can connect innovators with their weavers, knitters, and manufacturers to flatten the learning curve.

**MESSAGES TO MATERIAL COMPANIES**

- Honesty is critical - don’t overpromise and underdeliver.
- Don’t look for shortcuts or quick solutions. Brands with the interest and money to use next-gen materials expect quality.
- Start your environmental impact assessments early as it will help guide your development. Start with simple assessments – don’t need to overcomplicate. This is cheaper and allows you to be more fluid as your processes and inputs change.
- Include stakeholders who are experts on distribution, end-of-life, processing, etc., in the development process to ensure the most sustainable and systems-integrated product.
- Start developing products in partnership with clients. The earlier the better. Every innovator wants a big name brand to feature their product but this can mean higher expectations, longer approval processes, and unreasonable performance targets. Consider working with smaller brands who have fewer requirements and can get your product to market quicker, offering you quicker learning opportunities.

**MESSAGES TO BRANDS**

- Environmentally preferred and animal-free materials are the future. The regulations are coming so start to prepare now. Look to Europe and California to set rules the rest of the world will have to follow.
- Consider working with next-gen material companies in advancing their product: it will help products get to market quicker, you will gain an understanding that not all brands will have, and you will have early access to materials consumers are demanding.
- While some next-gen materials are replacements for animal-based and petro-chemical derived materials you already use, not all are: sometimes you need to think of these materials as completely new and novel. Use them to inspire your design teams.
- Fear of picking the “right” or “best” material stalls progress. There won’t just be one material and market solution. There are many different technologies and solutions, the industry is huge, and we need a multitude of solutions to address the negative impact from materials.
- It is important for your PR teams to communicate accurate information. Some ideas: bring PR into the discussion with technical teams to truly understand the impact of the material or have the technical team review public statements before publishing. Sustainability is complicated and simplistic marketing campaigns are usually inaccurate. Inaccurate promotion sets the entire industry back.
THE MATERIAL INNOVATION INITIATIVE exists to make the sustainable option the easy option.

THANK YOU TO THE TEAM BEHIND THE SCENES THAT HELPED MAKE MIC 2023 A SUCCESS:

NICOLE RAWLING — Programming and Host
CORTNEY BUSCH — Legal and Finance
SYDNEY GLADMAN — Scientific Programming
THOMASINE DOLAN — Fashion Programming
RANJANI THEREGOWDA — Environmental Programming
CAMILLA SOUZA — Producer and Project Manager
AILEEN KOUNAVES — Tech Support
ANASTASIA ORTH — Sponsorships
CARRA CHESLIN — Planning and Coordination
TEMMA MARTIN — Communications Support
OLIVIA WEATHERS — Intern, Tech Support
CLAUDIA ERIXON — Intern, Tech Support
SUPPORT THE NEXT-GEN MOVEMENT

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER TO KEEP UP TO DATE WITH PROGRESS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

SIGN UP NOW

MISSED THE EVENT?
You can purchase an on-demand ticket to access the session recordings through December 31, 2023.

PURCHASE TICKET NOW

WANT TO ACCELERATE THE ENTIRE NEXT-GEN MATERIALS INDUSTRY?
Help drive material change year round by joining our family of donors and advocates.

The Material Innovation Initiative is a nonprofit that accelerates the development of high performance, animal-free, and more sustainable materials for the fashion, automotive, and home goods industries. partners with scientists, startups, brands, and retailers to bring these next-gen materials to market. Visit materialInnovation.org for more details.

Please consider a tax-deductible gift, or join us as a monthly-sustainer, and thank you.

SUPPORT MII NOW

materialinnovation.org/conference --- events@materialinnovation.org

Image Courtesy of ISA Next-Gen Materials