

Sustainability Takes Root

Suppliers, Retailers and Professionals Step Up Efforts and Support



Image Credit: Getty Images / sarayut Thaneerat

BY VM STAFF

NEW YORK—Sustainability is definitely progressing in the optical business world, from all directions. New conversations with optical retailers large, mid-sized and smaller independents reaffirm that the eyecare and eyewear space is supporting new involvement and the commitment to evaluate and implement sustainable practices. This means operationally within companies, within the supply chain and to the consumer, as more sustainably made

optical products are being brought to patients and customers.

In a new Jobson Research *Environmental Sustainability Study* (<https://www.202omag.com/article/sustainable-options-market-pulse>) for *Vision Monday's* sister publication, *20/20 Magazine*, conducted just last fall, eyecare professionals shared a markedly positive outlook. Over 70 percent said it was “somewhat or very important” to employ environmentally friendly practices to make their location “green.”

Fifty-eight percent felt that their patients/consumers felt it was “somewhat or very” important that their practice did this. Seventy percent said they felt their customers put at least some priority on sustainable eyewear products but they’ve noticed more proactive interest, as 19 percent of ECPs said customers were inquiring or requesting information about products with ecologically conscious manufacturing, a peak since Jobson started the survey.

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MyEyeDr. Continues to Expand Sustainable Eco-Friendly Options

RALEIGH, N.C.—MyEyeDr. has been carrying sustainable eyewear as part of its product portfolio for many years now, according to Christina Perraud, EVP, merchandising and supply chain, for the national group. She told *VM*, “Whether made from upcycled materials like fishing nets or water bottles and bio- or plant-based resins, we are definitely seeing an increasing trend where brands are releasing eco-friendly capsule collections within their in-line assortments, so we are able to still offer those great designer brands but without having to sacrifice sustainability or quality.”



Christina Perraud

Perraud added, “We will definitely continue to explore new and innovative ways to increase a sustainable path forward. We have incorporated many practices when it comes to frame materials but would love to see the same efforts by suppliers to address waste in categories

like demo lenses, frame packaging and contact lenses. In addition, it would be great to see more eco-friendly recycling programs for trading in old or unusable frames and contact lenses.”

Some of the brands MyEyeDr. carry include Upcycled Plastic from Dragon. This is produced through a new method, where a number of recycled plastic water bottles are repurposed, or “upcycled” into a frame. The fabrication process begins with the plastic bottles being manually separated and selected. Next, the recycled waste is washed thoroughly and cut into chips. The chips are pressed into small pellets, then melted down and injected into a frame.

Another is plant-based resin in the JOE collection.



Upcycled Plastic from Dragon

This is resin made from castor-bean oil, a cleaner alternative to standard petroleum-based plastics.

Skaga features responsible acetate frames, featuring over 60 percent bio-based materials. And in Ferragamo, Tritan Renew, from Eastman, is a sustainable material using more than 56 percent of sustainable materials made from bio-based and certified recycled content.

Perraud noted, “The majority of brands are now featuring eco symbols on demo frames as well as through various types of POP materials, so these tools help sustainable styles be distinguished easily from others on the frame boards.”

She added, “We will definitely continue to explore new and innovative ways to increase a sustainable path forward. We have incorporated many practices when it comes to frame materials but would love to see the same efforts by suppliers to address waste in categories like demo lenses, frame packaging and contact lenses.” ■

National Vision Embraces Sustainable Goals Across Its Company, Lab and Product Mix

DULUTH, Ga.—National Vision, Inc. (NVI) has been escalating its sustainability efforts for a few years now. Its Sustainability Report, launched in 2021, spells out much of that from the view of a national retail operation with over 1,000 locations, laboratories, associates and other social purpose activities. Inside NVI, the company shined a light on work done at the group’s Plano, Texas laboratory. The company’s website details <https://www.nationalvision.com/news/2023/04/22/advanced-lab-technology-boosts-sustainability-efforts/> the initiative.

“At every step of the lab operations, we look for opportunities to be cost-conscious while maintaining high quality—because for our customers, affordability really matters. We want more people to be able to afford the eyewear they need, and efficiency in our lab operations is a big part of how National Vision is able to achieve that,” said Bob McKinzie, National Vision’s senior vice president of manufacturing and supply chain.

“As socially responsible corporate citizens, we proactively look for opportunities to make decisions that are both low-cost and environmentally aware. Often, these go hand-in-hand.”

“National Vision’s optical lab in Plano has achieved the lowest operating cost of all labs in our lab network. Despite rising costs for materials and increased wages for

workers, the Plano lab has still been able to drive down costs and set a new standard for lab operations,” he said.

On the merchandising side in the stores, sustainable collections have been examined for a while. Megan Molony, NVI’s chief merchandising and managed care officer, told *VM*, “Social and environmental responsibility are part of National Vision’s DNA. We’ll continue to evolve our product offering to ensure we’re offering environmentally responsible eyewear that also meets our customers’ budgets, vision and fashion needs.



Megan Molony

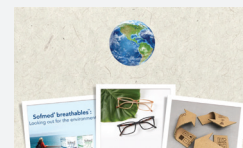
“This year, we launched our Green Love frame collection, which uses Eastman Acetate Renew. With the Green Love collection, we’re excited to be able to offer frames that showcase groundbreaking carbon renewal technologies and what’s possible as the industry advances in our ability to recycle complex plastic wastes in an impactful way.”

Molony added, “We also worked with CooperVision last year to be able to offer 100 percent net plastic neutral contact lenses in Eyeglass World and America’s Best Contacts & Eyeglasses.

“Affordability is core to our customers, and giving them the ability to choose products that reflect their sustainability values is critical,” she said. “Being mindful of that, we strive to find quality products that deliver both affordability and positive impact. Our customers shouldn’t have to sacrifice affordability, style or quality in order to choose a product that does good in the world.

“We’re seeing this extend beyond environmental impact, too, as our customers have responded very positively to products that represent their values in other areas, such as our frames capsule celebrating Pride, or our new See Inside frames collection honoring mental health awareness, as well as participating in the philanthropic register giving program we initiated last year.”

As for raising the profile of sustainability with customers, Molony added, “We want people to know that sustainable products are available even before they come in the door, so we leverage our website, social channels, email and in-store signage to tell these product stories. Associate training is key, so that they can be a resource for customers who want to know what impact their purchase is making.” ■



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For several retailers, there is still a way to go as sustainability evolves. Observed Mollie Tavel Kaback, director of growth and community engagement for Dr. Tavel in Indianapolis, Ind., “We’ve dabbled in sustainable frames and contact lens recycling for a couple years. We adopted the B&L contact recycling when they launched it, and we started bringing in Dragon recycled frames in 2020.

“Right now, sustainable eyewear products are not in demand from our customer base. We have yet to receive any requests for recycled or sustainable product, and we haven’t heard any pushback on our current assortment. That said, we recognize that eventually our industry will need to make a concerted effort to go

green and once it becomes a focus for our vendors, it will be easier for us to make the change.

“We are already seeing vendors like Marchon, Modo and Tura putting additional focus on sustainable frames and cases. It’s really wonderful to have partners who are making moves in the sustainable space. There is still an upside opportunity to focus our optician training on the importance of sustainability in eyecare, but this hasn’t been a priority narrative for us thus far,” Tavel said.

In contrast, Alfonso Cerullo, president, Lens Crafters, pointed out, “Consumers are increasingly asking for products that are aligned with their own personal values, and sustainability is a great example of that. We’re not just talking about Millennials and Gen Z—the desire to

‘do your part’ is woven into the larger consumer mindset. Our associates are always proud to highlight these innovations as another sign that we are a socially conscious business.”

Shopko Optical in Green Bay, Wis. has instituted several sustainability initiatives in their optical centers and labs. “Overall, we have had positive support from our teams and our patients on these initiatives,” said Kirk Lauterback, Shopko’s chief experience officer.

There’s a wide range of adoption as of now, but the trend is accelerating. *VM’s* editors talked to a cross-section of retailers, ECPs and suppliers about the crescendo of involvement and commitment to environmental and sustainability (ESG) causes. Here’s what they had to say. ■

Standard Optical Embraces Sustainable Products

Standard Optical, located in Salt Lake City, Utah, has been carrying products made from recycled or upcycled ocean plastics, etc since 2016. Aaron Schubach, CEO of Standard Optical Company, said, “As a part of our house collections we have five lines under the Schubach Originals label. We launched S.O. Green in May of 2021. This product was brought to us by our manufacturing partner in China. The line consists of 18 SKU’s made from castor seed oil. This was our first larger scale commitment from an inventory standpoint, to sustainable products and practices.

“Sustainable products is just a part of our overall commitment to being an eco-conscious company with sustainable and ethical practices. This starts with a vision statement and policy about this commitment. This includes current recycling programs and reusable programs with Lions Club as well as concerned efforts to reduce single use items like plastic bags. Product sustainability is a critical piece to the implementation of this vision. We quiz our manufacturing partners in

China and we intend to launch this amongst our current vendor partners, regarding their business practices both ethically and sustainably,” he said.

Standard Optical currently carries sustainable products from Visual Eyes Eyewear and a new vendor Sea2see, a European company with a very successful ocean cleanup mission and excellent ophthalmic and sunglass designs.

The response from Standard Optical’s customers has been positive. “Utah, being home to four national parks and one of the countries premier outdoor recreation destinations, sustainability and an overall concern for our planet is not a new concept and frankly it’s expected of Utah-based businesses. Both Smith Sport Optics from Safilo and Zeal Optics from Maui Jim are both Utah sunwear companies that have had sustainable products and messaging for nearly a decade.



While the retailer has some placards that explain some of the benefits of bio-acetates, Schubach said, “It is our intent to make our overall eco-friendly and sustainability corporate mission something that is front and center during the patient experience. Alongside our eco-vision statement patients will

be made aware of the eco and ethics standards that we hold our vendors and manufacturers to when it comes to our commitment to reduce waste and single-use packaging.

Schubach believes that while some patients might be willing to pay more for these products, it’s the company’s goal to bring in offerings that are at the same or better pricing. “Given the current economic conditions and the frugal nature of the typical Utah family, we understand the way to make sustainable products commonplace is by doing whatever we can to keep the prices low,” he concluded. ■



Eastman’s Molecular Recycling Amps Up the Possibilities in Sustainable Eyewear

NEW YORK—A steady progression of eyewear, sunwear and retail groups in the U.S. and around the world have been stepping up their development partnerships in the sustainability arena with the help of Eastman (NYSE:EMN) one of the world’s largest plastics producers. Eastman’s multi-year effort to create a more sustainable, circular approach to the system of recycling plastics into sustainable partnerships aimed at limiting the environmental impact of acetate frames and other injected plastic materials has involved using what the company calls “eco-responsible” formulas of recycled content and bio-sourced materials.

Today the number of partnerships involving Eastman’s Acetate Renew, Tenite Renew and Tritan Renew are advancing quickly, with eyewear companies bringing new options into their production and supply chains.

Eastman’s own eyewear options (many details are posted here at Eastman/eyewear (<https://www.eastman.com/Markets/Eyewear/Pages/Overview.aspx>) are the result of the Kingsport, Tenn.-based company’s own multimillion dollar investments in creating a circular recycling approach that is adaptable to long-term eyewear producers’ own production, engineering and design needs. Advanced Circular Recycling technologies process waste plastics that traditional mechanical recycling methods cannot.

Rachel Oakley, Eastman’s eyewear segment marketing manager, told VM, “It’s so exciting now as we see the traction build among all sorts of players in the eyewear category. We have three priority areas this year. First, advancing the continued adoption of Acetate Renew to help support it particularly in the premium sector of the market and to help our partners help their clients, ECPs and optical retailers, communicate and educate about this to consumers.



Rachel Oakley

“The second is to focus on Tritan options in the sunwear category and the mainstream of the market. Third, we want to tackle lenses, so that we’re not just stopping with the frame.”

Oakley added, “As things develop around the world, the success of sustainability is directly related to how transparent and clear the standards and communication can be so that ‘greenwashing’ is minimized. Standards

Eastman sustainable solutions for eyewear

With our molecular recycling technologies, Eastman is a leading supplier of sustainable solutions. Renew resins offer a sustainable alternative to our heritage materials for all applications in eyewear.

Eastman ACETATE RENEW

cellulose diacetate

- A broad portfolio of acetate grades used to create the finest aesthetics in eyewear sheet
- Offered at a range of different clarities and price points; suitable for wet block, dry block, and extrusion processes
- 40% recycled content¹
- 60% biobased content²
- Application: premium frames

Eastman TENITE RENEW

cellulose acetate propionate

- A range of propionates that combine the premium feel of acetate with the convenience of injection molding for readers, prescription, and sunwear frames
- Min. 20% recycled content¹
- Min. 36% biobased content²
- Application: rims, temples, and temple endings

Eastman TRITAN RENEW

copolyester

- Clear, durable, and safe copolyester with a superior wearer experience relative to materials traditionally used in injection molded eyewear
- 50% recycled content¹
- Application: fashion sunwear and reader frames and lenses

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¹Certified recycled content allocated using ISCC mass balance
²Biobased content measured to ASTM D6866-22 Method B

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Current Eastman Renew Partners

<p>Eastman ACETATE RENEW</p> <p>MARCHON <i>Sebastião Ferragamo</i></p> <p>Safilo</p> <p>BOSS EYEWEAR TOMMY HILFIFER</p> <p>MYKITA ANDY WOLF</p> <p>WARBY PARKER</p> <p>MONDOTTICA</p> <p><i>Wilde Westwood</i> <i>SCOTCH & SUEVA</i> <i>Jones</i></p> <p>TED BAKER LONDON</p> <p>KENMARK EYEWEAR</p> <p>etnia <i>BARCELONA</i> ALLPOETS</p> <p>VIU ace & tate</p> <p>GENTLE MONSTER</p> <p>V BEY & FRANK</p>	<p>tritan RENEW FRAMES</p> <p>MARCHON <i>Sebastião Ferragamo</i></p> <p>Safilo HUGO</p> <p>UNDER ARMOUR Polaroid</p> <p>FGX FOSTER GRANT</p> <p>otaaki™</p> <p>KOE</p>	<p>tritan RENEW LENSES</p> <p>MARCHON <i>Sebastião Ferragamo</i></p> <p>Safilo BOSS EYEWEAR</p> <p>Polaroid HUGO</p> <p>UNDER ARMOUR</p> <p>KENMARK EYEWEAR</p> <p>otaaki™</p> <p>Calvin Klein</p>	<p>Eastman TENITE RENEW FRAMES</p> <p>Safilo</p> <p>Levi's</p> <p>MARCHON</p> <p>NAUTICA</p>	<p>TAKE BACK PROGRAM</p> <p>WARBY PARKER eyewear</p>
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teams in Europe, and soon, in America and other parts of the world, will be coming to the forefront to help educate more people about what’s really qualified and vetted.

We participate with ISCC Certification because that is a pass-through certification so that all steps of a process are examined and can be validated,” Oakley said. ■

More →

Sustainability Takes Root

Eyewear Companies Adopt Green Strategies in Production, Packaging and Everything in Between

BY GWENDOLYN PLUMMER / SENIOR EDITOR

Eyewear is the most tangible segment of our industry—the final product that consumers can touch, feel, wear and love—which makes it an integral touch point for the sustainable message. Across the industry, eyewear companies are adopting and advancing their sustainable practices: reimagining materials, product, packaging and marketing to make every step better for the planet we live on. These

positive changes are translated from the production floor to the ECP and, finally, to the consumer, who will carry that sustainable story with them every time they wear their frames.

From small, passionate, independent brands to the biggest names in the eyewear industry—everyone is concerned with the impact our industry has on the planet and how we can lessen it. Here, we take a look at some of the ways eyewear is changing, innovating and becoming more sustainable every day.

Charmant USA, Building Sustainable Product Lines

The idea that recyclable fashion can't be beautiful is a myth Charmant USA is quick to dispel. New collections from ELLE, Eddie Bauer and ESPRIT are made of biodegradable acetate, proving that luxury and sustainability can go hand in hand.

Director of product for product development Michele Ziss said the collections are lightweight and provide flexibility and durability, with a history of creating sustainable pieces dating back to the 1960s. "These new Esprit Ecollection eyeglasses take sustainability to the next level. Not only are these modern frames light, thin, durable, and UV-resistant, they are made of responsibly sourced eco-acetate," she said.

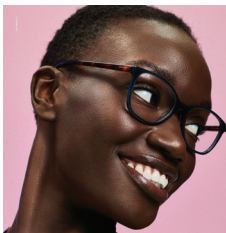
Ziss noted that the collections contain a high proportion of plant-based ingredients including cotton cellulose, eco-acetate which can be processed with biodegradable natural plasticizers. "ELLE consumers are more aware of the environmental importance, causing a search for more eco-friendly options. The make-up of acetate is already largely plant based, but conventional acetates usually have plasticizers which release toxic chemicals when they biodegrade. Biodegradable acetate uses bio-based plasticizers made from renewable sources and ensures premium hand feel, look and quality."

She said consumers have gotten on board and welcome the addition of sustainable pieces. Sales have increased in these specific brands because of the company's sustainable efforts.

"We are creating these sustainable products because of the importance it has on the environment and our community. Many environmental reasons have shifted the consumers' consumption and priorities. There is a renewed sense of purpose and accountability for protecting the environment in every



During the Month of April, a portion of every Eddie Bauer frame sold was donated to the American Forests and for every dollar donated, a tree is planted.



The new Esprit Ecollection eyeglasses, made of responsibly sourced eco-acetate, are lightweight and durable.

aspect," she said.

Biodegradable acetate is made of cotton seeds and wood pulp, which is designed to decompose, and degrade in nature, leading to less waste. Responsible processing requires significant and ongoing cleaning of facilities or separate production lines, storage, and management of bio-acetates, to be sure the end-product can pass all testing. Biodegradable acetate offers production processes that handle acetate without risk of phthalate contamination.

The company has expanded their efforts to American Forests in partnership with Eddie Bauer to further help protect and restore our forests. For more than 25 years, Eddie Bauer has partnered with American Forests to plant more than 8 million trees.

During the Month of April, a portion of every Eddie Bauer frame sold was donated to the American Forests. For every dollar donated, a tree is planted. The campaign offered multiple opportunities for customers to extend their Eddie Bauer Eyewear inventory

and maximize their donations.

Charmant is also utilizing social media to help spread the word about sustainability efforts.

"Our future goal is to continue making products that protect our environment. As an eye and health care specialist, our primary goal is to enhance the lives of people worldwide through our actions," she said. "These actions are based on our socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable mindset," Ziss concluded.

Costa's Commitment Runs Deep

From the very beginning, Costa had a clear mission: "protect and preserve the waters, beaches, and coastal communities that we call home." Every pair of sunglasses the brand sells helps support its conservation programs, as well as its 30+ non-profit conversation partnerships that help protect fisheries and waterways, reduce ocean plastic pollution, educate and empower the fishing community, and restore and rebuild coastal communities.

There has never been a doubt about what Costa stands for—or how committed the brand is to its planet-first cause.

When it comes to eyewear offerings, Costa approaches sustainability in a handful of ways. First is its Untangled Collection, made from recycled fishing nets collected with a California-based partner Bureo. These commercial fishing nets which would have otherwise been left in the sea are turned into Costa's NetPlus material, and then into frames.

Secondly is Costa's lightweight and durable bio-resin collection, made from castor oil it is part of the brand's Kick Plastic initiative to reduce its carbon footprint. This year, Costa also introduced bio-acetate into its offerings as part of its best-selling Del Mar collection.

But for Costa, sustainability is about so much

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Costa's Untangled collection is made from recycled fishing nets collected with a California-based partner Bureo.



These commercial fishing nets which would have otherwise been left in the sea are turned into Costa's NetPlus material, and then into frames.

more than what product is made from. The company supports a number of organizations and initiatives aimed at protecting the planet and its people. John Sanchez, VP of global product strategy for Costa Sunglasses broke down some of these initiatives for VM.

"Costa's Kick Plastic program helps reduce the number of single-use plastic water bottles piling up in our landfills, and waterways. It has also, with the help of our Kick Plastic Ambassadors, recycled 14 tons of polycarbonate lenses. Our OneCoast program—inspired by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria—helps rebuild communities impacted by natural disasters through the purchase of OneCoast apparel, direct donations, and volunteering. Trout Unlimited Costa 5 Rivers, engages the next generation of anglers with a nationwide network of conservation-minded college fly fishing clubs.

"Costa has also developed meaningful partnerships with mission-aligned organizations around the world. To name a few: IndiFly, founded as a Costa-led initiative, provides an economic opportunity to fishermen by developing sustainable fly fishing ecotourism businesses around the world.

"Headquartered in our home state of Florida, Captains for Clean Water is a grassroots non-profit organization fighting to protect our watery resources; and The Billfish Foundation, and Bonefish Tarpon Trust are working to conserve saltwater fish species," according to Sanchez.

When it comes to eyewear, though, Costa has seen a genuine interest in sustainable offerings. Sanchez said, "Sales are good, environmental im-

pact is better. Nearly all of our products contain sustainable materials, so in terms of sales they're doing great. We're seeing an increase in interest for our Untangled collection, which is the most sustainable collection of products we offer.

"Sales for that collection were up nearly 50 percent last year... Generally speaking, our customers care about sustainability. They look to partner with cause driven initiatives, and it reflects in both their partnerships and buying habits... Results are seen in both overall sales and emotional connectivity to the brand."

To help make this message clear, Costa's account marketing team works closely with the brand and sales teams to ensure that Costa provides the right tools to help customers better understand the brand story and sustainability efforts. This happens through various channels, from point of sale elements on the sales floor to e-commerce and newsletters to social media assets and tools at retail events.

The brand also ensures that the vendors it works with stay true to its principles, using sustainable materials and bulk shipping where possible.

Looking to the future, Costa's commitment to protecting the waterways will continue to grow, deeply impacting the planet for the better. Sanchez explained, "It's not just our ambition to be the most sustainable brand on the water, but to actually be regenerative to the watery world. We're here to protect and restore.

"With the power of EssilorLuxottica behind us, we have some amazing activities in development to help us achieve our ambitions... Beyond sustainable products, our boots on the ground and hands in the communities is truly what makes us unique. In the future, we'll be scaling where and how we show up, but our end goal is to leave the world a better place than we found it," Sanchez said.

Eco Eyewear Is The Name of the Game

Eco Eyewear has long set the standard for environmentally conscious eyewear production. Launched by Modo in 2009, Eco is one of the fastest growing brands in Modo's portfolio. Brian Dombrowski, Modo's director of ECP sales and marketing, told VM, "Though we launched Eco in 2009, we have really seen an increase over the past few years as customers and patients are seeking out more sustainable solutions in all their purchases. Similarly, we continue to evolve with our products and also work with our suppliers to do the same."

ECPs Bring Green to the Consumer

"Mitch, Dr. Keltgen's husband, was adopted as an infant, so Arbor's passion to donate a percentage of their proceeds to finding permanent homes for children in foster care was important to us. It was a cherry on top to learn that they plant a tree for every frame sold."

- Rachel McKennon, office manager, Seek Eyecare in Victoria, Minnesota

Eco takes what it calls a 360-degree approach to sustainability—frames are made from bio-based castor seed oil, recycled metal or recycled ocean plastic, while the brand's packaging is made from recycled paper, recycled PET and cornstarch. Eco's biodegradable transport bag is made from 100 percent cornstarch—the first of its kind in the industry.



Through its partnership with Trees for the Future, Eco Eyewear has been carbon negative since February 2023.



Eco's frames are made from bio-based castor seed oil, recycled metal or ocean plastic.

Even Eco's demo lenses are made from 99 percent recycled plastic, and its display trays and stands are made of 100 percent FSC certified bamboo or recycled paper. As of February 2023, Eco is carbon negative too, thanks to its mission of planting trees for every frame sold. This means that the 3.3 million trees Eco has planted in partnership with Trees for the Future (so far) clean out more CO2 than Eco's production makes.

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Eyewear Makes Sustainable Strides

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From every angle, Eco prioritizes the environment—it's in the production, in the product, and in the name. Dombrowski said, "Sustainability really is the mission for us and it's not an initiative." It's also in the way Eco works with ECPs and other partners.

Dombrowski explained, "Our customers and reps appreciate our 360-degree approach. Our sales team does an incredible job educating shops, opticians and doctors about the products and purpose of Eco; our team helps to merchandise in-store with our traditional forms of POP (counter cards, mirrors, displays, and more) or provide digital assets for social media pages."

Eco has come as close to mastering sustainability as possible, but that doesn't mean they're stopping any time soon—innovation and environmental consciousness are at the heart of everything Eco does and will continue to do.

EssilorLuxottica Keeps Its 'Eyes on the Planet'

Each season, more brands in the EssilorLuxottica portfolio join the sustainability club. For Spring/Summer 2023 specifically, Arnette, Starck Biotech Paris, Ray-Ban, Burberry, Armani Exchange, Giorgio Armani, Emporio Armani, Coach and Tory Burch all offer sustainably produced eyewear collections or specific styles. These frames are crafted with a mix of recycled content, bio-based materials, and castor oil made from renewable sources, covering all bases, and offering something different for every type of customer.

The company sees sustainability as part of its DNA—a central facet of eyewear production that cannot be overlooked. Elena Dimichino, global head of Corporate Social Responsibility, EssilorLuxottica, explained to *VM*, "Sustainability is an essential part of our Group's DNA and is strongly intertwined with our business strategy and with our Mission of helping people see more and be more.

"The products we design, manufacture and sell have a social function by definition: to correct, protect and frame the beauty of our eyes. To see well improves everything in life: individual's health, education and work opportunities. And this is our company's mission: to help people see more and be more with the goal of helping eliminate uncorrected poor vision from the world by 2050."



Part of EssilorLuxottica's sustainable offerings, Arnette's latest collection is made from sustainably sourced, bio-degradable bio-acetate and new bio-based lenses.



Ray-Ban's summer capsule is made from bio-based materials and designed to appeal to the Gen Z customer.

On the production side, EssilorLuxottica is progressively replacing standard acetate with high-content bio-acetate, as well as increasing its ability to recycle industrial waste. It is the first eyewear company to obtain the ISCC Plus certificate for circular economy for its in-house nylon recycling process at the Agordo plant in Italy. That plant recycled over 30 tons of nylon in 2022.

In addition, EssilorLuxottica's material choices are subject to control operations related to their chemical composition and physical and mechanical characteristics, and the company's commitment to research has allowed it to introduce innovative, renewable raw materials instead of fossil-based ones—thus enabling the launch of specific collections.

Dimichino said, "At EssilorLuxottica, sustainability and innovation go together, with the product naturally at the center of our circular economy approach. The aim is to minimize the impact on the environment while enhancing product excellence and quality. We speak of 'sustainable innovation.'

"Our vertically integrated and open business model is a lever for sustainable innovation. In 2022, we started a full comprehensive approach for all our products, called eco-design, with the aim to develop products more sustainable starting from the product design. And all this is nurtured through the Eyes on Circularity pillar of our Eyes on the Planet sustainability program."

Launched in 2021, this is EssilorLuxottica's first sustainability program and Dimichino explained it

"marked the beginning of a new journey, which has deep roots in Essilor's and Luxottica's sustainability legacies... Our entire value chain is involved in this journey, as the Planet belongs to us all.

"And it's up to all of us to look after it and its inhabitants... the deployment and evolution of the five pillars of Eyes on the Planet (Eyes on Carbon, Eyes on Circularity, Eyes on World Sight, Eyes on Inclusion and Eyes on Ethics) requires a collaborative effort and involves many stakeholders to make the difference and reach the same ambition: making EssilorLuxottica a leader on sustainability," Dimichino said.

EssilorLuxottica communicates its sustainable mission to customers through a variety of channels, especially making use of its learning platform Leonardo, to make every detail relevant to accounts. Ludo Ladreyt, chief commercial officer, EssilorLuxottica Wholesale NA, told *VM*, "When we introduce sustainable collections and individual sustainable styles, there is an enormous storytelling opportunity for both our ECP customers and end consumers.

"Through Leonardo, our 24/7 learning platform, our customers have access to overarching sustainability content as well as more focused content like which components in any given style are made with bio nylon, recycled acetate and so on, and how we manage water waste in the facility where those frames are made. This resource delivers incredible value for ECPs and our EssilorLuxottica sales force, bringing everyone on the same page," he said.

Dimichino said, "We know that buying from a company that makes sustainability a priority is important to our consumers. EssilorLuxottica is not only offering beautiful eyewear collections made with bio-based materials, but we're also doing the hard work on the inside, from both environmental and social perspectives."

Kenmark's Sustainable Commitment Increases Throughout Supply Chain

Kenmark is making great strides to increase the sustainability of their products. For the past two years, the company has been participating in the UPS Carbon Neutral Program. The carbon offsets purchased through this program have mitigated over 350 metric tons of Co2.

Last year, the Eastman Acetate Renew product accounted for nearly 30 percent of Paradigm sales. The

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A Commitment to Sustainable Eyewear

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company has even shifted their ordering practices to ensure they are never causing more production than required.

“Having our entire supply chain certified, validating the material and the product has been the only real change in terms of the effect on the manufacturing process. We are conscious of ordering based on our demand, rather than over-producing in hopes of certain models or colors to sell,” said Kenmark social media manager Sarah Beth Mayton. “In the past 12 months with the product featuring Acetate Renew, we’ve been able to divert roughly 8,000 kilos of greenhouse gas emissions, equating to nearly 400 trees.”

She added the company has also partnered with Cool Earth, donating 20 percent of sales from Paradigm’s ‘Sid’ in Ginkgo to aid in their fight against the climate crisis.

Response from ECPs has been positive, according to Mayton. She said the sales consultants have made great strides to tell the brand’s sustainability story and that the team has undergone extensive training on how to talk about this collection to customers.



Last year, the Eastman Acetate Renew product accounted for nearly 30 percent of Kenmark’s Paradigm sales. Pictured above are Paradigm Ezekiel (l) and Paradigm Kolohe.

“Most ECPs have some sort of POP assortment in their stores, so we’ve produced a branded logo block made from the remaining Eastman Acetate Renew material in this collection. This logo block features information regarding the recycled content that makes up its DNA,” she said. “The intent is to further provide the end consumer with the proper information regarding the certified recycled content, and begin to seek it out when shopping for new products in the future.”

Marchon and Altair, Sustainable From All Angles

Marchon and Altair have been incorporating sustainable materials into production wherever possible for



Gabriele Bonapersona, Marchon’s chief brand officer, tells VM, “Marchon is constantly looking for ways we can improve and build on our efforts now and in the future.”



Dragon’s Upcycled Collection has far outpaced its assortment percentage in the collection as a whole already.

some time now, Gabriele Bonapersona, Marchon’s chief brand officer, told VM. It is one of the pillars of the company’s Corporate Social Responsibility platform, and spans Marchon and Altair’s portfolio, from luxury fashion brands to lifestyle and proprietary.

Bonapersona said, “We have several sustainable materials in our offering—including Plant-Based Resin, Responsible Acetate, Upcycled Plastic and three collaborations with Eastman including Acetate Renew, Tenite Renew and Tritan Renew. We are thrilled to be able to offer our customers sustainable options as they are shopping for frames.”

This broad approach to sustainable offerings is one of Marchon’s strengths, and is popular with accounts and final customers alike. In fact, Marchon and Altair have seen evidence that final customers will choose a sustainable option over a standard frame, when given the chance. Bonapersona said, “Customers are delighted by the numerous styles and brands available

incorporating sustainable materials, and our accounts say many consumers are selecting sustainable eyewear when given the choice.

“On our Dragon brand, for example, the majority of our top 10 best-selling frames in the Dragon sun collection are made with Plant-Based Resin. Additionally, the Dragon Upcycled Collection has far outpaced its assortment percentage in the collection as a whole. We expect this trend to continue as we add more sustainable styles each season.”

Dragon’s sustainable offerings are appealing to customers, but it doesn’t end there. The brand partners with Plastic Bank, too, implementing a plastic offset impact program wherein each pair of Dragon optical frames, sunglasses and snow goggles sold will prevent the equivalent of 10 plastic bottles from entering the ocean.

Another Altair brand, JOE by Joseph Abboud, partners with Keep America Beautiful, supporting the Great American Cleanup. Through these types of partnerships, Marchon and Altair can approach sustainability from all angles—underscoring a true commitment.

Wooden dowels used for hanging banners are made from locally sourced hardwood, endcaps and wires are made of PVC-free plastic, and chemical free ink is the standard. All displays and parts can be separated and recycled, ensuring a sustainable mindset from start to finish.

Marchon and Altair’s efforts are vast—but they continue to grow. Bonapersona concluded, “We are committed to our CSR platform, leveraging to use sustainable materials wherever possible and available and simplifying and eliminating waste by improving our recycling efforts. Marchon is constantly looking for ways we can improve and build on our efforts, now and in the future.”

ECPs Bring Green to the Consumer

“When the rep, Jan, came in with this new line, she explained what Tura was doing with planting a tree for every frame sold. It inspired us to do the same thing for our community. Not only are the glasses unique but the company was wanting to help with replacing trees for our planet and so does Vision Center.”

- Tawnya Strause, optician at The Vision Center, P.C. in Muscatine, Iowa

Mita Brings Miami Personality to Its Sustainability Efforts

Born in Miami and headed by chief creative officer Nora Cabrera and CEO Fabio Ferracane, Mita Eyewear focuses on sustainability above all else. The Mita collection includes both sun and optical offerings, and all are made from sustainable materials including recycled water bottles, recycled aluminum and sustainable lenses.

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Sustainability Takes Root



Production Goes Greener

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All Mita packaging is made from 100 percent sustainable materials, too. As the brand explained to *VM*, “Sustainable eyewear corresponds to 100 percent of our revenue and sales.”

Since its launch in 2019, Mita has launched three collections, making up 37 sun and 36 optical styles. The collections take inspiration from the brand’s home city of Miami, bringing the bold, eclectic and multicultural background of the city into the eyewear designs. Mita said it has seen a welcoming response here in the U.S. with the rise of environmentally conscious consumers, and is also available in stores in Canada and the U.K., as well as multiple countries across Latin America, Europe and Asia. Online and direct to consumer, the collection is available globally.



Mita’s CEO Fabio Ferracane cleans up Miami Beach with the Mita team and customers.



Mita Eyewear’s sustainable designs bring a Miami personality to eyewear.

Over the past few months, Mita has taken home Mido’s 2023 Certified Sustainable Award in the Sunglasses category, as well as the Vision Expo East 2023 NOW Award in the Sunglasses Under \$250 category.

Mita’s sustainable efforts don’t stop at its eyewear, though. The Mita website is a Net Zero page, meaning it does not set off any carbon into the atmosphere, and 2 percent of all website proceeds are donated to Clean Miami Beach and Tree Nation. Plus, Mita plants a tree in a reforestation zone for every pair of eyewear sold through its website. In Miami, Mita partners with Clean Miami Beach to offer local volunteer efforts that include both the Mita team and customers.

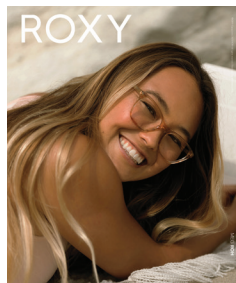
A spokesperson for Mita said, “Sustainability is a factor in every decision we make, from design to manufacturing, all the way through to our packaging. It takes community involvement to truly make a lasting impact.”

Mondottica Protects The Surf

Mondottica’s relationship with Quiksilver and Roxy created a natural step into a sustainability mindset. Both brands are iconic names in the surfing and beach lifestyle worlds, and are equally committed to taking care of the shores that they call their home.

Kat Pedercini, Mondottica’s marketing manager, told *VM*, “Quiksilver and ROXY are not only committed to making waves and moving mountains, but also preserving them.” This partnership also gives Mondottica the opportunity to support Quiksilver and Roxy’s parent company, Boardriders, in its mission to help preserve the environment, through hands-on experiences like ocean cleanup projects.

Mondottica works “in solidarity with the brands’ mission,” Pedercini said, by using plant-based acetates throughout the Roxy and Quiksilver collections. She explained, “Environmentally friendly, sustainable, safe, and natural, eco acetates are a plant-based material free of traditional plasticizers normally found in acetate material. It’s bio-degradable and affords the Roxy and Quiksilver consumer a green option when it comes to eyewear.”



Roxy and Quiksilver are both iconic brands in the surf and beach lifestyle worlds.



Mondottica’s partnership with the brands allows them to step naturally into a sustainability mindset.

In the same vein, Mondottica overall “strives to source and work with manufacturers who carry specific standards that support the integration of sustainability within the DNA of the eyewear, such as Carbon Neutrality certification.”

Overall, Mondottica has seen a positive reaction from accounts, both to the introduction of Roxy and Quiksilver and to this step into sustainability. They extend this step toward point of sales contact with customers, too.

Mykita Takes a Holistic Approach

Mykita does not separate its designs out into specific sustainable collections—instead, it applies the same environmentally conscious standards across all of its frame production, from its acetate collections made with Eastman to its recycled stainless steel designs. A spokesperson for the company told *VM*, “We aim to continually reduce the footprint of our products and entire operation. We do not have separate ‘sustainable collections,’ the approach is a more holistic one.”



Mykita’s eyewear is produced at the Mykita Haus in Berlin.



Mykita does not divide its eyewear into specific sustainable collections; all eyewear is produced under fair working conditions in Berlin using mainly recycled materials.

All Mykita frames are made in the EU and handcrafted in the Mykita Haus in Berlin under fair working conditions.

Critically, Mykita has total transparency of its value chain and buys 90 percent recycled materials overall. This is exceedingly important for a manufacturing company, where the bulk of emissions lie with the materials used. For stainless steel, which can be reused indefinitely, Mykita operates in a closed loop with its supplier. Meanwhile, all Mykita acetate products have been produced with Eastman Acetate Renew since 2022.

Mykita sees its distinctive design language as the key thing that attracts people to the brand, but, “We can state that sustainability, durability and under what conditions a product is made—are all of paramount importance to our consumers and important

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Sustainability Takes Root

Sustainable From Start to Store

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reasons why they purchase a Mykita frame. And we see this consumer expectation on the rise, globally. People seek brands that align with their values,” the company said.

This ties into how the brand communicates sustainability to its accounts and customers. “Most accounts will not bring in product on sustainability aspects alone, but sustainability aspects give them another selling point to their customers from a brand they already trust. The launch of the Mykita acetate collection last year, made from the recycled Acetate Renew, definitely was a big success with sales surpassing expectations,” the company said.

Safilo’s Sustainable Business Pillar

Safilo Group sees sustainability as “the key strategy that sustains and drives purpose into every aspect of our business,” Vladimiro Baldin, the Group’s chief licensed brands and global product officer, told VM. In the U.S., Safilo’s sustainable frame collections include Polaroid, BOSS, Fossil, Tommy Hilfiger, Under Armour, Levi’s and Smith—a sizeable offering already, but one that is planning to grow.

Baldin explained, “Our target is to expand our sustainability offer so that by 2025, 25 percent of the models in our new collections will use certified sustainable materials, either recycled and/or bio-based.”

While Safilo works toward this goal, the Group is investing heavily into other sustainable initiatives, too. Baldin said, “We will continue to using chain of custody certifications (designed to help organizations prove traceability of certified materials as they flow through all points of the supply chain for recycled materials) in order to be able to perform transparent and clear product environmental claims.

“Additionally, we will continue with our life cycle assessment approach to evaluate the environmental impact of our products to enable designs that are best for environment. In particular, we study the carbon footprint that indicates the CO₂ equivalent that the production of each product creates.

“This kind of data, along with indicators, are used to help our product creation team select the best possible material and production flow to guarantee the aesthetical and functional result while minimizing the impact on the environment,” Baldin said.

For Safilo, sales performance of sustainable styles



Safilo’s sustainable offerings extend across its brand portfolio. Star power backs many of its brands, including BOSS, with Gigi Hadid and Maluma fronting the brand’s new campaign.

Each of Safilo’s sustainable brands features its own specific callouts—Polaroid frames have the phrase Sustainable Choice printed on the inner temple tip.

is “similar” to that of standard styles—“a good result considering the premium the consumer has to pay for sustainability,” Baldin said. Safilo aims to continue to minimize the cost of sustainability, especially through its partnership with Eastman.

According to Baldin, “For us, innovation is real only when it is sustainable and inclusive.” Safilo’s North American commercial team has seen an increasing interest in eco-friendly options across all of Safilo’s brands, especially as public awareness grows.

“Whenever we have a sustainable frame or compelling product story or offer, our customers gravitate toward those styles. It helps the brand and frame stand out and tell a story. In the end, the main deciding factor today when our customers select product is the price and quality. If the price is reasonable and the quality is in line with expectations, then sustainability is a bonus as long as the price point, product story and brand’s other sustainability initiatives also align,” he said.

The next step for Safilo Group is to “fully understand consumer willingness to pay a premium for sustainability in order to continue to scale-up the adoption of sustainable materials in our collections. There is still an educational gap to cover in order to better engage the consumer and the lack of standards are not helping to communicate sustainability and transfer this value to the consumer,” Baldin said.

“Hopefully, regulators will help to create standards with specific taxonomy and to harmonize current country specific standards so that everyone will be able to communicate sustainability in a clear, transparent and coherent way. We want to have an ac-

tive role in this journey, as per our participation in The Fashion Pact, a global coalition of fashion brands and their suppliers, as we think sustainability is no longer a ‘nice to have’ but a ‘must have’ and consumers are keen to make the switch to a trend that is here to stay and we need the power of the collective to achieve inclusive and sustainable solutions,” he said.

Safilo’s regional sales managers and sales representatives focus on sustainability wherever relevant in a wide range of customer meetings, and the Group highlights sustainable concerts in its corporate materials, too. The vast majority of POS materials provided by Safilo are Forest Stewardship Council certified, ensuring that wood pulp comes from responsibly managed forests.

Baldin said, “We are also in the early development stages of creating dedicated displays, for applicable brands, that will identify the sustainability attributes of the featured products.” Each sustainable brand has its own specific callouts that highlight its sustainable initiatives, too.

On the large sale, Safilo Group is committed to a common core of key environmental goals in three areas: stopping global warming, restoring biodiversity and protecting the oceans. The Group has an internal Sustainability Committee, with strong internal controls over sustainability related processes, too.

Seazsee’s Ocean Mission

Since its inception in 2016, Seazsee has been focused on one thing: marine plastic. Founder François van den Abeele spent years working in the maritime industry and seeing the impact plastic has on our oceans—a journey which led to him to create a company that creates a new life for recycled marine plastic.

100 percent of Seazsee eyewear, which currently includes 350 skus, is made from recycled marine plastic, which the brand calls “Upsea” plastic material. Thanks to the brand’s own Seazsee Foundation, Seazsee can monitor its direct environmental impact; each year, in collaboration with thousands of fishermen from Spain and France, the Foundation collects about 600,000 pounds of plastic from the waters surrounding those countries.

Of that collected plastic, 12,000 pounds is used for Seazsee frames, while the remaining plastic is sold to the textile industry.

In addition to the environmental impact, the



Seazsee founder François van den Abeele.



In addition to showcasing the eyewear, Seazsee's campaigns raise awareness of plastic waste in our oceans.

Seazsee foundation also helps create employment for those collecting the plastic. The Foundation has expanded waste collection into Ghana and Senegal too, and has plans to extend further into Cameroon, Sri Lanka and Madagascar in the coming months and years. There is also an arm of the Foundation that supports the education of rescued enslaved children from the fishing trade in Ghana.

When it comes to the eyewear, though, Seazsee is paving a fully sustainable path. In 2021, Seazsee became carbon negative, offsetting all its carbon emissions in UN certified solar projects. The brand stated that the average impact of its eyewear is 0.18 kg CO₂, which is 80 percent less than an average acetate or TR90 frame. The brand is also B Corporation Certified and Cradle to Cradle Certified.

Seazsee has found the reception to its sustainable mission strong, but varied. A spokesperson for the company told VM, "When we started promoting our 'seastainable' products in Europe in 2017, Scandinavia and Northern Europe loved our mission, made in Italy products and prices instantly. Canada followed with great enthusiasm. Southern and Eastern Europe are now moving in. After having presented our products at Vision Expo West 2022 and Vision Expo East 2023 it seems that finally the U.S. market is ripe for real sustainable products and even more so when made in Italy."

For ECPs, Seazsee offers POS materials and other marketing to help underscore both the importance of this mission, and our own individual impact.

"Sustainable glasses will not change the world, people that wear them will. Educating people and raising awareness about the state of our Ocean is our mission; each frame sold does its part and makes each customer a part of this story," the company said.

Silhouette Builds Sustainability to Last

Since its founding in 1964, The Silhouette Group has had eyes on the environment. Its proprietary material, SPX+, is a sustainable polyamide used in an injection-molding process that significantly minimizes waste and allows for leftover material to be recycled. Silhouette's titanium frames are always made with wire rather than titanium plates, allowing production to use and discard significantly less material.

However, Silhouette's commitment to sustainability goes far beyond its materials. Since September 2022, Silhouette's eyewear production is carbon neutral with offsetting, and by the end of 2027 Silhouette's goal is to produce its eyewear carbon neutral without offsetting. The company also continues to reduce its CO₂ emissions through in-house sustainability initiatives, including green electricity and solar energy used exclusively for its HQ office and production sites.



Silhouette's commitment to sustainability goes beyond just its materials and includes energy and water-conserving initiatives at its Austrian facility.

Jill Caponera, media relations and marketing manager for Silhouette, told VM, "We are constantly expanding our company's own solar panel system. By the end of the year, all available rooftop space at Silhouette will be filled with solar modules."

Because Silhouette's Austrian production facility is located within a water conservation area, the company also makes it a point to prioritize conscious water usage. Silhouette reduces and reuses water wherever possible, resulting in smaller volumes of wastewater released into local sewage systems. Water is recycled several times before being purified and released into those local wastewater systems, ensuring correct temperature, pH and volume.

Another main tenant of Silhouette's sustainability mission is the simple fact that their eyewear is built to last. Caponera said, "We pride ourselves in offering our consumers long-lasting eyewear that enhances their daily lives. Instead of simply consuming resources, we strive to preserve their value as much as possible and extend their life cycle."

ECPs Bring Green to the Consumer

"I love a good cause. We are always looking for biodegradable products that are not going to be harmful to the environment."

- Michele Parrino, optician and manager of Quality Optical in Ramsey, New Jersey

"Exceptional service is another way we extend the lifespan of our products. We offer a high-quality repair service to avoid unnecessary waste, and expert one-on-one business consultancy through our sales account executives to ensure our customers make the right purchase decisions," she said.

Thema's On-Demand Approach to Production

For Thema, an Italian eyewear company with a factory in Miami, Florida, the first step to sustainable production is production on-demand. Thema has been invested in on-demand production since it opened its U.S. factory in 2017—"long before it became a top and popular concern," Giulia Valmassoi, CEO of Thema North America, told VM. "Attention to the environment is part of our company policy that aims to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth."



Thema has been invested in on-demand production since it opened its U.S. factory in 2017.



Thema's iGreen Hi-Tech collection is crafted from a bio-based acetate derived from cotton fibers and castor seed oil.

In addition to on-demand production that decreases waste, Thema's unique production techniques and patented machines help the company reduce waste by producing only what is needed when needed. All eyewear is made from Advanced Bio-Circular (ABC) and biobased materials in place of a fossil fuel-based alternative—in fact, one of Thema's most popular collections is its Green Hi-Tech, which is crafted from a bio-based acetate derived from cot-

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Sustainability Takes Root



Contact Lens Companies Strive to Reach Sustainability Goals

BY DANIEL BREEMAN / SENIOR EDITOR

In the broadest sense, “sustainability” may refer to the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. In business, sustainability seeks to prevent the depletion of natural or physical resources, so that they will remain available for the long term. While a specific definition may be difficult to agree on, in 2023, major contact lens companies have all agreed on one thing: the time to implement sustainability initiatives is now.

Among the sustainability initiatives taken by the likes of Bausch + Lomb, Alcon, CooperVision, and Johnson and Johnson Vision are major recycling

efforts for contact lenses, which benefit manufacturers, eyecare professionals and patients alike. “Eyecare practitioners appreciate the complimentary recycling bins we provide as it not only helps their practice collect used materials, but it is also a visual reminder for their patients to do so as well,” said Amy Butler, vice president, global environment, health, safety and sustainability, Bausch + Lomb.

Other environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and sustainability initiatives gaining traction in the optical industry include tackling climate change, plastic waste reduction, reducing operational emissions, and protecting natural resources.

Alcon Expands Plastic Bank Partnership

With sustainability gaining traction in the eyecare arena, Alcon has set its focus on reducing operational emissions and waste with two major environmental initiatives in the works.

By 2030, Alcon plans to become carbon neutral across global operations (scope 1 and 2 emissions) while diverting 100 percent of non-hazardous waste generated at manufacturing sites and distribution centers from landfill.

“We also have initiatives to reduce waste, emissions, and chemicals of concern associated with the use of our products,” said Charles Herget, vice president, global head of ESG, Alcon. “Our environmental sustainability scorecard evaluates new and existing products against indicators like water and energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and waste.”

He said, “The Green Innovations Surgical Team (GreenIST) identifies opportunities to increase sustainability and reduce waste for commercialized products within our surgical franchise. By removing the tray from our Centurion Fluid Management System pack, we reduced material waste by approximately 90 percent. We also changed our printed directions for use booklets to electronic, reducing paper usage and package weight by 53 percent.”

Alcon’s sustainability efforts are focused on supporting its new and ongoing initiatives. “In addition, we have a partnership with Plastic Bank through which every ton of plastic used in our surgical and vision care businesses to enhance the safety and convenience of our contact lenses, contact lens packaging, and preloaded intraocular lens (IOL) delivery systems, will be offset by the removal of a ton of ocean-bound plastic waste from communities



Alcon’s manufacturing facilities in Malaysia (above) and its site in Germany (l) have contributed to the company’s sustainability efforts.

around the world,” Herget added.

Alcon recently announced that it was expanding its Plastic Bank partnership in 2023 to further support sustainability efforts. Having prevented the equivalent of over 30 million plastic bottles from reaching the ocean in 2022, Alcon is broadening the partnership with Vision Care products to reach more than 90 countries in 2023.

Within the vision sector, Alcon is finding that ECPs have become responsive to their sustainability initiatives and are eager to be at the forefront of these efforts both for their practices and for their patients.

“The eye health care system is passionate about contributing to sustainability initiatives,” Herget said. “We have had numerous positive reactions from ECPs on our initiatives.”

In 2022, the Alcon Green Tiger Team (an employee interest group focusing on environmental initiatives from a commercial lens) initiated a program to cre-

ate training materials and guidelines to be placed in operating rooms, showing where and how to recycle surgical leftovers and how to properly dispose of recyclable materials.

Also in 2022, Alcon earned the GreenCircle Zero Waste to Landfill certification for three of its ophthalmic drop and solutions manufacturing facilities—two in Fort Worth, Texas, and one in Singapore. Each of the three facilities, which supply Alcon products to markets around the world, diverted 100 percent of total waste from landfills.

Bausch + Lomb: Implementing Sustainable Practices

Since 2009, Bausch + Lomb has been dedicated to implementing sustainable business practices and identifying opportunities that support its stakeholders. Now, as a publicly traded company, it continues to build and enhance the environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives around the world.

“We do this by taking steps each and every day to reduce our impact to waste streams, water usage, energy consumption and carbon emissions to minimize our environmental footprint. We are also committed to the highest standards of corporate governance,” said Amy Butler, vice president, global environment, health, safety and sustainability, Bausch + Lomb.

“We have a strong system of internal controls that support our compliance with applicable laws and regulations around the world and enable us to maintain stakeholders’ trust. Lastly, product quality and safety are two of our most important responsibilities. We equate business excellence with quality excellence, which is why we embed quality and safety

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Sustainability Takes Root

Companies Look to Major Recycling Efforts for Contact Lenses

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management practices throughout our product's lifecycles to support the well-being of our patients around the world.

"While we are proud of the programs we have implemented to date and continue to develop initiatives, we recognize the dynamic nature of the ESG landscape presents continual opportunities for learning and improvement. We are committed to continue to improve our interactions with the natural, human and social capital upon which our enduring success depends."

According to Butler, ESG initiatives are embedded in all Bausch + Lomb's global operating plans, enabling widespread impact at both the corporate level and across its manufacturing and supply chain locations. Each business segment is empowered to develop and manage customized initiatives designed specifically to improve local operations and preserve, protect and sustain the community, the environment and natural resources so they are available for future generations.

"Our company's sustainability focus has been consistent for more than a decade on fuel, energy, water and waste (FEWW metrics)," Butler said. "Our combined efforts are focused on making a positive impact that will ultimately benefit our employees, consumers, eyecare professionals and patients."

According to Butler, feedback on its overarching sustainability program has been tremendously positive.

"Our ONE by ONE program is also an integral part of many optometrists' eyecare practices in the U.S. Today, nearly 13,000 eyecare practices are registered as official recycling centers of our ONE by ONE recycling program," Butler said.

Eyecare practitioners appreciate the complimentary recycling bins we provide as it not only helps their practice collect these used materials, but it is also a visual reminder for their patients to do so as well. Once the bin is filled, the optometry practice ships the materials to TerraCycle for proper recycling, using a shipping label prepaid by Bausch + Lomb. Used lens and eyecare materials collected for the Biotrue Eye Care Recycling program can be mailed to TerraCycle directly using a Bausch + Lomb prepaid shipping label.



Amy Butler, vice president, global environment, health, safety and sustainability, Bausch + Lomb (l) and Bausch + Lomb's contact lens manufacturing facility in Rochester, N.Y. is home to one of the largest solar arrays of its kind in the Finger Lakes region with 3,667 solar panels.

"These programs have also helped to eliminate barriers for consumers who were previously hesitant to use single dose unit eye drops or wear contact lenses, particularly daily disposables, because of the waste they create."

As of March 2023, B + L's exclusive ONE by ONE and Biotrue Eye Care recycling programs have recycled a total of 65.8 million units, or 397,194 pounds, of used contact lenses, eyecare and lens care materials.

According to Butler, Bausch + Lomb provides updates on its ongoing ESG initiatives through its website and its annual global ESG report. The 2022 ESG report launched in early May.

Bausch + Lomb has made, and continues to make, notable strides in reducing waste in its operations and from its products, according to Butler. "Our success is achieved through a variety of initiatives, including solar energy, co-generation power, water conservation, food waste, green packaging commitments, product recycling and more. We continue to build upon our recycling programs, which to date have collected more than 65 million units of contact lens, eyecare and lens care materials.

"A major project we will complete in 2023 is construction of a cryogenic plant for production of high purity nitrogen gas in Rochester, New York. When the nitrogen plant goes online, it will eliminate the need for about 50 tanker truck deliveries of nitrogen to the Bausch + Lomb manufacturing facility each month. This project will reduce CO₂ GreenHouse Gas (GHG) emissions estimated at 800 tons annually."

CooperVision's Net Plastic Neutral Initiative

CooperVision is dedicated to more than developing quality products that help people see better each day. The company has also demonstrated a strong heritage to doing so sustainably—with a strong track record of sustainable manufacturing and operations over the last several years focused "on areas in which we can make the greatest impact," according to Melissa Kiewe, vice president of marketing at CooperVision.

In 2021, CooperVision pioneered the world's first net plastic neutral contact lens with clariti 1 day contact lenses in the U.S., and has continued to expand the scope of the global initiative. It funds Plastic Bank's collection, processing, and reuse of general ocean-bound plastic waste that is equal to the weight of the plastic contained in designated products in 27 countries throughout the Americas, Europe, and Asia-Pacific.

In the U.S., this includes the clariti 1 day, MyDay, MiSight 1 day, and Biofinity brands. Globally, the effort has already prevented the equivalent of more than 160 million plastic bottles from entering the oceans and has positively impacted more than 5,600 collectors in 345 communities around the globe.

"CooperVision is more committed than ever to sustainability and environmental health," Kiewe said. "We have spent years developing best-in-class, environmentally conscious manufacturing processes resulting in award-winning conservation efforts in Puerto Rico and prestigious sustainability certifications in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Spain, and the U.K. And here in the U.S., all of our Rochester, N.Y. operations are powered by 100 percent renewable electricity.

"As a medical device manufacturer, plastic plays a critical role in the hygienic delivery and sterile protection of our products, and how that plastic is managed is important to us. That's why we launched CooperVision's net plastic neutral initiative, which makes it easy for anyone who recommends, prescribes, or wears our most popular contact lens brands to make a positive impact on the environment.

"In addition, supporting this initiative changes lives, as our partnership enables Plastic Bank collectors in nearly 200 coastal communities to clean up their towns and villages while earning credits for



In 2021, CooperVision pioneered the first net plastic neutral contact lens with clariti 1 day in the U.S. and has continued to expand the scope of its global initiative. Globally, CooperVision's partnership with Plastic Bank for its net plastic neutral initiative has already prevented the equivalent of more than 160 million plastic bottles from entering our oceans.

necessities such as groceries, cooking fuel, school tuition and health insurance," she said.

Through the CooperVision net plastic neutral initiative, thousands of eyecare professionals and their patients have contributed to the sustainability effort, simply by prescribing and wearing CooperVision contact lenses. "Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, as practitioners are grateful to have more sustainable options—particularly for patients who are more environmentally conscious," said Kiewe.

Information about CooperVision's commitment to sustainability—including an impact dashboard that provides regular updates on how much plastic waste has been collected in collaboration with Plastic Bank—is available at <https://sustainability.coopervision.com/>. In addition, there are tools and materials available through its sales team that eyecare professionals can use to promote and educate the net plastic neutral initiative in their practices.

"One of the greatest advantages of the CooperVision net plastic neutral initiative is that it's automatic. Eyecare professionals and patients don't need to do anything beyond prescribe and wear clariti 1 day, MyDay, MiSight 1 day, or Biofinity contact lenses," said Kiewe.

"This year's expansion of the CooperVision net plastic neutral initiative represents the next step in our steadfast commitment to making a positive impact on the environment because it's the right thing to do—for eyecare professionals, their patients, and the planet—but we won't stop there. At our Puerto Rico production site, our new, innovative CHP (combined heat and power) installation has lowered greenhouse gas emissions while simultaneously supporting increased production volumes—a rare combination," she said.

Johnson & Johnson Vision: Tackling Climate Change and Waste Reduction

Johnson & Johnson Vision is committed to creating a healthier world with sustainability efforts focused in three key areas: tackling climate change, waste reduction and protecting natural resources.

"We constantly innovate how we produce, transport, and responsibly dispose of our products to reduce waste. For example, 89 percent of raw materials at Acuvue contact lens manufacturing sites are recycled," said Jacqueline Henderson, president, EMEA, Johnson & Johnson Vision. "We're also on track to help Johnson & Johnson meet its carbon neutrality goal by 2030, having significantly reduced our carbon footprint in the last 10 years. Through significant investment in renewable energy, all Acuvue contact lenses are now made with 100 percent renewable electricity.

"We continue to strive to limit our use of natural resources and find new solutions to protect the en-

vironment. In 2023, we removed the plastic pouches on delivery notices for all our Acuvue orders, saving 12.7 tons of plastic each year across EMEA."

According to Henderson, Johnson & Johnson Vision does not support one specific organization in its sustainability efforts, "but instead as a global manufacturer, we recognize our responsibility to help protect the planet by leading the conversation and driving meaningful action on sustainability as a business, looking at how we can tackle key issues, from recycling and reducing our carbon footprint, to optimizing our packaging.

"Our progress in environmental sustainability also includes engagement with our suppliers with a focus on advancing climate resilience; managing waste and water impacts; and improving product sustainability. We also work closely with our customers and partners to share information about sustainability

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ECP Viewpoint: Line of Sight

As the founder and owner of Line of Sight in New York, Jennifer Tsai, OD, and her team are passionate about eye health and understand that sustainability continues to play an ever-growing role in her patient's overall wellness. "There has been an increased awareness of sustainability in the eyecare industry," Dr. Tsai said. "The progression toward finding solutions that reduce environmental impact without compromising patient safety has been gradual but progressing in a positive direction.

"As an ECP, climate change is important to me because it can have an impact on eyecare. Environmental factors such as pollution, UV index, and toxins can affect the vision and eye health of my patients. Sustainability is crucial to our practice as it involves finding ways to intentionally make the world a healthier place while also improving people's eye health. This includes reducing waste in our office, recycling, and choosing sustainable materials and manufacturing processes for eyewear and contact lens care."

Speaking with patients about sustainability efforts in her practice has become commonplace for Tsai and her team and often leads to a trust factor that goes a long way toward overall eye health.



Jennifer Tsai, OD

"Our patients are often relieved when we initiate conversations about sustainability and take action to contribute. We believe in providing high-quality care, and our patients trust us to do so when we also prioritize sustainability," Dr. Tsai said. "To this end, we set up intentional recycling bins

in our practice and educate our clients on sustainable at home contact lens and eyewear practices. We also encourage them to contribute by bringing in their used contact lens materials for recycling and used eyewear to us for donation.

Dr. Tsai noted, "We have gone paperless in our studio and regularly recycle throughout the work week. We collect donated eyewear from our local community to donate to organizations that help underserved communities. Additionally, we accept all used contact lenses, contact blister packs, contact cases, and multipurpose solution bottle caps from any brand to be recycled. It is our priority to support and carry eyewear and eyecare brands that prioritize sustainability as well." ■

Sustainability Takes Root

Protecting Natural Resources Is Top of Mind for CL Companies

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initiatives and practices and explore how together we can create a healthier world.”

Johnson & Johnson Vision is also aware of the heightened interest eyecare patients are taking in sustainability products and services and are addressing these concerns with their eyecare professionals.

“We know from ECPs that patients are increasingly asking them about the sustainability of eyecare products and services, and having solutions and an understanding of the sustainability credentials of our products can be helpful,” said Henderson. “In 2019, we launched the Acuvue Contact Lens Recycling Program as a convenient solution to help reduce waste for both our customers and patients.

“The program currently operates through a network of over 1,000 public drop-off locations, in partnership with TerraCycle and opticians across the U.K. Since launch, the program has seen over 11 million contact lenses, blister packs and foils recycled. This represents roughly 52,904 kg of recycled material.

“Research we commissioned in 2022 also found that 67 percent of contact lens wearers and those



The Acuvue Contact Lens Recycling scheme launches at Boots in London, offering a convenient solution to help reduce waste for customers and patients.



Consumers can take any brand of soft, disposable contact lenses, blister packaging and outer foil into their local participating optician and drop it into the TerraCycle Zero Waste Recycling Box.

considering contacts were more likely to switch to an optician that offered contact lens recycling,” Henderson said.

Getting the word out about its programs and initiatives is another important part of the company’s sustainability efforts. Johnson & Johnson accomplishes this in a number of different ways.

“We actively drive awareness of our sustainability programs and initiatives in a variety of ways—from having dedicated information and educational resources available on our global websites, through to hosting in 2022 our first ever LinkedIn Live discussion on sustainability. We have also been invited to speak at major industry events on sustainability and in 2022 were the first major sustainability sponsor of the European Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgeons (ESCRS).

“When it comes to driving awareness of our patient initiatives like the Acuvue Contact Lens Recycling Program we work with our customers to promote the scheme in store and have a series of consumer facing assets including videos etc., to show how it works. In the last year, we have also worked with a series of micro-influencers to promote the scheme and drive awareness amongst consumers.”

“As we look to the future, we will continue to demand more from ourselves as we work toward our sustainable vision and creating a healthier planet. We have a number of initiatives in the pipeline,” said Henderson. ■

ECP Viewpoint: Athens Eye Care

As the owner of two independent eyecare practices in Ohio—Athens Eye Care and Hocking Hills Eye Care—Shane Foster, OD, needs to keep in touch with his patients of all ages, including identifying emerging trends and initiatives that not only serve his practices but also contribute to the well-being of his patients and the global environment.

“I think the topic of sustainability continues to gain interest among the public as we see more and more reports about climate change and the future of our global environment. Millennials were the first generation to really focus on green initiatives and protecting the environment, and Gen Z has followed behind with even more emphasis on sustainability,” said Dr. Foster.

“These two generational groups are not only more active and vocal about green initiatives, but they also make decisions about where to make purchases and what companies to support based on those companies’ involvement in sustainable practices.”

He said, “To me, sustainability means including the

environmental impact into your thought process when it comes to making business decisions. We live in a world and a society that is inherently causing harm to the environment through waste, emissions, and use of resources, but we can make small decisions in our everyday lives and in our business plans to help mitigate that damage.

“My practice is in an area where we don’t have to bring up sustainability with our patients—they are often the first to mention it,” he said. “They love the recycling bins all over the office, and they appreciate that we are a One by One TerraCycle center for contact lens waste. Our doctors firmly believe that a daily disposable contact lens is the cleanest, safest, and healthiest option for our patients. The number one concern when discussing this with patients usually isn’t cost—it is the amount



Shane Foster, OD

of waste that a daily contact lens produces. I am grateful that I can discuss the program and Plastic Bank with them to help put their minds at ease.”

“CooperVision has been a great partner in our practice, not only for their products and support, but also because they truly value sustainability as a core guiding principle in everything they do. Their support of Plastic Bank to make their products truly plastic neutral is such an amazing initiative, and it truly helps me, my staff, and our patients feel better about the amount of plastic waste that is created by contact lens wearers.”

Dr. Foster also identifies Bausch + Lomb as “a wonderful partner in sustainability, with the wide availability of its One by One TerraCycle program for contact lens waste. We educate our staff and our patients on the proper way to recycle all waste, since some items like solution bottles and the boxes they come in can be recycled in the traditional way, but contact lens packaging, bottle caps, vials, and contact lens cases must be sent to TerraCycle.” ■



Lens Manufacturers and Labs Take Action to Lower Carbon Footprint

BY SARAH MCGOLDRICK / CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Consumers are using their buying power to change the world for the better. According to a GreenPrint survey, 64 percent of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products. Meanwhile, 78 percent of people are more likely to purchase a product if it has been clearly labeled as environmentally friendly.

The optical industry is listening to consumers, developing innovative products and programs to improve sustainability and lessen waste. Lens manufacturers and optical labs have been working together to create products that lower their carbon footprint, as well as create production environments that are green-focused and work toward reducing pre- and post consumer waste.

Zeiss Vision Care has set out to create several initiatives that reflect their commitment to green production. Their Green, Safe and Responsible program features 340 initiatives that are continuously working toward sustainable goals at all their locations around the world.

The company has integrated into their corporate strategy with sustainable practices that have improved all aspects of their business from products, services, R&D, manufacturing, logistics, supply chain, corporate social responsibility, and other key areas.

“Our strategy aims to improve the social and environmental impact of business operations, view sustainability as a value driver, and leverage sustainability challenges as opportunities. Zeiss pledges its commitment to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” said Matthew Woelbern, head of marketing, US Channels Zeiss Vision Care US.

“Within our sustainability strategy we have set ourselves ambitious goals—annually our Sustainability Reports show what we achieved and what our current environmental footprint and our contributions to society, progress and a sustainable future are,” he said.

The company focuses on three areas of sustainability, including climate action, where the focus is to become carbon-neutral by 2025. Zeiss is also looking at the emissions in its upstream value chains and intends to use energy as efficiently as possible.

The company has also worked to address the circular economy, reducing the impact on the environ-



Zeiss Vision Care has reduced water consumption in its largest volume lab for their NA lab network, located in the Southwest of North America.

ment by developing products with more renewables and recycled materials.

“It is our clear goal to operate in a carbon-neutral way in our own global activities by 2025,” said Woelbern. “Since 2022, the company is using only green power at its main sites. Compared to 2018-2019, we reduced our CO₂ emissions in 2021-2022 by 82 percent. We achieved 17 percent reduction in water consumption, 14 percent in waste volume and 5 percent in energy consumption.

“One tangible example is our 94 percent reduction in water usage since 2018 to produce Rx lenses in our largest volume lab for our NA lab network, located in the Southwest of North America. The same site also manufactures lenses and freeform pucks for Zeiss globally, reducing water consumption by 35 percent in the same period. The image above shows we need to reduce this consumption, since water levels in the local reservoir are significantly reduced; the water line doesn’t even reach the outflow gate level,” he said.

Woelbern said the response from consumers has been positive. Eyecare professionals and retailers often ask about the company’s sustainability strategy, goals and achievements. They also want to know how they can contribute to the programs and address the concerns of buyers who want environmentally and socially responsible products.

“Our impression, based on many discussions and exchanges with customers and consumers, is that sustainability is a ‘must have,’ not an additional factor in their purchasing decision. Companies and brands that are not ambitious and transparent about their contributions to climate protection, nature conservation, society and sustainability are under increasing scrutiny.

“And we know from our customers that companies without a sustainability program are struggling to attract new talent and customers,” he said, adding the

company is working to make it easier for their customers to integrate green marketing strategies into day to day operations. They maintain regular marketing and communication to keep customers aware of the latest product.

“We support ECPs in their ‘green’ marketing, e.g., with facts and figures about eyeglass lenses, with our sustainability report and with support/material for their sustainability marketing,” he said. “We provide them with exemplary stories that illustrate what we do and aim for. One additional tangible example is our sustainable packaging to the ECP for fully finished eyeglasses. In 2020, we launched a completely new packaging system using recycled paperboard and soy inks as well as fully recycled microfiber pouches.”

Woelbern said most customers now expect the company to make greener, more sustainable products as a matter of course. He added, they typically don’t see an opportunity to charge a price premium for sustainable products, but it can be a tiebreaker when customers are deciding to purchase from Zeiss versus a competitor. He said the new finished lens packaging reminds customers every day of the company’s commitment to sustainability.

Many companies have been developing packaging that reduces the level of waste that enters landfills. Earlier this year, **VSP Vision** launched responsibly-sourced shipping packages for online retailer Eyeconic and Visionworks retail locations. The packaging is made from 100 percent FSC-certified recycled corrugated materials, non-toxic ink, and zero plastic and their curbside recyclable.

Each year, Eyeconic ships tens of thousands of eyewear orders. Transitioning to the new packages will reduce the online retailer’s materials usage by 65 percent.

“As a purpose-driven company, we embrace the opportunity to create meaningful solutions to protect the environment and the communities we serve,” said VSP Vision chief marketing officer Wendy Hauteman. “Launching more environmentally friendly shipping boxes is a great way for us



VSP Vision launched responsibly-sourced shipping packages for online retailer Eyeconic and Visionworks retail locations.

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Sustainability Takes Root

Taking Innovation in Sustainability to New Levels

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to get beautifully designed packages to customers without having to sacrifice our commitment to more sustainable business practices.”

Visionworks is the sixth-largest optical chain in the U.S., with more than 750 retail locations. The deployment of the new boxes across both VSP Vision companies will save the equivalent of 748 mature trees each year, resulting in the annual removal of 35,904 pounds of carbon dioxide from the air.



Wendy Hauteman

The move to sustainable packaging was conceived by the VSP Global Innovation Center (GIC), an arm of VSP Vision that works to reimagine the way eyecare and eyewear are delivered to the world. In December 2021, the GIC explored several design concepts for eyewear cases made from plastic alternatives, including bamboo, coffee grounds and mushrooms (mycelium).

In order to achieve the objectives defined by their sustainable development strategy “Eyes on the Planet,” **EssilorLuxottica** has introduced several local initiatives designed to reduce their environmental footprint in its laboratories, including its Canadian facilities. “Initiatives are multiplying, in various forms, at all our industrial sites,” said Abhishek Nayak and Nicolas Raymond, Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) coordinators. “We always have new projects in development. These actions are aimed at improving our three performance indicators at the Toronto site: water conservation, energy conservation and waste management,” said Nayak who oversees EHS for Ontario and the Western regions of Canada.

These include renovation of the sanitary facilities which is underway—a water meter and automatic water saving touchless faucets will replace the old equipment. New installations in the surfacing department—in the next few weeks, new energy efficient rooftop units for heating, ventilation and air conditioning will provide a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of more than 5 tons of CO₂ per year. Installation of four new Satisloh ART (AlloyReplacement Technology) blockers that use glue instead of metal alloy for blocking glass, reducing the company’s use of alloy by 50 percent. In addition, Satisloh Art consumes up to five times less water and 50 percent less

energy than a traditional blocker. Waste management: At the Toronto industrial laboratory, cardboard will be recycled, and wooden pallets will be collected by a partner who will put them back on the market for reuse.

According to a company spokesperson, “We are excited to announce that we have taken the next step on our sustainability journey at the Atlanta Service Center in the U.S. As part of our commitment to reducing our environmental impact, we have installed water dispensers in the Logistics office area, NAASC and the RxO office area. This will help reduce the use of plastic water bottles and promote a more sustainable workplace.

Hoya Labs are also taking innovation in sustainability to new levels as the industry looks to reduce waste and increase efficiency. In the Hoya Dallas, Texas and Ramsey, Minnesota labs, the company has implemented a recycling program for lens waste created during the surfacing process. They have also converted to 100 percent green energy in the Minnesota lab.

“Our operations team has implemented an alloy recycling program in our Dallas, Texas lab which allows us to recycle 80 percent of the alloys being used,” said Frank De Lille, vice president of operations, adding there are additional sustainability efforts including LED lighting and paper recycling being implemented in all lab locations.

Many labs are also working to develop more sustainable production and recycling programs. At Plastic Plus, Canada’s largest independent optical lab, this goal to achieve a higher level of sustainability has been integrated into everyday operations.

In 2022, the company launched the Green Send Back Program, allowing their customers to return shipping materials for reuse. This includes common packing and marketing materials such as pillow packs, bubble wrap, cardboard wrap and lens sleeves. The result has been a 25 percent reduction in the amount of waste that reaches the landfill.

“We are always striving to find new ways to reduce our environmental impact,” said Plastic Plus vice president Jason Faibish. “Optical lab manufacturing presents a number of challenges in the areas of sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint, and we are working with our suppliers and vendors to find new solutions to make a positive impact locally and globally.”



Jason Faibish

ABB Optical, the largest distributor of soft contact lenses in the U.S., has continued to take their recycling programs in new and innovative directions. This means switching all their marketing collateral and merchandising materials over to a digital format.

In the lab, the company has worked to reduce the number of materials required to ship their products. This quickly escalated with the addition of corporate sponsored recycling programs at their facilities for products including paper, cans, plastics, batteries, electronics and ink cartridges.

This list goes on, and we keep adding to it in order to recycle anything we can to support the health of the environment,” said Mike Rybacki, senior director of business operations. “We also always make it a point source from vendors that use recycled materials for paper and corrugated cardboard.”

He added, shipping has been overhauled to use the most environmentally friendly materials. “In 2023 we have two big initiatives starting with a stronger bubble wrap sheet that will allow us to eliminate 100 percent of using an inner cardboard protect box,” he said adding the company also plans to go paperless for invoicing as well as convert all shipping information documents to a thermal process which will remove paper usage as well as ink cartridges.

Younger Optics has worked to create a sustainable and environmentally positive workspace for its employees and customers. Director of administration Michael Kennedy told *VM* that the company meets all environmental requirements, but that several programs have been implemented to take this a step further.

“Younger recycles through our current waste hauler all paper and cardboard products as well as ensuring all electronic waste is properly disposed of and recycled,” he said, adding that all wastes are profiled and checked for recyclability before they are disposed of.

Additionally, the company recently invested in new lighting for their California warehouse. All lighting was replaced with LED technology, including “Smart Lighting” that adjusts for energy consumption based on the current lighting levels.

“Younger strives to continue to improve its environmental sustainability and reduce its footprint through continued efforts in waste minimization,” he said. ■



Mike Rybacki



Eyewear's Green Approach

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ton fibers and castor seed oil.

Valmassoi said, “For every ton of ABC material used in place of a fossil fuel-based alternative, the equivalent of one car is taken off the road for a year and two farming families (typically 10 people) enjoy a profitable and sustainable lifestyle.”

Alongside this, Thema is working to implement virtual activities that will help them limit the production of physical samples, thus significantly reducing overall waste. This helps the company express its sustainable message to accounts, too, alongside comprehensive training and resources. Valmassoi has seen a general rise in accounts interested in the sustainability story—something she thinks comes directly from the consumer.

She said, “It’s a rising trend among ECPs to look for sustainable products, but the biggest driver is from their customers, in my opinion. They are more aware it’s important that the companies they chose to do business with are conducting themselves in an environmentally responsible way, and by supporting these companies, they share this responsibility and feel good about it.”

Tura Takes Sustainability Seriously

In 2022, Tura launched Botaniq, a fully sustainable collection featuring bio-based acetate and natural wood harvested from ISO-certified forests with the Forest Stewardship Council seal. The collection also uses recyclable stainless steel and cork, as well as frame cases and cleaning cloths crafted from recycled PET, and recyclable demo lenses and nose pads.

With One Tree Planted, Tura plants a tree for every Botaniq frame sold, too. Botaniq is doubtlessly the jewel of Tura’s sustainable offerings—but it is also only just the beginning.

A sustainable mindset carries across Tura’s entire brand portfolio, with an assortment of sustainable styles found within each brand. Across the board, Tura works to design and manufacture with as little waste as possible, often using bio-based acetate made up of 50 percent natural contents including wood pulp, vegetable polymers and cotton fibers. When properly composted, it breaks down in 120 days.

The material can be manufactured in a variety of colors and textures, and the Tura team often creates its own colors to add a touch of uniqueness. Kristen McLaughlin, Tura’s director of marketing, told *VM*,



Tura’s Botaniq is a fully sustainable collection featuring bio-based acetate and natural wood harvested from ISO-certified forests with the Forest Stewardship Council seal.

“We approach our sustainable collections with design integrity as the driver, and our commitment to an eco-friendly product as an essential direction for how we position our company and brands. The beauty of our bio-based acetate is that if we didn’t tell you that it was eco-friendly, you may never detect it.”

Tura spreads their environmental message both through social channels and by including the product story at point of sale, often with a QR code that directs the customer to the website for more information. For Botaniq, the sustainable story is included in the frame case.

McLaughlin said, “Initially, ECPs were hesitant to adopt sustainable eyewear due to their slow progress. Additionally, since they already had a substantial inventory, they were unsure about the growing demand for sustainable products. However, there has been a recent shift toward recognizing the importance of a cleaner planet, and eyeglass wearers are becoming increasingly interested in participating in this movement.”

Now, Tura is seeing sales of its sustainable styles remain stable, thanks to the company’s ability to integrate sustainable practices with good design. McLaughlin said, “Sales have remained stable primarily because of the style and design, rather than the sustainability factor, as the customer’s appreciation for the product appears to be based on the former rather than the latter.”

Villa Eyewear Represents Independent Brands Emphasizing ‘Green’

New York-based Villa Eyewear works exclusively with independent collections that prioritize using traceable, sustainable raw materials has always been the norm for Villa Eyewear, but the company also considers the management of the brand as a whole and looks beyond just which types of materials are used.

“We’ve always represented collections made by independent manufacturers that are evolving artisanal ways of producing high-quality, small-batch eye-

wear,” said brand manager Lorenzo Sfoggia. “Before being sustainable was ‘cool,’ the artisans who had an inherent connection to the environment in which they lived, worked, and consumed the eyewear were already thinking about how the methods and materials they used could impact the environment and therefore have always worked to protect it.”

He said the company doesn’t view sustainability as a campaign effort or something to garner new buyers. Instead, the company focuses on prioritizing collections that are led by responsible people that make ethical decisions.

“It’s not just about using a recycled material to produce the frame, but all the things that surround it as well—including not wasting product, choosing to repair rather than replace where possible, reducing or eliminating single-use plastic from packaging, and producing seasonal merchandising materials from recycled materials,” he said.

Sfoggia is proud to work with brands like Gruppo Volo Canadair which donates part of the sales proceeds to conservation of biodiversity and natural landscapes, in anticipation of wildfires that could affect Italian territory in the summer.



Villa Eyewear works exclusively with independent collections that prioritize using traceable, sustainable raw materials.

Though ECPs are onboard with the company’s sustainability efforts, he said the overall goal is simply to create a product that is environmentally friendly.

“Again, we don’t see sustainability as a marketing campaign or sales tactic, rather as a way of doing business. From raw production, to distribution, to sales, and finally ‘consumption,’ there are many hands touching our frames, and we want our frames to reflect a sense of respect for all stakeholders,” he said.

“Nothing we sell is mass-produced, and that is reflected in the quality and attention to detail that goes into each product. Some of our primary materials, like titanium and aluminum, are very environmentally friendly. One of our brands, Blackfin, has completely rebuilt its headquarters and production facility to be one of the most sustainable in the region and to reflect its coexistence with the beautiful natural landscape in which it sits.” ■