



Keeping Denim Out of Landfills

Cotton Incorporated's Blue Jeans Go Green™ program has recycled denim for 13 years.

■ One of the great things about denim is that it practically lasts forever — “practically” being the key word. While nothing might seem to fit as well as a pair of old blue jeans, at some point, consumers realize their jeans are too big, too small, too worn or simply not trendy. Instead of throwing them away, the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ denim recycling program gives new purpose to old denim.

In 2006, Cotton Incorporated created the program to help divert denim from landfills. Since that time, more than 2.5 million pieces, including jeans, shorts, skirts, jackets, dresses and shirts, have been collected and transformed into something new, and unexpected: building insulation.

Most people might think of home insulation in only that pink stuff that comes with the mandatory pieces of skin-piercing glass fibers. But that's not the case with UltraTouch™ Denim Insulation that's created through a partnership

with Bonded Logic, Inc. To create this insulation, denim garments are collected; zippers, buttons and embellishments are removed. The denim is then returned to its original cotton fiber state and recycled into denim insulation. The UltraTouch Denim Insulation is a non-itch, environmentally safe insulation composed of 80% post-consumer recycled denim.

Since the program's inception, more than 4.8 million square feet of insulation has been manufactured from denim contributed to the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ program. Insulation distributed from the program helps construct homes and civic buildings across the United States. And the best part? More than 1,200 tons of denim garments have been kept out of landfills.

More and more brands and retailers are demonstrating their commitment to cotton sustainability by offering their customers denim recycling through Cotton Incorporated's Blue Jeans Go

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By Sarah Galvez, Manager of Public Relations, Cotton Incorporated



Green™ program. Participating retailers include Madewell, American Eagle Outfitters, Rag & Bone and Levi's, and often, customers dropping off an old denim garment at a store receive a dollar amount or a percentage toward something new in the denim family.

Since first teaming with Cotton Incorporated's Blue Jeans Go Green™ program in 2014, Madewell stores alone have contributed over 700,000 pieces of denim, resulting in over 1.4 million square feet of insulation. Madewell has helped bring the program full circle with store associates volunteering with Habitat for Humanity affiliates around the country to install insulation during home builds in cities including New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles.

Wrangler has also participated in the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ program, collecting denim scraps, material and product from its internal manufacturing, product development and distribution centers.

"In 2017, we contributed more than 43,000 pounds of denim, which produced over 80,000 square feet of insulation," says Roian Atwood, Director of Sustainability for Wrangler. Atwood also noted that customers were able to mail their old denim into Wrangler headquarters to be included in the recycling program, and in 2018, the company worked with the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ program to distribute insulation to help in rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Harvey.

While "upcycling" clothes might still sound unusual, recycling is something that comes naturally to most people in the U.S. these days. According to a Global Environment Survey commissioned by Cotton Incorporated, about three in four consumers say they recycle (82%), use refillable bottles (74%) and purchase energy-saving appliances (72%) in an effort to protect the environment. That's followed by consumers who say they

limit home water usage (69%), recycle clothing or textiles (65%), purchase locally made products (62%) and reduce overall consumption (55%).

When it comes to motivation for their environmentally friendly actions, 59% of consumers reported they do things "simply because it's the right thing to do," according to the Global Environment Survey. Another 50% attributed their actions to "protect the world for my children/grandchildren/future generations" and 41% attribute it to a wish to "live a more balanced/healthier lifestyle."

Perhaps this wish to do the right thing is why the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ program has enjoyed a series of successes:

- In 2009, it set a Guinness World Record™ when it partnered with National Geographic Kids magazine and earned the record for "Most Items of Clothing Collected for Recycling" with 33,088 pieces of denim.
- In 2010, it launched a grant program that gives architects, builders and project developers the opportunity to apply for grants of insulation for civic buildings.
- In 2013, the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ program celebrated recycling the one-millionth piece of denim via a unique auction where denim was used as currency to raise awareness about textile recycling.
- In 2014, denim was collected as part of a nationwide NASCAR series race.
- And in 2016, Cotton Incorporated celebrated a decade of collecting denim for its Blue Jeans Go Green™ program with a three-day pop-up in New York City. The star-studded affair featured interactive displays that showcased the achievements and milestones that the program had reached thus far.
- In December 2017, the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ program teamed up with media company Refinery 29 and was featured at its 29Rooms event in Los Angeles. Attendees were invited to experience the transformative power of creativity through denim recycling.
- In October 2018, Cotton Incorporated worked with Live Nation to bring its Blue Jeans Go

Green™ program to four concerts — Luke Bryan, Dierks Bentley, Keith Urban and Post Malone — where attendees could speak with brand ambassadors alongside a custom-built display designed to resemble a house. It featured denim insulation, facts and information about the program, plus a custom laser-etched map of the United States made entirely of denim.

In addition to retailers and manufacturers, Cotton Incorporated's Blue Jeans Go Green™ program has partnered with over 60 colleges and universities and collected more than 220,000 pieces of denim from students along the way.

Earlier in 2019, Cotton Incorporated announced a new collaboration with Zappos For Good, the community outreach arm of popular online retailer Zappos.com. Zappos For Good offers prepaid mailing labels available for download to consumers, making it easier than ever for a customer to send their old denim into the Cotton Incorporated Blue Jeans Go Green™ program for recycling.

"Providing consumers with prepaid mailing labels makes participating in the denim recycling movement so much more accessible," explained Andrea Samber, Director, Consumer Marketing—Strategic Alliances at Cotton Incorporated. "We are proud to be part of the Recycle program by Zappos For Good, which has assembled so many powerful and sustainable options for helping others. Zappos For Good is the newest addition to our ever-growing roster of fantastic collaborations working to close the loop on cotton sustainability and give back to communities across the U.S."

Through strong retail extensions, corporate social responsibility, education initiatives and consumers mailing in denim, Cotton Incorporated's Blue Jeans Go Green™ denim recycling program continues to make a significant impact.

Cotton Incorporated, funded by U.S. cotton producers and importers of cotton and cotton textile products, conducts worldwide research and promotion activities to increase the demand for and profitability of cotton. Sarah Galvez is the Manager of Public Relations at Cotton Incorporated, the research and promotion company representing upland cotton. In this role, she manages consumer and corporate media communications, as well as social media for the organization's corporate channels.