

# The future of sustainable yarns



Insights from experts on the future of sustainable yarns

The future of sustainable yarns is an inspirational publication dedicated to anyone who is interested in sustainable living.

Discover how internal and external thought leaders think about the future of sustainable yarns.

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Dear reader,

## “Out of difficulties grow miracles.”

Those are the words of 17<sup>th</sup>-century, French philosopher Jean de La Bruyère. Although the 17<sup>th</sup> century might be a long time ago, I believe these words perfectly reflect the duality we are confronted with today.

I don't have to tell you that we live in challenging times. On a global scale, the past few years have been tough. High inflation, steep energy prices, and geopolitical instability, to name but a few. At the same time, the reality of climate change has made it very clear to our industry that we can no longer afford to wait to take action.

However, it's not all doom and gloom. Quite the contrary, when it comes to sustainability, B.I.G. Yarns has never been as ambitious as today. When we proposed our strategic plan, Vision 2030, a few years ago, we decided as a group not only to take sustainability seriously, but even more, to lead by example in our sustainability efforts.

I believe that Vision 2030 is only the beginning. While adapting to the new reality of today, we are already preparing for a future beyond 2030. In fact, we are continuously a company in transformation. Unfortunately, this means that we sometimes have to take tough decisions. No doubt that closing down our site in Comines-Warneton was a hard, but necessary measure to further optimise our operations.



What B.I.G. Yarns has proven over the past few years, is that our sustainability strategy goes beyond greenwashing or fancy slogans. It's substantiated in ambitious, but concrete roadmaps, aligned with B.I.G.'s Route 2030. It's acknowledged in our recognition as an SDG Pioneer, awarded with EcoVadis Gold rating and validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). It's reinforced with our significant investments in the latest extrusion technology, our continuous product development, and our focus on innovation.

And last, but not least, it's put into practice every day by our people. Only a few of these people are mentioned in this publication, but we're lucky enough to be able to count on many more.

**People are at the center of our sustainability strategy.** Yes, we have to motivate and inspire our customers, suppliers and partners to join the sustainability movement. But at the same time, we strongly believe in starting with ourselves and taking our own responsibility. This also means surrounding ourselves with the right experts that have the ability and the enthusiasm to create a true wave towards sustainability and make miracles possible.

I hope that the enthusiasm of the experts represented in this publication will be able to inspire you too.

**Emmanuel Colchen**  
General Manager B.I.G. Yarns



**“Let’s be in that first 10%.  
Let’s set the bar high.”**

Sustainability is not something you can achieve alone. For **Clara Carelli**, it’s a matter of creating a movement, where every employee joins the effort. But it’s also about setting up an ecosystem of partners and suppliers who understand that sustainability is the future.

Get inspired by Clara Carelli  
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**“Sustainability is more  
than environmentalism.”**

In sustainability discussions, it’s important to distinguish fact from fiction. The Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is one of the most vital instruments to do just that. Group Sustainability Manager **Femke Faelens** talks us through the challenges of implementing LCAs.

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**“Third-party certification is the  
recipe against greenwashing.”**

Manufacturers across the globe are increasing their efforts to offer more sustainable products. But how do you know they’re not greenwashing? The answer is certification. For **Lieven Flamée**, third-party recognition is essential to bring credible and qualitative solutions to the market.

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**"Circular economy:  
building a resilient tomorrow."**

The circular economy is gaining prominence as industries strive for more embedded sustainability. According to **Pieter Vanoosthuyse**, B.I.G.'s Group Circular Economy Manager, achieving a circular economy hinges on dialogue amongst all stakeholders, throughout the circular value chain.

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**"We want to create  
a sustainability wave."**

Yarn manufacturers realise most of their greenhouse gas emissions via the value chain. That's why it's safe to say that a company's purchasing strategy can make or break its sustainability efforts. **Steve Clicteur**, B.I.G.'s Global Procurement Manager Polymers, explains how suppliers help the company to reduce its impact.

Get inspired by Steve Clicteur on page 18 >



**"Companies that aren't working  
on sustainable solutions today,  
will be in trouble soon."**

Forests slow down climate change. Unfortunately, deforestation is tough on our planet. That's why B.I.G. Yarns teamed up with Go Forest to plant trees with impact. In the past three years, our company supported reforestation and agroforestry projects in Peru, Madagascar and the UK. We had a chat with Go Forest founder and CEO **Sarah Parent**.

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**“Let’s be in that first 10%. Let’s set the bar high.”**

*Sustainability is not something you can achieve alone. For Clara Carelli, it’s a matter of creating a movement, where every employee joins the effort. But it’s also about setting up an ecosystem of partners and suppliers who understand that sustainability is the future.*

## Clara Carelli

- 🌱 Born in Rome, Italy in 332 ppm\*
- 🌱 Group Sustainability Director at Beaulieu International Group
- 🌱 Optimist and firm believer everyone can contribute to a better world
- 🌱 Likes to travel and explore new cultures (next stop: Mount Fuji)

\* Curious what this means? Have a look at [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org) to see how much carbon was in the atmosphere when you were born.

In her role of Group Sustainability Director at B.I.G., **Clara Carelli** has made it her mission to drive the company's efforts to become a fully sustainable group. But Clara is humble enough to realise she cannot do it alone. "I like to think that I have a team that supports me in this mission. Not a team of four people, but of almost 5,000 enthusiastic B.I.G. co-workers."

**B.I.G. co-workers seem to take sustainability to heart. Is that also your impression?**

Absolutely! It works both in a top-down and bottom-up fashion. From a corporate side, we have articulated our mission and our strategy to become a more sustainable company. And people seem to lean into it too. On the other hand, I also feel the drive from our employees. They believe sustainability is the future, they are proud to be part of an ambitious company, and they want to actively participate in our journey towards reducing our climate impact.

**"There can be no sustainability without transparency."**

**In 2023, B.I.G. was the highest climber in the FINN ranking on sustainability reporting for Belgian companies. The company seems to be taking sustainability communication more seriously than ever.**

I think the ranking tells us that our commitment is credible and that the whole company is working diligently to reduce our impact. Transparency on both positive and negative impacts is very important in this. In our sustainability report I stressed that people would get the

truth, and nothing but the truth. If we achieve something, we'll be glad to report it, but if we fall short, we will be open about it too. There can be no sustainability without transparency. That's why it's important to work science-based, and then gain objective, third-party recognition for your actions.

**"We need to transform ourselves from being part of the problem to being part of the solution."**

**Looking at yarn manufacturing and the carpet industry as a whole, what are the biggest sustainability challenges today?**

Embracing circularity is a huge challenge. As Group, B.I.G. commercialises more than one million tons of plastics every year. That is not a small number. We need to transform ourselves from being part of the problem to being part of the solution. We're working on that, but it's not easy.

For the carpet industry in particular, I think there are two main challenges. First, we need to work on less impactful raw materials. We need to look at how we can design products in a more environmentally-friendly way, but at the same time, we need to face cost and availability challenges. Second, we need to look at how we organise the end of life of products. Products can be designed to be more recyclable, but you also have to take logistics into account. Right now, our global economy is not organised efficiently to tackle this. That's definitely not a challenge B.I.G. can solve alone.

**B.I.G.'s Route 2030 nevertheless seems very ambitious, and includes much more than the environmental aspect.**

Indeed, for example, there's the social aspect that typically tends to get snowed under. It means that we will not just work with any supplier. We screen our value chain partners in terms of ethical business conduct. For example, we look at corruption, are they respecting human rights, do they provide a safe and healthy working environment, do they prevent pollution? That's all part of the bigger sustainable picture. If suppliers don't meet our high standards, we won't work with them. So, at least you know, when you are buying a B.I.G. product, there's nothing behind it that you can't be proud of.

**Innovative, more sustainable products often come with a cost, which either needs to be passed to the consumer, or absorbed by the company. Is that the curse of the innovator?**

It's all a matter of seeing behind the simple manufacturing cost. We also need to look at the global climate cost. That's where we are competing. But indeed, it's not so easy today. Recently, I heard a professor saying that it takes between 10 and 15% of the industry to really change everyone else. So, let's be in that 10% and set the bar high. We will have partners and customers who will join us in our efforts to be more sustainable. We need to start with those, and then more will follow, which will bring the price down. But I admit it's a challenge.





**“I believe that when we are under pressure, we can be more creative.”**

**"Unfortunately, time is not on our side."**

No, we don't have that much time. 2030 is tomorrow, but for the planet, we cannot afford to wait any longer. And yet, I also think that when we are under pressure, we are often more creative in finding innovative solutions. I count on everyone to understand that urgency.

**You joined B.I.G. in 2022. Did you have any personal ambitions in terms of sustainability? Which stone in the river did you want to have moved?**

When I joined B.I.G., I just wanted to contribute in a positive way and help to preserve the planet. I have a son, and I want to feel proud looking at him, because I did my best to change things. Working in the area of sustainability, there may be 'easier' companies to work for than B.I.G. I could have joined a non-government organisation for example. But

I think working in a complex, corporate environment, the satisfaction is greater when you manage to bring positive change.

What I really want is to create a movement. I don't want to be the only one doing things, I would like everyone to feel proud of their contribution. So, maybe I will be the happiest when my role is no longer needed, and when everyone knows exactly what they have to do to make this business more sustainable.



## “Sustainability is more than environmentalism.”

*In sustainability discussions, it's important to distinguish fact from fiction. The Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is one of the most vital instruments to do just that. Group Sustainability Manager Femke Faelens talks us through the challenges of implementing LCAs.*

### Femke Faelens

- 🕒 Born in Torhout, Belgium in 1991
- 🕒 Group Sustainability Manager at Beaulieu International Group
- 🕒 Key player in B.I.G.'s sustainability journey, laying the groundworks even before a sustainability department was set up
- 🕒 Enjoys trying new recipes, fine dining and exploring new worlds through RPG gaming

Analysing the impact of products on the world around us through LCAs is one of the main tasks of **Femke Faelens** and her team. In addition, Femke also helps B.I.G. to meet the requirements of Europe's new Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). And she helps to raise awareness inside the company walls with the intention to build a true sustainability culture.



**In order to do sustainable business, LCAs seem to have become indispensable. Can you explain why they are so essential?**

The LCA is a tool to evaluate the environmental impact of a product or process over its life cycle, which includes raw materials extraction, manufacturing, transportation, usage and maintenance, and waste management. It's an essential tool to compare products in a transparent and quantifiable way. Compare it to choosing different so-called green products from your local shop. You may be looking at so many different products with different sustainability labels, that it's hard to compare them. The LCA is a tool that enables you to compare these products objectively, but then for products and services throughout the value chain.

**Is every supplier fully aware of the importance of an LCA?**

More and more companies are. They know that we want it, but it's also increasingly a legislative requirement. But we try to be pragmatic about it. For some of our suppliers, implementing LCAs is a

heavy and costly exercise, so it's not unusual that they are struggling with it. On the other hand, we try to motivate our suppliers to provide correct LCAs. We explain that it's part of our sustainability strategy and that we cannot reduce our impact alone. It's something we need to do with our partners and suppliers.

**“There's still much room for innovation with end-of-life management.”**

**Yarn manufacturers must feel the need for sustainable solutions from the carpet industry as well, right?**

Yes, the market demands sustainable solutions, although it varies from one market segment to another. For the residential market – solutions that go directly to the consumer – the demand is still lagging. There, price is still an important driver.

For the commercial flooring market however, we see more demand. Public tenders are more stringent

when it comes to reducing carbon emissions. Also in the automotive market for example, there's a higher need for recycled plastics driven by legislation. Fortunately, B.I.G. Yarns customers have different sustainable options to meet these requirements nowadays.

**For the production of yarns, polyamide 6 (PA6) is the most important raw material. Does PA6 lend itself to creating sustainable solutions?**

Manufacturing PA6 is quite energy-intensive. Maybe a bit contradictory, but this means that there's still much opportunity to make a difference, for example by adapting our energy consumption and energy mix.

From a chemistry standpoint, PA6 is a material that relatively easily breaks up into its original building blocks. This means that it can be chemically recycled. You can compare PA6 to a pearl string, with separate pearls that can easily be strung together. This is in contrast to polypropylene for example, which is more like a spaghetti that is hard to untangle. And once cut up, it's impossible to put it back together.





**"Sustainability is not just about strategy. You also need people who make it work."**

**In which areas do you still see the most room for innovation?**

The biggest room for improvement I think is managing the end of life of our products. Our economy is still mainly linear. We need to make it circular and close that loop. We need to think about how we are going to collect our waste. And once we have tackled that, we need to know how we are going to separate our collected materials. And last but not least, how are we going to process these separated materials into new raw materials? We still have a lot to think about.

But it's more than a technology story. Maybe we need to look into other business models, like servitization, as well. *(Editor's note: This is a model where the customer pays for a service, while the ownership of the product remains with the provider, who is responsible for all operational costs.)* It might be a way to reduce

our resource consumption and to disconnect profit from the actual number of units we produce.

**You have been working in the field of sustainability for many years now. What are some of the most valuable lessons you have learned along the way?**

That we should not focus exclusively on technology or strategy. Sustainability is also about internal organisation, about people. It's not just a strategic direction that has been laid down by management. You also need ambassadors who help to make that strategy a reality, from the bottom up. You need people who believe in it and who can make it work. So, it's a combination of strategic vision and people.

I also like to point out that sustainability is about more than environmentalism. There's a social aspect to sustainability that tends to be overlooked. It's about how you operate in society as an organisation, how you treat people, how you help them grow, and how you give them a safe place to work.



## “Third-party certification is the recipe against greenwashing.”

**Manufacturers across the globe are increasing their efforts to offer more sustainable products. But how do you know they're not greenwashing? The answer is certification. For Lieven Flamée, third-party recognition is essential to bring credible and qualitative solutions to the market.**

### Lieven Flamée

- 🕒 Born in Kortrijk, Belgium in 1965
- 🕒 QHSE director at Beaulieu Engineered Solutions
- 🕒 Passionate about integrating sustainability into existing business processes and management systems

As Quality, Health, Safety and Environment (QHSE) director at B.I.G., **Lieven Flamée** is responsible for translating the company's Route 2030 ambitions – achieving a zero environmental footprint by 2030 – into tangible actions for the different Engineered Solutions divisions, including the Yarns division. With the 2030 deadline approaching, Lieven is optimistic and ambitious about the division's progress in terms of sustainability.

#### **Lieven, can you tell us why you are optimistic about the Yarns division's sustainability efforts?**

Our roadmap towards Route 2030 is organised across five different routes, and we are working hard on each one of them. So, yes, I'm optimistic about the outcome. Internally, we have all noses in the same direction, everyone is enthusiastic about the journey we need to make.

But also externally, we are able to convince more and more partners and suppliers to work on sustainable solutions with us. Both the commercial and automotive markets have a demand for more sustainable solutions, which is positive for us.

**You like to stress the importance of certificates and third-party recognition. One of these certificates is Cradle to Cradle. Why is this such an important certification for B.I.G. Yarns?**

“Cradle to Cradle helps us to put circularity into practice.”

Cradle to Cradle offers us a practical and actionable framework to put the concept of circularity into practice. It provides a structured way towards certification, it's a mature and internationally recognised standard.

We are currently (*editor's note: time of writing is October 2024*) working on material health, making sure that the materials used in our yarn products are safe and environmentally friendly. By becoming certified for this category, the market will acknowledge that we are taking sustainability and circularity seriously.





**What are the biggest roadblocks you are facing towards reaching the Cradle to Cradle certification?**

Being certified for Material Health means that you have to be transparent about the raw materials you are using in your products. Cradle to Cradle wants to know what materials are made of down to a molecular level. But for that, we need full cooperation from our suppliers, who are not always comfortable sharing their inner company secrets, quite understandably by the way. That is sometimes difficult.

It's for that reason that we rely on third-party certification bodies who can offer non-disclosure agreements. This way, nobody needs to unnecessarily unveil its proprietary knowledge. Convincing our suppliers is a matter of repetition and polite persistence.

**What keeps the market from fully embracing circularity today?**

The manufacturing cost is still a big hurdle. For companies, it may seem risky to change suppliers when they have been used to working with prices and margins they know. Switching to a new, more sustainable product may be more expensive.



**“Sustainability is a multi-challenge that needs multi-solutions.”**

This will probably still go on for some time, until companies are triggered to switch to more sustainable products because of national, European or international directives and legislations, like a carbon tax for example. Governments could speed up matters, for example by obliging every new government building to use low-impact products. It's complex, because will need to find a balance between profitability and sustainability.

It's also important that we offer our customers different options. We cannot be a one-trick pony. Sustainability is multi-challenge that needs multi-solutions. That's why we have different solutions in our yarn portfolio: EgoCycle recycled content yarn, EgoYarn low-footprint yarns, and EgoBalance, which uses renewable sources.

**And all these sustainable yarn solutions are backed by third-party certifications?**

They are. For example, by applying for Cradle to Cradle's material health certification, we are showing that we want to be fully transparent towards our customers, partners and suppliers. And all the claims we make in terms of recyclability or carbon footprint reduction are backed up by independent, third-party specialists. For example, EgoBalance is REDcert2 certified by TÜV SÜD and EgoCycle is GRS certified by Control Union. Certifications are both a quality label and a sign of credibility. I believe they are crucial in the fight against greenwashing. B.I.G. also puts a lot of effort into meeting ISO9001 and ISO14001 quality standards, which have sustainability embedded. This way, we are showing that we are always optimizing our processes to become more efficient and more sustainable. It's about continuous effort, not one-off measures.

**How do you see the not so distant future of sustainable yarn manufacturing?**

2030 will be an important milestone for us. In the run-up to that year, but also beyond, I expect that more sustainable products will be specified for public buildings. Cost can still remain a challenge for some time. The most substantial progress will be made in those niche markets, and hopefully this will quickly trickle down to other, adjacent markets.

Meanwhile, we can't afford to sit still. We need to look to ourselves and turn words into actions. This means constantly optimising or rethinking our own processes and encouraging everyone to join the discussion.







## Circular economy: building a resilient tomorrow

*The circular economy is gaining prominence as industries strive for more embedded sustainability. According to Pieter Vanoosthuyse, B.I.G.'s Group Circular Economy Manager, achieving a circular economy hinges on dialogue amongst all stakeholders, throughout the circular value chain.*

### Pieter Vanoosthuyse

- 🌱 Born in Belgium in 1989
- 🌱 Group Circular Economy Manager at Beaulieu International Group
- 🌱 Loves to explore the world & connect
- 🌱 Creating positive impact

As Group Circular Economy Manager at Beaulieu International Group, **Pieter Vanoosthuyse** has the corporate responsibility for the upstream and downstream circularity strategy and implementation. In his career up to now, Pieter has often combined business development with sustainability strategies. This makes him the ideal person to talk to when discussing ecology and economics.



**Pieter, how do you explain the concept of a circular economy to people who have never heard of this?**

In a linear economy, which we largely have today, depletable materials are extracted from the earth to create products that eventually end up in landfills or incinerators. This results in a significant value loss as we basically take-make-waste. In contrast, a circular economy aims to maintain the highest possible value through the several stages of the value chain – from raw material

**“Dialogue between all stakeholders throughout the circular value chain is crucial to enable circularity.”**

to component manufacturing, to product assembly, distribution, product use, collection, pre-treatment and recycling. At their end of life they become valuable secondary raw materials, and are kept inside continuous loops, for example through re-use or recycling.

**How is B.I.G. Yarns contributing to the circular economy today?**

As Group, we are taking this into two directions. First, we want to shift the origins of our raw materials away from fossil-based materials to recycled streams and bio-attributed streams, or take in raw materials with a lower carbon footprint. Secondly, we focus on the product's end of life. For example, our yarns are designed to be 100% recyclable, so that they don't need to end up in landfills or incineration facilities. We operate on two fronts in the value chain, both upstream and downstream.

**So, collaboration with the value chain will be crucial?**

Stepping into the circular economy means that you need to consider an entire ecosystem from the start, and understand how to optimally design the solution for each of the stakeholders and step in the full life cycle value chain.

At the end of life, collection is crucial, so mechanisms need to be set up properly. Sortability and

recyclability have to be built into our products from the beginning. For example, looking at the carpet market today, there's a growing trend towards monomaterial products, because recycling monomaterials is way more efficient.

Another point of focus is to design products for longevity, so they are kept in the loop much longer, and don't need to end up as waste. But to keep that circular economy running, dialogue between all stakeholders throughout the circular value chain is crucial.

**What are the biggest challenges on our way to a circular economy?**

I think there are four key drivers we need to focus on. Innovation and technology are the first one. Looking at our own solutions: how can we design out waste from the start, and how can we make sure our products are kept at their highest values, inside the loop as long as possible?

Secondly, we need to have a transparent view on which mate-





**“Being an early adopter can provide early access to circular value chains, which leads to new market opportunities.”**

rials are used where and how. Here, digitisation can help us to collect, store, and track data throughout lifecycles.

Third, we need to mobilise all players in the value chain to collaborate, because the circular economy is a concerted effort.

And last but not least, we need ambitious public policies and incentives that help boost the circular economy to new levels.

**At this moment, we're not close to a circular economy at scale. How can we get there?**

Yes, the circular economy requires significant investments, and at the moment, it's hard to strike a good balance between climate and economics, especially because we are currently facing a high market demand and supply shortage for certain circular materials. But eventually, as scales of economy increase together with public policies, this will leverage profitability. Then again, being an early adopter has competitive benefits too, because

it gives us early access to circular value chains, which leads to new market opportunities.

**B.I.G. is on its way to achieve a zero environmental footprint by 2030. How do you look upon the road taken so far?**

When we look at the Route 3 part of our Route 2030 strategy – working towards a circular economy with the whole value chain in mind – we have already achieved a lot. Four years ago, we launched our Rewind sustainable event carpet, as one of the first circular economy projects. Today, we have several ongoing circular initiatives in each division, both focusing on downstream and upstream. Also our yarn customers have different sustainable options. Now the challenge is to educate our market and create a multiplier effect. The great thing about B.I.G. is that there's a cross-fertilisation of ideas. What we have learned from Rewind in terms of take-back schemes for example, may be useful for other product portfolios as well.

**The role of Group Circular Economy Manager seems challenging and rewarding at the same time. Do you have any personal ambitions when it comes to promoting circularity?**

First and foremost, I want to make a positive impact in everything I do, both professionally and personally. As a father to a young daughter with a bright future ahead, I'm convinced it is our responsibility to ensure a sustainable future for the next generations. If I look at how technology has evolved, I'm convinced that we can enable the circular economy, provided that we implement the right strategies now.

**"By focusing on our circular economy strategy, we will build a resilient tomorrow, today!"**



**“We want  
to create a  
sustainability  
wave.”**

## Steve Clicteur

- 🕒 Born in Brugge, Belgium in 1978
- 🕒 Global Procurement Manager Polymers at Beaulieu International Group
- 🕒 Passionate about sports
- 🕒 Traveling encrypted DNA



***Yarn manufacturers realise most of their greenhouse gas emissions via the value chain. That's why it's safe to say that a company's purchasing strategy can make or break its sustainability efforts. Steve Clicteur, B.I.G.'s Global Procurement Manager Polymers, explains how suppliers help the company to reduce its impact.***

B.I.G. is a house with many rooms. Fortunately, there's people like **Steve Clicteur** who manage to find synergies between the different divisions. As the Global Procurement Manager for polymers, Steve is constantly looking for efficiencies in the company's purchasing strategy for raw materials. At the same time, Steve is pushing B.I.G.'s suppliers to follow the company on its Route 2030.

**Some 90 percent of B.I.G.'s carbon footprint can be attributed to the value chain, the so-called scope 3 emissions. So, when it comes to sustainability, your role cannot be underestimated. How challenging is that?**

It is quite challenging. For our scope 3 emissions, we depend on our sup-

pliers, and on how well they manage to reduce their impact. But for now, there's no silver bullet solution. For example, our suppliers could work on chemical recycling (*editor's note: the process of converting polymeric waste into its original monomers*), but this still requires huge investments in the coming years. Another option would be reducing our impact through the use of renewable sources – via the mass balance principle – but the market has not yet come to a consensus on the acceptance of this matter. And obviously, these solutions will also come at a price.

**"Some companies still think sustainability is a fad. We have proven them wrong in recent years."**

**Do suppliers fully understand the need to offer sustainable solutions?**

More and more. In 2023, we launched our low-impact PA6 yarn, EgoYarn, which reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions with 46% compared to standard solutions. We have made it clear to our suppliers that this will become our standard solution in the coming years. Sometimes, it means we have to put some pressure on suppliers. Other suppliers don't need that push, but inherently know that offering low-impact raw materials is the way forward. They do what they can to lower their scope 1 & 2 impact, be it with green energy, bio-based solutions, or carbon capture for example.

**How do you manage to convince suppliers to step into the sustainable yarns story?**

There are still companies who think that sustainability is a fad. The past few years, we have proven that this is not the case. Even in difficult economic times, we did considerable efforts. Our suppliers know we're not just selecting raw materials based on price; we also care about impact.

I often hear from our suppliers that we are very demanding at B.I.G., that we lead the way in terms of sustainability. Fortunately, we are not a small fish in the market, so we can use our influence to achieve things. On the other hand, we also motivate our suppliers about the bigger story, and we actively provide feedback on how they can improve to help us improve. Sustainability is not something we can achieve alone. We need our

partners. That's why we try to create some kind of sustainability wave, a critical mass of companies who want to be part of our commitment to sustainability.

**"Our suppliers know we're not just selecting raw materials based on price; we also care about impact."**

**In terms of lowering our impact, where do you see the most important innovations in the coming years?**

For polyamide 6, our most important raw material for yarns, there are several production methods, some more impactful than others. We definitely need to keep an eye on renewable, bio-based raw materials.

But also capturing carbon-heavy by-products is an option. For example, an important contributor to the carbon footprint of PA6 is nitrous oxide, also called laughing gas. It's ten times more impactful to the climate than CO<sub>2</sub>. If our suppliers could capture those emissions during the manufacturing process, before they are released into the air, and then store them and repurpose them, we can effectively prevent them from contributing to climate change.

But innovation goes further than that. We also need to step away from creating products that do not last long. Instead, we should create more durable products, and prevent those products from becoming waste altogether. This is still the preferred option, in my opinion.

**Moving forward, uniting economic and ecologic interests, always seems to be the biggest challenge.**

We are looking into the mid-term and long-term, but the econom-

ic reality also forces us to look at short term gains. We need to make a profit as a company. That doesn't mean we're not making progress in terms of sustainability. We are continuously strengthening our position by looking for additional suppliers who can help us make yarn solutions with a lower carbon impact or solutions that are based on recycled materials. For all our product lines – EgoYarn, EgoCycle and EgoBalance – we're going for multiple sources, not just one source.

**Do you have any personal ambitions when it comes to sustainable yarns?**

If anything, I'm glad to contribute to the sustainable yarns story. And it would be fantastic if one of our sustainable solutions could become the reference in the market. We have already achieved a lot together with our suppliers, but I'm eager to continue working on this to make it happen.





**“Companies that aren’t working on sustainable solutions today, will be in trouble soon.”**



### **Sarah Parent**

- ② Co-founder & Chief Ecological Officer at Go Forest
- ② Believes that you don't have to be the perfect greenie to make a change
- ② Winner of the WOMED Award (Women in Enterprise and Development)
- ② Author of the book 'Not your average climate activist'



*Forests slow down climate change. Unfortunately, deforestation is tough on our planet. That's why B.I.G. Yarns teamed up with Go Forest to plant trees with impact. In the past three years, B.I.G. Yarns supported reforestation and agroforestry projects in Peru, Madagascar and the UK. And they recently*

*renewed its commitment to support Go Forest for another year. We had a chat with Go Forest founder and CEO Sarah Parent.*

**“Tree-planting works as an accelerator for other sustainability projects.”**



Go Forest is a young company, established in 2020 with Sarah Parent and Antoine Geerinckx as the driving forces behind the tree-planting, planet-saving mission. Go Forest organises reforestation projects, agroforestry and man-grove planting all over the world. The company ensures that the right trees grow in the right regions, and that they will be maintained.

### **Sarah, what is the success of Go Forest?**

I think we offer projects with a tangible outcome, and it's easy for companies to step in, because we have ready-made sustainability solutions for them. Companies can also follow the impact they make by planting trees via an impact dashboard. It's all very transparent. We receive requests from a wide range of people, including CEOs and business owners, but also marketing managers, HR managers and CSR managers.

### **There's a social dimension to Go Forest as well. Can you explain?**

We think it's important that our tree-planting projects create the greatest possible impact. This includes creating jobs for the local communities, for example, but also providing education to children or farmers on nature restoration, or the creation of food forests. We could perfectly well use drones to plant trees, but we choose not to. We want local people to do it, so they benefit from it as well.

**"We all use plastics, so we all have an impact on the climate."**

### **Go Forest has a low threshold. But is planting trees not distracting companies from tackling their own impact reduction?**

We definitely don't intend to distract them. What we see is that tree-planting projects often work as a motivator and an accelerator. For many companies, planting trees is a first sustainability project, especially with smaller SMEs. Then they see what an impact they can make, and they're inspired to do more. That's the beauty of Go Forest. But we just as well have companies that are already doing a lot. Those companies see tree-planting as something in parallel with other sustainability efforts.

But I understand the danger of greenwashing, I like to call it *tree-washing*. The fact is: planting trees is not greenwashing. It's the extent of transparency in how you communicate about it all. That's why we also offer our online *credibili-tree* tool. It's a way to calculate your recommended minimum number of trees, in accordance with your industry and number of employees.

### **How do you feel about working together with B.I.G. Yarns, a company that uses plastics as raw material?**

We are all consumers, we all use plastics. So, we all have an impact on the climate. Of course, we have a

list of companies we do not tend to work with. But there's a great mid-field of companies – about 80% of companies – who are aware of the impact they make on the climate, but want to give something back. But I admit it's not always an easy decision to make.

### **Do you think the industry is doing enough to reduce its climate impact?**

I don't think so. Unlike B.I.G. Yarns, many companies are not intrinsically motivated and are just waiting to see what climate change obligations will come their way. But I think that those who are not proactively working on climate-friendly solutions already, will be in trouble soon. Many companies seem to think they have the luxury of an easy start, that they can take climate actions in due course. But what about the past? The CO<sub>2</sub> we emitted 30 years ago, that's what we are feeling today. We should be more aware of that retardant effect.

### **What inspires you to keep Go Forest going?**

We still have so much work to do, but I try to focus on the good things. What inspires me is the many companies and individuals who are already making a difference today. They are the true ambassadors of sustainability. Also, I see a younger generation that truly wants to change things, and that demands change from our companies and world leaders. We can do it, but I think it will need to happen through a combination of technological innovation and man-made nature recovery projects.








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