



Your partner
in progress

Thirst for change

Accelerating progress to a water secure future
in the retail sector



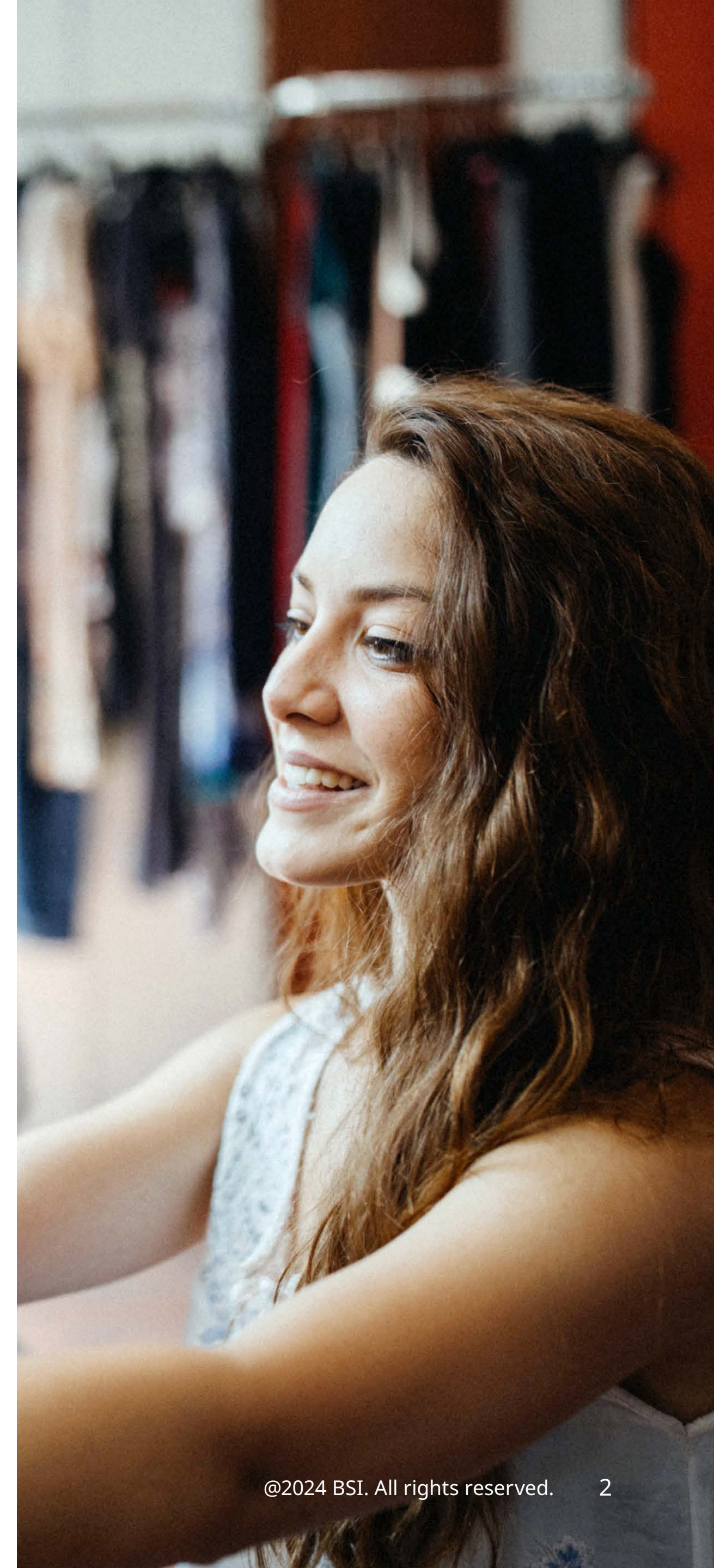
Todd Redwood
Global Managing Director
– Consumer, Retail & Food,
BSI

Water has many uses in the retail sector, throughout the supply chain for manufacturing goods to the operation of retail facilities such as factories and customer-facing stores. Alone these might not feel significant but, combined, water use in the retail sector is estimated to account for nearly a fifth of public water supplies globally.

But the retail sector is nothing if not adaptable, and there are many solutions that can be adopted to minimize its impact on the water supply. From making more sustainable material choices, to implementing water saving technology in the production and retail facilities, or adopting a circular mindset and encouraging consumers to reuse goods, small changes can have a sizeable impact. And, as a customer-facing sector, retail is also well positioned to inspire positive action on water security amongst consumers.

This is because consumers are increasingly cognizant of sustainability claims, with many opting to purchase goods from brands that can demonstrate their sustainability credentials over those that do not. When it comes to fashion, consumers are particularly interested in water security. BSI's research finds that more than two thirds of people are keen to purchase clothing made from less water intensive materials and that they would be more willing to purchase clothes from a brand demonstrating positive action on water efficiency. This presents an opportunity for retail organizations to engage customers in their sustainability stories and reap commercial benefits.

With complex supply chains and necessary uses of water, achieving water security in the retail sector won't happen overnight. However, by focusing on solutions now, the sector can begin the journey and empower consumers to make more sustainable choices, ultimately accelerating progress towards a water secure world for all.

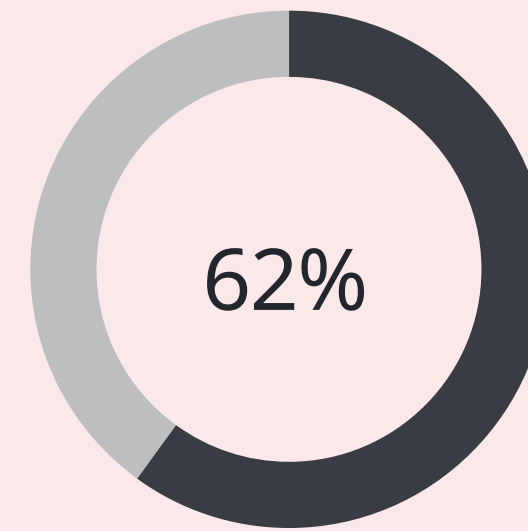


Public purchasing decisions associated with water security measures

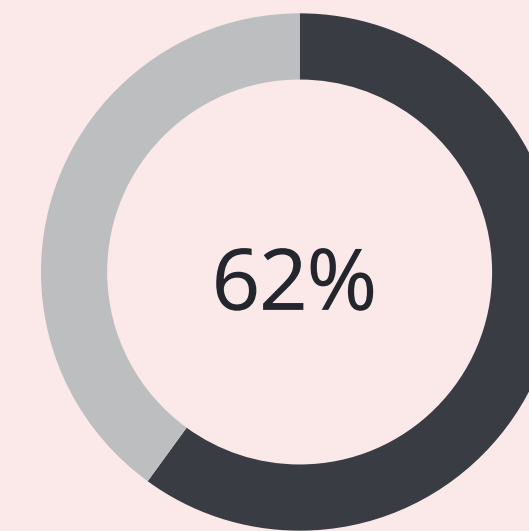
Consumers make purchasing decisions every day, and BSI research suggests that sustainability is increasingly becoming a consideration, with nearly two thirds globally (62%) seeking out sustainability claims when purchasing goods. While perhaps lower on the agenda than climate change, water security is nonetheless part of this, with 73% saying they would be willing to change their consumer habits to support businesses acting on water efficiency if it doesn't come at an extra cost. When asked about water labelling and its potential to inform them about how to make sustainable purchasing decisions, three quarters of people backed this as a solution.

Given the water footprint of clothing production, it is encouraging to find that more than two thirds (67%) of people say they would be more likely to purchase an item of clothing that has used less water intensive materials such as recycled cotton, organic cotton or linen over an item that has not, even at an extra cost. Similarly, 66% say they would be more willing to purchase clothes from a brand that demonstrates positive water action on water efficiency over a brand that does not, even at an extra cost.

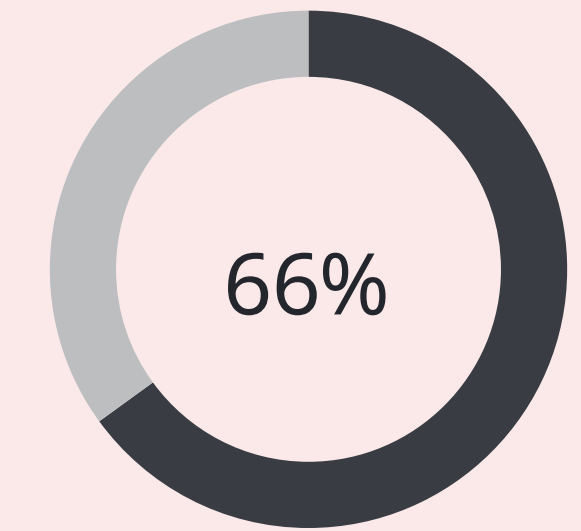
It will be key for the retail sector to focus on underpinning sustainability claims with credible assurance and ensuring there is no suggestion of greenwashing, as 70% of people say they are conscious of businesses making misleading environmental claims. Yet three quarters (74%) are more likely to trust a business' environmental claims if they can provide evidence verification and/or certification to validate the claims.



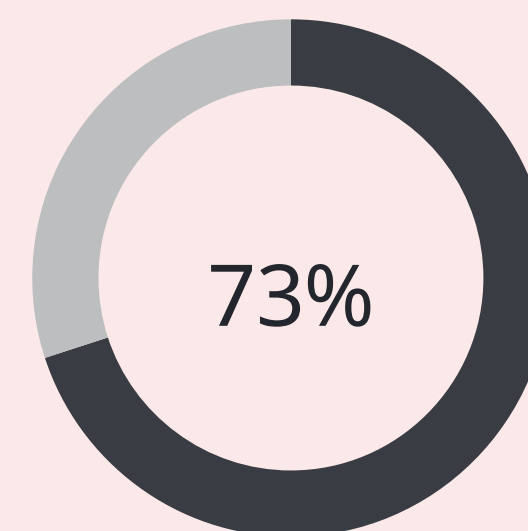
seek out sustainability claims when purchasing goods



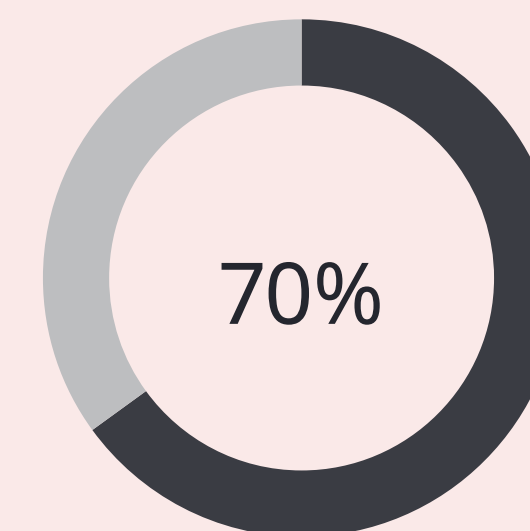
more likely to purchase an item of clothing that has used less water intensive materials



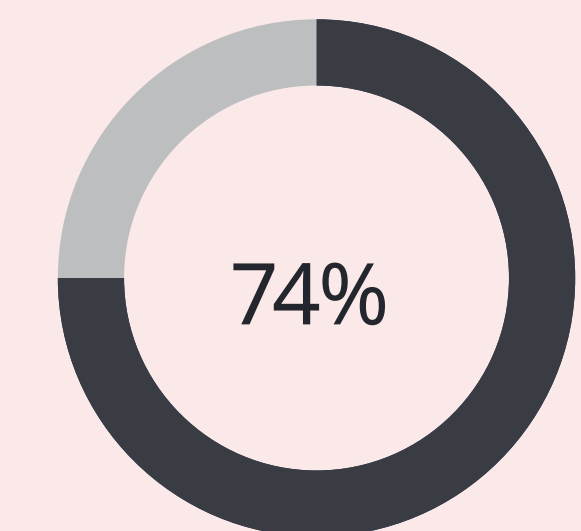
more willing to purchase clothes from a brand that demonstrates positive water action



willing to change their consumer habits to support businesses acting on water efficiency



conscious of businesses making misleading environmental claims



trust a business' environmental claims if evidence, verification and/or certification is provided

Water security solutions



Recommendations for the retail sector from Titi Susanti, BSI Global Director, Consumer, Retail & Food.

Titi has over 20 years of experience supporting the textile, fashion, and retail industries in sustainable product development and sustainable practices.

Make use of sustainable materials

Where possible, choose materials such as recycled cotton, organic cotton or other less water intensive materials such as bamboo, Tencel and linen.

Embrace water saving technology

Use high-pressure, low volume cleaning systems and consider installing rainwater harvesting systems at retail facilities to collect and store rainwater for use in non-potable applications. Additionally, invest in water efficient equipment and install water metering and leak detection systems at retail facilities to monitor usage and reduce wastage.

Water recycling

Implement systems to recycle and reuse water in manufacturing processes. For example water used in cooling can be treated and reused for cleaning or irrigation. Replace open-loop cooling systems with closed-loop systems that will recycle the water used for cooling.

Water management plans

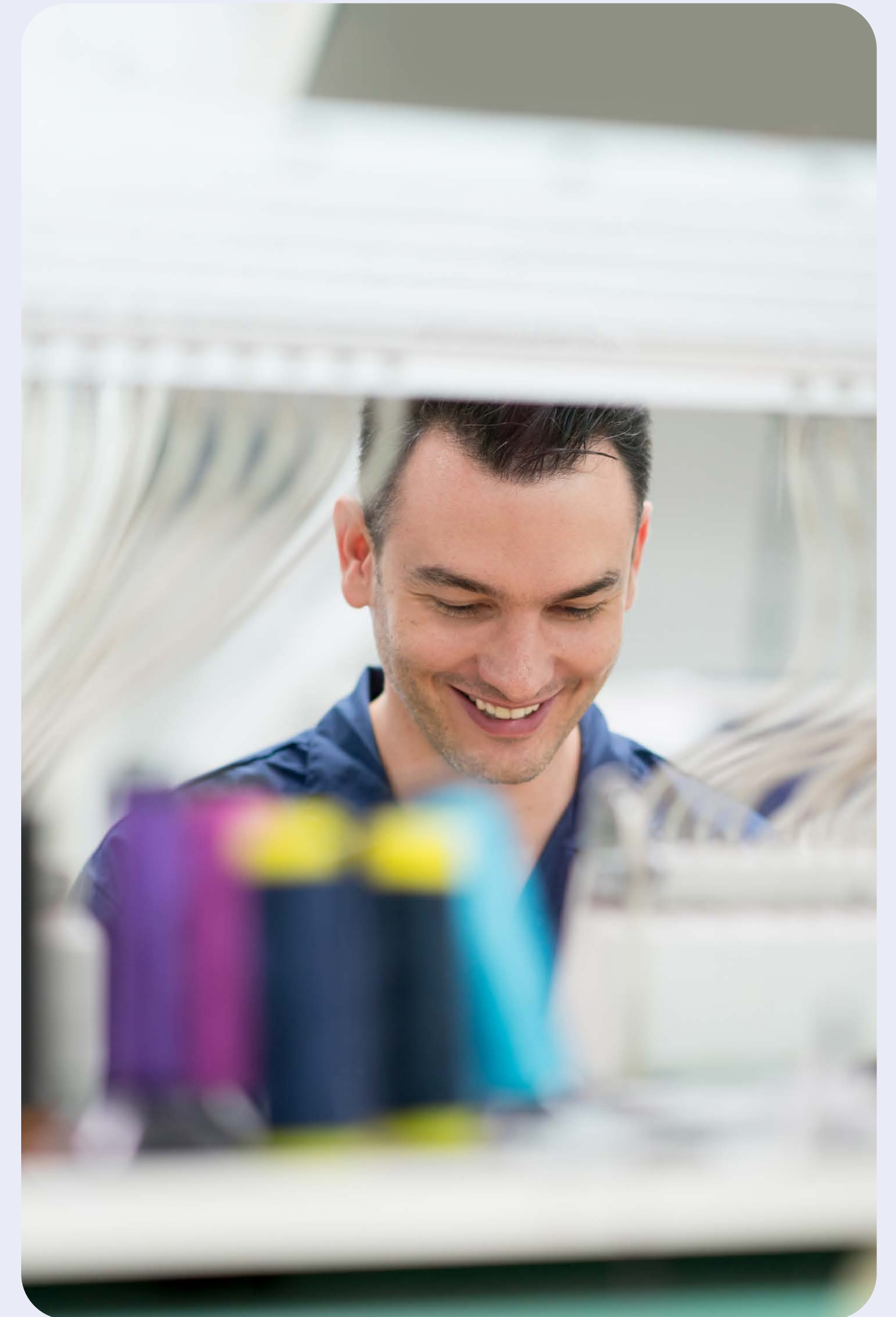
Implement a water management plan across retail operations from manufacturing processes to operating retail sites.

Water-saving technologies in the textile industry

The textile industry is extremely water-intensive, accounting for 4% of global water consumption¹, and 20% of global water pollution². In particular, the dyeing and finishing processes, are significant contributors to water pollution.

However great strides are being made by retail manufacturers and the wider supply chain, with innovative water-saving solutions being put forward by sustainability-conscious textile producers to cut water use and reduce pollution. For example, SIAM NITORI, a Thailand-based manufacturer of carpets from recycled plastics, has developed a waterless dyeing process that integrates dye pigments directly into recycled raw materials, eliminating water consumption and effluent. Similarly, Jeanologia, a Spanish textile technology company, has developed several

water-saving innovations, including water recycling units and laser and ozone technologies that remove the need for water- and chemical-intensive dyeing and finishing methods. Using Jeanologia's technology it is possible to reduce water consumption in the textile finishing process down to a single litre from 100. Major fashion retailers like H&M have taken note and developed water-conscious collections.



1 [Closed-Loop Tech Aims to Change Textile Industry's Water Use from 'Waste2Fresh'](#), Sustainable Brands, accessed September 2024

2 [The impact of textile production and waste on the environment \(infographics\)](#), European Parliament, accessed September 2024



Find out more about sustainability in the **consumer & retail sectors**

Explore the **Thirst for Change campaign**

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