London’s sixth annual Future Fabrics Expo (January 25-26) focused on showcasing and promoting world-leading sustainable materials and research for fashion. The event hosted a diverse selection of textiles, fibres and products that embody a range of eco-friendly principles and new technologies.

Curated by not-for-profit organisation The Sustainable Angle, individual fabrics are sourced from suppliers and mills that demonstrate a commitment to lowering environmental impact across the textile supply chain. Each fabric meets criteria based on water, waste or energy consumption and biodiversity. A labelling system of symbols helps visitors to navigate the samples.

Two key material innovations centred on repurposing waste. Italian start-ups Orange Fiber and Frumat produce sustainable textiles made of byproducts from the food industry. Orange Fiber transforms post-industrial waste citrus peel into a textile made of orange cellulose fibre and silk, while Frumat transforms leftover apple into a tactile, leather-like material for use in accessories.
Working with local communities, Brazilian designer Flavia Andreu has produced Folha Semi-Artefato (Semi-Artefact Rubber Sheet). The durable, rubber-lined textile is made of latex collected from trees in the Amazon rainforest, and finished with Amazonian beeswax and natural essences. See our blog post Studio Swine: Fordlandia Exhibition for more material investigations into natural rubber.

Another Stylus favourite is London/Berlin-based start-up Doppelhaus, which felts ethically sourced British wool using non-woven technology. The entire process requires fewer steps, no additives and less water. By presenting natural-coloured felts printed with pastel colours and metallic foil patterns, the company has carved out a space for non-wovens with fashion-focused aesthetics.

Amid growing concerns around diminishing resources, increasing global demand and unsteady prices, the event presents a future where resources can be managed wisely and cost effectively, and sustainability can be seen as a positive game changer.

For more innovative material developments, see Materials Focus 2018/19.
About Stylus

Stylus is a global innovation research and advisory firm, which works with businesses to stimulate innovation and growth. Our team of researchers identify and analyse the latest consumer lifestyle, product design and customer engagement trends across 20+ industries. The reports we publish provide commercial insight for 300+ global brands and agencies, making Stylus an essential resource for professionals in innovation, planning, strategy, product design and marketing roles.