

## The Denim Project.

# Upcycling Excess Textiles

The Upcycled Denim Project breathes new life into excess textiles, specifically 15,000+ pounds of rejected jeans, which would otherwise end up in the landfill. This Project

brought together the will to divert material away from the landfill together with CheckSammy's network of reverse logistics and bespoke recycling facilities.

## The Problem

Textile recycling is a global problem, with many local impacts. Manufacturers, retailers, and end consumers are beginning to recognize the need for more sustainable practices when it comes to textiles, but even so, it's not easy to achieve sustainable outcomes and the uptake has been slow.

At CheckSammy, we're on the front-line of textile recycling because we hear it from our clients – whether you're a manufacturer, retailer, or an end consumer, finding a path to sustainable recycling for your excess or worn textiles is a major challenge.



With our nationwide network of more than 25,000 recycling and reverse logistics facilities, there are countless options when it comes to repurposing textiles, and that plethora of choices can be just another problem to account for. Our solutions focus on sustainable and local solutions. There's a significant cost in shipping textiles halfway around the world, both financial and environmental costs, especially when we have solutions located much closer to the source.

## The industry unpacked

The textile challenge is much more pressing than many are aware. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the global textile industry produces close to 92 million tons of textile waste annually – and that's excluding end of life of worn garments. To make matters even worse, the World Bank recently reported that the amount of solid waste generated by the global textile industry is expected to increase a whopping 60% by 2030. Both California and Massachusetts are enacting legislation to restrict the ability to dispose of textile waste in landfills – and that's where CheckSammy can most directly help brands in search of solutions.

A study by the European Commission estimates that the economic cost of textile waste in the European Union is

€143 billion per year – taking a substantial bite out of revenue, and the Global Fashion Agenda and Boston Consulting Group estimate that the economic cost of textile waste in the fashion industry is a staggering \$500 billion per year!

Holistically, the textile industry is plagued with the ill of excess – overproduction, overconsumption, and a lack of sustainable disposal options. In this context, we were excited to implement a solution for a client who was looking to sustainably repurpose over 15,000 pounds of rejected denim jeans.

## WHY DENIM, YOU ASK?

The “water footprint” of denim is enormous, from growing cotton to dyeing it, then laundering finished products. Did you know that manufacturing one pair of jeans takes up to **1,000 gallons of water**? That's a lot of water used, and a lot of reasons why providing a useful life for this material, which was otherwise destined for the landfill, is so impactful.

With 10,000 pairs of denim jeans in hand, we sought a sustainable solution and landed on a partnership with InJEANious Designs, NC – a microbusiness of Red Ridge, NC – who creates handmade products from 100% upcycled, post-consumer waste jeans. Red Ridge is a startup NGO, whose microbusinesses and programs focus on engagement, education, and employment in their community to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world through mobilizing their programs, microbusinesses, and partners.

When InJEANious Designs was selected to receive the shipment of denim, it was great news for Red Ridge. **“Having access to a seemingly unlimited supply of denim means we can eliminate the need to focus on sourcing our primary raw material and concentrate instead on design, production, marketing, and distribution,”** said Chandler Holland, Founder and Director at Red Ridge. “This is very significant for a startup our size!”

InJEANious Designs was able to accept the denim and are refashioning it into a wide variety of functional and whimsical items made from upcycled post-consumer waste jeans, creating a boost for their local economy and dramatically impacting their bottom line! Not only that, but the over 8 million pounds of water that went into manufacturing the rejected denim has now found a new life and new purpose.

## Conclusion

While textile waste is far from being a problem of the past, it will take coordinated efforts from all impacted stakeholders, including governments, industry, consumers, and civil society, to broaden the discourse and address the excess.

CheckSammy can tie all these stakeholders together, and execute on outcomes that are environmentally, socially, and fiscally responsible. CheckSammy Drop is

our Sustainability Program that unites all of our material collection and repurposing projects under one roof, whether it's textiles, eWaste, or other industrial materials such as plastic, metal, or cardboard.

For now, The Upcycled Denim Project will continue to bring repurposed joy to the hearts of many, while we collectively work to implement more Drop projects across manufacturers, retailers, and more locations.

