

Vision and mission

TAL Apparel, a leading garment manufacturer and early adopter of many environmentally conscious practices, has been quick to sign on as a member of the Sustainable Fashion Business Consortium (SFBC) and throw its weight behind the various initiatives.

"We have been pushing 'green' operational issues for some time, including recycling and energy-saving scrubber systems for all of our water operations," said Delman Lee, director of the company. "As the environmental aspect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) continues to gain momentum, we are very excited to be a part of SFBC to help us get to the next level and to share our experiences with others." With



nearly 25,000 staff worldwide, the company produces more than 55 million items annually, and works with international brands and stores, such as Burberry, Brooks Brothers and LL Bean. These relationships

have provided additional impetus in investigating and implementing CSR programmes.

As a staunch supporter of the SFBC's carbon accounting project, TAL will initially focus on reducing the carbon footprint in its own factories. By mapping out the entire production process, it aims to understand carbon footprinting from beginning to end. In a pilot programme with another SFBC member, the company is using leftover materials to make recycled denim fabric. Results have been encouraging. An additional benefit is that the amount of carbon created by the recycling should be minimal.

The company has linked up with Business for Social Responsibility, which will conduct an in-depth "audit" of practices in a bid to recommend and establish further practical and long-lasting initiatives.

While each TAL office and factory around the world adopts its own localised CSR programme, the company expects them to be based on a common code of conduct. The starting point is education and an emphasis on making people aware of their responsibilities and commitment to getting the small details correct, such as choosing the right types of light bulb and minimising the use of packaging materials.

"Our goal is to run an economically viable and environmentally sustainable business and share these accomplishments," Dr Lee said. "For us, it's not an initiative, it's a mission."