

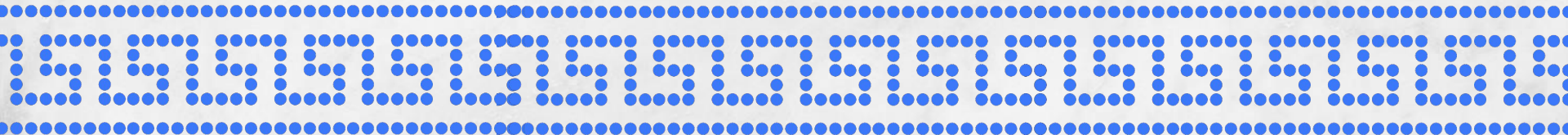
Executive Summary:

Cascale Annual Meeting

Athens, Greece

September 15–17, 2026

**Value Chain Transformation: Who Pays, Who Profits,
and What Changes**



Reflections from Athens



Every Annual Meeting has a question at its center. This year's was an uncomfortable one, and we stayed on it for three days: who pays for this transformation, who profits from it, and what actually has to change?

600 attendees, 75 speakers across five stages and meeting rooms, 27 sponsors. Athens was the right place to ask. Greece's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Harry Theoharis, opened Day Two by reminding us that a sustainable supply chain has to work economically for everyone in it — farmer, producer, manufacturer, retailer, investor, consumer. For a country positioning itself as a bridge between European markets and global supply chains, that is not an abstract point.

Thank you to the attendees, speakers, sponsors, and the Cascale team who made it happen. Moving the needle on climate change and supporting decent work for all takes every part of the value chain at the table — not most of it, and not only the parts that find it easiest. As our CEO Ying McGuire put it from the Main Stage: Cascale does not belong to a few. It belongs to the community.

Three days of honest, difficult, hopeful conversation. Thank you for it. We'll see you next year in Bangkok, Thailand.

Lee Green
VP, Marketing, Communications & Public Affairs

Executive Summary **Contents**



• Reflections from Athens	2	• Stage & Room Summaries	62
• Three Days, One Question	4	◦ Impact Stage	63
• Networking Moments	5	◦ Worldly Stage	69
• Welcome Reception	7	◦ Collaboration Stage	80
• Sponsors in Action	8	◦ Transformation & Summit Rooms	87
• Wellness Sessions	12	• The Executive Track	92
• Our Emcees	13	• Closing Dinner Reception	93
• Main Stage	14	• Field Trip: Cotton Experience	94
◦ Day One	15	• Thank You to Our Sponsors	95
◦ Day Two	30	• Next Year: Bangkok	96
◦ Day Three	47		

Three Days, One Question

Leaders from across the value chain gathered in Athens and online this September to confront a question the industry has debated for years but rarely answered directly: what commercial and partnership models will actually help brands and manufacturers prioritize, finance, and scale solutions for decarbonization, resilient supply chains, and decent work?

Across three days and five stages, Cascale's membership moved that question from keynote to closed-door roundtable, debating it as often from the audience as from the podium. New CEO Ying McGuire used the meeting to open that debate, introducing a refreshed industry systems map that members spent the week stress-testing, reshaping and, in several sessions, rewriting from the floor.

3

Days of sessions, roundtables and workshops

600

Attendees in Athens and online

3,250

Minutes of content multiple stages and meeting rooms

27

Sponsors and partners, led by Worldly

23

Hours of networking away from the planned program content

Networking Moments



Networking Moments



Welcome Reception

Day One ran a half day, from noon, and it did not ease anyone in. Ying McGuire opened by arguing that no company can decarbonize alone. Sandrine Dixon-Declève reframed the decade. The industry's systems map was pressure-tested on stage, and Jeremy Lardeau closed by reciting the meeting's question in full.

Then Cascale convened the Welcome Reception, and the conversation carried on without microphones. Brands and manufacturers, investors and service providers, NGOs and academics, in a room together on their first evening in Athens with the week's hardest question already on the table.



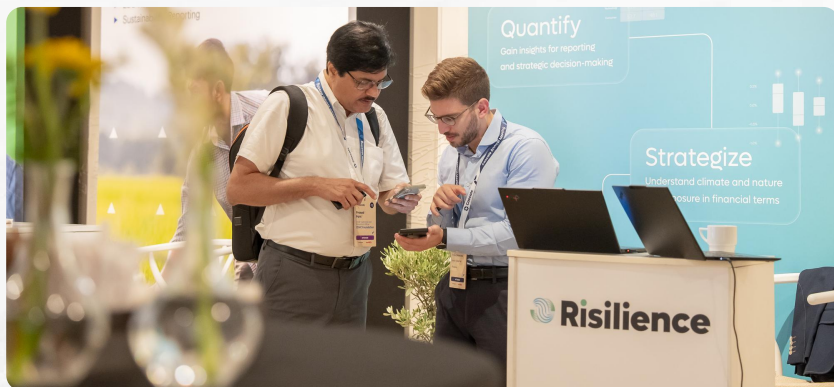
Sponsors in Action



Sponsors in Action



Sponsors in Action



Sponsors in Action



Wellness Sessions

Nike returned as the wellness sponsor for the Annual Meeting 2026, sharpening the agenda with movement and restorative sessions to help attendees navigate three days of packed programming.

From the returning favorites, the Nike Run and Morning Yoga session, to the newly-introduced Namaste in the Main Stage, attendees had the chance to bring a new energy to the day ahead.



Our Emcees

An emcee's work only shows when it goes wrong. Ours never did. Isabelle Kumar held the Main Stage, Fleur Meerman – van den Heuvel the Collaboration Stage, and James Schaffer the Worldly Stage — keeping three days to time, drawing speakers out, and reading each room well enough to know when a question needed asking and when to let a conversation run.

Thank you to all three.



Day One

Relive the Annual Meeting 2026 with the full Main Stage session summaries.





Opening **Video**



DAY ONE

Opening Address: A New Perspective on Our Shared Industry Realities

Cascale's CEO Reflects on Her First Months and the Realities Facing Members

Speakers:

- Ying McGuire – CEO, Cascale

In her first Annual Meeting as chief executive, Ying McGuire argued that no single company can decarbonize its supply chain alone, telling the room “the climate does not stop at a factory’s gate. And labor rights cannot stop at Tier 1.” McGuire framed Cascale’s role as bringing brands, manufacturers, investors, policymakers, NGOs, and academia together around problems no one player can solve in isolation.



She said the organization's next chapter means "turning measurement into insights, insights into investment, action, and measurable results," pushing Cascale past data collection and toward outcomes members can act on. McGuire positioned Cascale as shared infrastructure rather than another industry initiative, one where manufacturers are treated as partners and success is judged by what changes on the ground, closing by reminding the room the organization belongs to its whole community, not to a few.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Industry challenges are interconnected and demand collective action
- ✓ Cascale is shifting from measurement to measurable action
- ✓ Cascale is shared infrastructure, not another initiative

“*Cascale does not belong to a few. It belongs to the community.*
— Ying McGuire



DAY ONE

Keynote: The New Operating Reality

Systems Thinker Unpacked the Forces Redefining Business Resilience

Speakers:

- Sandrine Dixon-Declève – Honorary President, Club of Rome; Executive Chair and Author, Earth4All

Sandrine Dixon-Declève argued that environmental and social progress cannot be separated, telling attendees, “The speed of action on planetary boundaries is an absolute function of the speed of action on inequality and poverty.” She called on companies to look beyond their own sector, building partnerships across industries, governments, and value chains to address consumption, materials, ownership models, and the broader economic systems driving environmental impact.



Despite the scale of the challenges, Dixon-Declève framed the moment as an opportunity rather than a reason for despair, calling it “the greatest decade of building bridges, and hope, and alternative futures that we’ve ever faced in our entire lifetimes.” Her keynote set a macro frame for the systems-mapping work Cascale introduced later that day, closing on a note that balanced realism with resolve.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Environmental and social progress are inseparable goals
- ✓ Companies urged to look beyond their own sector for solutions
- ✓ Framed as a decade for hope, not complacency or despair

“ *There is too much bad news to justify complacency, but there’s too much good news to justify despair.*

— **Sandrine Dixon-Declève**



Cascale Annual Meeting 2026 | Athens



Executive Summary

DAY ONE

What We're Hearing — and Where We Go Next

Fireside Chat Surfaced Early Reflections From Cascale's New CEO

Speakers:

- Isabelle Kumar – Award-Winning Journalist and Moderator
- Dr. Delman Lee – Vice Chair, TAL Apparel Ltd.
- Ying McGuire – CEO, Cascale

Moderated by Isabelle Kumar, this fireside chat put McGuire and board member Delman Lee in front of the barriers still slowing transformation. McGuire went straight to the financing tension. A brand asks a manufacturer to invest in renewable energy or an electric boiler; the manufacturer has to work out whether the economics hold, and the question that settles it is short: "Do I have a contract?"



Dr. Lee pushed the room toward candor for the days ahead, asking for open, robust conversation about the barriers rather than polite agreement. McGuire named what had surprised her most since taking the role — how widely Cascale's standardized methodology has already been adopted: "no other industry can match this." Between them they set up the financing and business-value questions that returned to the Main Stage all week.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Manufacturers need contract certainty before committing capital
- ✓ We need an open, robust conversation about the barriers
- ✓ Cascale's adoption rate is unmatched in any industry

I really encourage everyone in the conference to have some open, robust conversation about some of the barriers.

— Dr. Delman Lee

I was surprised to see that the massive adoption rate, as the standardized methodology framework, Cascale has. No other industry can match this.

— Ying McGuire



DAY ONE

Transformation Isn't Stalled. It's Misaligned.

Leaders Pressure-Tested New Industry Systems Map

Speakers:

- Ying McGuire – CEO, Cascale
- Marshall Clemens – Principal, Nexial
- Rick Ridgeway – President, Rick Ridgeway Productions, Inc.
- Scott Raskin – CEO, Worldly

Central to Cascale's origins (then the SAC) was a systems map portraying major industry barriers. Moderated by McGuire, this panel reunited Cascale with Marshall Clemens, whose team built the industry's original systems map 12 years ago, alongside board member Rick Ridgeway and Worldly chief executive Scott Raskin. Ridgeway called the original map the product of "hundreds and hundreds of thousands of hours of deep, deep interviews," while Clemens argued the update needed to confront an uncomfortable reality: "there is very little real evidence that relative decoupling is happening — in this industry or any industry."



Raskin drew the line between the two organizations, describing Cascale as the convener of the industry's common methodology and Worldly as the platform that deploys and scales it. Clemens pressed the room to see people beyond their roles as customers, arguing "we have to stop treating people as just customers," and closed by reminding attendees the map itself is only a tool for the collective work ahead. Sandrine Dixon-Declève joined near the end to flag fossil-fuel windfall profits as the system's costliest misalignment. McGuire's closer drew the loudest reaction: "Economy is the wholly owned subsidiary of the environment. Not the other way around."

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Collective action is essential to unlocking solutions
- ✓ Panel said little evidence of real decoupling exists in the industry
- ✓ Cascale convenes the common methodology; Worldly scales it



We need collective action to unlock the solutions that none of us can achieve on our own.

— **Marshall Clemens**



Your vision was not to create a great data tool. Your vision was to create a sustainably operating supply chain. And the data was just a tool for that.

— **Ying McGuire**



DAY ONE

Transformation Crossroads: What Must Leaders Prepare For Now?

Executive Crossfire Live-Polled the Room on the Industry's Biggest Pressures

Speakers:

- Isabelle Kumar – Award-Winning Journalist and Moderator
- Harsh Saini – Former Interim Chief Executive Officer, Cascale
- Quentin Thorel – Deputy Chief Executive Officer and General Manager, Aquarelle – Laguna
- Rick Horwitch – Chief of Sustainability & Supply Chain Strategy, Bureau Veritas
- Dr. Thiwanka De Fonseka – Chief Sustainability Officer, Komar

Moderated by Isabelle Kumar, this live-polling crossfire asked the room to name the biggest external pressures facing the industry over the next five years. Geopolitical disruption, economic value, and climate change topped the list, while AI and traceability tied for lowest.



Former interim chief executive Harsh Saini defended AI's uneven reputation: "we will have another revolution that allows people to be gainfully employed. I think we just don't know what AI will do just yet." Bureau Veritas' Rick Horwitch drew on his manufacturing roots, arguing change requires you to "see it and feel it," while Aquarelle-Laguna's Quentin Thorel stressed that "collective action and partnership are so critical across the value chain." Komar's Thiwanka De Fonseka pushed the panel toward integration, asking how many organizations have sustainability KPIs outside the sustainability team, and warning that "sustainability should not be only on the minimum compliance."

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Geopolitical disruption, economic value and climate topped audience concerns
- ✓ AI drew both optimism and uncertainty despite ranking as low pressure
- ✓ Panel called for sustainability KPIs across every department



People think sustainability is the role only of the sustainability team...Sustainability is speaking one language and sourcing another.

— Dr. Thiwanka De Fonseka



DAY ONE

Worldly Product Keynote | Above the Line

Product Roadmap Traced a Line From 1800s Shipping Safety to the Higg Index

Speakers:

- Kevin Vranes – Chief Product Officer, Worldly
- Kathryn Smith – VP, Human Rights Risk Solutions, Worldly
- Mandeep Soor – VP of Product, Worldly

Sponsored by:



Worldly's product team opened with a 19th-century analogy: British reformer Samuel Plimsoll's load line, a simple painted mark that made a ship's safety visible to anyone on the dock. Kevin Vranes used it to frame the Higg Index's role in the industry today, noting that reported regulatory pressure on sourcing decisions has jumped from 31% of respondents in 2016 to 76% now.



He walked through four compliance domains — environmental, social, chemical, and product impact — including outlier-detection improvements in the Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) and the BHive chemical intelligence platform. Kathryn Smith demonstrated Worldly's Axion platform, including adverse media screening and AI-driven corrective action plans, arguing "audits only get you so far. The true value in the audit is fixing the results." Mandeep Soor closed by connecting product-level regulation, including the Digital Product Passport and Product Environmental Footprint, to facility-level data, framing the stakes plainly: "behind every data point is a person... that's responsibility made possible."

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Regulatory pressure on sourcing jumped from 31% to 76% since 2016
- ✓ Axion platform adds adverse media screening and AI corrective actions
- ✓ Product passport and facility data are converging on Worldly's roadmap

“When you think about this industry's Plimsoll line, it's the Higg Index.

— Kevin Vranes



DAY ONE

Closing Reflection: What Comes After Recognition?

SVP Recapped Day One and Reframed the Industry's Central Tension

Speakers:

- Jeremy Lardeau – Senior Vice President, Industry Activation & Growth, Cascale

Closing the first day, Cascale's Jeremy Lardeau recited the meeting's problem statement in full: what commercial and partnership models will help brands and manufacturers prioritize, finance and scale solutions for decarbonization, resilient supply chains, and decent work, and who pays, who profits, and what must change?



He reflected on the cost-versus-value tension running through the day's sessions, calling out the need for fair purchasing practices, regulation, and collective action as the "crux of the problem." Lardeau walked through the day's tensions, including Sandrine Dixon-Declève's framing of an overlying "ego system" pitting individual action against public good, and pointed ahead to the systems-map work still to come. His close was an invitation rather than a summary: "Cascale is not just for you, we're here to work with you."

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Recited the meeting's full problem statement to close Day One
- ✓ Named fair purchasing practices and regulation as the core tension
- ✓ Framed the week as an invitation, not just a recap

Cascale is not just for you, we're here to work with you.
— **Jeremy Lardeau**



Day Two

Greece's welcome address, the sourcing terms behind resilient supply chains, and the financing question at the center of the week.



DAY TWO

Opening Address from the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece

Greece Positioned Itself as a Bridge for a Resilient Value Chain

Speakers:

- Harry Theoharis – Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Greece

Harry Theoharis welcomed Cascale's global community to Athens by arguing that competitiveness and sustainability can no longer be treated as separate agendas: "the challenge is, therefore, to bring the two together, to make sustainability investable, measurable, and economically viable." He called for better data and transparency across supply chains, noting that "companies need reliable information across their supply chains. Investors need comparable metrics. Governments need evidence on which to design effective policy."



Theoharis argued transformation cannot simply be pushed from one part of the supply chain to another, and that costs, risks and benefits must be distributed in ways that create incentives for investment throughout the system. He positioned Greece as a potential production, investment, logistics and connectivity hub linking Europe, Southeastern Europe, and the Mediterranean, pointing to cotton as a direct link between Greek agriculture and the global consumer goods value chain.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Competitiveness and sustainability must be pursued together
- ✓ Better data and transparency named as prerequisites for investment
- ✓ Greece positioned as a bridge between European and global supply chains



Resilience is built through cooperation, competitiveness is built through investment, and sustainable transformation is built when our mission becomes implementation.

— Harry Theoharis



DAY TWO

Centralizing the Producer's Reality — Sourcing Terms for a Resilient Future

Panel Confronted the Mismatch Between Payback Periods and Contract Length

Speakers:

- Krishna Manda – Global Head of Sustainability, Lenzing Group
- Asif Khan – Executive Director, Supply Chain & Sustainability, Mondetta Canada Inc.
- Matthew Guenther – Vice President Corporate Sustainability, TAL Apparel Ltd.
- Priyanka Khanna – Innovation Director, Fashion for Good

Moderated by Lenzing's Krishna Manda, this Main Stage conversation confronted the mismatch between long decarbonization payback periods and short-term buying relationships. Mondetta's Asif Khan argued the commercial relationship has to change first: "if you have season-to-season buying, that doesn't build confidence... if you have a long-term partnership, that gives you confidence to invest."



Fashion for Good's Priyanka Khanna pointed to cluster-level solutions, noting manufacturers in the same product and geography often face nearly identical utility, energy, and machinery needs: "the interventions are very similar." Manda closed by posing the question at the heart of the panel: "how do we create conditions to create the confidence by the value chain partners, to invest and scale this transformation process?" The discussion reinforced a theme running through the meeting: unlocking manufacturer investment depends less on capital availability than on the length and certainty of the commercial relationships built around it.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Long-term partnerships build the confidence needed to invest
- ✓ Cluster-level solutions can create shared infrastructure across manufacturers
- ✓ Contract length seen as a bigger lever than capital availability



It's not necessarily the capital expenditure that's the roadblock, it's the operational expenditure.

— **Matthew Guenther**



We can't always give a long-term order commitment, but what we can give is visibility on demand. We can improve forecasting and work together on cost-sharing for certain projects. That gives suppliers the assurance to invest.

— **Asif Khan**



DAY TWO

What Changed When Sustainability Started Affecting Commercial Decisions?

Tapestry's ESG Chief Described Moving From Compliance to Commercial Partner

Speakers:

- Sarah Krasley – Fellow, Cornell ILR; Founder, Shimmy Technologies
- Logan Duran – Global Head of ESG and Sustainability, Tapestry, Inc.

Facilitated by Cornell's Sarah Krasley, this session asked what happens when sustainability stops being a compliance function and starts shaping commercial decisions. Tapestry's Logan Duran offered a structural answer: his team moved out of the legal department in 2022 and into the supply chain, reporting to the chief supply chain officer — a shift from reactive hurdle to proactive business partner.



Duran uses the Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) as a foundation for performance conversations, noting that weak social and environmental scores often track with weak delivery and quality, and now weights those metrics into manufacturer scorecards. He judges initiatives against a “Style, Performance, Impact” test – customer appeal, cost and quality, measurable benefit – arguing circularity earns its place the same way; Coach (Re)Loved and Coachtopia began as experiments and now stand commercially. His closing counsel: “move as far as you can, as fast as you can, and plant the flag as far down the field.”

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Tapestry moved sustainability into the supply chain function in 2022
- ✓ Higg FEM scores are now weighted into manufacturer scorecards
- ✓ Initiatives are judged on style, performance and impact alike



As a leader, I think there's an opportunity for us to connect the dots across the organization and to not always influence everything but to at least raise the conversation.

— Logan Duran



DAY TWO

From Commitment to Capital Allocation: How Organizations Are Prioritizing Sustainability Investments Under Pressure

Panel Argued Capital Isn't the Constraint — a Fragmented Business Case Is

Speakers:

- Kurt Kipka – Chief Impact Officer, Apparel Impact Institute
- Anna Ryott – Partner and Nordic Chief Impact Officer, EY
- Clair Smith – Global Head of Sustainable Trade Solutions, HSBC Bank Plc
- Hampus Starre Friberg – Head of Sustainability Strategy & Controlling, H&M Group

Moderated by Kurt Kipka of the Apparel Impact Institute, this panel argued capital is not the binding constraint on decarbonization; projects stall because the business case is fragmented across parties, solid for a brand's CFO but not yet a win for the manufacturer or the scale a bank needs. EY's Anna Ryott described boardroom conversations shifting from ambition toward resilience and capital allocation, citing findings that 91% of large European companies report greater investor pressure.



H&M Group's Hampus Starre Friberg said the retailer runs one strategy, not a separate sustainability plan, financing manufacturer projects directly, including replacing a coal boiler with biomass. HSBC's Clair Smith was blunt about what banks need: a plain business case and cash-flow visibility, since manufacturers spend now and see returns later. Kipka closed on the cost of delay, citing a joint report putting 30 to 34% of the bottom line at risk today, rising toward 67% by 2040.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Capital isn't the constraint — a fragmented business case is
- ✓ 91% of large European firms report rising investor pressure
- ✓ Cost of delay could reach 67% of the bottom line by 2040



Energy security takes the lead for me. Invest now in renewables. Have a surety of supply. If you can't keep the lights on, you haven't got a business.

— Clair Smith



Financing decarbonization at scale means capital, business decision-making, and suppliers all moving together as one.

— Kurt Kipka



DAY TWO

Who Pays for Decarbonization and What Would Fair Cost Sharing Actually Look Like?

Open Seat Debate Confronted One of the Industry's Hardest Financing Questions

Speakers:

- Jimmy Christopher – SVP, Sustainability and Innovation, ITL Group
- Oli Orlik – Europe Engagement Manager, Science Based Targets Initiative
- Dr. Thiwanka De Fonseka – Chief Sustainability Officer, Komar

Held under the Chatham House Rule, this open-seat debate put the meeting's central question directly to the room: who should carry the financial risk of manufacturer decarbonization? A live poll captured the split – 11.5% of the room said manufacturers should bear it alone, 57% said brands and manufacturers should share it, and roughly 31% said it depends on who drives the requirement, claims the reduction and receives the return.



Discussion, drawing on the experience of panelists including Christopher, Orlik and De Fonseca, ranged across long-term commercial commitments, aligned demand signals and financing structures suited to different geographies, manufacturer sizes and payback periods. Participants agreed there is no single financing model that fits every case, and that unlocking manufacturer investment depends on the kind of demand visibility only sustained buyer relationships can provide. In keeping with the meeting's theme, the session turned "who pays, who profits, what changes" from a tagline into a live, numbers-backed negotiation among the people who face that question daily.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Live poll showed the room split nearly evenly on who should pay
- ✓ No one-size-fits-all financing model exists across geographies
- ✓ Long-term demand signals seen as key to unlocking investment

Who should carry the primary financial risk for supplier decarbonization investments?

11.5% answered suppliers, 57% said brands and suppliers, and 30.8% "it depends on who drives the requirement, claims the reduction, and receives the return."

— **Live Poll Result**



DAY TWO

When Investment Starts Paying Off

Panel Argued Sustainability Investment Is Now a Basic Cost of Doing Business

Speakers:

- Betsy Blaisdell – Director of Decarbonization, Future Supplier Initiative
- Koen Oosterom – Head of Signatory Engagement, International Accord for Health and Safety in the Garment and Textile Industry
- Nikhil Hirdaramani – Director, Hirdaramani Group
- Nishat Shahid Chowdhury – Project Lead, SA PaCT, International Finance Corporation
- Saqib Shahzad – Head of Sustainability, Sapphire – Diamond Fabrics Limited

Moderated by Betsy Blaisdell, this panel examined where sustainability investment is already paying off for manufacturers. Hirdaramani Group's Nikhil Hirdaramani put it plainly: "sustainability investments have to be on the table if you want to be in business."



Panelists including the International Accord's Koen Oosterom, IFC's Nishat Shahid Chowdhury and Sapphire's Saqib Shahzad discussed returns that extend beyond traditional financial payback, including risk reduction, resilience, customer relationships, and maintaining market access. The group agreed collective action among brands, manufacturers and financial institutions is often what allows manufacturers to clear investment barriers that no single company could clear alone, particularly for longer-term financing tailored to local conditions.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Sustainability investment is becoming a basic cost of doing business
- ✓ Returns extend beyond payback to resilience and market access
- ✓ Collective action helps manufacturers clear investment barriers



Sustainability investments are making us a more cost-effective factory and a better option for brands. If you invest, you are going to stay in business – and you are also going to compete with other factories in Pakistan and in other countries.

— Saqib Shahzad



The real return on investment is lives saved and workers saved from being injured.

— Koen Oosterom



DAY TWO

We Can't Recycle Our Way Out of This

Circular Economist Challenged the Assumptions Behind Today's Growth Models

Speakers:

- Vojtech Vosecky – Founder, The Circular Economists

Vojtech Vosecky opened by polling the room on the circular economy, then asked how many felt confident making the business case for it — only two attendees stayed standing. He used the fast-fashion model to frame the stakes: just 3% of textile inputs come from recycled material against 97% from virgin resources. “Don’t mistake the circular economy for the so-called recycling economy,” Vosecky said. “We can’t recycle our way out of this. It’s not a silver bullet.”



He walked through companies building value through use rather than volume — IKEA doubling the value created by its Karlstad sofa through repairs and covers, Finnish uniform maker Lindström leasing and repairing textiles as a service, and Patagonia's repair program, which generates roughly 1% of revenue but drives outsized loyalty. On recovery, he pointed to H&M-owned recycler Syre's new Vietnam plant, expected to process 250,000 tons of recycled polyester. His closing argument reframed circularity as a strategy for deepening customer relationships, not simply diverting waste from landfill.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Just 3% of textile inputs come from recycled material today
- ✓ Value comes from retaining customers, not just recycling product
- ✓ Circularity framed as a business strategy, not a recycling program



The best customers are the ones that have already bought from you, and circular business models like this one can help you extend this relationship and keep them for longer.

— **Vojtech Vosecky**



DAY TWO

Redesigning the System: What Business Models Will Succeed Next?

Panel Built on the Keynote to Ask Which Business Models Scale Circularity

Speakers:

- Vojtech Vosecky – Founder, The Circular Economists
- Brad Boren – Chief Sustainability Officer & Director of Innovation, Norrøna
- Dimitris Polychronos – President, European Cotton Alliance; CEO, Nafpaktos Textile Industry S.A.
- Marie Måwe – Director Sustainability Stakeholder Engagement, W.L. Gore & Associates

Following his keynote, Vojtech Vosecky moderated this panel on scaling circularity, opening with a stark statistic: only 1% of used textiles globally are recycled back into new textile products. Norrøna's Brad Boren described customers already passing products forward, "father to son to grandson," and said durability and reparability remain the brand's core lever.



Nafpaktos Textile Industry's Dimitris Polychronos spoke to centuries of cotton cultivation in Greece, including reduced water usage to cope with a changing climate, urging both shoppers and sourcers to act responsibly. W.L. Gore's Marie Måwe shared a 70% absolute reduction across Scope 1 and 2 emissions against a 2016 baseline, but named the deeper challenge as structural: "we have to find ways to make it very clear who is profiting from what, who takes costs of depreciation, or operating costs." All three agreed scaling circularity depends on broader partnerships, not individual company effort.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Only 1% of used textiles are recycled into new products today
- ✓ Durability and reparability remain circularity's most reliable lever
- ✓ Scaling circularity requires broader partnerships, not solo effort



To create those successful collaborations, we would need broader partners. It's about partnerships and creating these ventures together.

— Marie Måwe



We see our products resold quite a bit, but we also see generational shifts of our products – father to son to grandson. We're not recording all of these different things but we see that wellmade products can last more than a lifetime

— Brad Boren



Day Three

Decent work, sustainability's pushback, AI's expanding role, and the closing plenary in Athens.



DAY THREE

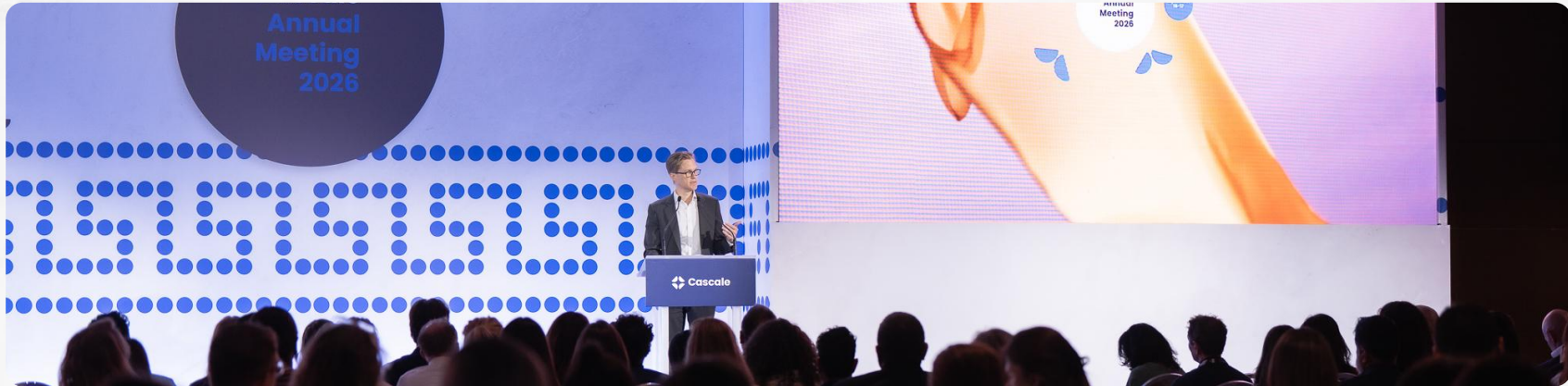
Decent Work in an Indecent Climate

Keynote Argued Labor Instability Carries Risk Like Any Climate Disruption

Speakers:

- Jeff Vockrodt – President and CEO, Fair Labor Association

In a solo keynote, Jeff Vockrodt of the Fair Labor Association argued the industry's climate response will fail workers unless labor and human rights stay at its center. He said labor instability carries the same operational weight as physical disruption: "a supplier that can't retain workers, or faces strikes, or gets caught up in a labor scandal can face the same operational risks as a factory that loses its power grid and gets flooded out."



On heat stress, he noted a 90-degree day can push factory interiors past 100 degrees, with recent heat waves in Bangladesh and Pakistan making indoor conditions hazardous, and urged brands and manufacturers to share the cost of fixes like reflective roofing and shade rather than push it downstream. He argued worker voice is a business asset, not a courtesy, and workers are partners in navigating change. Vockrodt tied the case to a tightening regulatory landscape, including the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), OECD guidelines and the International Accord's move toward a binding heat-stress protocol.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Labor instability carries risk on par with physical disruption
- ✓ Heat waves are already pushing factory interiors past safe limits
- ✓ Regulatory landscape is tightening around labor and climate risk



Consultation with workers in the planning process isn't just a courtesy; it's risk mitigation for the transition itself. If you leave people out, you're not avoiding conflict; you're just postponing it to a later, more expensive, more difficult stage.

— **Jeff Vockrodt**



DAY THREE

Featured Conversation: Remaking Sustainability — Why Pushback Could Strengthen the Next Phase of Transformation

Author Argued the Backlash Against Sustainability Is Partly Self-Inflicted

Speakers:

- Rachel Lincoln Sarnoff – Senior Director, Communications, Cascale
- John Morrison – Author, Remaking Sustainability; Founding CEO, Institute for Human Rights and Business

Moderated by Rachel Lincoln Sarnoff, this featured conversation with author John Morrison argued that the backlash against sustainability is partly self-inflicted. Morrison, founding CEO of the Institute for Human Rights and Business, said the movement overextended ESG and leaned on awareness-raising over action, opening a gap between claim and reality.



He pointed to rural skepticism as a symptom: “the people who are most skeptical about sustainability are people that live in rural areas... they feel the transitions are happening to benefit urban elites.” His central challenge to the room was structural, asking whether companies were “shorting the system” or operating with real systemic awareness. Morrison’s prescription was to rebuild sustainability on principles embedded in trade, finance and technology rather than quarantined in a specialist function. His close reframed the industry’s task from “if” to “when”: the next thirty years, he said, will be defined by delivery, not declaration.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Sustainability’s backlash is partly self-inflicted, Morrison argued
- ✓ Rural communities named as most skeptical of the current agenda
- ✓ Next thirty years will be defined by delivery, not declaration



If you’re going to hire somebody, I would hire a chief systems officer before a chief sustainability officer. Because if you understand systems, the sustainability case is largely made automatically.

— John Morrison



DAY THREE

The Incentive Economy: How AI Could Reshape Transparency, Trust & Value Creation

Panel Moved Past Generic AI Talk Into Real Supply Chain Use Cases

Speakers:

- Ying McGuire – CEO, Cascale
- Kevin Vranes – Chief Product Officer, Worldly
- Nanna Ingemann Dalsgaard – VP Strategic Intelligence, SML Group
- Pascal Brun – VP of Sustainability, Zalando SE

Moderated by McGuire, this panel moved past generic AI talk to how the technology is already reshaping fashion and sustainability. Zalando's Pascal Brun described a company now running as a tech business, using AI to forecast demand and curb overproduction, and said automation is coming to manufacturing floors: "robots helping in the making of the garments — that's for sure, this is coming. You must adapt in your factories as well."



Worldly's Kevin Vranes gave a concrete case of AI cutting a multi-week supply chain analysis down to minutes, and pushed back on AI's environmental reputation, arguing it will create more efficiencies than it costs. The panel was candid about risk, calling AI "hallucination" a daily reality that demands human verification, and agreed AI can make sustainability performance transparent enough to sit alongside price and quality in commercial decisions, but only if the industry shares the costs and benefits across the value chain.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ AI already cuts multi-week supply chain analysis to minutes
- ✓ Automation is coming to the manufacturing floor, not just the office
- ✓ Sustainability data can sit alongside price and quality if costs are shared



AI doesn't differentiate whether information is correct or incorrect. It takes what it has and it amplifies it — it can amplify wrong information, or it can amplify correct information.

— Nanna Ingemann Dalsgaard



DAY THREE

The Relentless Pursuit of Better: An Epic Factory Story

Factory Case Study Reframed What a Net-Zero Facility Looks Like

Speakers:

- Kim van der Weerd – Co-Founder and CEO, The Fashion Producer Collective
- Dr. Vidhura Ralapanawe – Executive Vice President, Epic Group

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Moderated by Kim van der Weerd, this Main Stage conversation with Epic Group's Vidhura Ralapanawe walked through a factory in Odisha, India, that opened in April 2026 after two years of design — built for net-zero carbon, water-positive operation and resilience to the heat waves and flash floods of a cyclone zone, while employing roughly 10,000 people through a 90-day training program built around potential rather than prior experience.



The engineering was specific: an industry-first high-temperature heat pump reaches 135 degrees Celsius on renewable electricity alone, replacing fuel-fired dryers, while a closed-loop water system and on-site detention ponds hold every drop of floodwater rather than pushing that risk onto the surrounding community. Ralapanawe was candid about constraint, too. The lessons are already retrofitting Epic's Bangladesh factories, with insulation now mandatory on every new structure, but air conditioning runs into a grid prone to frequent power cuts, forcing a costly reliance on diesel generators — a cost conversation still to be had with brand partners. Epic plans to publish open-source guidebooks so other manufacturers can follow the model.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Net-zero factory in India opened in April 2026
- ✓ High-temperature heat pump runs on renewable electricity alone
- ✓ Epic plans to open-source its design for other manufacturers



The problem with air conditioning in Bangladesh is more complex, and the complexity comes from the energy grid. Running an air conditioning system with a diesel generator is a significant cost increase — it completely changes the cost profile of the factory.

— Dr. Vidhura Ralapanawe



DAY THREE

Addressing Heat Stress: The Workforce Risk Leaders Can No Longer Ignore

Panel Turned a New Industry Toolkit Into a Look at Conditions on the Ground

Speakers:

- Nate Herman – Executive Vice President, American Apparel & Footwear Association
- Anant Ahuja – Director, ESG & Sustainability, Shahi Exports
- Brian La Plante – Senior Manager Sustainability, YKK
- Sarah Krasley – Fellow, Cornell ILR; Founder, Shimmy Technologies
- Tamar Hoek – Senior Policy Director Sustainable Fashion, Solidaridad

Moderated by Nate Herman of the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), who opened by announcing the release of the AAFA heat-stress toolkit, this panel turned from the tool to conditions on the ground. Cornell's Sarah Krasley grounded the discussion in field data: sensors across eight Bangladeshi factories found indoor temperatures running hotter than outside, with the heat season now stretching from April to October, and remediating a small or mid-sized factory running about \$127,000.



Shahi Exports' Anant Ahuja, who manages 50 factories in India, framed the toolkit as an invitation rather than an audit, shifting the question from "how do I reduce my exposure" to "how do we, as a community, reduce the risk." Solidaridad's Tamar Hoek kept the worker in view, noting piece-rate pay turns a rest break into a pay cut. YKK's Brian La Plante named the structural bind directly: rest breaks that protect workers can cut output by up to 25%, while manufacturers are still rated on on-time delivery.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ AAFA released its heat-stress toolkit at the session's opening
- ✓ Remediating a mid-sized factory costs roughly \$127,000
- ✓ Rest breaks can cut output 25% while manufacturers are rated on speed

This is a collective issue; it's not a problem in just one factory. If there's a collective response with incentives from government, that could dramatically reduce costs.

— Nate Herman

Instead of saying, as an individual, how do I reduce my exposure to the risk, it's saying: as a community, how do we reduce the risk?

— Anant Ahuja



Building an Aligned Industry Response to Heat Stress

Panel Argued the Industry Must Retire ROI Logic for Heat Adaptation

Speakers:

- Ying McGuire, CEO, Cascale
- Nate Herman – Executive Vice President, American Apparel & Footwear Association
- Naurin Muzaffar – Founder/Director, Innovatus
- Priyadarshini Gouthi – Senior Manager – ESG and Innovation, Shahi Exports
- Dr. Vidhura Ralapanawe – Executive Vice President, Epic Group

This panel argued that heat stress forces the industry to retire the return-on-investment logic that shaped the decarbonization era, since adaptation protects workers and productivity but does not pay for itself. Epic Group's Vidhura Ralapanawe warned against treating it as an ROI play: "we run the same risk of passing the full responsibility back to manufacturers."



He noted the meteorological data underpinning factory design in India dates to 2007 to 2011, assuming a 39-degree-Celsius peak where 2024 hit 45, and called for a “manufacturer-led, brand-supported” model with cost absorbed collectively. Shahi Exports’ Priyadarshini Gouthi supplied a three-level framework — contextual measurement, facility engineering, and financing — arguing the industry is stalling on the third: productivity “gains” merely recover output already lost to heat, so a business case built on them is illusory. Innovatus’ Naurin Muzaffar reframed that third level as business, not sustainability, while AAFA’s Nate Herman closed by urging the room to “build on what is being created, not in parallel to it.”

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Heat adaptation doesn’t pay for itself and shouldn’t be treated as ROI
- ✓ India’s factory design data predates today’s record heat
- ✓ Industry stalls at the financing level of a three-part framework



That’s why the premise that there’s a business case for addressing heat stress doesn’t inherently exist. That’s why we need shared responsibility.

— Priyadarshini Gouthi



DAY THREE

If You Can't Do Everything — What Should Leaders Prioritize First?

Closing Plenary Pushed Leaders to Tie Every Activity to Measurable Value

Speakers:

- Rick Ridgeway – President, Rick Ridgeway Productions, Inc.
- Sean Cady – VP, Global Sustainability, Responsibility, Trade and Government Affairs, VF Corporation
- Ying McGuire – CEO, Cascale

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In the meeting's closing plenary, Rick Ridgeway called systems thinking the week's central lesson, arguing organizations need "not a chief sustainability officer, but a chief systems officer — and that's who we ourselves need to be." He tied the point to the industry systems map first drawn in 2014, where business value and sustainability commitments sat as separate circles; the refreshed version overlaps them, and merging them into one, he said, is the goal.



Sean Cady of VF Corporation supplied the discipline, describing a year of apparel-market values down sharply and arguing sustainability leaders must speak the language of value creation. VF weighs every investment against five outputs: revenue growth, cost reduction, avoided future cost, risk management, and reputation. Ridgeway closed on a longer horizon, invoking the tortoises on his California property and their 270 million years of history against humanity's three. McGuire then thanked the community and closed the meeting in Athens by looking ahead to Bangkok.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Every sustainability activity should tie to measurable value
- ✓ VF weighs investments against five distinct business outputs
- ✓ Meeting closed by looking ahead to Bangkok in 2027



For each hour, each day you spend doing something, are you able to determine the value you're creating? If you can't talk about the value you're creating, you should stop doing that work.

— Sean Cady



Stage & Room Summaries

Review key topics at the Impact, Worldly, Collaboration, and Virtual Stages, as well as the Summit and Transformation Rooms. Explore key themes and conversations.



Impact Stage

Shaping the Next Generation of the Higg Index and Cascale's Strategy

Key Impacts

Member Input

Shaped the next Higg FEM

Systems Thinking

Ran twice to meet demand

FEP Baseline

Built from 80 stakeholders

The Impact Stage gave members a direct hand in the tools and strategy they use. Sessions opened the next generation of the Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) to member input, ran Cascale's systems-mapping workshop twice to meet demand, and detailed two new Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) resources built from stakeholder consultation.

Across the stage, the pattern was consistent: rather than presenting finished roadmaps, the Cascale and Worldly teams used these sessions to pressure-test proposed changes against real user experience, capturing input intended to shape upcoming development cycles.



IMPACT STAGE

Evolution of Higg FEM: Designing the Next Generation of Environmental Performance Measurement

Interactive Session Shaped the Future of Higg's Facility Tool

Speakers:

- Demith Gooneratne, Director, Higg Facility Tools, Cascalé
- Dhawall Mane, Director, Training and Verification, Cascalé
- Kevin Vranes, Chief Product Officer, Worldly
- Maravillas Rodriguez Zarco, Vice President, Tools & Data, Cascalé

Gooneratne, Mane, Vranes, and Rodriguez Zarco used this Impact Stage session to open the next generation of the Higg Facility Environmental Module to member input, walking attendees through emerging priorities for facilities, brands, and regulators before opening the floor for direct feedback. Instead of a finished roadmap, the Cascalé and Worldly team used the session to pressure-test proposed changes against real user experience, capturing input intended to shape upcoming development cycles.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Next-generation Higg FEM development opened to member input
- ✓ Cascalé and Worldly presented emerging measurement priorities jointly
- ✓ Feedback gathered will inform upcoming tool development



Systems Mapping

Back-to-back Workshops Invited Members to Help Redraw Industry Systems Map

Speakers:

- Alexandra Kanitz, CEO, Nexial
- Marshall Clemens, Principal, Nexial
- Rick Ridgeway, President, Rick Ridgeway Productions, Inc.
- Ying McGuire, CEO, Cascale

Run twice to ensure maximum engagement, this workshop gave members and staff a direct hand in Cascale's systems mapping and strategy refresh. Nexial's Alexandra Kanitz opened with an iceberg metaphor, telling participants the exercise was "not about the map and not about Cascale. This is about the system." Clemens returned to explain the map's levers, arguing "sustainability impact is bigger than business value. There is no business value if we are not operating sustainably in the longer term." Attendees then worked in four breakout groups before sharing a readout with the full room. One virtual participant, a Tier 1 manufacturer, said requirements are still largely dictated by brands in major markets and called for deeper financial and technical collaboration to move faster.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ There is no business value if we are not operating sustainably in the longer term
- ✓ There are no silver bullets or levers
- ✓ There's a need for deeper financial collaboration



Boardroom Value: Turning Sustainability Data Into Business Decisions

Interactive Session Highlighted How Board Make Decisions Based on Risk, Opportunity, Cost, Resilience, and More

Speakers:

- Hilary Strickland, Head of Executive Operations & Development, Cascale
- Karin Ekberg, CEO, Leadership & Sustainability
- Stefan Seidel, Senior Director Climate and Environmental Impact, ZDHC

This interactive session treated the boardroom as the hard audience it is. Boards weigh risk, cost, resilience, growth, and the price of waiting, and rarely act on environmental data alone. Participants examined what senior leaders need from a sustainability team, then worked a realistic scenario, turning Higg Index insights, environmental performance data and supply-chain information into a single decision-ready recommendation. The session separated the drivers that make a business case land from the different ones a board needs in order to act, give direction, and hold oversight, and closed on the language for arguing sustainability in commercial and financial terms.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Sustainability data alone does not move a board
- ✓ Business cases and board decisions need different drivers
- ✓ Attendees practiced turning evidence into a decision-ready case



Data You Can Build On: The Next Phase of Higg FEM Data Quality

Interactive Session Highlighted Cascale's Shift from Reactive to Proactive Data Quality

Speakers:

- Aaron Di Silvestro, Senior Director, Higg Products, Cascale
- Dhawal Mane, Director, Training and Verification, Cascale

Cascale's Higg Index team opened up the work behind Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) data quality — the part that rarely gets an audience. Facility numbers do not stop at the assessment; they flow into the figures brands use to calculate their own environmental impact, so an error at source becomes an error downstream. The session set out how Cascale defines and tracks quality across the full lifecycle, from self-assessment through verification, naming specific problems already found and fixed rather than commitments, and the validation checks being built to catch errors before submission. A moderated exchange with members and an open floor filled the second half.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Facility errors flow straight into brand impact figures
- ✓ Cascale tracks data quality from self-assessment to verification
- ✓ New validation aims to catch errors before submission



Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) — Next Steps

A Deep Dive into Two New Resources Built From 80 Stakeholders

Speakers:

- Demith Gooneratne, Director, Higg Facility Tools, Cascale
- Julie Gretton, End-to-End Supply Chain Sustainability Lead, W.L. Gore & Associates
- Maravillas Rodríguez Zarco, Vice President, Tools & Data, Cascale

This panel unpacked what comes next for the FEP Module, the baseline Cascale developed this year through the aligned industry definition of Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP), engaging 80 stakeholders across more than 30 organizations. Speakers walked attendees through two new resources now available to members: a technical paper documenting where stakeholders disagreed and how those questions were resolved, and a member dashboard, available through Cascale's Member Analytics Portal, that benchmarks a company's own supply chain against the wider industry. The panel confirmed the FEP question set draws entirely from existing Higg FEM Level 1 questions rather than introducing new ones, and that starting in November, a standalone FEP Module will let facilities new to the Higg ecosystem complete those questions independent of the full Higg FEM.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ FEP Module is a baseline built from 80 stakeholders across 30+ organizations
- ✓ New technical paper and member dashboard now available
- ✓ Standalone FEP Module launches for new facilities in November



Worldly Stage

Data-driven Sessions on Water, Worker voice, and Decarbonization in Practice

Key Themes

Water Risk

Deserves carbon-level attention

Worker Voice

Passing audits isn't enough

Scope 3

Targets meet facility reality

The Worldly Stage took three of the industry's harder measurement problems and examined what the data actually shows. Sessions made the case that water stress deserves the same planning attention as carbon, examined the gap between passing a social audit and maintaining a safe workplace, and moved Scope 3 targets from group-level commitments to individual manufacturer engagement.

The common thread across the stage was the distance between a number on a dashboard and a condition on a factory floor — and what it takes to close it.



Your Data Is More Disclosure-Ready Than You Think

Dismantling the Reality of Disclosure-Ready Data

Speakers:

- Adele Stafford, Chief Revenue Officer, Worldly
- Cerian Atwell, Sustainability Lead – Environment and Chemicals, Marks and Spencer

Worldly's Adele Stafford and Marks and Spencer's Cerian Atwell took to the stage to dismantle the myth that supply chain data isn't good enough for disclosure. With evidence from Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) submitters and assurance teams, the two deepened the conversation around what disclosure-ready data is and how teams can utilize it with confidence as they brace for ongoing legislative requirements. Discussions highlighted that a passing social audit does not automatically equal a safe supply chain, emphasizing where true social risk hides.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Passing social audits are not automatically a disclosure reality
- ✓ Supply chain data can be both clean and robust enough for major reporting requirements



What to Do With the Supply Chain Data You Have

Panel Argued the Data Is the Start, Not the Work.

Speakers:

- Christoph Centmayer, Sustainability Specialist Data & Environment, Helly Hansen
- Eleonora Lepri, Environmental Lead, Teddy S.P.A.
- Nik Lollo, Principal Product Manager, Worldly

Moderated by Worldly's Nik Lollo, this panel opened with a live poll on how attendees were actually using primary environmental, social and labor data. Managing risk and resilience came out ahead of impact reduction and compliance, more than Lollo expected. Teddy S.p.A.'s Eleonora Lepri described starting five years ago with "reactivity and some kind of compliance checklist that you need to tick," and conversations that stayed "in silos, more qualitative" until Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) data gave her a common language with procurement; before that, target setting was "much more like a guessing exercise." Helly Hansen's Christoph Centmayer had the opposite problem — a larger manufacturing base than he knew and no baseline. His advice was to map the supply chain first, then "don't hide behind the data."

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Risk and resilience outranked compliance in the live poll
- ✓ Primary data gave sustainability teams a language procurement accepts
- ✓ Map the supply chain before trusting any benchmark



The Audit Said Everything Was Fine. The Workers Didn't.

Panel Examined the Gap Between Passing Audits and Safe Workplaces

Speakers:

- Kathryn Smith – VP, Human Rights Risk Solutions, Worldly
- Gaurav Agrawal – Senior Production Governance Manager, H&M Group
- Mari-lou Dupont – Senior Vice President, Social Compliance, Fair Labor Association

This Worldly Stage panel examined the gap between passing a social audit and maintaining a genuinely safe supply chain. Smith, Agrawal and Dupont discussed where traditional audit models miss real conditions on the factory floor, with Agrawal sharing how H&M Group is working to identify risk that standard audits can undercount and Dupont bringing the Fair Labor Association's perspective on where compliance-driven models fall short of worker reality. The panel argued that closing this gap requires listening mechanisms that extend beyond the audit day itself.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Passing audits does not guarantee safe working conditions
- ✓ Standard audit models can undercount real factory-floor risk
- ✓ Panel called for listening mechanisms beyond the audit day



Using Facility Data for Real-World Impact

Aii's Benchmark Moves Into the Data Facilities Already Report

Speakers:

- James Schaffer, Chief Strategy Officer, Worldly
- Kurt Kipka, Chief Impact Officer, Apparel Impact Institute

Shaffer and Kipka used this conversation to announce that the Apparel Impact Institute (Aii) benchmark is being built into Worldly's Facility Data Manager (FDM): facilities already answering FDM questions can now reach an Aii performance score by toggling on a short set of extra questions, at no additional cost, rather than repeating the exercise elsewhere. Kipka traced the benchmark to his first sustainability role at Target Corporation more than a decade ago — "I just wanted a number" — and to years of being told an apples-to-apples figure was impossible. Aii built one from expert-set model processes where primary data was missing, and expects it to sharpen as use grows. Facilities below the benchmark, he said, are "where we see the most potential for emissions reductions."

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Aii's benchmark is being built into Worldly's FDM
- ✓ Facilities get a score without repeating the assessment elsewhere
- ✓ Falling below the benchmark is where the opportunity sits



The Decarbonization Roadmap — Strategy Meets Supply Chain Reality

Session Moved Scope 3 Targets to Manufacturer-Level Engagement

Speakers:

- Joe Franks – Account Director, Worldly
- Aleksandra Kędziora – Sustainability Expert, LPP S.A.
- Nilesch Bucktowar – Head of Sustainability – Ciel Textile Region, CIEL Textile

Franks moderated this Worldly Stage session on moving decarbonization from target-setting into manufacturer-level execution. Bucktowar shared how CIEL Textile is translating group-level Scope 3 commitments to the individual manufacturer level, while Kędziora brought LPP's perspective on sequencing investment across a diverse manufacturing base. The discussion centered on a common gap the panel sees across the industry: ambitious group-level targets that have not yet been broken down into a plan any single facility can act on.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Scope 3 targets discussed at the individual manufacturer level
- ✓ CIEL Textile and LPP shared their own sequencing approaches
- ✓ Panel named the gap between group targets and facility action



Higg FEM Deep Dive — What the 2025 Data Tells Us

How Multi-Year Engagement and Interconnected Data Drive Supply Chain Compliance

Speakers:

- Daniel Etra, Principal Product Architect, AI, Worldly
- Aaron Di Silvestro, Senior Director, Higg Products, Casmale

Worldly's Daniel Etra and Casmale's Aaron Di Silvestro shared data on the Higg Facility Environmental Module (FEM), projecting approximately 22,000 assessments in 2025 across more than 40,000 historical facility accounts. The program primarily covers the apparel and footwear sectors in China and Southeast Asia. Analysis shows continuous, year-over-year participation drives higher performance, with facilities in their seventh reporting year averaging nearly 30 points higher than second-year facilities. Interconnectedness also improves retention, as sharing data with six or more brand partners drops network departure rates from 50% to 2%. The two discussed completion rates, automatic outlier detection, and more relevant figures. Looking ahead to the 2026 cadence, Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) will track core baseline compliance metrics.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ FEP set to roll out for the 2026 cadence
- ✓ Continued facility engagement drives improvement
- ✓ Network connectivity boosts facility retention



You Can Scan a Wine Label. Why Not a Chemical One?

Digitizing and Automating Chemical Compliance

Speakers:

- Lars Doemer, VP, Chemical Intelligence & Traceability, Worldly, moderator
- Alagesan Senniappan, EVP – ESG/QA, Eastman Exports
- Hani Selim, Manager, Environmental Programme, BESTSELLER
- Lydia Lin, Asia Director, ZDHC

Industry leaders gathered on the Worldly stage to discuss how digital tools streamline chemical management, moving the fashion sector from reactive product testing to proactive, source-level compliance aligned with standardized Manufacturing Restricted Substances Lists (MRSL). Panelists highlighted platforms like the Beehive, which allow suppliers to scan chemical products directly to establish inventory transparency, reduce redundant manual reporting, and quickly verify compliance. Integrating these specialist applications into broader frameworks like the Higg Facility Environmental Module (FEM) further aims to minimize platform fatigue and reporting workloads.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Digitalization reduces redundancy
- ✓ Business incentives drive adoption
- ✓ Harmonization and integration are vital



Long-Term Supplier Relationships Are Like Compound Interest for Your Business

Suppliers Call for Standardized Sustainability Data to Relieve Burden

Speakers:

- Loretta Tam, VP, Supplier Engagement, Worldly, moderator
- Charmane Lam, Manager – Environmental Sustainability, Crystal Group
- Saqib Shahzad, Head of Sustainability, Sapphire – Diamond Fabrics Limited

Worldly's Loretta Tam led a session examining how long-term supplier relationships act like "compound interest" for businesses with Sapphire's Saqib Shahzad, and Crystal Group's Charmane Lam. The speakers addressed major operational hurdles caused by redundant customer requests for sustainability data. The panel urged brands, manufacturers, and platform developers to establish standardized metrics and reporting guidelines to reduce administrative burdens. Following the panel presentation, Tam invited the audience to engage in an open group discussion on addressing data request challenges.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Manufacturers face significant administrative, financial, and operational costs
- ✓ Current reporting prioritizes data collection over impact
- ✓ Industry alignment and standardization are essential



Stop Asking Twice. A Shared Environmental Baseline for Brands and Suppliers

Setting Baseline Standards: Key Implementation Takeaways for FEP

Speakers:

- Loretta Tam, VP, Supplier Engagement, Worldly, moderator
- Daniel Etra, Principal Product Architect, AI, Worldly

Worldly's Loretta Tam and Daniel Etra gathered to address practical application questions regarding the Foundational Environmental Performance framework. Developed by Cascale, FEP acts as an entry point and baseline standard derived from a curated selection of existing Level 1 questions within the Higg Facility Environmental Module. Daniel Etra, principal product architect at Worldly, emphasized that the framework sets common baseline management expectations for safe operations across all facilities regardless of size or sector. Rather than functioning as a distinct assessment, FEP is integrated directly into the broader Higg FEM subscription, allowing companies to view results and track historical baseline data via dedicated analytics features on the Worldly platform.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Utilize the FEP Module as a Supply Chain Baseline
- ✓ Guide Progressive Adoption
- ✓ Leverage Platform Analytics for Targeted Action



Climate Risk and Your Business — Getting Procurement and Finance in the Room

Brands Shift Sustainability Strategies to Align With Core Business Functions

Speakers:

- Adele Stafford, Chief Growth Officer, Worldly
- Eleonora Lepri, Environmental Lead, Teddy S.P.A.
- Mia Gunawan, Director Environmental Sustainability, PUMA SE

The panel addressed the shifting dynamics of corporate sustainability teams, noting that the percentage of organizations without dedicated sustainability budgets rose from 32% to 44% over the past year. Panelists Mia Gunawan (Puma) and Eleonora Lepri (Teddy Spa) shared strategies for aligning environmental priorities with broader business goals. Gunawan discussed how Puma integrates sustainability into enterprise risk management and ties annual bonuses for all employees to sustainability metrics, while leveraging supply chain performance data from SLCP and the Higg FEM. Lepri highlighted Teddy Spa's efforts to embed environmental considerations into procurement discussions alongside cost, quality, and lead times. The session concluded with advice for sustainability leaders to build cross-departmental relationships.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Simplify internal diplomacy and align language across departments
- ✓ Create enhanced performance metrics and increase incentives
- ✓ Leverage data for strategic partnerships



Collaboration Stage

Interactive Workshops Turning Value Chain Theory into Shared Practice

Key Connections

Human Library

Practitioners, not panels

Who Invests

Who risks, who benefits

Under Pressure

Responsible buying stress-tested

Moderated by Fleur Meerman – van den Heuvel and held under Chatham House Rule, the Collaboration Stage traded the panel format for working sessions. A Human Library let attendees check out practitioners who had solved their exact implementation challenge, a TAL Apparel-sponsored workshop examined who invests and who benefits across the value chain, and a live simulation tested whether responsible purchasing practices survive a margin squeeze.

The interactive formats proved some of the event's most popular, giving attendees structured access to experience they might otherwise reach only through a cold email.



Human Library: The Business Case Lab

Attendees Checked Out Practitioners Who Had Solved Their Exact Challenge

Speakers:

- Fleur Meerman – van den Heuvel, Strategic Moderator, moderator
- Alagesan Senniappan, Executive VP – ESG / Quality Assurance, Eastman Exports Global Clothing Private Limited
- Amanthi Perera, Head, Sustainable Business, MAS Holdings
- Betsy Blaisdell, Director of Decarbonization, Future Supplier Initiative
- Eliot Metzger, Director, Innovation and Sustainable Business, World Resources Institute
- Katy Stevens, Head of CSR and Sustainability, European Outdoor Group
- Kim van der Weerd, Co-Founder & CEO, The Fashion Producer Collective
- Lena Staafgard, Chief Operating Officer, Better Cotton Initiative
- Mark Newbold, Environmental Sustainability Programme Lead, Primark
- Naurin Muzaffar, Founder/Director, Innovatus
- Oli Orlik, Europe Engagement Manager, Science Based Targets Initiative
- Parameswar Chopparapu, Group Head of Sustainability, CIEL Textile
- Rick Ridgeway, President, Rick Ridgeway Productions, Inc.

Cascale replaced the traditional panel with a Human Library on Day One, letting attendees select the implementation challenge most relevant to their organization – from securing investment to building manufacturer engagement – then check out a practitioner who had lived it. Moderated by Fleur Meerman – van den Heuvel, the format ran two rounds and paired attendees in small groups with a dozen experts, including Blaisdell, Perera, Staafgard, Ridgeway and Orlik, for direct, unscripted conversation. Rather than theory, the sessions surfaced honest reflections on what worked, what failed and what attendees could realistically adapt inside their own organizations.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Small-group format replaced panel theory with direct access
- ✓ Attendees selected their own most relevant challenge
- ✓ A dozen practitioners shared field-tested lessons across two rounds



COLLABORATION STAGE

Aligning Business and Sustainability: Balancing Profit and Risk Across the Value Chain

Workshop Examined Who Invests, Who Risks and Who Benefits

Speakers:

- Matthew Guenther, Vice President Corporate Sustainability, TAL Apparel Ltd.
- Clair Smith, Global Head of Sustainable Trade Solutions, HSBC Bank Plc
- Dr. Delman Lee, Vice Chair, TAL Apparel Ltd.
- Tamar Hoek, Senior Policy Director Sustainable Fashion, Solidaridad

Sponsored by:



Sponsored by TAL Apparel and moderated by Guenther, this Day Two workshop invited attendees to examine the commercial practices that decide who invests, who carries risk and who benefits across the value chain. Smith brought HSBC's perspective on financing sustainable trade, Lee spoke to the manufacturer's side as TAL Apparel's vice chair, and Hoek raised Solidaridad's policy lens on where purchasing practices still fall short of supporting a fair transition. The interactive format gave attendees a structured venue to test their own assumptions about who should move first on shared investment, translating the meeting's theme into a working session rather than an abstract debate.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Workshop focused on who invests, who risks and who benefits
- ✓ Speakers brought finance, manufacturer and policy perspectives
- ✓ Session translated the meeting's theme into a working exercise



Responsible Purchasing Under Pressure: What Changes in a Crisis?

Simulation Tested Whether Responsible Buying Survives a Margin Squeeze

Speakers:

- Isobel Archer, Labour Rights Programme Manager, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
- Kathryn Smith, VP, Human Rights Risk Solutions, Worldly
- Katie Hess, Head of Product, Better Buying, Cascale

This decision-making simulation, developed by Archer, Smith and Hess, put sourcing, procurement and sustainability leaders through a live crisis scenario to test how responsible purchasing practices hold up under margin pressure. Drawing on Cascale's Better Buying program, the exercise asked groups to work through the commercial trade-offs that arise when timelines tighten or costs are renegotiated, and to practice defending responsible terms internally when finance or merchandising push back. Attendees left with a sharper sense of where their own organization's purchasing practices are most exposed under pressure.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Simulation tested purchasing practices under real margin pressure
- ✓ Exercise grounded in Cascale's Better Buying program
- ✓ Attendees practiced defending responsible terms internally



Human Library: Navigating the Policy Maze

A Human Library Where Attendees Picked Their Own Regulation

Speakers:

- Fleur Meerman – van den Heuvel, Strategic Moderator, moderator
- Baptiste Carriere-Pradal, Director and Co-Founder, 2B Policy
- Bethan Taylor, Global Sustainability Director, Checkpoint Apparel Labelling Solutions
- Buddhi Paranamana, Director Sustainability & Innovation, PDS Limited
- Chelsea Murtha, Senior Director, Sustainability, American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)
- Hester Janssens, Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships Lead, Fair Wear
- Iria Mouzo Lestón, Corporate Public Affairs Director, Pepco Group
- Jonathan Salmon, Head of Sustainability, Li & Fung
- Maravillas Rodriguez Zarco, Senior Director, Higg Index Strategy & Operations, Cascalé
- Marie Mavrikios, EU Legislation Expert for Standards, Textile Exchange
- Marina Prados Espínola, Director, Policy Hub – Circularity for Apparel & Footwear
- Mark Burstein, SVP, Americas, Inspectorio
- Tom Mason, Senior Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Manager, SLCP

Policy expectations have been moving faster than most teams can track, and this Human Library let attendees pick the part of that problem they actually needed to solve. Instead of a panel on regulation in general, each attendee checked out one policy expert as a living book and joined a small-group conversation on a single regulatory or implementation challenge. The books included Manufacturing for the Future, Simplify Global Regulatory Compliance, How the Higg Index Supports Compliance and Getting Ready for EU ESG Legislation. Participants could ask direct questions, compare how different experts read the same requirement, and test what it meant for their own organization.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Attendees chose the regulatory problem they needed solved
- ✓ Topics spanned EU ESG legislation and global compliance simplification
- ✓ Small groups let attendees compare experts on one requirement



OECD Scenario Workshop: Applying Risk-Based Due Diligence In Practice

Working Through the Scenarios Nobody Gets a Clean Answer To

Speakers:

- Peter Higgins, Programme Manager, Garment and Footwear Sector, OECD – OCDE
- Andrea Schill, Senior Policy Analyst, Garment and Footwear Sector, OECD – OCDE

This workshop took risk-based due diligence off the page and into the room. Rather than talk through the OECD framework in the abstract, facilitators put two scenarios in front of attendees and sent them into breakout groups to work out what they would actually do — analyzing a real-world example, weighing the response options, and defending the call to the rest of their table. Printed guidance sat on each table for groups that wanted to check their reasoning against it. Two facilitators moved between groups rather than directing from the front. The room then reconvened in plenary to compare conclusions and put the questions that had surfaced to OECD experts directly. The point of the format was peer learning: due diligence looks different in every operating context, and the fastest way to see that is to hear how the next table reached a different answer from the same facts.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Risk-based due diligence is judgment, not a checklist
- ✓ The same scenario yields different answers in different contexts
- ✓ Peer reasoning surfaces more than framework training alone



Building a Connected Data Ecosystem: Why Shared Infrastructure Matters

An Interactive Discussion on Making the Existing Ecosystem Work Together

Speakers:

- Fleur Meerman – van den Heuvel, Strategic Moderator, moderator
- Guillaume Chevalleray, Sustainability Manager Europe, Columbia Sportswear Company
- Hester Janssens, Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships Lead, Fair Wear
- Janet Mensink, CEO, Social & Labor Convergence Program
- Natalie Flournoy Grillon, CEO, Open Supply Hub

Held under the Chatham House Rule and framed against the OECD due diligence process, this session opened on the premise that connected data is not the goal – better decisions are. A hands-up check narrowed the room in three steps, from who uses these systems to whose sources are actually connected. Columbia Sportswear set out the brand problem of facility, assessment and risk information sitting in separate places, and the panel followed the chain it represents: Open Supply Hub on the shared facility ID that lets sources connect, the Social & Labor Convergence Program (SLCP) on reusing social assessment data rather than collecting it twice, and Fair Wear on turning information into collective action. The closing round asked each speaker for one practical thing a Cascalé member could do next week.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Connected data is the means, not the goal
- ✓ A shared facility ID lets separate systems talk
- ✓ Reusing existing assessments beats collecting the same data twice



Transformation & Summit Rooms



Roundtables on Verification, Capital, Due Diligence, Traceability, Policy, Closing the Manufacturer Gap, and More!

Key Insights

Joint Verification

Reducing duplicative audits reduces costs and saves time

Catalytic Capital

Fixed budgets force trade-offs

Traceability

Gaps between data collection and real impact

Due Diligence

OECD review opened to practitioners

ESPR

Today's decisions have big value chain impacts

Trade & Sustainability

Treat sustainability information as risk intelligence

The Summit Room and Transformation Room hosted the meeting's smaller-format sessions — roundtables and working discussions convened by industry experts from across the membership and partner network, many of them sponsors. The smaller rooms were the point: fewer people, closer exchange, and room for the kind of candor a main stage rarely gets.

Sessions held under Chatham House-style confidentiality are summarized by theme only, with no remarks attributed to individuals.



TRANSFORMATION ROOM

Beyond Value Chain: EU Ecodesign Delegated Act for Textiles

Testing Brussels' Ecodesign Proposals Against Operational Reality

Hosted by:  

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Consumer-facing scores oversimplify durability, recyclability and footprint
- ✓ Primary data costs land hardest on manufacturers and SMEs
- ✓ Requirements are still open; evidence submitted now shapes them



SUMMIT ROOM

From Quick Wins to Transformation: Unlocking Investment for Energy, Water and Chemical Improvement for Sustainable Wet Processing

Who Funds the Upgrades Everyone Agrees On

Hosted by:  

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Operational efficiency and chemical stewardship reinforce each other in wet processing
- ✓ Upgrades range from low-cost quick wins to major CapEx
- ✓ Financing wet processing means sharing risk and reforming buying practices



TRANSFORMATION ROOM

Resilient and Responsible: Supply Chains in a New Trade Landscape

Resilience and Sustainability Now Run on the Same Capabilities

Hosted by:  **Cascade**

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Trade fragmentation changes how sustainability is delivered, not whether
- ✓ Sustainability travels further when it speaks procurement, finance and trade
- ✓ Duplicative audits and data requests are the industry's own problem to fix



SUMMIT ROOM

Beyond Traceability: Designing What Comes Next

What Traceability Can Realistically Deliver, and What Comes Next

Hosted by:  **better cotton**

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Adoption of true traceability is slower than the industry expected
- ✓ Expectations have widened from compliance to impact and farmer outcomes
- ✓ Scaling traceability means changing systems, not running more pilots



TRANSFORMATION ROOM

The Catalytic Million: How Would You Invest €1 Million to Build a Resilient Cotton Landscape by 2030?

Live Investment Challenge for Cotton

Hosted by:  Pili

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Deploying a fixed budget forces trade-offs that principles alone avoid
- ✓ Targeted brand capital multiplies impact beyond the sum invested
- ✓ Climate, nature, communities and resilience compete for the same euro



SUMMIT ROOM

Pakistan Regional Decarbonization Strategy

A Change to Feedback Into Cascale's Regional Strategy

Hosted by:  Cascale

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Feedback came before rollout, when it can still change things
- ✓ Moving from receiving a strategy to shaping it jointly
- ✓ A Pakistan-focused collective group is the proposed next step



TRANSFORMATION ROOM

Joint Verification — ZDHC & Cascale Roundtable

Two Frameworks, One Audit...Less Duplication

Hosted by:  **Cascale**  **ZDHC**

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Duplicative audits and assessments cost manufacturers real time and money
- ✓ Technical alignment and shadow verification have early results to show
- ✓ A phased roadmap sets out what changes from 2027



Cascale Annual Meeting 2026 | Athens | Executive Summary

SUMMIT ROOM

Garment Sustainability Initiatives and Due Diligence: OECD Practitioner Review Kick-off

Opening the Question of What Initiatives Can Actually Carry

Hosted by:  **OECD**

Key Takeaways

- ✓ The framework tests whether initiatives can credibly support due diligence
- ✓ Practitioners shaped the review's design before it began
- ✓ A collaborative learning exercise, not an assessment or ranking



The Executive Track

New to the program this year, the Executive Track gave senior leaders what a main agenda can't: smaller rooms, fewer people, and enough time to talk without an audience. It ran closed-door discussions alongside the main program, sessions that went further into the industry systems map than the Main Stage allowed, and a rooftop networking breakfast. It also put executives in direct conversation with Harry Theoharis, Greece's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who addressed the meeting from the Main Stage on Day Two.

We will continue to build out the Executive Track as we look ahead to Bangkok next year.



Closing Dinner Reception

Cascale's two co-chairs hosted the closing dinner together — **TAL Apparel** for the manufacturers, **VF Corporation** for the brands — at Ble Azure on the Athenian Riviera. After three days spent asking who pays and who profits, having both ends of the value chain at the door was its own kind of answer.

The sessions ended; the conversations didn't. Attendees carried them out to the water over Greek food and a last evening together, in the unhurried form talk takes once the microphones are off.

Then, we danced.

Hosted by:  TAL Apparel



Field Trip: Cotton Cultivation Experience

Hosted by the **European Cotton Alliance**, this field trip in Voiotia, Greece traced the cotton value chain from cultivation and harvesting through ginning and preparation for shipment to spinning mills.

In Europe's largest cotton-producing country, participants visited cotton fields and a ginning facility, meeting farmers and industry representatives working across each stage of production.

Candid conversations highlighted the challenges producers face, from the economic impact of external pressures to the realities of adopting more sustainable practices.

The visit connected Annual Meeting discussions with the people, processes, and economic realities at the very start of the textile value chain.

Hosted by:



Thank You to Our Sponsors

Because of your exceptional support and enduring dedication to the sustainability cause, we made this Annual Meeting 2026 unforgettable. Without your commitment, we would not have accomplished such an incredible lift.

Across Lead, Co-Chair, Wellness, Gold, Silver, Bronze, Event App, Lunch and Coffee Break Hosts, Affiliate Exhibitors, Affiliate Collaborators, and Roundtable Hosts – we are eternally grateful.

Please read more information about our sponsors for the Annual Meeting 2026 [here](#).



Next Year: **Bangkok**

The Cascale Annual Meeting 2027 in Bangkok, Thailand will be our next premier platform to engage with leaders across the consumer goods industry.

Starting in January, at least half of next year's program will be shaped by members themselves through an open, SXSW-style request-for-proposal process, backed by a host committee of senior leaders from companies operating in Thailand and the region.

If you enjoyed this year, maximize your impact with high-visibility sponsorship packages, exhibitor booths, and networking opportunities. Whether you aim to position yourself as a thought leader, contribute as a speaker, generate high-quality leads, or showcase innovative solutions, our sponsorship opportunities will help you achieve your objectives.

Get in touch: events@cascale.org



Thank You!

Thank you for three days in Athens — for the questions, the disagreements, and the willingness to have them out loud.

Cascale exists to move the needle on climate change and to support decent work for all. Neither happens without every part of the value chain at the table. That is what this meeting is for.

We hope to see you next year in Bangkok, Thailand for the Annual Meeting 2027. Until then, you can always reach us at events@cascale.org.

