



ukft[®]

Supporting the growth
of the UK fashion and
textile industry



The UK Fashion & Textile Industry Manifesto

01 The industry in numbers

UK consumers spent

£74bn

on clothing, clothing accessories, household textiles and carpets in 2018. Clothing makes up the lion's share at £53bn in 2018, up 47% in 10 years.

There are

34,055

businesses engaged in manufacturing, distributing or selling fashion or textiles in the UK, but the industry is dominated by micro businesses employing 9 people or less.

The UK exports

£9.7bn

worth of fashion and textiles around the world, up 66% in 10 years. Clothing exports have more than doubled in the last decade.

76%

of UK fashion and textile exports go to the European Union.

A big employer: The UK fashion and textile industry directly employs

276,000

in retail jobs

109,000

in manufacturing

43,000

in wholesale

The UK's fashion and textile manufacturing sector produces

£9.1 billion

of product, ranging from designer creations seen at the leading catwalks to technical textiles used in medical, defence and transport industries.

Imports of textile goods stood at £5.6bn, while fashion stood at

£19.9bn

in 2018, representing a slight increase on the previous year.

More than

90%

of the fashion and textiles that consumers buy on the UK's high streets is imported. Imports of fashion and textile goods slowed in 2018 and saw their first decline since 2012. However, 2018 was still the second highest figure on record standing at over £25bn.





The UK fashion and textile industry's priorities for the next government



Brexit

The EU is currently the UK fashion and textiles largest market, accounting for 76% of UK fashion and textile exports. The industry needs both a transition period and a rapid conclusion of a free trade deal with the EU that delivers tariff-free trade with as little disruption as possible. UK companies selling in to the EU will continue to have to meet EU regulations, therefore the industry needs the regulatory environment to remain as close as possible.

In order to help the sector's international expansion, the government must ensure that new free-trade deals with markets such as the USA and Japan are concluded as rapidly as possible.

Increase support for UK fashion and textile exporters to help drive economic growth

Exporting is the life blood of the sector, many brands start their business through export sales and UK fabric producers are renowned throughout the world. The currently level of government support for UK exporters is far behind that given to our competitors.

To increase the UK's competitiveness in global markets, the government must help boost our international trade. The new government must dramatically increase funding for exports through much greater support for both the trade fair programme and trade missions, particularly those that address the changing nature of global retail. The new administration should work with the sector to identify the right markets, the right activity and the right level of support.

Fix the skills and training landscape

There is a chronic lack of skilled workers entering the industry and that is limiting the sector's growth potential. The limitations of the national curriculum, the paucity of vocational training and the complexity of the apprenticeship system are all acting as barriers to recruiting new talent

The government must urgently address the complexity of the apprenticeship system and remove the barriers to entry, particularly for small business. It needs to ensure niche provision remains in place and it needs to ensure private training providers are able to provide cost-effective apprenticeship training.

The government needs to ensure that careers in making are valued and that the new T levels come on stream as quickly as possible.

More targeted support for UK manufacturing businesses

The UK fashion and textile manufacturing sector has a great opportunity to expand. Using local manufacturing helps reduce the industry's carbon footprint, while providing meaningful jobs with long-term prospects.

The Government needs to rapidly change the support available for manufacturing. SME manufacturers should be given tax relief to encourage them to invest in new capabilities and training people.

A new capital investment programme should be made available to help the sector develop new, highly productive manufacturing capacity.

Ensure UK immigration policy reflects the needs of SMEs

Whatever immigration policy is introduced, the government must make sure that it is simple to use for SMEs and that the criteria for entry are based on industry needs and not on a simple salary threshold.

Develop and foster innovation

The UK has a worldwide reputation in fashion and textile innovation. Our designers are seen as the most creative and the textile industry is ranked number one in Europe in terms of patent generation. However, the government needs to do more to help SMEs invest in innovation. New industry-specific R&D funding should be made available that is driven by the needs of the industry to help deliver a step change in the UK manufacturing sector to meet growing demand for fashion and textiles made here.





Boost sustainability

Manufacturers, brands, retailers and consumers all have a significant role to play in making the UK fashion and textile industry as sustainable as possible. But the government must ensure that the right incentives are put in place to help change behaviour. Tax relief for the most energy efficient manufacturers, nationally co-ordinated recycling and take back schemes and significant investment on the UK's capacity to produce recycled textiles would all contribute to a step-change in reducing the sector's impact on the environment.

Support entrepreneurship and encourage business growth

The UK's universities and academic institutions develop some of the world's best fashion and textile talent but the government must create the right environment to retain that talent, ensuring that the UK remains an international hub for business, as well as creativity and innovation. The government must create the best environment, business regime and financial support to encourage entrepreneurship so the industry can continue to positively contribute to UK PLC.

03 About UKFT

The collective voice of UK fashion and textiles

Representing the entire fashion and textile supply chain



Business support

Practical advice and technical support to help companies grow



Lobbying

Promoting the strategic and economic value of our vibrant industry



International business

Helping UK companies reach new markets overseas



Skills and training

Addressing critical skills gaps and developing industry-led solutions



UKFT Rise

A supportive community for early-stage fashion and textile firms



UK Manufacturing

Creating the right conditions for UK manufacturers to thrive



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