



PRESS RELEASE

NGOs AND BUSINESSES LAUNCH MAJOR INITIATIVE FOR CLEANING SEAS

March 18th 2013, Arco, Tilburg, Leiden, Oisterwijk

Aquafil, the ECNC Group and Star Sock have together established the ***'Healthy Seas, a Journey from Waste to Wear'*** initiative.

The main objective of this Healthy Seas initiative is to remove waste, in particular fishing nets and other marine litter from the seas and oceans for the purpose of creating healthier seas and recycling marine litter.

Recovered fishing nets are still all too often dumped into landfills or burned, but as part of the Healthy Seas initiative they will be transformed and regenerated into ECONYL® yarn, a high-quality raw material used to create new products, such as socks, swimwear, underwear, carpets, etc.

The dumping of fishing nets is an open wound in our ecosystem. According to a joint report by FAO and UNEP, there are approximately 640,000 tons of abandoned fishing nets in the oceans, accounting for one-tenth of all marine litter. These nets remain in the marine ecosystem for hundreds of years and are responsible for accidental capture of dolphins and other animals, such as turtles and marine birds, which often die once trapped.

The Healthy Seas initiative will be launched in three main phases and the detailed description of the relevant action plan will be made public before the end of April 2013.

In the first phase, the Healthy Seas approach will be implemented in three pilot regions in Europe: the North Sea (Netherlands and Belgium), the Adriatic Sea (Italy, Slovenia and Croatia) and the Mediterranean Sea (Spain). The completion of this pilot phase will allow the three partners to identify the most efficient practice to adopt in the future expansion of the Initiative into other much wider areas.

The second phase will identify effective procedures which will discourage the abandonment of fishing nets at sea and will make available, encourage, and facilitate responsible handling of fishing nets at the end of their life, allowing their recovery and regeneration into new products. The expansion of the Initiative to other areas will be part of this second phase.

During the third phase constructive proposals will be developed concerning implementable actions. These will be submitted to governments and legislators to ensure that the Healthy Seas Initiative will deliver long-term results and that public awareness will be maximised.

A 'Healthy Seas Fund' will be established, with a focus on awareness-raising about the importance of healthy seas, the removal of abandoned fishing nets from oceans and seas, and the financing of local coastal and marine projects that support the objectives of the Healthy Seas Initiative.

In addition to the three original founders, the initiative will be open to other business and NGO partners. Local communities, experts and operators will be involved in order to create best practices that will improve the recovery and regeneration of fishing nets. At the same time, events and training courses will be held to promote and raise the awareness of people, including the younger generation, about the preservation of our seas' environment and health.

Note for editor:

ECNC Group

The ECNC Group is the leading European Expertise Centre for Biodiversity and Sustainability, dedicated to a beautiful Europe for present and future generations, based on rich biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and strong linkages between nature and society. The group consists of: ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation, Tilburg (NL), the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC), Leiden (NL), and Mediterranean Centre (MedCentre), Barcelona (Spain). The ECNC Group has a presence in all regions of Europe, and builds bridges between stakeholders in businesses, governments, NGOs and science, provides tailor-made expertise, and is able to mobilise its wide international and local networks.

Aquafil

Since 1969, Aquafil has been one of the leading players, both in Italy and globally, in the production of polyamide 6. The Aquafil Group has a presence in seven countries on three continents, employing more than 2200 staff at 13 plants located in Italy, Germany, Slovenia, Croatia, the USA, Thailand and China. Always committed to taking real measures to protect the environment, in 2011 Aquafil started the ECONYL® Regeneration System project. It is an innovative industrial regeneration process that produces nylon 6 polymer from:

- post-consumer waste, i.e. end-of-life products made from polyamide 6, including fishing nets, fluff (from the top of carpets and rugs) and textiles;
- pre-consumer waste such as oligomers, scraps, etc., generated from the production of nylon 6.

Star Sock

Star Sock is a leading development and production partner for socks, established in 1996 and based in the Netherlands. Our focus is on sport, outdoor and work wear socks for the European market. Next to the development of licensed socks for some of the most well-known sport brands, we also create and produce on behalf of many international retailers. Star Sock decided to make the best possible products for our partners through a combination of innovation, technical expertise, and an integrated sustainable approach throughout our entire chain. To reach our goal we work through our philosophy based on our four P's professional, positive, passion and pleasure.

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