

Higg Index Heads for Full Usage by SAC Members by End of 2017

The Sustainability Apparel Coalition includes Wal-Mart, Patagonia, Nike, Adidas, Puma and Nordstrom.

By [Emily Backus](#) on June 14, 2017

SAN FRANCISCO — Milestones hit by the Sustainable Apparel Coalition this year mark a turning point toward progress and transparency in the apparel industry, chief executive officer Jason Kibbey said.

Launched in 2011, SAC has worked on [sustainability](#) standards called the Higg Index that now offer modules to assess facilities, brands, products, design, and social and labor impacts. But until last year, Higg Index assessment methods were confidential and their implementation wholly optional.

“We implemented a membership requirement that requires all of our brand and retail members to utilize the Higg Index by the end of 2017, create plans and devote resources to score

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improvements in 2018, and demonstrate significant score improvements by 2020,” Kibbey said.

Members remain barred from volunteering any of their Higg scores until next year.

“For a large-scale transparency effort to be effective, it needs to be comparable, credible and scaled. We want to make sure that when a company releases its Higg scores that those scores are reliable and accurate, that there is a basis for comparison amongst other companies,” Kibbey said.

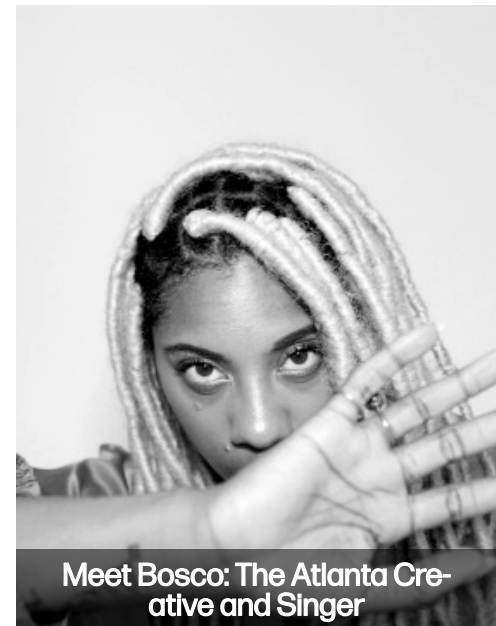
Assessment tools used by members can be downloaded from the SAC web site as Microsoft Excel files. Kibbey said assessment questions would evolve with a new version of SAC’s facilities and brand assessments scheduled for release later this year.

“One of the main new developments is a shift from mainly management indicators — how are you managing your water? — to more performance indicators — how much water do you use?” Kibbey said.

SAC is experimenting with how to share [sustainability](#) data with consumers through a partnership with Evrythng, a web-of-things software company specializing in digital identities, and Sourcemap, a supply chain mapping company. How that access will take shape remains a work in progress at the moment, but an initial phase should go live next year, Kibbey confirmed.



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Members will be able to release their Higg Facility Scores in 2018, their Higg Brand Scores in 2019, and their Higg Product Scores in 2020.

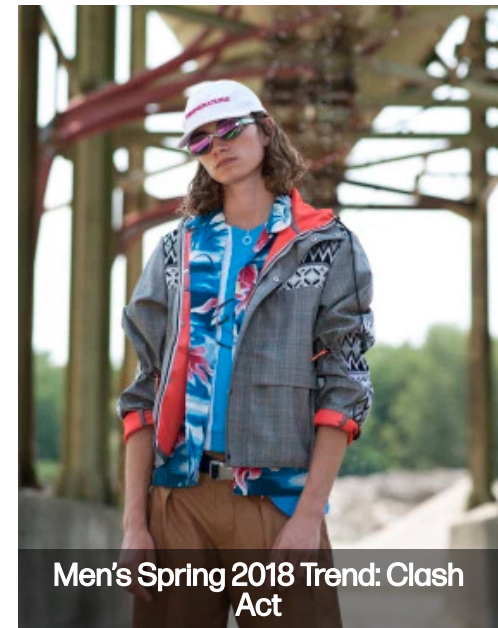
Asked whether there will ever come a day when Higg Index scores for all members will be made available to all stakeholders, Kibbey answered, “Complete transparency for key sustainability information remains our goal. Given that participation in the SAC is voluntary, all of our members must both buy into that vision and determine how to implement it within their business [or businesses]. While our members generally support this vision, the implementation both as an industry and a company takes time.”

SAC has received 20,000 completed facilities assessments and more than 1,000 brand assessments to date, and now has a flock of global leaders among its 207 members. Membership revenue is growing at 10 to 25 percent a year, according to SAC.

“We’ve nearly captured every apparel brand and retailer with sales greater than \$10 billion,” Kibbey wrote.

Members include sports clothing giants Patagonia, Nike, Adidas, New Balance, Asics, Brooks, Puma, Columbia Sportswear and VF Corp. It also includes retailers Wal-Mart, Gap Inc., Target, Inditex, Levi’s, Guess, H&M, J. Crew, OVS, Marks & Spencer, Macy’s and Nordstrom.

Kibbey lamented that SAC is not yet fashionable among runway designers, but it nevertheless influences a significant chunk of the luxury market, with [Kering](#), LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis




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Vuitton, Burberry and Eileen Fisher in its ranks. Kibbey would also like to recruit more members among textile mills and Latin American companies.

SAC was conceived in 2009 by Patagonia and Wal-Mart to develop a standardized supply chain measurement tool to assess environmental and social impacts of making and selling apparel, footwear and textiles.

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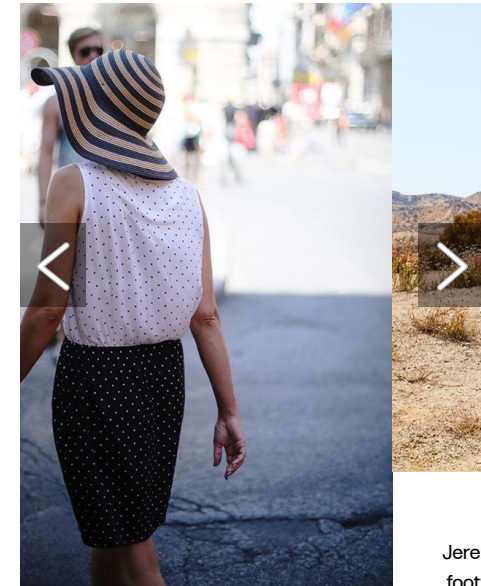


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