

Q&A

ACHIEVING DURABILITY, LOWERING IMPACT

Fjällräven is committed to making outdoor gear that lasts. How? Johanna Mollberg, Sustainability Manager Materials, and Felix Aejmelaeus-Lindström, Sustainable Material & Chemical Specialist, share how Fjällräven works with materials and chemicals to achieve durability, all while striving to lower its environmental impact.

Johanna, what makes a material durable by Fjällräven's standards?

Johanna: Durability is contextual, so the real objective isn't to always use the most durable materials, but to apply them where needed. A material could have great tear strength and abrasion performance, but if it's used alongside a lightweight material and wears it out, the durability of the product is compromised. In that case, durability concerns the construction of a product, not only the materials.

It's also vital to use the most durable version of a material in the appropriate kinds of products. Cotton jersey is not an especially durable material, but Fjällräven cotton-jersey t-shirts test well for abrasion, pilling and bursting. In that context, cotton jersey is durable.

How do you balance material durability with sustainability?

Johanna: Durability through hardwearing materials is one of the reasons Fjällräven gear lasts. This longevity results in a lower environmental impact over your gear's lifetime because you use it often for a long time rather than buying new. In that case, a durable material is a 'sustainable' material.

We must be openminded about materials' applications. Some materials that are not the most durable are more sustainable choices. Materials that are thermo-mechanically recycled are less strong than virgin because the process shortens the fibre and puts it back together again. In most cases, however, this is acceptable, because the recycled material's durability is sufficient for the product's purpose.

Having said that, my job is to seek out sustainable innovation and chemical recycling is a solution without such compromises. It breaks down fibres to levels where you completely build them back up again as good as new.

Felix, can you describe Fjällräven's approach to chemicals and how they're used in its products?

Felix: With harmful chemicals, our standard is to go beyond legal compliance, because to be legally compliant is to do the bare minimum. When Fjällräven identifies a chemical that should not be used, it is completely restricted. Unlike others in the industry, we have no limited acceptance levels. In short, the chemical is banned.

We also group 'families' of restricted chemicals together and ban them all. Even though some PFCs* have been regulated in the



past, there are other options that are not regulated in the same way. Rather than use a workaround solution of using some PFCs, but not others, and wait until legislation in places like the EU and California ban their use in 2025, we completely restricted their use in 2009.

New research about harmful chemicals like PFCs is constantly published. How do you stay up to date and implement this knowledge at Fjällräven?

Felix: It is important to stay ahead, so both Johanna and I go to conferences and continually network with suppliers and expert consultants. A lot of research and learning go into our work. ECHA (European Chemicals Agency) is one of the main sources of information and I take time every day to read and understand the impact of the latest chemical developments and chemical legislation. Since Fjällräven goes beyond compliance, this daily research helps us identify where there may be future challenges.

Fjällräven is also a member of the 'chemical group' run by RISE (Research Institute of Sweden), which includes a network of Swedish textile brands. It also has third-party labs that analyse restricted substances and those that show signs that they could be toxic or have long-term environmental effects.

What does the future hold for how Fjällräven works with chemicals and materials?

Johanna: So many things! We are working on the 2030 strategy and textile-to-textile recycling is significant. Rather than using PET bottles for recycled polyester, we want to use textile waste.

In the long-term, Fjällräven must be even more openminded about sustainable materials than it already is. Take organic cotton. We have a 2025 target of 100% usage and as of 2023 we're at 97%. It's still a water-intensive crop though, so we are interested in regenerative farming, which improves the soil, land and community of organic cotton farms.

Felix: We are looking at dyeing and coating methods and also researching closed-loop systems for material production.

I believe the future of chemical management will be impacted by recycling methods. The industry needs to investigate substances today that are perhaps okay from an environmental risk and hazard perspective but may cause recycling problems in the future. We need to figure out how chemicals will one day fit into the different recycling methods available.

*Per- and polyfluorinated compounds. Also commonly known as PFAS.



In 1960, Åke Nordin founded Fjällräven in his basement in the small northern-Swedish town of Örnsköldsvik. Today the company's functional, durable and timeless outdoor gear is sold in over 70 countries, and includes clothing and

accessories for women and men, backpacks, tents, sleeping bags and more.

With an ongoing mission of enabling more people to experience nature, Fjällräven makes every effort to act responsibly towards people, wildlife and the environment. It also inspires thousands each year to embrace the outdoors in all conditions with Fjällräven Classic and Fjällräven Polar.

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