The Life of a Conventional T-Shirt

Cotton is cultivated on farms in America, China or India
- 713 gallons of water are needed to produce the average t-shirt or 30 bathtubs full.
- Cotton uses more insecticides and herbicides than any other crop in the world. Cotton uses 16% of the world’s insecticides and 7% of pesticides. These chemicals are toxic, harm workers, and devastate ecosystems.

More t-shirt facts
- Clothing production accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions.
- The 3 trillion dollar fashion industry is the 2nd largest polluter in the world, after oil.
- Garment production went up 400% from 1994-2014 to 80 billion garments per year.
- To avoid this cycle, purchase clothing made with organic and fair trade cotton, shop second hand, swap, and only buy what you need!

When the consumer no longer wants the shirt, it may be donated, re-used as a rag, or thrown in landfill.

T-shirt is brought home, worn and washed
- The average American household does 400 loads of laundry per year.
- 16,000 gallons of water per year are used for laundry.
- Dryers use 5-6x more energy than washers.

2 billion t-shirts are bought and sold every year. Why does that matter?

After manufacture, t-shirts travel by ship, train, and truck to high income countries.
- This process is hugely polluting, and is cut out if t-shirts are produced locally.

Fabric is dipped into Commercial Bleaches and dyes until it turns soft and white.
- Bleaches and dyes are made of cancer-causing chemicals such as lead, cadmium, chromium, and mercury.
- Other harmful compounds and chemicals cause widespread contamination when they are released into rivers and oceans as waste waters.
- The world bank estimated that 20% of industrial water pollution comes from the treatment and dyeing of textiles.

Finished cloth travels to factories in Bangladesh, China, India and Turkey. Workers stitch cloth into t-shirts.
- Bangladesh is the largest t-shirt manufacturer, employing 4.5 million people.
- Workers typically spend long hours in unsafe factory conditions.
- The average garment worker in Bangladesh makes only 68 USD per month.

Clothing is sold for a price that doesn’t factor in natural capital exploited, or human labor involved (the true cost).

Infographic by Nicole Friedman