



## Levi's Eyes Flax Fiber for Sustainable Denim

By Andrew Nusca | Apr 15, 2011



Levi Strauss & Co. announced on Thursday that it will begin evaluating the use of flax fiber in woven casual apparel products as a more sustainable way to produce clothing.

The fiber, made by Vancouver, Canada-based Naturally Advanced Technologies, will be used in denim and non-denim, bottom and top weight fabrics. The deal follows a 10-year contract signed last month between NAT and Hanesbrands, NAT's first deal to commercialize its product.

(It has also signed an agreement with Georgia-Pacific for use of its fiber in formed materials.)

NAT's fiber, dubbed "CRAiLAR Flax," is soft like cotton, has a similar color, possesses similar performance traits and is comfortable to wear year-round, the company says. It appears, fits and washes "the same" as cotton but shrinks less, wicks moisture better and has increased dye uptake — requiring fewer chemicals to achieve a desired color, a savings of both energy, money and carbon emissions.

Here is NAT on its fiber:

The all-natural CRAiLAR process is the first to remove the binding agents from flax that contribute to its stiff texture by bathing it in a proprietary enzyme wash. The result is a textile fiber that merges the strength and durability of flax with the most desirable attributes of cotton. Yarns made from CRAiLAR fibers can be used in knit, woven or non-woven fabrics alone, or blended with other natural fibers used to manufacture apparel products.

From Levi's standpoint, the deal is part of its greater strategy to achieve more sustainable practices, including pursuing better cotton for its products and taking on the role of a leader in the apparel industry.

The Levi-NAT development agreement will begin this month.

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