

Press Release:
Ismaning, April 22, 2022

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produced by Design & Development GmbH Textile Consult
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Expert Talks: Fantastic expert talks and thrilling rounds of discussions on the cards for PERFORMANCE DAYS on April 27-28, 2022

The Miracle They Call Hemp: How the versatile plant can help solve our climate issues

As part of the upcoming PERFORMANCE DAYS, which takes place again on April 27-28, 2022 for the first time as a hybrid event at the Messe München exhibition center, the event organizers have lined up a host of internationally acclaimed speakers on stage. Within the framework of the Expert Talks, the focus of the fair will center on exciting issues in connection with this year's Focus Topic "The Journey to Carbon Neutrality". What can we do to improve our carbon footprint in the long term? How far are we today and what are the textile industry's goals for the future? Journalist and photographer Maren Krings provides an insight into the miracle they call hemp. Her book "H is for HEMP" impressively describes the potential of hemp and how this useful plant could save our planet.

More and more sports and fashion brands are setting themselves the environmental goal of becoming climate-neutral in the next few years. The CO₂ balance serves as a gateway for sustainable fashion and greater consumer transparency. This process begins with the materials supplied by textile producers and requires great knowhow regarding the amounts of CO₂ emitted during production. "How can we save on CO₂ emissions in the future?". The Focus Topic "The Journey to Carbon Neutrality" seeks answers to this question, a recurring theme at this year's Expert Talks on April 27-28, 2022 as part of PERFORMANCE DAYS. Furthermore, and as usual, the spotlight will be on the fabric and fiber highlights of the summer 2024 season, featuring current color trends and further innovations.

Maren Krings is certainly one of the impressive speakers in the line-up. The German photographer and climate impact storyteller has been monitoring the rediscovery of industrial hemp on four continents and compiled her journey in her book "H is for HEMP". Krings not only strikingly reveals the potential that lies in hemp in her book, but also here in this interview with PERFORMANCE DAYS.

PERFORMANCE DAYS: *Why hemp of all things? How did you cross paths with this plant?*

Maren Krings: Well actually, Hemp crossed paths with me. I had originally planned a documentary about the refugee crisis in Europe in 2016. While I was doing research, I regularly stumbled across hemp and kept being aware of the potential that lies in the plant. My thoughts were: Why does this plant keep crossing my path? The other question in my mind was: Why do people flee their homeland? Because they are politically persecuted, or can't find work, no access to education, have no homes,

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or no basic livelihoods and end up lacking food. Hemp has the potential to take care of all of these issues: Food, water, health, education, income and jobs. You could compare it to being able to exchange our global currency of money for a global currency of nature. How can hemp help us in going “greener“ and to ultimately think and live more sustainably, producing more sustainably, use more sustainable materials? All that was pivotal in learning more about this miracle plant and especially, to find out to what extent hemp can actually contribute to a “System Reset”. With this goal in mind, I then set off on this exciting five-year journey to explore how hemp could help in achieving a circular economy - an economy that focuses on positive overall societal benefits, rather than growth.

PERFORMANCE DAYS: What makes hemp so special?

Krings: Hemp realizes its full potential when we consider the plant holistically. Hemp has unique properties that contribute to its universal use. No other plant has such versatility. In fact, the plant looks back on a long tradition. Hemp is one of the oldest cultivated plants after all. Plant extracts are said to have been used as far back as ancient Egypt. On the one hand, the plant is an ideal soil purifier. The hemp plant does not have great demands and grows quickly without the use of pesticides. In fact, hemp can help improve soil structure as well as soil fertility. Because the plants can grow up to four meters high in certain geographies, developing deep roots and dense foliage by July, which prevents other weed from growing due to a lack of light. That’s why hemp doesn’t need to be chemically treated with herbicides, which causes harm to insects such as bees and other soil creatures. Thus, hemp cultivation can be used in organic farming for environmentally friendly weed control. It also puts weeds back in their place. The plant can also compete with cotton. For the same area of land, it can produce up to three times as much fiber as cotton.

PERFORMANCE DAYS: ... and ultimately also sustainable?

Krings: What is particularly sustainable is that almost all parts of the plant can be used. Besides that, hemp produces a higher proportion of biomass than many other crops, boasts high durability levels and ensures a low energy balance when grown. Hemp is low on maintenance and grows in almost any soil from the tropics to Siberia. Cotton, on the other hand, only grows in especially warm and dry regions. The result is longer transport distance and more intensive irrigation compared to hemp. Farmers who have to rotate their agriculture because of the lack of fertile soil available often turn to hemp cultivation. The end result is better soil and higher yields. It is precisely because of its versatility, regionality and durability that hemp is a promising, renewable raw material of the future.

PERFORMANCE DAYS: In which areas can hemp be applied?

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Krings: Hemp is very versatile and can be used for a lot of products. All plant components can be processed - high added value being the result. Currently, hemp is undoubtedly experiencing its biggest boom in the supplement and food sector, as well as in medicine. Indian hemp was first described in Europe in the 19th century as a remedy with euphoric effects. Nowadays, the topic of “cannabis as medicine” is gaining in acceptance and it’s almost impossible to imagine the food and health market without hemp. Not to mention the world of cosmetics. What is amazing is that hemp provides two raw materials for construction and insulation materials. Firstly, the outer hemp fiber and secondly, the woody core of the stalks, the so-called hemp shives or hurds. Hemp fibers are used as thermal insulation. And hemp can be used for solid construction.

PEFORMANCE DAYS: *What does that mean in terms of use for textiles?*

Krings: Hemp is extremely durable. You could actually wear garments made of hemp for decades. We often find linen cloths made hemp and flax that have been passed down through several generations, which in itself is a good prerequisite for sustainable action. As far as the topic of textile hemp is concerned, I have been mainly on the road in China and in Turkey. It is striking that no pesticides are used in the cultivation process and that extremely little water is required - the soil can be replanted immediately after harvesting. In general, I think the textile industry should support the use of natural materials.

PEFORMANCE DAYS: *And what does the carbon footprint look like?*

Krings: You have to be extremely careful here with corresponding, because hemp is grown in different regions and of course und grows differently in different climates - in Iceland, the plants are of course generally smaller than in Turkey, for example. I have seen plants there that were over eight meters high. On a rough average, you can say that because it grows so fast and also has an extremely high biomass in most regions, it sequesters more CO₂ on average than other agricultural crops. Compared to cotton, hemp is therefore unbeatable.

PEFORMANCE DAYS: *Why does legalization also make sense for industrial hemp?*

Krings: Legalization would be extremely helpful for farmers and would make the cultivation and harvesting processes a lot more relaxed - as soon as hemp begins to blossom, farmers have to report this to the relevant authorities. Up to now, cannabis extracts may only be sold to the end consumer if they derive from hemp varieties that contain less than 0.3 percent of the psychoactive THC substance. Cultivation and processing are already heavily regulated. Samples are taken in the field. Strict limits apply to the finished products, monitored by health authorities.

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PERFORMANCE DAYS: We look forward to your experts talks! Thanks a lot for your comments.

Anyone interested in learning more about this topic should not miss out on Maren's book launch for "H is for HEMP" - How has industrial hemp manifested globally in climate change mitigation?" on April 27, 2022 at 3:45pm which precedes the Panel Discussion at 4:15pm with the discussion: "Can hemp help to reduce our global carbon footprint?" All talks take place at the EXPERT TALKS Area of PERFORMANCE DAYS, in Hall C1 at Messe München and will be streamed live on the PERFORMANCE DAYS Loop Webseite as a LIVESTREAM service, with a live Q&A session. It's definitely worth it!