DuPont™ Sorona® Combines Sustainability and Performance to Increase Knit Footwear Appeal

SPONSORED CONTENT

By S'Guest Editorial

These days, consumers want brands that stand for something. More than talking the talk, they're drawn to products that walk the walk. And increasingly footwear companies are digging their heels in when it comes to sustainability.

RELATED ARTICLES

- Smartrac Is Bringing Green RFID Tags to Market
- Amazon's Strategy for Fighting Counterfeits? Facial Recognition
While sustainable products and practices have become rather commonplace in apparel, shoes have been slower to evolve given the complexity of the mechanics.

“The difference between footwear and apparel is that footwear is more complex because of all the components, making it harder to get their sustainable or performance story concise,” said Laurie Kronenberg, global marketing and demand creation director, DuPont. “The turning point now is that footwear manufacturing is incorporating all kinds of solutions.”

That’s the route that VIVOBAREFOOT is taking as it swaps in plant based solutions from a variety of sources. With the cheeky “Grow a Pair” tagline, the footwear brand promotes a range of Bio sneakers that uses materials derived from corn, algae and rubber trees.

And DuPont is big part of their story.

The brand’s PrimusLite Bio style achieves its plant-forward construction by using an algae component along with both DuPont Tate & Lyle Susterra® and DuPont™ Sorona® in combination on the outsoles, insoles and uppers. Susterra® is the building block for bio-based TPU’s and Sorona® fibers derived from a fermentation process leveraging field corn as the starting resource that uses 52 percent less energy than traditional footwear materials and results in 32 percent less greenhouse gas emissions. Sorona®’s biosynthetic fabric combines eco-efficiency with function, providing exceptional softness, maximum comfort and long-lasting performance. Additionally, it is comprised of 37 percent renewable plant-based ingredients and requires less energy and releases fewer greenhouse gas emissions as compared to Nylon 6.

“For us, this is an exciting step away from the industry’s reliance on single use petroleum-based materials and towards a promising future of plant based ones,” said Asher Clark, design director for VIVOBAREFOOT.
The sustainability aspect is an important part of DuPont™ Sorona®’s appeal for Anta Sports Products Limited as well. Jiaming Su, vice director of footwear, said Chinese consumers are embracing sustainability in greater numbers today. “The core customers to Anta are paying more and more attention to environmental natures of a product,” he said.

While Anta messages around the sustainability properties, the core appeal for the performance-based brand is Sorona®’s technical properties. Used as a key component in Anta’s Liveknit shoes, Sorona® offers superior design flexibility while retaining all of the benefits that consumers love about knit footwear, which include lightweight construction, breathability, a snug fit light socks and comfort like a second layer of skin, Su said.

“[Sorona®] has long-lasting comfort stretch, and excellent recovery for shape retention, a perfect fit for the flat-knit product needs,” Su said. “And Sorona® fiber can maximize the wearing comfort of the shoes.”

Sorona® delivers on these expectations due to the product’s signature stretch and recovery, which surpasses spandex, Kronenberg said. With Sorona®, footwear holds its shape over time, ensuring a secure fit for every wear.
It’s the reason why Anta, which is known for its proprietary research and development, chose to partner with DuPont on Liveknit. “Anta wants technology- and innovation-based products/solutions to enhance our competitiveness and influence in the market, and we strongly believe DuPont can be a good partner for this purpose,” Su said.

Sorona®’s ability to offer both performance and sustainability properties means it’s a differentiator and a value add to products, allowing brand partners to command a premium for their footwear, Kronenberg said.

“The reason why DuPont has been so successful is that a lot of sustainable products are more expensive, but we have performance-based products that are coming with all of these other attributes. So it’s seen more as a solution—like spandex replacement for stretch and recovery. It’s not like other solutions that are just pushed into the market that are higher priced that don’t have the adoption,” Kronenberg said.