

Track 24 – Unit 8/12

Announcer: The story of your jeans

Jeans are cool, they are comfortable, and they are never out of fashion. But there are some facts you should think of when buying a pair of jeans.

What are your jeans made of?

Jeans are made of cotton. The cotton plantations require a lot of water for irrigation and a lot of chemicals for pest control. You can buy jeans made of cotton which was not treated with chemicals, but they are more expensive.

What makes your jeans blue?

To turn white and hard cotton into blue and soft denim, the workers dye cotton with strong chemicals and heavy metals. Many workers have got big health problems because of the toxic fumes, and every year some people die in factory fires caused by the chemicals.

Who makes your jeans?

Jeans are made in low-wage countries where very poor people, mostly women and children, make jeans under bad working conditions. Most fashion companies don't pay good wages and usually don't care about the workers' health and safety.

Where do your jeans come from?

Jeans travel around the world. Most jeans are produced in countries in Asia, South America and Africa because cotton only grows in hot countries and the cheapest workers live there. The thousands of transport kilometres by ship or by plane from the factories to the shops in Europe and in the USA pollute the environment.

Who earns on your jeans?

Only 1% of the jeans price goes to the workers. The material costs are about 13%, the transport costs are 11%. The rest goes to the brand company (25%) and to the shops (50%). So if you buy very cheap jeans in a shop, the workers earn very little money.

What can you do?

- Wash your jeans carefully and less often.
- Buy jeans from companies that don't use chemicals.
- Buy jeans from companies that pay their workers more money.
- Recycle your old jeans.