

verse projects with diverse groups, when have you found collective action and part-Q&A WITH nerships to work best or to be most beneficial? GIULIO BONAZZI

A: The most beneficial collaborations are the ones that are connected to the business

Q: Over your years

of working on di-

models of partners. Everyone does what they know best and what they need to do from a business standpoint. All together, they are also helping the environment and improving production processes.

Q: What makes a good sustainability partnership? What makes a bad one?

A: It goes back to a connection to a partner's business model: So the partnership is not something special that you do once and then forget about. It's something that brings a profound change in the way you manufacture your product and in the way you do business.

Business culture is also important. It's fundamental that people in the partnership have a similar DNA and a common, clear goal that is beneficial for everyone and for the community. This leads to longer commitment, which is what is needed for a real system change.

Q: What about these partnerships keeps you inspired?

A: Entities in different industries and with different backgrounds coming together for a common goal!

**HOW ONE SUPPLIER FOR** CARPET MANUFACTURERS IS MAKING RADICAL **CHANGES TOWARD A** CIRCULAR ECONOMY

ifty-three years ago, few could have guessed that a company founded to create yarn for textile flooring in Arco, Italy, would become an international leader in creating sustainable, circular economies. Even fewer may have guessed that organization would become a model for creative partnerships.

"At the beginning it was quite a traditional business," says CEO Giulio Bonazzi, second generation leader of the family-owned Aquafil, a top supplier for commercial and residential carpet manufacturers. As the business expanded, Bonazzi moved quickly up its leadership chain. He started first as an assistant production manager at the Arco plant before taking over division management and then moving on to spearhead the company's move into its Slovenia operations.

Bonazzi soon reached the helm of the family business, where, in 2011, he had the idea to combine waste reduction with the production of nylon, Aquafil's primary product. At that point, the company morphed into something decidedly nontraditional.

## **NEW MODEL(S)**

Nylon 6—or polycaprolactam—is one of the most commonly used nylon products across industries, from aircraft to electronics to clothing and construction.

Aquafil's standout product, **ECONYL®**, is a nylon 6 fiber derived fully from regenerated waste materials. It's been loudly featured in products like **Speedo** swimsuits and designer **Stella McCartney**'s Falabella

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AQUAFIL'S MANY PARTNERSHIPS FEED ITS MISSION OF SUSTAINABILITY.

ECONYL PLANT IN

Aquafil's ECONYL plant in
Slovenia sends heat generated
during production to the nearby
Atlantis waterpark in Ljubljana,
Slovenia. The excess heat
provides enough thermal
energy to supply all of the water
park's needs. Aquafil estimates
that nearly 4.5 million
pounds of CO2 emissions
are avoided each year.



AQUAFIL CARPET RECYCLING

Aquafil is investing \$20 million into U.S. carpet recycling programs. In the Cartersville, Georgia plant, they extrude yarn from mostly ECONYL resin made in Slovenia. "This yarn is destined for our U.S. customers who want to buy a product with a great, sustainable story," says Franco Rossi, Aquafil USA president. "And in Arizona and California, we contribute to the sourcing of raw materials to feed the ECONYL system."

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

HEALTHY SEAS & NET-WORKS

In 2013, Aquafil, with partners, established the Healthy Seas initiative to <u>extract old fishing nets</u> <u>and other marine litter</u>

from the seas. These

materials are removed by

volunteers and recycled

into new textile products.

Before that, in 2012,

Aquafil whet its appetite

for recycled nets by joining

the award-winning Interface

and Zoological Society of

London partnership

called Net-works.

Here Aquafil deconstructs used nylon 6 carpet and extracts
the raw material to feed its
ECONYL plant in Slovenia.

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

California offers **special incentives** for collectors
and recyclers of used
carpets to make their work
economically viable.

Aquafil partners with manufacturers to collect scraps and fiber waste—
that would otherwise end up in landfills—for recycling into new nylon. Partners include Speedo and Interface.









"These problems are enormous; it can make it hard to know where to start," Google's Robin Bass says. "My advice is just to start."







GO bags. More quietly, ECONYL fabrics meet almost every need across the residential and commercial building sectors: Interface, Milliken & Company, Desso, and Modulyss are all using ECONYL fibers.

Today, approximately one-third of all the nylon 6 yarn made by Aquafil is made with ECONYL. This is no side project.

But despite his vision for a closed-loop nylon economy, or perhaps because of it,

Bonazzi knew Aquafil couldn't collect and recycle nylon on its own. The story of ECONYL's development is also the story of Aquafil's breakout into the world of sustainability partnerships. "We needed to find partners outside of our supply chain to develop a reverse logistic that could assure a constant supply of waste material to a plant running 24-7-365," Bonazzi says.

As it turns out, Bonazzi's team found many.

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We want to solve problems in a way that extends into our communities, hometowns, and around the world.

Robin Bass, Google

WHAT'S NEXT

Aquafil's success with its ECONYL partnerships are exciting, but they aren't the end of Bonazzi's vision.

He's mostly secretive about what's coming down the line, but he is excited about the upcoming partnership with **Genomatica**, a San Diego-based biotechnology company and manufacturing innovator.

The two companies have announced a multi-year agreement to create sustainable caprolactam, an organic compound and an ingredient integral to producing 100% sustainable nylon. The collaboration will work to

develop a commercially advantageous caprolactam using plant-based renewable ingredients, instead of the fossil fuel-based materials more traditionally used by the nylon industry.

"This is a project we will be involved in for the next several years and we are very excited about," Bonazzi says, underscoring his real goal: radically transforming the carpet industry through partnerships and circular economy. **gb&d** 

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