



Peri and Emily Drysdale,
Untouched World, organic fashion
wear.

FASHION SUCCESS FOUNDED ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

Peri Drysdale has been concerned for many years about what is happening to the environment. In 1995, when she launched her luxury everyday casual wear brand 'Untouched World', it was natural that she should bring her strong environmental conscience to the business.

Peri began Untouched World with a range of casual knitwear made exclusively from certified organic and undyed wool. Today the range has grown to include garments from organic merino, cotton and denim, bamboo and blends of super soft possum fibre. Untouched World has 130 staff, five stores in New Zealand, and sells worldwide via its website and to independent retailers.

Peri estimates 70% of the company's products are now made from certified organic fibres, a figure set to increase as more suppliers come on board.

She says sourcing organic fibres has been an ongoing challenge for the company. Until recently all its certified organic merino wool came from Australia because there was none available in New Zealand that met the company's high quality specifications.

"We're excited to be working with a New Zealand merino farmer now," Peri says, and adds "farmers need certainty of market to convert to organics, and with the long lead time, it requires a lot of forward planning."

Peri believes one of the biggest future challenges for Untouched World will not be in sourcing organic fibres, but managing the integrity of the supply chain – for example, ensuring the company's cotton does not get mixed with, or substituted for, non-organic cotton. Untouched World must also ensure certified organic products meet not only the company's high quality specifications, but also its strict ethical values of fair trade and fair work conditions.

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Mother and daughter design team, Peri and Emily Drysdale.
Photo: Untouched World



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Peri notes that while customers like the fact Untouched World uses certified organic fibres, this is just one aspect of the product they take into account when considering a purchase.

“Our success comes from a package that includes brand, design, quality and leading sustainable business practice,” she says.

“We bring to our customers quality as a first principle, and we then work to deliver that quality in the most sustainable way we can. Working with certified organic materials as they become available in the quantities we need is part of that.”

Essentially, Peri believes the fact Untouched World’s products are organic is an added “feel good” for customers when they buy.

In 2007, Untouched World was the first fashion company in the world to be recognised by the United Nations and granted the use of the UN DESD logo. Peri says this recognises the efforts of Untouched World and the Untouched World Charitable Trust in the area of education for sustainability.

Prior to launching Untouched World, Peri led the ‘Snowy Peak’ knitwear brand, which she founded in the 1980s. In 2000 her daughter Emily, a multiple award winning fashion designer, joined the Untouched World team, having returned from the United Kingdom where she was a freelance sportswear designer.

“Growing up in the business, I had no idea that I would end up one day working alongside my mother,” Emily says.

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Photo: Untouched World