

German children's footwear brand Ricosta is used to being a pioneer. Earlier this year it became the first shoe company to use Sympatex lining materials made from recycled polyester.

# Recycled polyester works well in shoe linings

Children's footwear brand Ricosta has announced a plan to use Sympatex laminate material made from recycled fibres in the lining of the shoes in its newest collection. A long-term user of Sympatex technology in its shoe linings, Ricosta has said it wants to use recycled functional materials to enhance the sustainability of its products.

The man behind the brand is former New Zealand international soccer player Tim Brown. In 2014, he launched a crowdfunding campaign to gauge consumer interest in wool sneakers. Needless to say, there was definitely a demand. In fact, it was overwhelming, with the project's Kickstarter page raising more than \$100,000 in just five days.

In making these new linings, Sympatex has used polyester fibres made from recycled PET bottles, with certification from either bluesign or the Global Recycle Standard (GRS) to prove that the raw material really has been used before. Sympatex has calculated that using recycled polyester fibres to make its lining material leads to a 94% saving in water consumption, a 60% saving in energy and a 32% saving in carbon emissions compared to using virgin polyester. And to help keep the loop closed, the materials Sympatex makes are, in turn, recyclable.

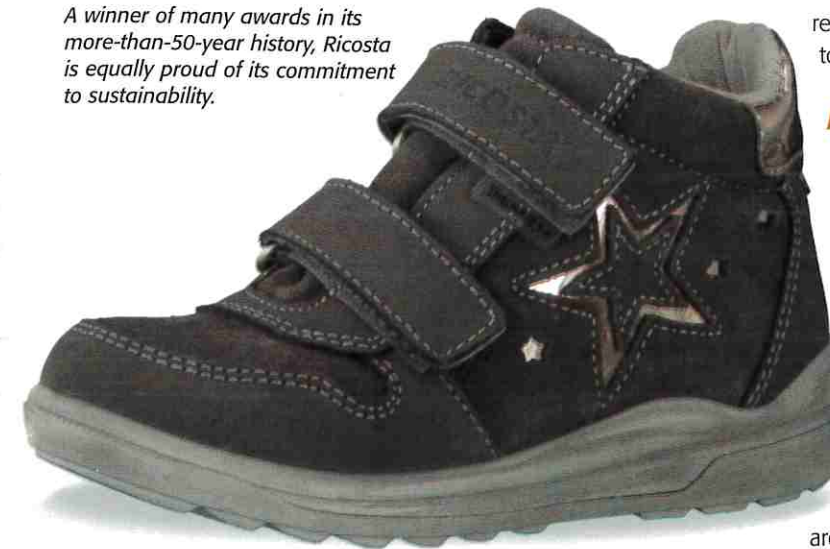
The functional materials developer explains that the membrane technology it has developed has a compact enough structure to offer good wear resistance, which is a requirement in all footwear but perhaps especially in children's shoes. As a result, it says its layered linings offer protection for little feet from dampness, good insulation from cold and a high level of

*Recycled lining materials are just as good for protecting little feet from damp and cold as those made from regular polyester.*

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*A winner of many awards in its more-than-50-year history, Ricosta is equally proud of its commitment to sustainability.*



breathability. In particularly warm conditions or in times of high activity, the membrane reacts and transports additional moisture to the outside quickly.

### Array of awards

Since its foundation in Baden-Württemberg in 1955, Ricosta has won many awards, including German leather industry awards in 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2009. Its Mountain model won a Gold Award at the OutDoor exhibition in Friedrichshafen in 2010 in the children's outdoor footwear category, and its Pepino Krabbelmaxe baby shoe won a prestigious Red Dot design award in 2011. In 2012, the German Design Awards followed OutDoor's lead and honoured the Ricosta Mountain shoe. Recognition continued in 2013 when its Rallye shoe won one of the prizes at the German Footwear Awards. By the end of 2014, the company calculated that it had produced 80 million pairs of children's shoes in its almost 50 years of existence. It is adding two million pairs to that total every year.

### Sustainability story

Ricosta seems to take at least similar pride in its sustainability credentials. It has been ISO 14001 certified since 1999 and claims still to be the only European children's shoe manufacturer with this accreditation. It uses hydropower and solar energy to run its main production plant at Donaueschingen, making the facility carbon neutral, which it has calculated saves the equivalent of cars driving a total of 4.5 million kilometres per year.

The shoe manufacturer is also an enthusiastic user of Terracare leather, a range that comes from German tanner Josef Heinen. Heinen describes these leathers as being environmentally-friendly, resource-efficient and socially compatible, using raw materials from Germany. All of the company's shoes, for the Ricosta brand and for the Pepino infants' footwear brand, are designed in Germany and manufactured only in European Union countries, all of which are group owned. It

regards this as another important part of its commitment to social responsibility.

### Future generations

It is no surprise, then, that the first footwear manufacturer to incorporate recycled Sympatex materials into its shoes is Ricosta. As well as point-of-sale material to explain the difference between this collection's use of Sympatex compared to previous examples, the two companies developed a children's book called 'Sam and the Plastic Plan' to raise awareness among children of the need for action on plastic waste. Sympatex says it finds the company to have been a good partner to work with on this pioneering recycling development, particularly because Ricosta's real end-customers are children. "We think that the youngest of the next generation must also have a say in ecological issues," says Sympatex chief executive, Dr Rüdiger Fox. "If we don't close the plastic cycle as soon as possible, their generation will find more plastic than fish in the oceans." ♻️

*Sympatex is happy to have helped Ricosta enhance its sustainability credentials, particularly because its end-customers are children.*

