

Hi, and welcome to season four, episode five, all about slow fashion, but first here's what's happening on the farm. I am recording this mid-June and we're starting to get a little bit of our hot, mid Atlantic weather. This week it's going to be in the nineties and I think there are supposed to be thunderstorms every evening or something like that. So I think we're going to have a little bit of a wild week. Bill is getting some more things planted in the garden. We got kind of a late start because the weather has been so strange, cold and then hot for a couple of days and then cold again, it's really weird. We have, you know, our gracious, plenty of deer who, you went into the garden and ate up, nearly all of the sweet potatoes that Bill had planted. So, he spent the weekend putting up deer fence so that whatever we do plant, hopefully we will be able to harvest and we had to go and buy another 50 plants. I'm hoping that maybe something survives, but I don't know how much of a start those sweet potatoes had gotten before.

So just to kind of recap where we've been the season, so I've talked a lot about fast fashion, what it is, and what the problem with it is. Where it arose from this rise in consumerism that we need to all be trendy. We need it, we're following the influencers to tell us what to wear. And, you know, heaven forbid you wear something more than once or twice. Even if you wanted to, a lot of the clothing is not well-made so you can't wear it more than a few times before the seam start popping out and things like that. This is all caused by this idea of race to zero by the industry, race to zero cost. So they're constantly cutting costs by looking for cheaper workers, looking for cheaper product, and so that their profit margin is bigger that is how they make more money. That's just the way that capitalism is kind of working right now. But the problem is there's a lot of consequences. There are consequences to people. We looked at the effect of the toxins that are in the dyes and there's, consequences to the climate in the use of carbon and the global warming threat that is being caused by the use of this carbon to make all these clothes is a threat to the environment because of the trash and because of pollution. And again there's a consequence to your own body because of hormone disruptors that are not only in the dyes, but also in some of the finishes like anti-wrinkling, and fire or waterproofing, yada yada, all those kinds of things. I hope that some of you have taken some kind of action steps, whether that has been to inventory your own closet, to look at what fits your style today and what fits your values, and to also research a brand that you love.

So slow fashion is the opposite of fast fashion. It has arisen from the concerns about the planet and about concerns about wage equality and the equal treatment of people in all countries, not only as workers, but also as the end users of these products and concern about our climate. It started by a lot of people pivoting to buying organic clothes, when possible. And then people started looking at the idea of these organic sustainable fibers are going to be grown on a farm somewhere. So just like the term slow food means farm to table, slow fashion is coming to mean farm to needles or a farm to closet or farm to clothing. As a fiber farmer, I've been working on this for a couple of years now. But the whole time, the whole 17 years that I've been a fiber farmer, I've been working to grow fiber in the most humane way and the most sustainable way possible. I've really been working to make my fibers into roving and into yarn in a way that's as local as possible. That's mostly because it's important to me to have a relationship with the people who are touching all aspects of my yarn. There is a synergy between the person who is coming to share my animals, me who's the one is designing the yarn and then into the mill where they're actually cleaning it and spinning it and making it into yarn. It needs to be a conversation between all these parties in order to get a really good product. And I've worked really hard over the years to make really nice farm yarn.

And if you have looked at my farm yarn here, you know that is true, I have some really nice farm yarn.

Just in the last, I want to say like four years, the term Fibershed came about. The Fibershed movement came about because Rebecca Burgess in California wrote the book Fibershed. She was doing research on the textile industry and she wanted to make a wardrobe that was a hundred percent local to her. So it became a project for her to see if she could do that. And now it has grown into Fibershed affiliates all over the world. A lot of like-minded people who want the same kind of thing. She used the term shed in Fibershed in the same way you would a watershed. A Fibershed is that area local to you where you can source your fiber and cloth, and yarn and your dyes, natural dyes and your labor. So whether that's you making something, whether it's the mill that is local to you, or if you're not a maker, maybe it's having someone who's local to you that is going to actually knit you a sweater or knit you a hat so that the labor is also local.

And another cornerstone of Fibershed is to have a wardrobe that is soil to soil. And what that means is that the ingredients for your clothing are coming from the soil. Either they are grown in the ground, or they are grown on an animal who's eating what's growing on the ground. Then they are worn. They are used. They have an end of life plan that is to then compost it back into the soil. So, you have it going from the growing on the soil to then going back into the soil, to nourish the soil and making that a very cyclical thing. In order to compost it, like I have talked about in the previous episodes, this means it has to be a hundred percent natural fibers, of course you would take off the buttons, zippers, et cetera, those things and then you would add to the compost. We go back into the soil to nourish the soil. If you want to know more, you can read her book called Fibershed. It's an excellent resource, and you can find a list of those resources on my free resource list on my website.

So what does slow fashion and a slow fashion wardrobe look like? I think that it can look several different ways, and I think it depends on the region of the country that you're in and therefore the climate that you live in. Here in the mid-Atlantic, I've been working on a local wardrobe. I did just what I've asked you to do. I've looked at what's in my closet. I've looked at what I want my style to be. And I have made a list of a kind of capsule wardrobe. This wardrobe that was the center. What would that look like? Because we have cold winters I can wear hand knit, sweaters, hand knit, socks, hand knit tops. Those can be really local to me, because I can use my wool and I can naturally dye the yarn. Or for instance, the sweater that I'm making right now is with naturally colored wool. It came off the sheep that way. I can even hand spin the yarn. So it is totally, totally local what I can't make and can't really buy is any local cotton or linen at this time. I have found a place that has locally grown cotton that it's milled in the next Fibershed, in South Carolina, which we'll talk about later is kind of like local ish. For those items that I can't make locally I'm working to either buy or sew things that are cotton or linen, like shirts and skirts and pants. I am working for those to be organic if possible and making sure that they are all natural fibers. So then it will say 100% linen or 100% cotton as I talked about in the last episode, when we're talking about brands, I did buy a couple of those wool and, , dresses, which I really love. These are 75% wool and 25% nylon. But again, it's like, natural ish cause I do like the material. The weave structure, I think they're actually knit is very light and you can wear it in the winter, in the summertime here. Again, making those choices, based on where you are in the country and therefore your climate, based on your values and based on the availability and your style.

So the problem with fibersheds all over the world, is the supply chain. And as I've talked about in a previous episode, the U S simply doesn't have the amount of textile manufacturing that it used to have. I think I talked about this last time too, that my aunts and probably great aunts and grandmother and all the people back in my family on my father's side worked in those textile plants in North Carolina until the sixties when those were closed. Then they shifted over into doing the sewing type of work into the seventies until that also closed. One of the problems that the affiliates and of Fibershed itself, is to look into how to grow back these local regional supply textile ecosystems basically. And it's going to take some time.

There are small mom and pop mills that are starting up and they can handle some of what we need, but there's still significant holes in the supply chain. That means that sometimes what we can get for slow fashion is going to be local ish. Like what I just talked about with the cotton, it's grown in Virginia, which would be in my Fibershed, but it's been milled in South Carolina, but that's as local as I can get right now. The mill that has the combing skill that I need for my fine wools is in Michigan. That's as local as I can get at this time. The point is to be mindful about your textile choices to be as local as you can, and to be as climate beneficial as you can.

We need to be thinking about the practicality of all of this: to go completely into a local wardrobe is pretty overwhelming. It is for me. And I've been thinking of working towards this for some time now, and I have the raw material available to me, it's all around me and still it's very overwhelming. And I believe that the way to do this is to slowly change our wardrobes in a mindful way. First of all, to make sure that when you're buying a garment that you're buying quality, that you're going for something that is all-natural fiber. Items that are going to last for years, going for that classic style, the classic blazer, the cashmere sweater, that's in a neutral color that isn't necessarily trendy, but it can become more on-trend with a scarf or some accessories that are not going to be as problematic as plastic made clothes. For instance, you know, buying linen pants or linen skirts for the summertime, that will last for years because that fiber is so strong and that with linen, it only gets better over time. It softens up over time. It becomes a lot more comfortable over time. You add to these items over time, you're not looking to immediately, totally toss out everything you have and start completely over. It's about making mindful choices to change over your wardrobe. At least that's the way I'm going about it. Then start to look those items that aren't going to be local to you like the cotton and the linen, Looking for organic clothing that fits your style and your climate and make a purchase here and there. Those pieces will stand the test of time. And I had forgotten about this. I didn't even put, think about talking about this as well, but I found a hundred percent linen sheets that are fantastic. At first they were, I wouldn't say they were scratchy, they're crisp. As you wash them, then they become more and more comfortable. I did get those sheets from a company called Parachute. (this is not a paid endorsement) They do have elastic on the fitted sheets, but again once if you were going to then compost that you would just take the elastic part out and the rest of the sheet could be then composted when it is too worn out to use anymore.

I'm not just talking to makers. I think as a non-maker, you could also be part of the Fibershed movement. Like I said, you can be buying mindfully from companies that are selling organic and a hundred percent natural clothing. If you are a maker of people who sew and knit and crochet and weave, then you can make your own garments with those textiles. But if you can't, you could partner with other makers and that's part of what your local Fibershed can help with: to pair up makers and producers, pairing up makers and consumers.

So it's about building up this local regional textile economy, where we are all part of a community working towards the same thing, which is to have climate beneficial clothing that is good for the earth and good for our bodies. One that is also based on equity of everyone as far as wage equality.

So here is my call to action for you.

And this could be whether you are a maker or a non-maker. And what I'm going to ask you to do is to commit to one local garment.

You can ask your favorite fiber farms about local fibers that are locally dyed or naturally colored yarns, that you could make a garment out of

Start small, make a hat, make a pair of socks, make just one garment.

That's where it all begins.

Remember to let your money be your vote. I've talked about how your money can be your vote with big industry. Letting them know, I don't want to buy plastic clothes. I want to buy organic a hundred percent natural. They will start pivoting that direction, but we, as fiber farmers would like to know that as well. We want to know that you are looking for local fibers. We want to know what, what you were looking for, and then we'll make sure to have it for you.

I know again, when I started really working with his Fibershed concept, I decided that one thing that I needed to do was to make sure that I had all the various standard weights of yarn. So I do have local farm yarn that is fingering weight and sport weight at DK and worsted, and I even just now got in a bulky, which so I'm excited about that. There's lots of possibilities, not just my farm, but many other farms as well. If you are local to me, you can go to the website of Chesapeake fibershed.com and you can find a map on there that has certified producers, like I am, who are members. We have made the commitment to have Fibershed products. There's also a map on there of just all the different, various resources that we have within our 150 mile radius around the Capitol.

It doesn't matter where you are in the country or in the world, there's probably a Fibershed near you and they're adding these affiliates all the time. We, they just added one in the south Pacific somewhere like Fiji, Fibershed in Fiji, which was so cool, there's a Fibershed in Ireland, in Switzerland and the Swiss one also includes lots of Germany and the Netherlands as well. There are fibershed affiliates all over the United States and the world. So you can go to Fibershed.org website and go under their affiliate directory to find the Fibershed, that's closest to you as well.

And so I do hope that you will commit to one local garment, and I do hope that you will let me know, send me an email, it always works to have an accountability partner, right. You can respond via voicemail through the anchor app, which is where my podcasts live. I always love hearing from you. You can also make a comment on the YouTube or Vimeo channels where I post the videos of this in case you are a more visual person and would rather not just listen to a podcast.

So until next time, happy, happy, local making.