



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

5+



Activity Book

Junior

Story of
a t-shirt



Required citation:

FAO. 2024. *Activity Book Junior-- Story of a T-shirt*.

Roma. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0947en>

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

ISBN 978-92-5-138847-1

© FAO, 2024



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Third-party materials. Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org. Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request. Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: copyright@fao.org.

World Food Day

Every year on 16 October, people from more than 150 countries come together to mark World Food Day (WFD). Since 1945, nations around the world have joined forces with the common goal of raising global awareness and taking action to end hunger and ensure healthy diets for all. FAO was founded on that day. But WFD is YOUR day, too! Become a food hero and inspire others to take action to help create a more sustainable world where no one is left behind.

Note to teachers

This Activity Book tells an engaging story that is suitable for children aged 5 and over. Adult help is required with reading and comprehension. The book encourages children to play an active role in building a sustainable world.

This book is part of the FAO Activity Book Series. Though it is aimed at children between the ages of 8 and 12, it can be a valuable teaching aid for younger and older students.

Acknowledgements

FAO would like to thank Matteo Ward, World Food Day food hero and advocate for sustainable fashion, for his technical support and creative vision. His contribution to this story is intended to inspire young minds to embrace a more sustainable lifestyle.

FAO also acknowledges the author Susanna Mattiangeli and illustrator Lorenzo Terranera for their dedication and creativity in turning global issues into a source of inspiration for young people.



Hello everyone, today I want to show you something really strange. It's a truck full of trousers, shirts, jackets, skirts, evening gowns, coats and jumpers in every colour and size. There are so many of them that together they make one big colourful jumble.

Take a good look:
that strange mound is
made of clothes, not soil



Now the truck is tipping out the colourful jumble at the foot of the mound. Why? Where do all these clothes come from? Here's the thing: the truck is leaving them here because this is a clothes dump. A gigantic dustbin where millions of garments from all over the world are dumped on top of each other. To be honest, they don't seem at all happy to be here.

I'm **Matteo** and I want to tell you a story. It's about clothes, but also about plants, farmers and farming. What do clothes have to do with farming? We'll soon find out.



See this blue T-shirt? Her name is Celeste, which means sky blue. She's one of many T-shirts that end up here every day. She's cute, even if she seems a bit sad, and nearly new. She only has one small tear.



That must be why they threw you out, poor Celeste. I have an idea! Let's leave this dump. Tell me where you were before this, and I'll take you back there. What do you think?

Sure! She can't wait to get away from here. So where are we going?

Celeste points to the big city by the sea, down there. She ends up leading the way!



Near the harbour, where the ships depart, there's a second-hand clothes market. What an incredible place. Clothes from all over the world are sold here.

Celeste has bad memories of this place. She was here for ages waiting for someone to buy her. But no one wants a sad T-shirt, so in the end she was thrown away.

What's the matter, Celeste? Do you want to get out of here? OK, OK, let's go... where? How did you get here? Of course, I should have guessed – by ship!

Celeste came on a long journey over the ocean to get here, crammed into a big bag with a lot of other clothes. They were packed together so tightly they couldn't even breathe.



Let's retrace Celeste's journey. Before the lengthy ocean crossing, she spent a long time in a dark warehouse. Before that, she was in a shop that collects old clothes. How did she get there? She was taken there by car, in a bag, from Nina's house.

Yes, Celeste was Nina's T-shirt. Nina wanted Celeste when she saw her at the shop, it was love at first sight. She pestered her mother - will you buy her for me? Will you buy her for me? She wouldn't stop.

Back then, Celeste was an adorable, fun T-shirt. Nina wore her all the time – for running, jumping, somersaults and long bike rides.

It was the bike that did it. All it took was for Celeste to get hooked on a twig when they were cycling past a small tree, and... rip! It left a little hole.

When we get to Nina's house, Celeste starts to smile. "It's so good to see you again! I've missed you so much!" says Nina, slipping on her favourite T-shirt again. "I didn't care about the tear, but after a few days my mum said I couldn't walk around with a hole in my T-shirt. So, she put you in a bag and took you away. I was really upset."

Celeste tells her about her long journey and describes the mountain of clothes. Nina can hardly believe her ears. "Did you really cross the ocean? Do clothes travel that far?"

Yes, as soon as we decide that we don't want them any longer, clothes are passed around and, if nobody keeps them, they can end up in one of those giant dumps. What's more, most of the shirts, trousers and jackets we wear have to travel a long way before they get to the shops in the first place. So yes, clothes really can go round the world.



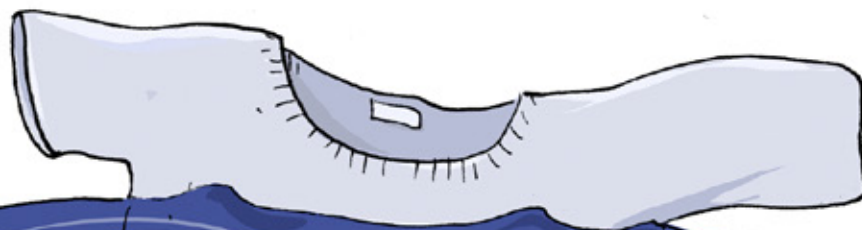
"And you, Celeste, where were you before you got to the shop?"

That's right. What were you before you became a T-shirt?



Celeste recalls it very well. She remembers when she was sewn together, piece by piece, in a big factory far away. The needle tickled a little and Celeste couldn't stop giggling. Perhaps that's why they decided to print a smiley face on her front.

Indigo is a plant. It grows in hot countries. Farmers harvest its leaves and get a beautiful blue dye from them, which can be dark or pale. What great swims I had in the indigo dye! I had so much fun, she says. It was a long time ago, in another faraway place, who knows where.



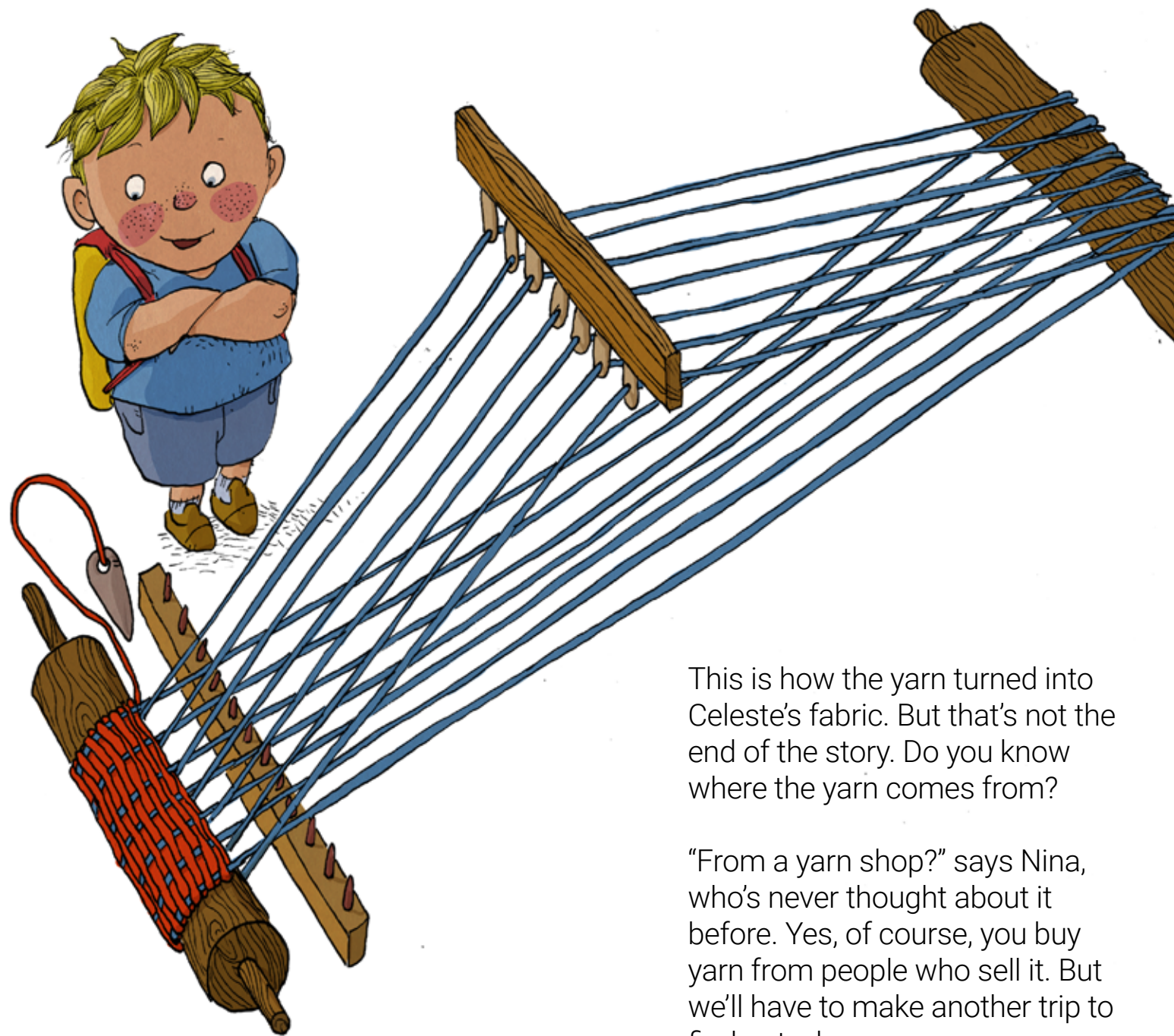
But before that? Do you remember anything from before? Yes, Celeste remembers when she was white fabric fresh from the loom. She remembers being dipped in indigo, the dye that turned her sky blue.

Celeste travelled a lot, even before becoming a T-shirt. What if we go further back? Before you were fabric you were a piece of yarn, remember?

Yarn?
I don't remember, says Celeste.

It's so long ago, I'm not surprised.
But I know.

You need a loom to make clothing fabric. You line up a lot of yarns side by side. They have to be nice and straight but not too tight, otherwise they break. All these lengthway yarns make up the warp. Another crosswise yarn is woven across this warp. This yarn passes over and under the warp yarns, leaving a horizontal row. The fabric is built up row after row. The loom is a very ancient tool. In the olden days, everything was done by hand, but now there are big machines that work much faster.



This is how the yarn turned into Celeste's fabric. But that's not the end of the story. Do you know where the yarn comes from?

"From a yarn shop?" says Nina, who's never thought about it before. Yes, of course, you buy yarn from people who sell it. But we'll have to make another trip to find out where.



Let's take a look at Celeste's label, it says she's all cotton, a very, very beautiful and special plant. When its flowers blossom and are pollinated, a fruit is formed. This holds the seeds. The cotton plant's fruit is round with a soft centre. See those fluffy tufts? They cover the seeds to protect them. When the fruit opens, the farmers collect these beautiful white tufts and separate them from the seeds. Making yarn is hard work – you have to clean the cotton tufts, comb them for a long time and put the fibres together to form strands; then you have to gently draw and twist the fibres round and round, until they become fine, strong yarn.

"So, Celeste comes from a flower?" asks Nina.

Yes, we could say that Celeste's parents were cotton flowers and whoever grew and harvested the cotton brought her into being.

"Sounds like magic!"

Yes, there's something magical in the very ancient art of spinning, weaving and dyeing the fabric. It is hard to believe, but before she became a T-shirt – before she was turned into fabric or even yarn – Celeste was a flower.

Nina looks at Celeste with fresh eyes. Now she prizes her even more: she travelled so far, from the cotton field where she was born to the shop where she bought her.

All that work done by so many people. "Can we fix this little tear?" Nina asks me.

Sure! We can mend it and maybe make it into... what would you like?

"A flower! A yellow one, like the cotton flower!" We set to work with needle and thread and make a lovely patch.

"Now that I've found you again, I'll never throw you away," Nina tells her. "You'll never end up in a clothes mound again".

Celeste is more beautiful than ever now. And the best thing is, she's never been happier.



Colour the images in white and look at the illustration. What negative and positive actions do you see? Talk about them with your classmates, your family or a guardian.







I'm Matteo Ward and I work to raise awareness of the effects that the clothing industry has on our environment and our lives. A T-shirt like Celeste is made from the same resources needed to make a loaf of bread, like soil, water, air, energy and people's labour. These are all valuable resources that we must use carefully. We know that food should not be wasted. In the same way, it's not right that resources essential to the planet should be used to make clothes that don't last long and are thrown away after a few months. All actions in the world are interconnected. They're part of one big chain. The clothing industry, just like the food industry, is part of the big chain that is farming.

Matteo Ward

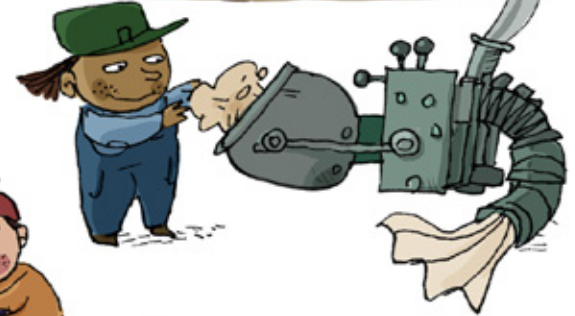
is one of FAO's many food heroes. Food heroes are people who are committed to inspiring action and nourishing communities even in challenging times, often ensuring that agriculture and food production do not harm the environment and guarantee a healthy life for all.



Celeste the T-shirt comes from cotton plants. Cotton is a vegetable fibre like linen, hemp, jute or coconut. It is used to make clothes but also curtains, upholstery, backpacks and many other things. Fibres don't just come from plants. Other fibres like silk, wool, cashmere or mohair come from animals.

To get these materials you need fields to grow crops, water for irrigation, energy for factories and, of course, many workers.

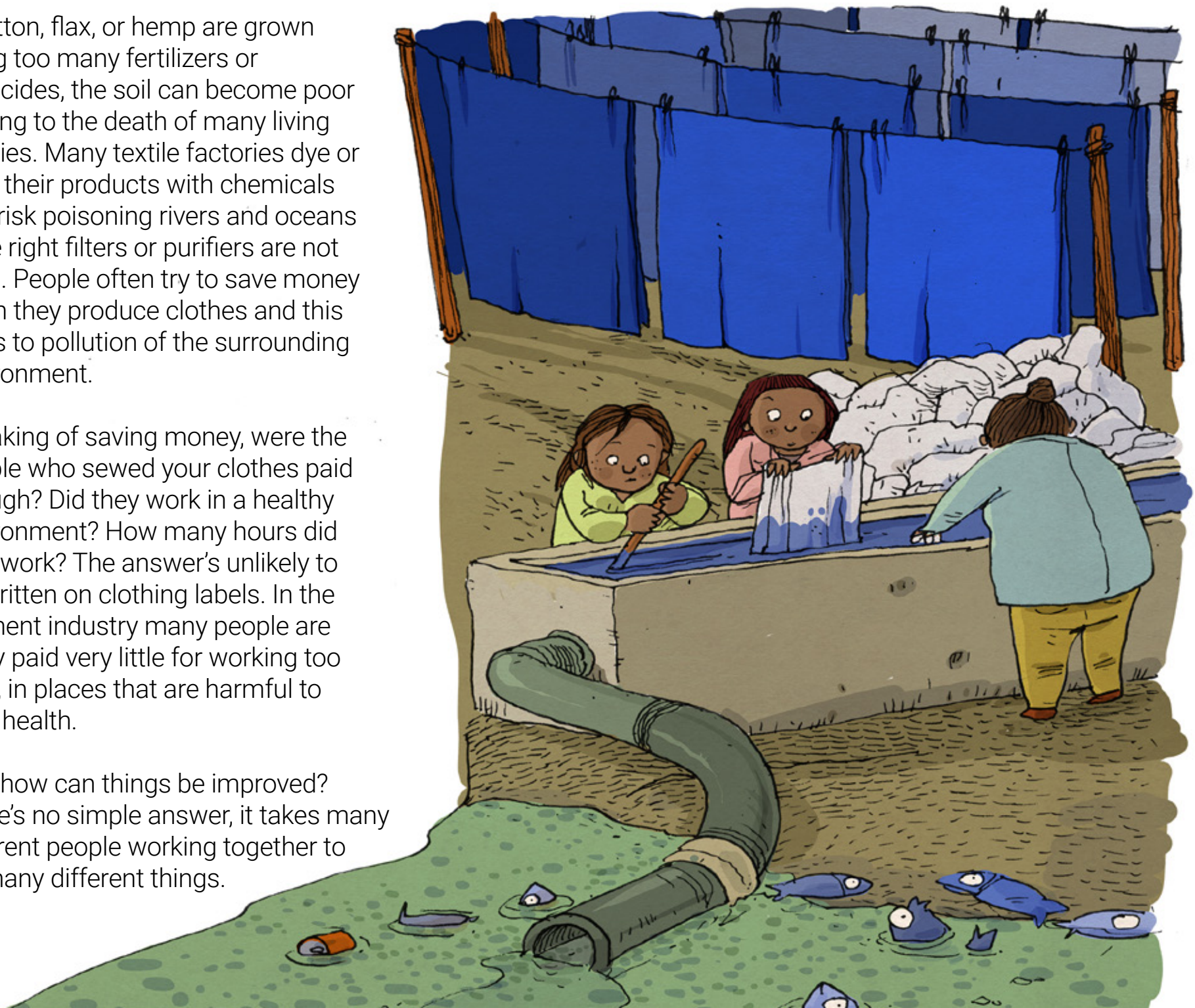
Every time you put on a garment, think of the chain that brought it to you, the environment and the people who worked on it.



If cotton, flax, or hemp are grown using too many fertilizers or pesticides, the soil can become poor leading to the death of many living species. Many textile factories dye or treat their products with chemicals that risk poisoning rivers and oceans if the right filters or purifiers are not used. People often try to save money when they produce clothes and this leads to pollution of the surrounding environment.

Speaking of saving money, were the people who sewed your clothes paid enough? Did they work in a healthy environment? How many hours did they work? The answer's unlikely to be written on clothing labels. In the garment industry many people are sadly paid very little for working too hard, in places that are harmful to their health.

So... how can things be improved? There's no simple answer, it takes many different people working together to do many different things.



What are the solutions?

Governments need to make laws so that clothes are made in a sustainable way. That means a way that does not harm the planet and is also fair to working men and women.

Companies have to produce fewer and better products, without polluting and wasting resources, ensuring good wages and healthy working environments.

All of society, which means all people, should call for the fashion industry to be more open and honest about what they do and to take responsibility for their actions



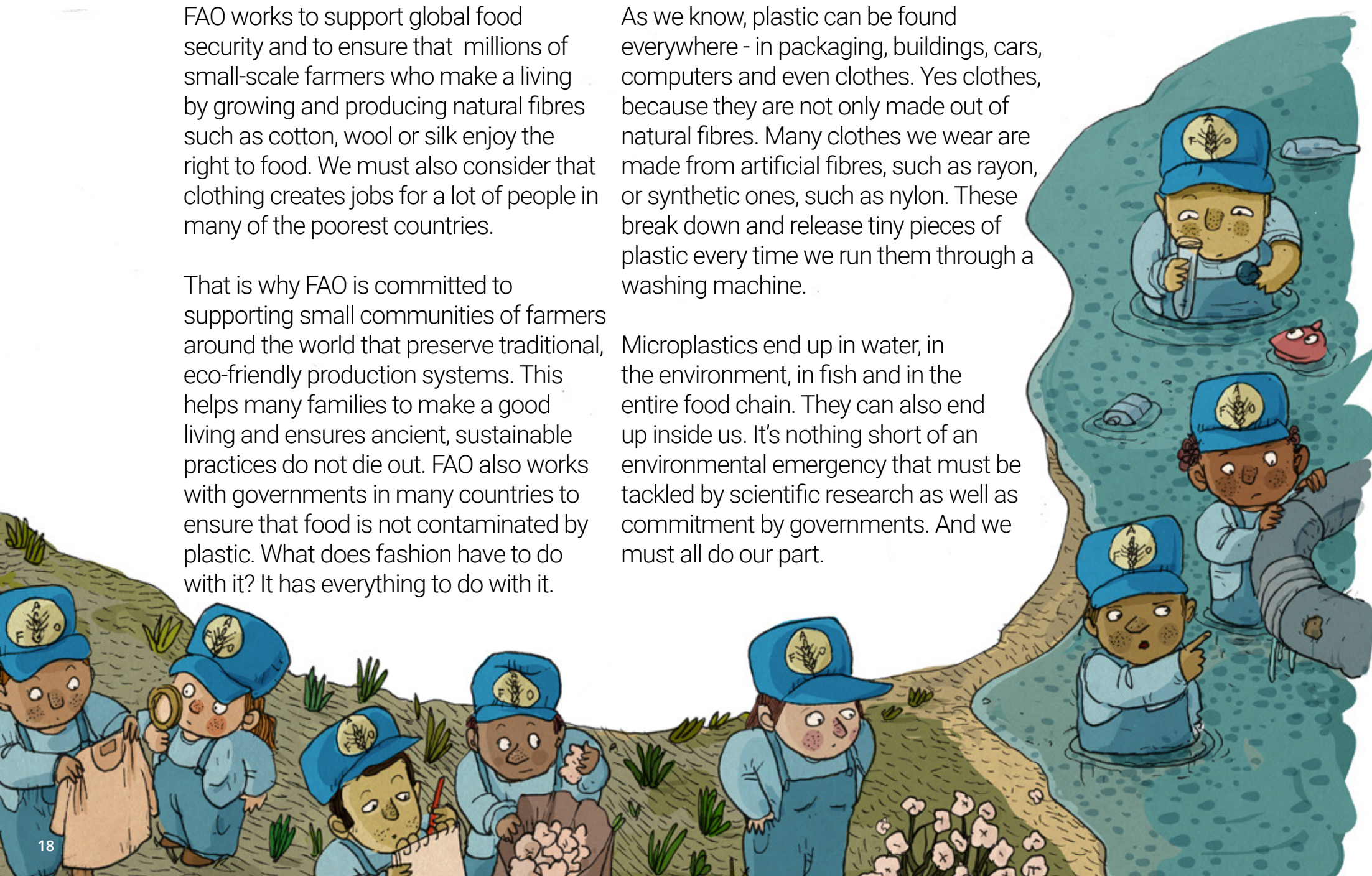
What does FAO do?

FAO works to support global food security and to ensure that millions of small-scale farmers who make a living by growing and producing natural fibres such as cotton, wool or silk enjoy the right to food. We must also consider that clothing creates jobs for a lot of people in many of the poorest countries.

That is why FAO is committed to supporting small communities of farmers around the world that preserve traditional, eco-friendly production systems. This helps many families to make a good living and ensures ancient, sustainable practices do not die out. FAO also works with governments in many countries to ensure that food is not contaminated by plastic. What does fashion have to do with it? It has everything to do with it.

As we know, plastic can be found everywhere - in packaging, buildings, cars, computers and even clothes. Yes clothes, because they are not only made out of natural fibres. Many clothes we wear are made from artificial fibres, such as rayon, or synthetic ones, such as nylon. These break down and release tiny pieces of plastic every time we run them through a washing machine.

Microplastics end up in water, in the environment, in fish and in the entire food chain. They can also end up inside us. It's nothing short of an environmental emergency that must be tackled by scientific research as well as commitment by governments. And we must all do our part.



What can you do?

Only buy what you need and look after your clothes carefully. Mend them for as long as you can and then try to repurpose them creatively. If you want to refresh your wardrobe, organize clothes swaps with friends and buy second-hand clothes if you can.

Choose responsible production. When you buy new clothes, look for shops or brands that do not pollute the environment, that use truly eco-friendly materials and that really guarantee fair wages and good working conditions. If you want to make informed choices, you can ask your schoolteachers to help you explore options.

Take care when washing! Wash in cold water to save electricity and make fabrics last longer. Artificial and synthetic fabrics release tiny bits of plastic that end up in our rivers and oceans whenever you wash them in a washing machine so wash your clothes sparingly.

Spread the word. You can help tell friends, relatives and acquaintances about the impact the fashion industry has on the environment. You can swap information on the true meaning of “sustainable fashion”, how to reduce waste and how and what to buy.



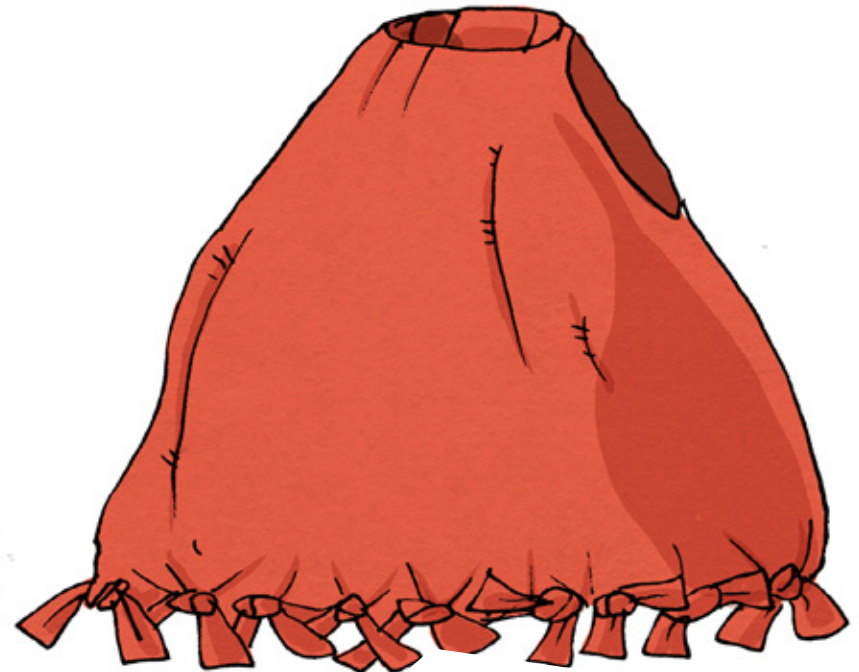
A no-sew T-shirt bag

Got a T-shirt that no longer fits? Is it too old, threadbare or tatty? Don't throw it away, turn it into a shopping bag instead.

Simply cut off the sleeves and neckband with scissors (you can use the leftover pieces as hair scrunchies or store them for other inventions) and snip vertical fringes at the bottom, like this:



Then knot together the fringes on the back and the ones on the front, like this:



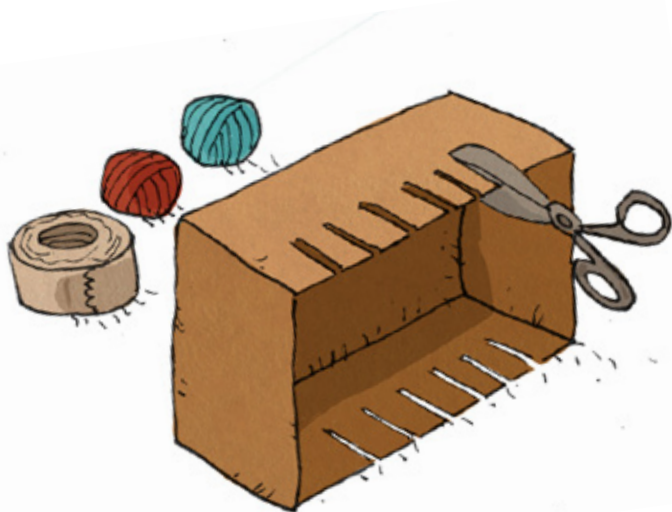
Tie a second round of knots between neighbouring fringes to strengthen the bottom of your bag. Once it's finished, you can choose to leave the fringes on the outside or turn the whole thing inside out.

Let's make a loom

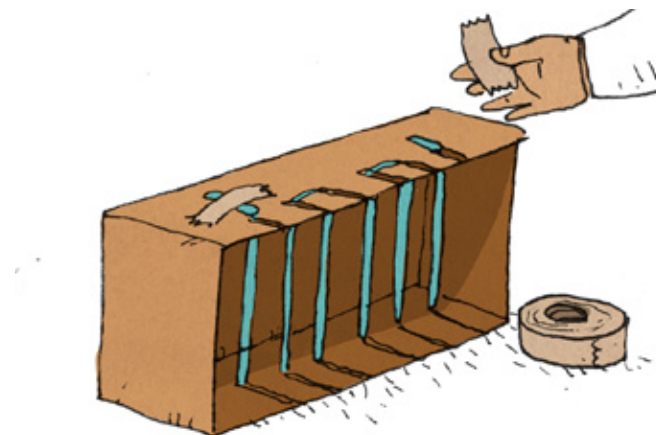
What you'll need:

- A shoebox without a lid
- Sticky tape
- Two long strands of wool or cotton in two different colours, e.g. red and green
- A large paper clip

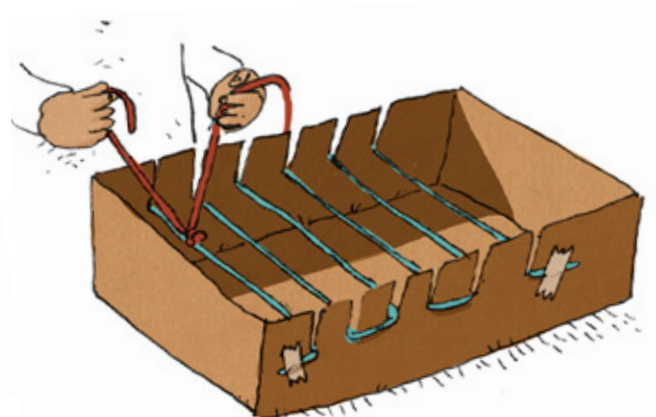
Make cuts about one centimetre apart and two and a half centimetres deep on the long sides of the shoebox:



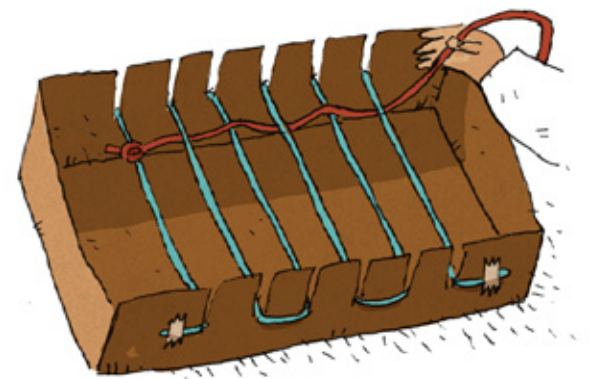
Thread the warp onto these cuts by weaving it through each slot. The start and end of the yarn must be on the same side of the box, like this:



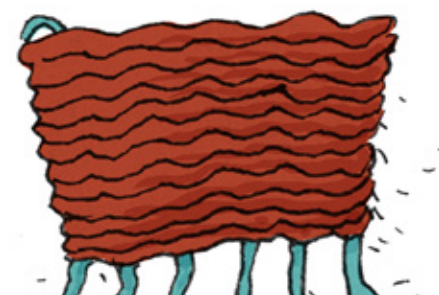
When you've finished, secure the beginning and end of the warp yarn with tape. Now take the other yarn, the red one, and tie one end to the paper clip, which will act as a bobbin. Tie the other end to the top left-hand side of the first warp yarn, like this:



Now you can start weaving your threads passing the bobbin over then under the other yarn, the warp yarn. Once you've finished one row from left to right, start again from the other side, this time working from right to left. PLEASE NOTE: if the weft thread, the red one, ends up UNDER the warp thread...

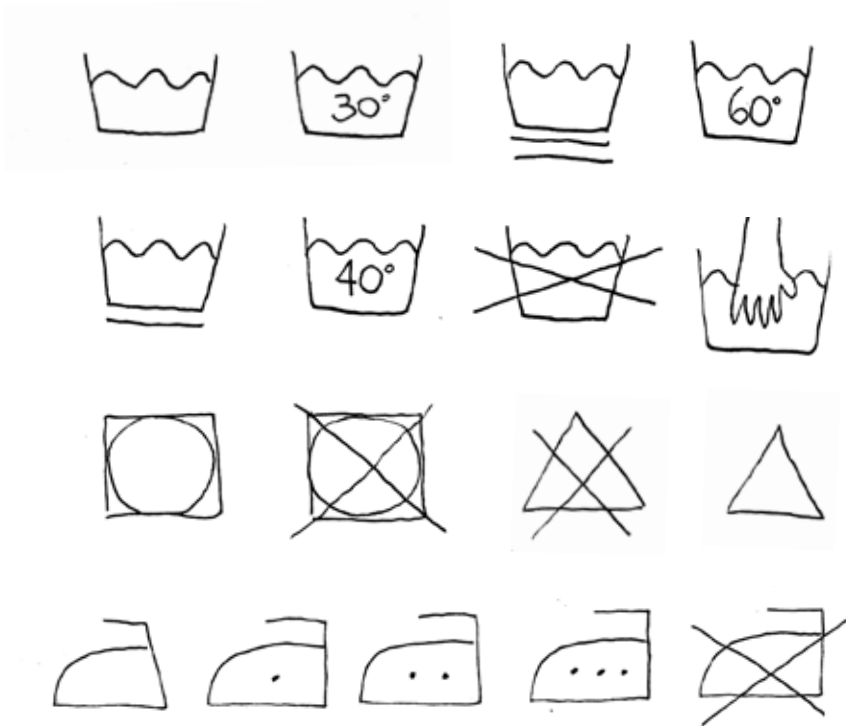


you have to start the next row ABOVE the warp thread. But if the yarn ends up above, you have to start the next row from below. Repeat the same steps until you reach the end of the warp, making sure the weft is nice and taut and, hey presto, you've made your very own woven cloth.



Read the label

What are our clothes made of? Of natural, artificial, synthetic or mixed fibres? How should we wash them to make them last? Labels answer with symbols like these. Do you know what they mean?



Do some research, choose 3-5 symbols and write down their meaning below.

Instructions for making your own travelling T-shirt

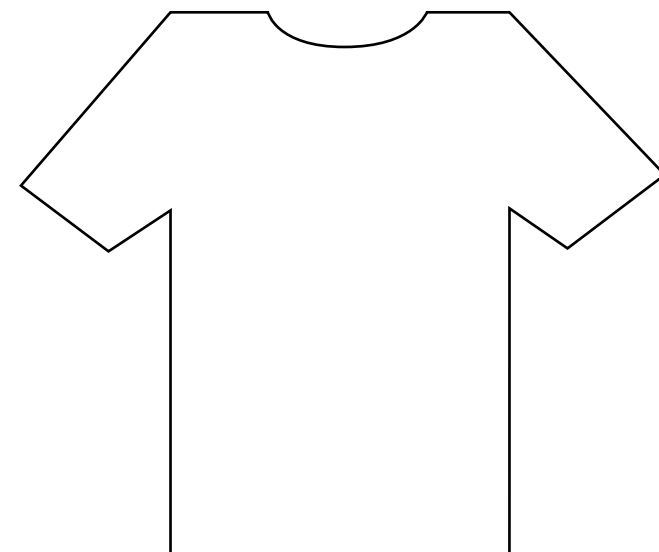
Congratulations on completing the Activity Book and finding out how you can live more sustainably! Now, it's time to get down to business and share what you've learned.

1. Colour-in the T-shirt: use your imagination and create an illustration.
2. Choose a specific action to commit to: think about the activities you've explored and choose the one that meant the most to you. Finally, write the action in the space provided.
3. Cut out the T-shirt.
4. Spread the word! If you can, send your T-shirt in an envelope to a friend or family member or deliver it in person. Encourage them to read the Activity Book so they can discover the impact of their actions and invite them to join you on your journey towards sustainability.

FAO Group Visits

FAO headquarters is located in Rome, Italy, but the Organisation works in over 130 countries around the world! Are you curious about FAO's history, its projects and the spaces where world leaders meet? We invite you to visit our group visits website where you can get an inside view of FAO and learn more about our work.

For more information visit
www.fao.org/about/visit-us/it



Fold the sheet along the dots

For sustainable clothing, I am committed to:





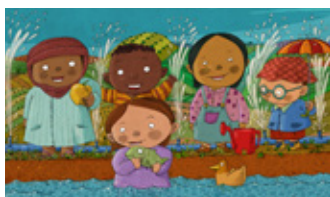
Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Activity Books

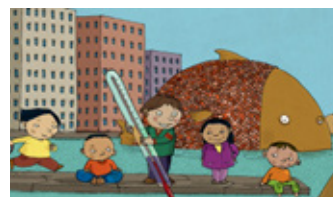


Activity Books Series

Download the FAO Activity Book Series for activities or lesson tips on important global issues at the heart of the Organization's work: www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc0239en



► Water is life,
water is food.



► Climate action



► Leave no one behind



► Le nostre azioni sono
il nostro futuro



► Food heroes



► Healthy plants,
healthy planet



► Eating healthy matters



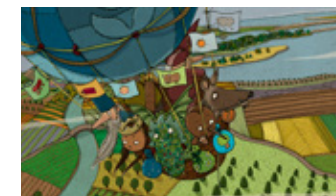
► Change the future
of migration



► La tua guida alla FAO



► Working for Zero Hunger



► Climate is changing

Contact us:

world-food-day@fao.org
www.fao.org

**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

Rome, Italy

My travel shirt



ISBN 978-92-5-138832-7



9 789251 388327

CD09471T/1/06.24