



sations about the nature of the silk fibre itself. With issues on sustainability being embedded within the corporate strategies of key luxury groups such as Kering and LVMH, that buy most of their silk from Italy, it's a concern for Como manufacturers that several environmental standards give silk a 'less than average' rating due both to the practice of sericulture and because resources used in degumming, dyeing and finishing can be intensive.

Yet despite this growing concern, very few analyses have been carried out on the sustainability of mulberry silk that is imported from China and widely used in high-end Italian silk fabrics – although there have been some studies on silk varieties from India and Brazil.

"Silk is a natural fibre and we know how sustainable it is, but we had to demonstrate it. The Italian silk industry, for this reason, has promoted an analysis of the environmental impact of the silk chain" said Stefano Vitali, F.lli Vitali SpA, President of Ufficio Italiano Seta, the branch of Sistema Moda Italia which comprises the most important silk mills in Italy. "In addition to this we are also very active in supporting our textile mills and in making them sensitive to the environmental aspects of products and manufacturing."

"Studies on the environmental impact of current silk production in Italy using a standardised methodological framework such as LCA, or a supply-chain lifecycle inventory (LCI) has never been performed," said Silvio Faragò, Head of Silk Division at Innovhub, which operates as part of the Milan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "The few examples available in literature focus on the assessment of raw silk production. Partial investigations have been also performed for some silk manufacturing steps, but they have a limited focus on single technologies or products."

That is why the Italian industry has recently published a new study to assess the environmental credentials of mulberry silk used in Italian silk yarns and fabrics, "in order to plug the gap which currently exists regarding field data and life cycle assessments (LCAs) in this niche area of the industry," he told us.

Silk currently accounts for less than 0.2 per cent of the global textile market, despite its production base being spread across more than 60 countries.

The newly released joint study was undertaken by University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland and Innovhub Stazioni Sperimentali per l'Industria, partially funded by the SIMPLER European consortium.

