

# Primark: The Cry For Help

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# General information

## PRIMARK

It is an Irish clothing and accessories company which is a subsidiary of AB Foods, and has headquartered in Dublin. Primark offer a diverse range of products, including newborn and children's clothing, women's wear, men's wear, home ware, accessories, footwear, beauty products and confectionery.

## STORES

Primark own over 315 stores, starting in Ireland and spreading all across Europe, currently Primark stores can be found in 11 countries, i

PRIMARK®



# Primark ethics:

## PEOPLE & PRODUCTION

"The welfare of the people who make products for Primark matters to us. Whether they're making t-shirts in Bangladesh, socks in Turkey or jewellery in India, we expect wages to be fair and working conditions safe. Primark does not own factories. We require every supplier and factory to commit to meet internationally recognised standards.»

## PLANET

«The lifecycle of a Primark product involves many stages which can affect the planet. We strive to minimise this impact wherever we can. Whether it's the cotton that goes into our t-shirts, the dyes used by factories or the way our products are transported and sold in-store.»



# The 'Sustainable Cotton Program'

## PLANET

In 2013, Primark partnered with agricultural experts, CottonConnect, and the Self-Employed Women's Association to create the 'Primark Sustainable Cotton Programme'





# THE CRIES FOR HELP

The SOS labels scandal of 2014

## The first case:

- ◆ ‘I was amazed when I checked for the washing instructions and spotted this label. It was stitched by hand to say “Forced to work exhausting hours” and sewn in with the other normal labels’.
- ◆ Rebecca called Primark for an explanation but said she ‘was put on hold for 15 minutes before being cut off’.





A spokesman said there had been ‘no other incidents of this kind’ and added: ‘We would be grateful if the customer would give us the dress, so we can investigate how the additional label became attached and whether there are issues which need to be looked into.’

## The second case:

'I was really shocked when I saw the label saying it was degrading sweatshop conditions'

She tweeted a photograph of the 'cry for help' to Primark and also tried to ring them but was put on hold and then cut off.





‘We are investigating the origins of an additional label which has been found in one of our dresses and whether there are issues which need to be looked into.’ Primark spokesman

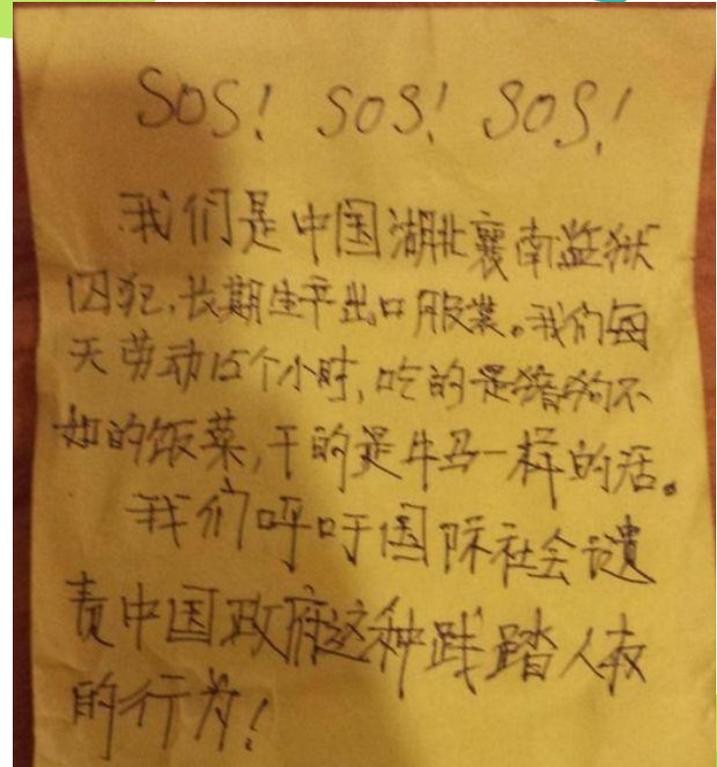
## The third case:

- ◆ Mrs Wisínska, from County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, bought the trousers during a shopping trip to Belfast in 2011, but had never worn them.
- ◆ She posted the pictures of the items on Facebook, and when she received rough English translations of the note, she said she was "in shock" and "felt sick".



# The SOS note translation:

- ◆ "SOS! SOS! SOS! We are prisoners at Xiangnan jail in Hubei, China.
- ◆ "For a long time, we have been producing clothing for export. We work for 15 hours each day. What we eat is even worse than food for pigs and dogs. The work we do is similar to (the hard work) that oxen and horses do.
- ◆ "We urge the international community to denounce China for this inhumane act"





- ◆ *"We find it very strange that this has come to light so recently, given that the trousers were on sale four years ago. We will be contacting the customer to obtain the trousers, so we can investigate how this occurred and whether there are issues which need to be looked into.*
- ◆ *"Nine inspections of the supplier have been carried out by Primark's ethical standards team since 2009. To be clear, no prison or other forced labour of any kind was found during these inspections,"*

## Recommendations:

- ◆ Checking labels before selling, because they might just be sabotage and if not, studying the issue before it goes public.
- ◆ A more open research into the cases, publishing the results on each occasion instead of making vague promises.

## Sources:

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3. "Primark investigates claim of 'cry for help' note in trousers" by Jullian Fowler for BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-28018137> [visited on 26.09.2017]
4. "Primark speaks out on 'exhausting hours' label dress" by Alison Lynch for METRO <http://metro.co.uk/2014/06/24/primark-speaks-out-on-exhausting-hours-label-dress-4773713/> [visited on 26.09.2017]
5. " 'The food we eat wouldn't even be given to dogs or pigs': Third Primark SOS note found" by Oliver McAteer for METRO <http://metro.co.uk/2014/06/26/the-food-we-eat-wouldnt-even-be-given-to-dogs-or-pigs-third-primark-sos-note-found-4776176/> [visited on 26.09.2017]
6. Primark Ethics research by JUST: [https://projectjust.com/brand\\_primark/](https://projectjust.com/brand_primark/) [visited on 26.09.2017]