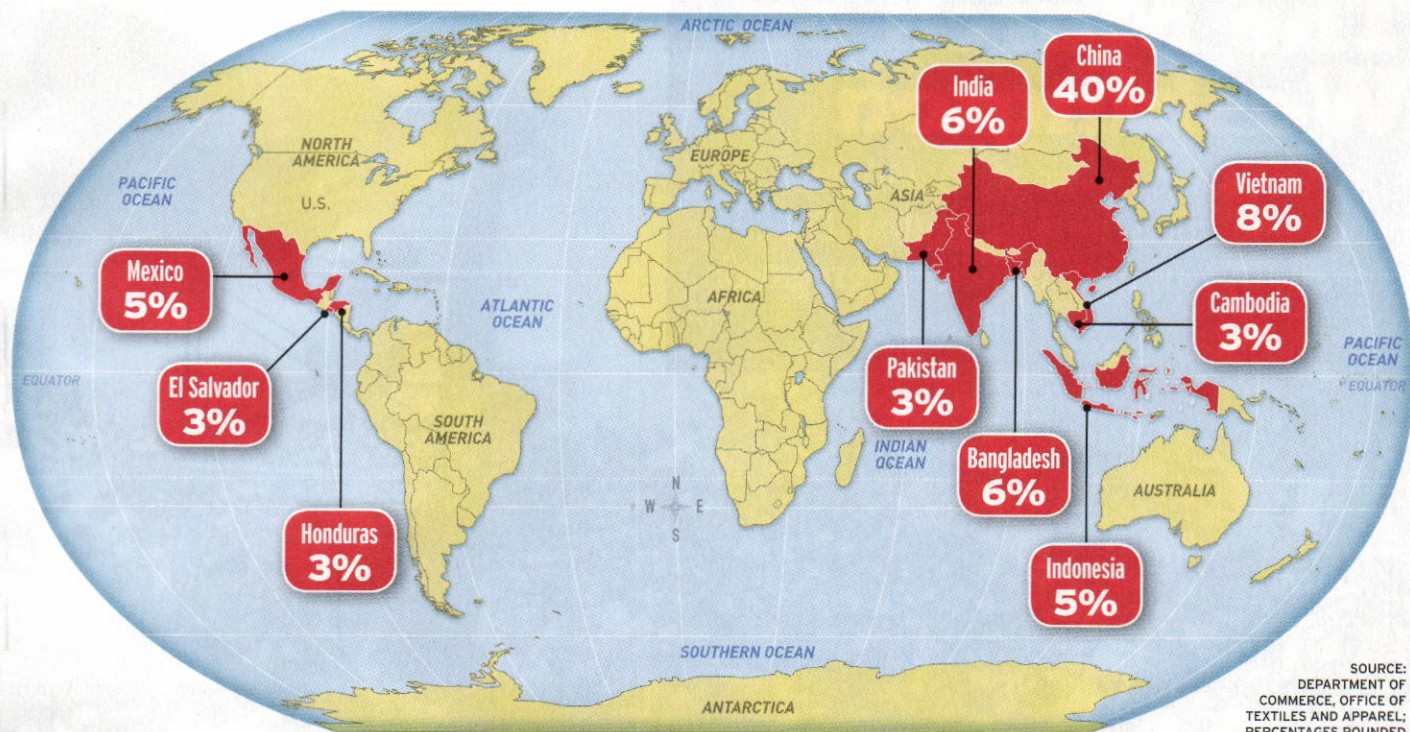


Where Your Clothes Come From

These 10 countries make more than 80 percent of the clothing sold in the U.S.



SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, OFFICE OF TEXTILES AND APPAREL; PERCENTAGES ROUNDED

"This industry is very important to us," says Mohammad Fazlul Azim, a member of the Bangladesh Parliament and a garment factory owner. "Fourteen million families depend on this."

Fifty major retailers recently signed a pact to spend at least \$60 million over the next five years to monitor safety in Bangladesh's clothing factories. To pressure Bangladesh to reform, President Obama suspended trading privileges that provide lower import tariffs.

Some consumers have begun changing their attitudes about fast fashion too.

"There's real demand for sweat-free products," says Ian Robinson, who studies labor issues at the University of Michigan. Consumers "don't have the information they need, and they do care."

How much more would it cost consumers for clothes to be produced with more worker protections in countries like Bangladesh? Less than 10 cents more per garment, according to one estimate by the National Consumers League.

A California-based yoga clothing company called PrAna is one of the first

American apparel firms to be fair-trade certified, meaning its factories have been inspected for safety and workers' pay and found to be fair. And the Sustainable Apparel Coalition—which includes big names like Walmart, Gap, and Target—has been testing a certification system that started with environmental goals but will soon include social and labor measurements.

An Ethical Alternative?

Cline is optimistic about the potential for change. "The era of the \$4.99 dress is not going to last forever," she says. "Things are going to change not only because consumers want an ethical alternative but also for economic reasons: The cost of labor in China is going up. Oil is more expensive, so transportation costs are higher."

Grace Donnelly, 20, a sophomore at John Carroll University in Ohio, says she used to frequent stores like Forever 21



Protesters outside an H&M store in Berlin, after the Bangladesh factory collapse in April

and Gap. But as she became more aware of working conditions in the factories that supply fast fashion stores, she's turned more to fair-trade clothes.

"It's difficult on a college budget," Donnelly says. But "at least you know the clothes you're buying were made sustainably and the people that made your clothes were paid fairly." •

With reporting by Jim Yardley, Stephanie Clifford, and Steven Greenhouse of *The New York Times*, and by Tiffany Lew.