



# CASE STUDY

## ECOALF

### Company Name

ECOALF S.L.

### Category

Sustainable fashion

### Location

Madrid, Spain

### Website

<https://ecoalf.com/>

*Circular Fashion  
Delivering Scalable  
Impact*

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# ECOALF

BECAUSE THERE IS NO PLANET B

## A European SME Evolving with Purpose

ECOALF, founded in 2012 in Madrid, is a circular-fashion company whose mission is to **demonstrate that high-quality clothing can be made from recycled waste materials**, without compromising design or performance (ECOALF, n.d.-a). The company transforms discarded fishing nets, plastic bottles, tyres, coffee grounds and textile scraps into premium fabrics through advanced recycling technologies. ECOALF exemplifies how European SMEs can embed **environmental, digital and inclusive values** into a cohesive, purpose-driven narrative that resonates with consumers, retailers and policymakers (Bocken et al., 2014).

The fashion industry is one of the world's most resource-intensive and polluting sectors, responsible for significant CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, water consumption and textile waste. ECOALF addresses these challenges by designing garments made from **100% recycled materials**, reducing reliance on virgin resources and cutting lifecycle emissions dramatically compared with conventional textiles (European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, 2019). By investing heavily in R&D for material innovation and waste recovery, ECOALF positions sustainability as a **core operational value**, consistent with circular business model archetypes (Bocken et al., 2014).

## Environmental Impact

ECOALF frames its business model through a **circularity and traceability lens**. Through its “Upcycling the Oceans” initiative, the company collaborates with fishermen to collect marine debris, transforming waste into high-quality yarns and fabrics (ECOALF Foundation, n.d.). ECOALF also publishes annual impact metrics detailing kilograms of ocean waste recovered, litres of water saved, and CO<sub>2</sub> reductions achieved (ECOALF, n.d.-b). This transparent, evidence-driven approach aligns with Elkington’s (1997) triple bottom line principles and strengthens legitimacy for sustainability-focused SMEs.

## Technological Innovation

ECOALF’s operations are supported by a digital backbone that integrates **recycling processes, supply-chain traceability, material science data** and customer transparency tools. The company’s R&D centres experiment with chemical and mechanical recycling to create over 500 proprietary fabrics made from waste. This innovation-driven model reflects the principles of **digital entrepreneurship**, where technology enables new value creation and scalable sustainable solutions (Nambisan, 2017). By merging science, design and technology, ECOALF demonstrates how digital tools can accelerate circular fashion innovation.

## Social Inclusion and Equity

At the heart of ECOALF's mission is **inclusion and community collaboration**. The ECOALF Foundation partners with fishing communities in Spain, Greece and Thailand, creating new income streams through marine-waste recovery while addressing environmental degradation (ECOALF Foundation, n.d.). ECOALF also advocates for responsible consumption and provides educational content on sustainability, reflecting George et al.'s (2021) framework for leveraging business models to address societal grand challenges. In this way, ECOALF ties social value creation directly to ecological impact.

## Storytelling Through the Story Spine

ECOALF's narrative clearly aligns with Egri's (2003) Story Spine structure.

**Once upon a time**, the fashion industry relied on linear, resource-heavy production.

**Every day**, this contributed to massive waste, pollution and ecological damage.

**Until one day**, ECOALF introduced a circular-textile system powered by recycled materials.

**Because of that**, waste streams were diverted into high-quality fashion.

**Because of that**, consumers gained access to sustainable, traceable garments.

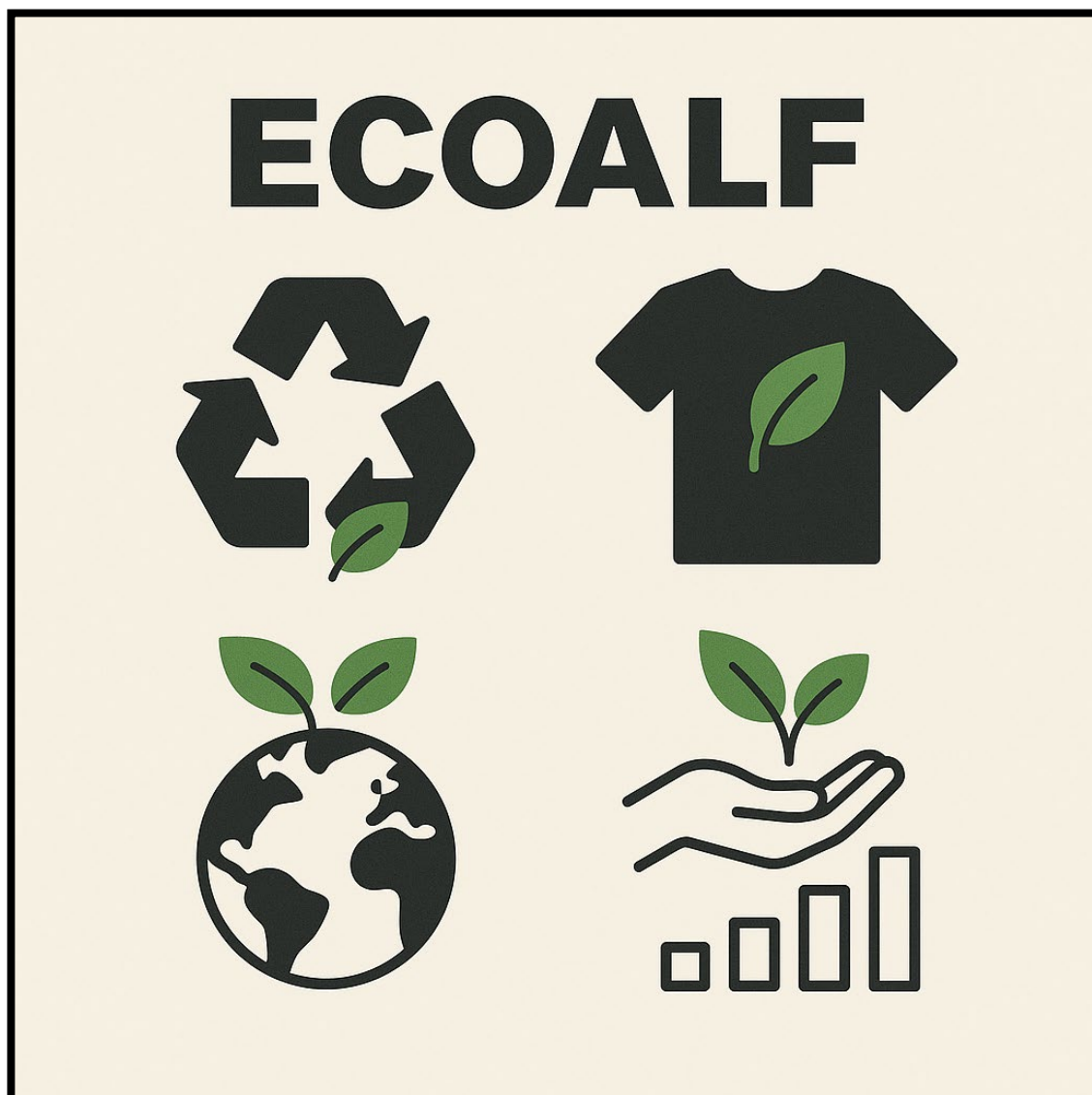
**Until finally**, ECOALF envisions a future where **circular fashion becomes the global standard**.

This structure balances environmental logic, technological innovation and emotional resonance, demonstrating how purpose-led SMEs can craft compelling sustainability narratives (Denning, 2005).



## Lessons for Startups

ECOALF demonstrates how SMEs can build legitimacy and scale by embedding **sustainability, technology and social inclusion** into their core narrative. By investing in recycled material innovation, collaborating with diverse stakeholders and aligning with European circularity goals, ECOALF illustrates the importance of **ecosystem collaboration** for sustainable transformation. Most importantly, its story shows that a well-designed narrative—grounded in real environmental benefits and transparent data—can mobilise customers, investors and regulators while staying true to mission and values.



ECOALF. (n.d.-a). *Our story*. <https://ecoalf.com/en/pages/about>

ECOALF. (n.d.-b). *Upcycling the Oceans*. <https://ecoalf.com/en/pages/upcycling-the-oceans>

ECOALF Foundation. (n.d.). *A decade ago, the ECOALF Foundation was born with a dream*. <https://ecoalf.com/en/pages/fundacion-ecoalf>

European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. (2019, October 10). *ECOALF: Upcycling the Oceans project collects marine trash and turns it into quality yarn*.

<https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/en/good-practices/ecoalf-upcycling-oceans-project-collects-marine-trash-and-turns-it-quality-yarn>