

Oberalp is continuously growing in expertise and care for the environment.

From June, the American climbing shoe brand EVOLV, will join the Oberalp family. The Oberalp sustainability report proves its "Leader-Status" in fair production, the only entity in Italy to hold this status.

The Oberalp Group, together with the brand family SALEWA, DYNAFIT, POMOCA and WILD COUNTRY, will grow even more this year with the American brand EVOLV, specialized in climbing shoes. Ruth Oberrauch explains what the new acquisition means to the family who owns the Oberalp Group: "We can now be a total solutions provider in the growing climbing sector, together with our brand WILD COUNTRY, which mainly focuses on technical hardware." Oberalp, along with its now five brands, seeks to further develop a clear positioning as mountain-specialist in the vast outdoor market. For the first time, the Oberalp Group will present "Contribute" its sustainability report for the past financial year, together with the balance sheet figures. "From this year on, economic results will be disclosed together with the sustainability figures," says the Oberalp Group CEO, Christoph Engl. The South Tyrolean company is the only company in Italy to hold the "Leader" status, awarded by the NGO "Fair Wear Foundation (FWF)". 97% of all textile products from SALEWA, DYNAFIT and WILD COUNTRY comes from factories where working conditions and social standards have been verified. "To reach goals like this in the field of sustainability, is as much a success for us as the 5% company growth to 220 million euros." The Oberalp Group employs almost 700 people worldwide, around 440 of them in Italy, and 230 in the headquarters in Bolzano Sud.

"We only do what we understand and what we are passionate about. And that is mountains, also in the form of climbing halls," says the Oberalp Group CEO, Christoph Engl. "Our growth relies upon keeping a clear focus on one area, mountain sport, whilst many other brands experiment with wider outdoor subject areas". Which is why the brand EVOLV is such a good fit for the Oberalp brand strategy: With a clear focus on climbing shoes and a volume of 120,000 pairs of shoes a year, the takeover of this previously well-known US brand was a must. By means of this acquisition, the Oberalp Group has emphasized its dedication to climbing and bouldering and its desire to increase its in-depth knowledge in this specific area. "The climbing hall is the only mountain that is growing worldwide. This mountain is young and urban. With both of our climbing brands we have our eyes on the US and Asian markets in particular, but even in Europe a new, fully-specialized product can be perfectly placed in the climbing community with EVOLV," says Engl, summarizing succinctly the EVOLV strategy of Oberalp.

EVOLV will stay in Los Angeles

EVOLV was founded in Los Angeles 16 years ago by a Korean National, Brian Chung, and had an extremely important ambassador in the form of the climbing legend, Chris Sharma. As founder and experienced product manager Brian will join the company in the brand

management of EVOLV and will help to lead the brand to venture further out of Los Angeles. Oberalp sees great potential for growth at EVOLV. Climbing will, after all, be a new discipline at the next Olympics in Tokyo and will therefore gain further prominence among the general public. "Climbing is a new form of fitness. It is not just mountain enthusiasts and alpinists that enjoy training in the climbing halls. Many young people are discovering climbing as a new form of sport that combines many different aspects: power, mobility, concentration. More and more people are discovering climbing for themselves and are heading to the rock-covered halls," observes Ruth Oberrauch regarding the trend. Even though EVOLV remains an independent brand, synergies with WILD COUNTRY should be utilized and incorporated into the company processes, i.e. in the areas of quality control and sustainability.

2018: 2500 chemical residue tests performed on own products

The Oberalp Group isn't concerned merely with continual improvements to create fairer working conditions, but also with the sustainable quality of the brand products. Around 92% of the clothing collection from the brands SALEWA, DYNAFIT and WILD COUNTRY are made by fabrics that are certified according to strict environmental criteria (bluesign® and OEKO-TEX®) or tested against its rigorous Restricted Substances List by third-party laboratories. In 2018 the company ran over 2.500 tests to check chemical residues in their own products. Oberalp wants to be transparent with its customers about how they deal with their social responsibility. In his introduction in the Oberalp sustainability report, "Contribute", the company founder, Heiner Oberrauch, writes: "It is our duty as a business to ensure the fair treatment of all those who work throughout our entire supply chain and to simultaneously maintain a future world, that is fit to live in for generations to come." In view of this, the entire SALEWA and DYNAFIT shoe collection is tested in independent labs. 76% of our clothing products are made using PFC free fabrics. PFCs are chemicals that make clothes water-repellent, which is important for the performance of technical products but has a negative impact on the environment, since their breakdown may take decades. "This is a positive outcome," says Ruth Oberrauch in her role as Head of Sustainability within the group, "we are investing in further research and product development, in order to find new and sustainable solutions to further reduce the use of PFCs together with our partners."

Every banknote is a vote

The Oberalp Group will address the issue of sustainability more firmly in the future with the end customers of its own brand products. "Every purchaser should know that their banknotes are like a vote," says the CEO Christoph Engl. Anyone who pays the cheapest price for mass-produced mountaineering clothing, obviously does not consider sustainability to be of importance. Oberalp cannot and will not join the game of the cheapest price with their brands, but will instead establish themselves as suppliers of worth. This is helped if a company has experienced healthy growth and has been able to invest in product development and research. Last summer the company set up its own department for research and development to drive innovation forward.

Swiss brand POMOCA is the world market leader in ski skins.

The 5% growth in sales is mostly thanks to the success of Oberalp's Swiss brand POMOCA, world market leader specialized in ski skins, followed by the ski tour and mountain running specialist DYNAFIT, a performance brand. The mountain brand SALEWA continues to account for the largest share of sales, while the climbing brand WILD COUNTRY has the largest international sales distribution. The Oberalp Group is planning a consolidation of the economic results for the year 2019. "The growth of the outdoor market reached its zenith a while ago," explains Christoph Engl, elucidating on his analysis of the economic environment. The next development stage for the Oberalp brand collective requires great stability in what has already been achieved before venturing towards something new. "However, we have the desire and enjoyment for this," reveals Ruth Oberrauch, "and there are ideas and concepts on how we can serve this love for mountains early enough for the next generation."