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Huntsman Develops Bio-Based Polyurethane for KEEN’s Plant-Based Soles

THE WOODLANDS, Texas – Footwear experts at Huntsman have helped KEEN, Inc. (KEEN) develop a breakthrough production innovation – a range of sneakers with plant-based soles. The Field to Foot (F2F) sneakers were created by KEEN’s Advanced Concepts Team, utilizing a specially developed bio-based polyurethane system from Huntsman that contains a by-product from agricultural processing.

Containing bio content ranging from 35% to 51%, the polyurethane system has a lower carbon footprint than petroleum-based alternatives that are readily available and currently the norm in footwear production. Developed at Huntsman’s footwear center in Belgium, the system, which is based on Huntsman’s DALTOPED® S polyurethane technology platform, is a bespoke soling solution created especially for KEEN. The direct-on system offers KEEN comparable performance to conventional systems when it comes to resilience, rebound, hydrolysis, comfort and durability – but crucially is fully aligned with the brand’s commitment to incorporating clean, environmentally focused, high-performance technologies into its footwear.

Discussions between Huntsman and KEEN began in late 2020, with development work on the F2F project starting in early 2021. Collaborating throughout the pandemic, KEEN and Huntsman pulled together experts from across their global operations to work together remotely. Colleagues from the United States, Europe and Asia were involved in development, scale up, and production of the system. For the most part, the team interacted online, but there were some face-to-face meetings towards the end of the project. As the soles went into production, Huntsman’s technical service team travelled to KEEN’s manufacturing plant in Thailand to provide on-site support.

Commenting on the partnership with Huntsman, Erik Burbank, Vice President, The KEEN Effect, said: “KEEN’s work with innovative partners like Huntsman advances our commitment to reducing our impact on the planet, and helps us extend and share those benefits with other businesses as well. We know that we have to work together to tackle the climate crisis.”

KEEN has described its’ F2F sneakers, which hit the market in late September 2021, as among its most significant environmental technology launches and a meaningful step towards setting a new industry standard for more sustainable footwear.
Dave Burge, a UK-based expert on polyurethanes, who worked with KEEN and Huntsman to develop the technology, said: "The use of agricultural processing by-products within polyurethane is an important step toward transforming the footwear industry supply chain. While the science and technology behind these shoes is serious business, the product itself is fun and familiar. The Field to Foot collection is classic looking and forward thinking, with a lighter footprint on the planet. It reinforces our commitment to detoxing the planet, while demonstrating that cutting edge technology can be fun and comfortable."

Paola Faoro, Global Footwear Marketing Manager at Huntsman, said: "The polyurethane system we created for KEEN is our first with such a high level of bio-based content and we are delighted it has been incorporated into the company’s F2F range – which is truly ground-breaking and is bound to be a real hit with consumers. This was a great project to be involved in, which was truly global, despite the pandemic. Working together, colleagues from around the world made the soling system a reality, rapidly."

F2F sneakers were initially made available as a limited edition in September 2021 and sold out quickly. KEEN will launch the product broadly on August 1, 2022, and is expecting significant demand for the program.

Separately, Huntsman and KEEN are collaborating on several additional sustainability-based projects as part of their shared commitment to reducing the impacts of climate change.

For more information, please contact Paola Faoro at paola_palma_faoro@huntsman.com.

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For more information about KEEN, Inc., visit www.keenfootwear.com. To get notified when the shoes are available for purchase, follow this link to the product page and request “Notify Me”: https://www.keenfootwear.com/the-harvest-collection/.

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