

Kombu Consulting Group

<u>Team Member Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Major</u>
Natalie Boesen	2027	MBA
David Gorton	2027	MBA
Treah Hutchings	2027	MBA
Eric Lee	2027	MBA
Maya Sullivan	2027	MBA

Advisor(s): N/A

Topic Title: Sustainability in Running Footwear

Audience: Executive leadership of [Cascale](#), developers of the Higg Index. Setting is at Cascale's [annual meeting](#) where industry leaders “come together to collaborate, innovate, and engage in the challenging conversations needed to drive impact at scale”.

Sustainable Development Goal

SDG Goal #12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

SDG Goal #13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Executive Summary

The running shoe industry is growing rapidly, projected to grow from \$14.2 billion in 2025 to \$25 billion by 2032. However, this growth comes at a cost. Currently, 90% of footwear used by the over 50 million Americans who run or exercise end up in landfills, contributing to environmental degradation. In addition, a single pair of running shoes generates 14 kg of carbon emissions during its life cycle, including 9.5 kg of emissions during the manufacturing process. As more footwear brands introduce sustainable practices, the industry faces a systematic issue: the lack of standardized metrics and transparent reporting on sustainability. Without clear and consistent standards, companies risk misleading consumers with vague or inconsistent claims, undermining efforts to reduce waste, lower emissions, or promote truly sustainable solutions.

KCG proposes a multi-faceted approach to promoting sustainable and ethical footwear. We advocate for clearer industry standardization that provides clear definitions for product-level carbon accounting, enhanced Scope 3 emissions reporting, and aligned “net-zero” claims across brands. These measures will lead to better sustainability benchmarking, manufacturing strategies, and end-of-life product management by both manufacturers and consumers.