



“The decision-making power is more on the side of the consumers than on the politicians. However, a concerted international policy to reduce carbon-intense means of transport and promoting others that emit less, through subsidies, would be a solution.”

-Frédéric MORAND

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons. March 27, 2020. HK Sheung Wan Queen's Road Central Fook Sing Court shop Fusion ParknShop Supermarket goods in March 2020. Photo Credit: Caomilm Mioat. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HK\\_上環\\_Sheung\\_Wan\\_皇后大道中\\_Queen%27s\\_Road\\_Central\\_福陞閣\\_Fook\\_Sing\\_Court\\_shop\\_Fusion\\_百佳超級市場\\_ParknShop\\_Supermarket\\_goods\\_March\\_2020\\_SS2\\_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HK_上環_Sheung_Wan_皇后大道中_Queen%27s_Road_Central_福陞閣_Fook_Sing_Court_shop_Fusion_百佳超級市場_ParknShop_Supermarket_goods_March_2020_SS2_02.jpg)





Frédéric MORAND  
SAINTLUC  
Italy



Martin KOCHAN  
Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)  
Germany

## On the future of furniture manufacturing

**Martin Kochan (MK):** SAINTLUC is a manufacturer of high-end furniture which implements the concept of circularity into its business model. What products does SAINTLUC produce and to what extent are your products circular, as of today?

**Frédéric Morand (FM):** The first furniture brand I created is the SAINTLUC brand. Saintluc is the result of an innovation in the world of composite materials: the substitution of glass and carbon fibers by the most ecological of all plant fibers: flax. Flax cultures do not require any fertilizer or water. The

culture and transformation mechanization need very little energy.

The composite material is constituted by the intimate union between the reinforcing fiber and a matrix, like resin or a thermoplastic material, which has the function to maintain the compatible fiber. The tightness of a composite material is due solely to the reinforcing fibers.

We continuously search for the best possible resin for environment and human well-being. There are different options: the classic resin from petroleum, a resin from biomass and a brand new resin from waste plastic bottles. We have opted for the latter.

**MK:** SAINTLUC is reusing PET bottles for its lounge chairs. Why have you chosen to use this kind of material?

**FM:** The question really arose between using a 100% petrol-based resin or a resin derived from biomass. The carbon balance of resin from biomass is excellent compared to that of 100% petroleum on the condition that the latter does not come from an intensive cultivation of maize which requires a lot of fertilizer, water and extreme mechanization for its culture. In addition, we questioned the relevance of using agricultural land, which is supposed to feed the planet and not to make luxury products intended for a very wealthy clientele.

We have concluded this debate because a new resin, of which

40% is made out of recycling of plastic bottles in PET, was offered to us. And if one day, luckily, there will be no more plastic bottles to recycle, we will just find another “good” solution!

MK: What makes it difficult for you, from a business perspective, to make your products even more sustainable and circular?

FM: Our clients are spread across the globe but our products are produced with French linen and manufactured in Europe. On the other hand, customers want the products to be shipped to where they live: Beijing, New York, Dubai or Sao Paulo. So maritime transport would be ideal to reduce the carbon footprint.

We also contemplated setting up production sites in other countries closer to our final customers. For example, in Asia, our product could then use jute fiber or abacca; in South America, we would work with banana fibers from Venezuela.

MK: How can policy makers make it easier for businesses to offer sustainable furniture at a competitive price?

FM: I believe that the decision-making power is more on the side of the consumers than on the politicians. However, a concerted international policy to reduce carbon-intense means of transport and promoting others that emit less, through subsidies, would be a solution. The world could stay

as interconnected as it is and globalization could continue! So why not a fleet of sailing cargo ships?!

MK: What will the furniture industry look like in 30 years from now? Do you expect the industry to focus on longer-lasting, more expensive products and move away from the cheap throw-away, IKEA culture?

FM: In the furniture sector, we do not face the horrors of fast fashion. We will increasingly move towards furniture that can be passed on from generation to generation, like our Saintluc products. And not just because it is expensive and the design market, like the art market, values “vintage”. But because the cultural influence and the taste for beauty, it seems to me, has become more universal and widespread. The Internet is also helping to popularize beauty. What is considered beautiful is timeless. An aesthetically pleasing armchair will still be beautiful after 50 years and no one will imagine throwing it away. I believe – and this is what we are going to do in 2022 with SAINTLUC – that furniture will increasingly get a ‘lifelong warranty’.

IKEA deserves credit for its minimalist transport design linked to consumer assembly. We work with our designers to succeed in integrating beauty, function and a reduction in the volume of transport of our products. In addition, direct sales from producer to consumer must develop further. We can maximize the added value of products by cutting out intermediaries and also reducing the flow of products.