



Hemp Bio

# Corporate press announcement

## Hemp Bio ApS and release of Vireo

**Danish high-end textile producer Kvadrat continues to push the boundaries of textiles, materiality, and sustainable design with the launch of plant-based material Vireo. It is produced by Hemp Bio, a visionary start-up set up by students from Kolding Design School, initially funded and now majority owned by Kvadrat.**

Made primarily from hemp, *Vireo* offers groundbreaking opportunities for fashion and design brands seeking an eco-conscious material, that offers aesthetic and functional excellence and creative freedom without the same environmental impact of for example leather.

*Vireo* is the result of one of the research collaborations initiated by the Kvadrat Innovation Lab started in 2018. At the time, students at Kolding Design School working on creating a plant-based alternative to leather, approached Kvadrat. Committed to leading the market in sustainability and establishing visionary partnerships, Kvadrat immediately put in place funding for a new company called Hemp Bio to develop and mature the material for commercial launch.

As of Autumn 2023, Hemp Bio has developed a scalable production and has finalised the new material, *Vireo*.

Charlotte Bastholm Skjold, VP Products Kvadrat: *"The Kvadrat Innovation Lab collaboration with Hemp Bio is a story of eco-conscious vision, creative partnership, and a shared desire to develop plant-based materials that perform to the highest standards in terms of aesthetics, function and environmental impact. Vireo, which acts as a proof-of-concept, has enormous potential."*

*Vireo* represents fundamental progress for the conscious design movement within the textile industry. Constructed from more than 70% hemp, *Vireo* furthermore features a top layer of polyurethane which is also partly bio-based. Highly durable, *Vireo* offers an elegant patina and exceptional creative flexibility thanks to its anti-scratch surface layer. It can be coloured, patterned, and embossed in virtually infinite ways.

Hemp Bio uses a type of hemp that is very fast-growing and makes excellent seeds. It is sown in April and is ready for harvest in August. Once the hemp has been grown, harvested, and carded in France, it is sent to Italy to be dyed and treated with the partly bio-based polyurethane coating.

Ronni Anthony Johannesen, Founder and Technical Manager: *“Vireo unites the very latest technologies, with long-forgotten craft skills to create a new, patented process”.*

Hemp is considered a highly regenerative crop. It requires very little water, no pesticides, and replenishes the health of the soil by removing agricultural pesticides. Consequently, farmers often choose it for crop rotation. Furthermore, compared to alternatives like cotton, it offers a significantly higher yield per hectare.

The Finnish design house Marimekko has chosen Vireo for a line of accessories launching in June, 2024.

As Suvi-Elina Enqvist, Head of Innovation Works at Marimekko: *“We are proud of the fact that we are the first brand to deliver this next generation material to market. With its many virtues, Vireo’s offers a promising new medium in which to create our timeless designs. It has been especially rewarding to collaborate with Ronni Johanssen on the finishing of the material unique to Marimekko.”*

### **About Hemp Bio**

Hemp Bio, a plant-based material start-up and part of the Kvadrat family of brands, exemplifies how we live the commitment of being a leader in sustainability and pushing the boundaries of design innovation.

The Hemp Bio story began in 2018 when Kvadrat were approached by students at Kolding Design School who had created an innovative, plant-based material made from the wonder crop hemp. Immediately, we saw the potential for a Kvadrat Innovation Lab collaboration and provided the seed money to establish a company. Hemp Bio was born.

Today, Kvadrat is the majority owner of Hemp Bio, and supports the business by sharing technical expertise and go-to-market insights. Hemp Bio supplies a groundbreaking material– named Vireo – to leading fashion and design brands to design durable and fully customisable accessories. Critically, scalable production ensures the material is commercially viable.

Ronni Anthony Johannesen is the Founder and Technical Manager at Hemp Bio.

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