



CROATIA EU trade deal

The European Commission and Croatia have initialled an agreement on trade in textile products, providing for the elimination of EU quotas on Croatian textile and clothing exports from January 1st 2001.

Textiles and clothing make up a quarter of all Croatia's exports to the EU. In exchange for market access, Croatia has agreed not to increase its customs duties on imports of EU textiles and clothing and to harmonise its technical regulations and standards with those of the EU, in particular with regard to certification and labelling. Both sides have agreed not to introduce or maintain non-tariff barriers on textile and clothing imports.

The agreement also provides that, in the future Stabilisation and Association Agreement still to be negotiated, Croatia will dismantle its tariffs on textile and clothing products at a pace as quick as that applied to any other industrial products. In order to prevent circumvention of textile trade and to ensure the actual Croatian origin of the products, the eleven most sensitive textiles products for the EU (cotton yarn, woven cotton and synthetic fabrics, pullovers, blouses, shirts, trousers, terry towelling, woven overcoats, suits, etc.) will be submitted to a double-checking system.

In 1999, Croatia's textiles and clothing exports to the EU amounted to Euro 495 million and EU textile and clothing exports to Croatia were worth Euro 458 million – 11.4% of total EU exports to Croatia.



EGYPT

Cotton trademark

The Cotton Traders Group in Cairo has entered into a partnership with US-based home textiles distributor WestPoint Stevens to create a distinctive consumer logo for Egyptian cotton. The Egyptian government has granted the WestPoint Stevens proprietary use of the logo within the home furnishings industry for 18 months, for incorporation on labelling, packaging and at point of sale.

WestPoint's senior vice-president of creative services, Kathleen Cwirko, said: "Consumers are generally aware that Egyptian cotton is of superior quality, but there has been little effort on the part of our industry to help consumers differentiate products at retail. The logo will simplify the shopping process by allowing consumers to immediately identify Egyptian cotton products."

A consumer advertising campaign will begin in the

USA in spring 2001. The logo is also expected to be used by selected apparel and stationery manufacturers.



UK

Plea for Government aid

The East Midlands Development Agency has written to Trade Secretary Stephen Byers, pleading for £12 million to prop up the region's textile industry, which has lost 10,000 jobs in the past year.

Agency chairman Derek Mapp has told the Minister he wants to spend the money on "regeneration, inward investment, developing innovation among clothing businesses, and retraining." In a letter he says: "We intend to work hard with our partners in the region to ensure that businesses and individuals have the support they need to adjust, and take advantage of a new opportunity."

He said that as a first step the region needed to find a buyer for the Coats Viyella contract clothing division, where up to 3,000 jobs in the region are under threat. Byers recently indicated that expressions of interest have been received. Among these is a proposed management buyout of the Coats Viyella Counterparts factory in Hinckley, where 400 are employed.

On the negative side, hosiery firm Barber & Nicholls, in Barwell, is to close with the loss of 100 jobs, after the collapse of talks with a potential buyer. And the first of 200 predicted redundancies have been declared at knitwear firm Richard Roberts of Hinckley, a casualty of Marks & Spencer's policy changes.

East Midlands Liberal Democrat MEP Nick Clegg is organising a petition of textiles and clothing

manufacturers, calling for clearer labelling of the origins of textile products traded in Europe. The petition will be handed to the European Commission.



USA

Borgstena buys Chatham

Borgstena Textile North America, a wholly owned subsidiary of AB Borgstena Textile, of Sweden, has purchased all of the assets of CMI's Chatham Automotive Textile business in Elkin, North Carolina.

According to CMI's president and CEO Joseph L. Gorga, CMI and Borgstena have been partners in their automotive operations since 1993, with the company achieving significant growth in sales and market share in the North American OEM automotive market.

Ulf Ellwen, CEO of Borgstena, said the acquisition of Chatham was a major step in the company's strategy of providing automotive textiles on a global basis. Borgstena has operations in Germany, Portugal and Brazil as well as joint manufacturing ventures in Malaysia and South Korea. It will continue Chatham's successful relationship with Tatsumura Textile Company in Japan.

The North American subsidiary will be called Chatham Borgstena Automotive Textiles.



TAIWAN

Silk zone construction halted

One of Taiwan's flagship textile projects, a US\$ 806 million silk production zone, has been abandoned because of a slump in the industry. The 268-hectare zone in the central region of Yunlin would have accommodated around 17 firms and was due for completion in 2005. However its backers, a group of leading textile companies including China Manmade Fibres, Zig Sheng Industrial, Taiwan Taffeta Fabric, Li Peng Enterprise and Wisher Industrial, decided to cut their losses and pull out.

Since the Asian financial crisis began, Taiwan's textile sector has suffered a serious decline in profitability and many companies have moved their production to overseas.

Among them, Formosa Chemicals Fibre Corp, a unit of Taiwan's petrochemical giant Formosa Plastics group, is reported to be moving its manmade fibre plants to Vietnam.

Several other textile firms have already moved a large part of their operations to Vietnam, including Tainan Spinning Co, Chung Shing Textile Co and Lien Ming Textile Co. Lian Ching-hsiung, vice chairman of

EUROPE

Nonwovens production

Production of nonwovens in Western Europe grew by 8.8% to more than 900,000 tonnes in 1999, according to EDANA, the Brussels-based trade association for the nonwovens and disposable softgoods industries. The figure has doubled in less than 10 years and EDANA general secretary Guy Massenaux said he expected that 2000 would also turn out to have been a significant growth year.

EDANA estimates the turnover of the Western European nonwovens industry in 1999 at around Euro 3.6 billion, about the same as the previous year. The industry employs around 15,000 people. Its most important raw material is polypropylene in fibre or granule form, accounting for more than half the polymer used.

Infection resistance

CardioTech International, based in Massachusetts, has announced the recent award of a \$499,902 two year Phase II grant in conjunction with the University of Rhode Island and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, also in Massachusetts.

Entitled "Infection-resistant polyurethane materials", the work is based on collaboration between researchers in polymer chemistry, textile chemistry and biomedical research. It has developed following the growing concern over the infection of implantable biomaterials, and the resulting considerable economic cost. For example, in the United States, approximately 50–100,000 indwelling vascular catheters become infected each year, leading to human suffering and associated healthcare costs greater than \$300 million.

The majority of current techniques which rely on external binding agents to integrate antiseptics and/or antibiotics to develop infection resistance in materials. However, the new research employs textile technology to incorporate broad spectrum antibiotics into a proprietary polyurethane coating without the use

of binders. This is claimed to result in long-term antimicrobial activity.

The Phase I studies demonstrated that a technology used for colouring garments can also be used to incorporate antibiotics into a novel polyurethane without the use of exogenous binder agents. Using this procedure is said to result in the slow release of antibiotic over time, thereby killing significant amounts of bacteria. With the award of the phase II grant, assessment of the novel infection-resistant material in vivo will begin, looking to progress to practical medical applications.

According to CardioTech International's chief executive officer Michael Szycher "This partnership with the University of Rhode Island, and the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center is key to our search for a strategic marketing partner in the area of microbial coatings. It is a vote of confidence in the commercial potential of our technology."

Fibre partnership

The UK's Woolmark Company and Cargill Dow, a US based joint venture, have announced an ongoing

Global logistics services

Swiss based Kuehne & Nagel International, one of the world's leading transport and logistics groups, has formed a co-operative alliance with Texbid of Connecticut, USA, said to be the only online neutral business-to-business exchange devoted exclusively to the worldwide and highly fragmented industrial and technical textile markets. Kuehne & Nagel will be offering Texbid members instant access to full freight and global logistics. This will include door-to-door landed costing functionality, custom clearance and ancillary services.

According to Texbid's founder and CEO, Eric Kamisher: "Our affiliation with Kuehne & Nagel will help us to provide seamless end-to-end transaction support for members who use the Texbid exchange to buy and sell technical textile products, industrial equipment and excess production. We will be implementing on our site a powerful and fully integrated RFQ engine to give our members direct online access to Kuehne & Nagel's services without having to leave the Texbid site."



partnership to explore the benefits of combining two natural based fibres, merino wool and Natureworks Fibres. The combination of these two unique fibres is said to offer a wide range of added value opportunities and benefits to the consumer. Results from early development trials are said to show a number of possible processing efficiency benefits from the natural blend combination, with new performance levels in handle and crease resistance for smart casual products, and moisture management advantages for outerwear.

Natureworks Fibres were conceived and launched by Cargill Dow. The resins, made from annually renewable resources such as corn, wheat and cassava, can be used in a range of fibre, textile and nonwoven fabric applications.

Both Robert Finch, group manager, technical marketing at Woolmark, and Andy Shafer, global commercial

director, fibres, at Cargill Dow, are excited about the new relationship. They feel it offers a new area to explore and exploit to the overall benefit to the textile industry, with opportunities for bringing new and unique naturally based products to the market.

Antimicrobial towels

A new line of towels containing antimicrobial protection has been launched in the USA. Davidson Cotton Company, based in North Carolina, is said to be the first towel supplier to incorporate Microban Antimicrobial Product Protection in its towel products, including bath and hand towels and face cloths. The Microban technology is said to inhibit the growth of a broad spectrum of bacteria, mould and mildew which cause odours and stains. The Antimicrobial Product Protection is

Organotin under attack

THE GERMAN government has moved to secure a European Union ban on the use of organotin compounds, where they are used as a biocidal treatment for textiles, notably heavy industrial textiles. It has tabled a formal memorandum to the EU Council of Ministers (environment), calling on the European Commission to take action against the use of these chemicals.

A 1989 EU directive restricted the use of organotin compounds, such as TBT, as a coating for ships, but its use on textiles is as yet unregulated in European law. The German paper repeated concerns about the risks posed by the chemical to human health and the aquatic environment. It said that tests carried out in Germany and Austria last year showed that TBT was being found in food, saying this "makes further restrictions on organotin compounds (eg. a ban on the biocidal treatment of certain articles, such as textiles) appear necessary."

Meanwhile, the German government also tabled a proposal to the Council for a ban on the use of an azo dye, Navy Blue 018112, which is used to colour wool and polyamide staples. The memorandum said that the colorant has "high aquatic toxicity, is not easily degradable and reaches the environment via waste water."

Texprint breaks records

Texprint 2000 broke all previous records when its' selection of new textile design talent exhibited in Paris in October.

Sales of designs rose by 28%, overall contacts increased by 16% and job offers, both freelance and permanent, were more numerous than in the previous five years that Texprint has exhibited at the Autumn edition of INDIGO.

Texprint, which is non-profit making and entirely dependent on the financial support of the fashion industry and charitable organisations, launches a specially selected group of 20 young UK-trained designers each year.

Leading British designer Nicole Farhi, presenting the Texprint 2000 awards to the winning graduate designers during the four-day event, commented that programmes like Texprint provided opportunities for buyers and graduates alike. She said that new

graduates needed support and praised the quality of their work and the level of innovation.

The exhibition attracted interest from Donna Karen, Calvin Klein, Christian Lacroix, Polo/ Ralph Lauren, Anne Klein, Etro, Urban Outfitters, Trend Union, Linea-m, Marioboselli Jersey, Miroglio, Missoni, Victoria's Secret and Weisbrod Zuerrer. Many international companies made contact for the first time, evidence of Texprint's success as a valuable source of new ideas.

CEO and deputy chairman of Texprint, Ian Willis, thanking sponsors during the prize giving, drew attention to the success of British-trained designers worldwide. British studios made up one third of the 170-plus exhibitors at INDIGO, and Texprint had initially helped 30 per cent of those. Texprint is now seeking funding to continue and extend the programme.

Infrared-Reflective Polyester

Meeting all military test requirements, a new 20-ounce vinyl-coated polyester infrared-reflective fabric has been developed by the Engineered Fabrics division of US-based Reeves Brothers.

Said to be the only tarp and covering material to meet the test requirements as well as all of the military's specifications, the new MIL-PRF-32002B will not deteriorate in extreme weather conditions and provides uninterrupted service in ambient air temperatures from -50 degrees F to +125 degrees F. The new fabric features a matte finish with infrared reflectance on one side. It is flame, abrasion, oil and mildew resistant and exhibits tear and tensile strength. It is available in two colours, green and tan.

Exchange Award

AFTER blazing a trail for service excellence, one of Europe's leading designers and suppliers of corporate clothing, Simon Jersey, has received an award for its participation in a Government-backed exchange initiative.

Simon Jersey has an annual turnover of £30 million and supplies clothing to business and industry in more than 110 countries. Clients include DHL, American Airlines, Securicor and British Gas. Its award of Best New Host in the best-practice exchange programme operated by Inside UK Enterprise caps a highly successful year. The company has also been nominated as one of only three finalists in the Management Today/ Unisys Service Excellence Awards, aimed at recognising leading UK companies breaking new ground in customer service.

UV Protection

TORAY Textiles has joined the battle against skin cancer as the latest independent research from the UK's National Radiological Protection Board shows that modern polyester fabrics offer the best protection.

Toray recently submitted seven fabric samples to the Board to test the Clothing Protection Factors (CPF). Each one submitted achieved a rating of between 100 and 200 CPF, many times the accepted value and indicating minimal Ultra Violet Radiation penetration.

Recorded cases of skin cancer in the UK have doubled during the past 20 years. Over 20,000 cases are diagnosed each year and there are 2,000 deaths annually from what is now the second most common cancer. Children are especially vulnerable because their skin is more sensitive to UV radiation, even if the symptoms don't appear until many years later.

Coupled with the growing awareness of avoiding over-exposure to sunlight is the fast expanding

children's market in this sector. Said Jo Cooke, from Toray: "We have examined and are re-engineering our products at every stage of the production process where we see new market potential for a fabric. This scrutiny starts with yarn selection and goes through to the durability of finishes, new colour ranges and colour fastness."

Digital Designs

Digital printing is playing an ever bigger part in fashion, and this football-themed dress from designer Justin Oh is just one example. Shown as part of his collection at London Fashion Week, it is made from silk printed on a Mimaki TX-1600s inkjet textile printer at 720 dpi resolution.

"With my designs and choice of silks for this year's collection, it was once again imperative that the prints be as bold, clean and crisp as possible," said Oh, adding that he was impressed by the printer's ability to print continuous stripes and to print on textured bases such as crepe.

The printer is supplied in the UK by Hybrid Services.

