

# IMPACT

The Monthly Web Magazine on Environment and Ethics in Textile Sourcing

T-Shirt Certified  
'CarbonFree'

## Earth Day Honour



US personalised-clothing supplier **CafePress** joined with **Carbonfund.org**, the country's leading non-profit carbon-offset and climate-solutions organisation, to introduce a special-edition carbon-neutral T-shirt in honour of Earth Day, on April 22. Certified 'CarbonFree' by Carbonfund.org's

*Continued in box  
on page 2*

## \$1.7 Million Penalty after Environmental Violations

# Invista Pays Up

Fibre giant **Invista** is to pay a US\$1.7 million civil penalty and spend up to an estimated \$500 million to correct self-reported environmental violations, discovered at facilities across the USA, according to a joint announcement by the Environmental Protection Agency (**EPA**) and the US Justice Department.

The company disclosed more than 680 violations of water, air, hazardous-waste, emergency planning and preparedness, and pesticide regulations to the EPA after auditing 12 facilities it acquired from DuPont in 2004.

"By correcting these violations, Invista will reduce harmful air pollution by nearly 10,000 tons per year,"

said Catherine R. McCabe, acting assistant administrator of the EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "Invista is making a clean start in a settlement that achieves significant environmental benefits, and we encourage other new owners to do the same."

John C. Cruden, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division, said: "This settlement is a significant achievement, as it will reduce air pollution in numerous communities, and demonstrates the United States'

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**Editor**

John Scrimshaw  
 jscrimshaw@world-textile.net

**Design & Production**

Jessica Holgate  
 jholgate@world-textile.net

**Advertisement Sales**

David Jagger  
 djagger@world-textile.net

**Classified Sales**

Jon Bloom  
 jbloom@world-textile.net

**Subscriptions Manager**

Sue Pritchard  
 spritchard@world-textile.net

**Managing Director**

Mark Jarvis

**Subscriptions (12 issues)**

Worldwide €99.00

For subscription details,  
 please contact Sue Pritchard at  
 World Textile Publications on:  
 Tel: +44 (0) 1274 378800  
 E-mail: info@world-textile.net

**ADVERTISEMENT SALES**

World Textile Publications Ltd.  
 Perkin House, 1 Longlands Street,  
 Bradford, West Yorkshire,  
 BD1 2TP. United Kingdom  
 Tel: +44 (0)1274 378800  
 Fax: +44 (0)1274 378811  
 E-mail: info@world-textile.net

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commitment to ensuring that all facility owners come into compliance with environmental requirements.

“This settlement reflects an effective use of EPA’s audit policy and the value of companies performing audits and working with the United States to correct violations found at their facilities.”

The joint statement says the emission reductions resulting from correcting these violations will result in

estimated annual human health benefits valued at over \$325 million, including 30 fewer premature deaths per year, 2,000 fewer days/year when people would miss school or work, and over 9,000 fewer cases of upper and lower respiratory symptoms.

The settlement resolves violations disclosed under Invista’s corporate audit agreement with the EPA. Invista conducted 45 separate audits of environmental practices and compliance at facilities

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Product Certification Program, the pre-shrunk AnvilRecycled T-shirt features 69% pre-consumer recycled cotton.

To meet Carbonfund.org’s rigorous CarbonFree certification standards, manufacturers must submit to a life-cycle assessment of their product and agree to make the product carbon-neutral through reductions and carbon offsets. The AnvilRecycled T-shirt bears the ‘eco-conscious’ message: “Small Feet Are Sexy. Ask me about reducing your carbon footprint.”

“CafePress partnered with Carbonfund.org to celebrate Earth Day, underscoring our commitment for supporting eco-conscious products,” said CafePress vice-president of marketing Amy Maniatis. “We’re excited to provide our community with access to a T-shirt they can feel good about wearing while supporting environmental causes.”

located in: Seaford, Delaware; Athens, Calhoun, and Dalton, Georgia; Kinston, North Carolina; Camden, South Carolina; Chattanooga, Tennessee; LaPorte, Orange, and Victoria, Texas; and Martinsville and Waynesboro, Virginia.

As part of its corrective action, Invista will install pollution-control equipment to treat air pollutants at four of its plants, while at others is has agreed to improve control of benzene wastes.

This is the largest settlement under the EPA's audit policy, which was launched in 1995. The policy provides incentives to companies that voluntarily discover, promptly disclose, and expeditiously correct environmental violations. The companies must also take steps to prevent future violations.

The EPA may reduce or waive penalties for certain violations if the facility meets the conditions of the policy. Consistent with the audit policy, EPA waived a large portion of the penalty in this case.

### New Company 'Meets Retail Challenge'

## Green Stores Merge

Two of the UK's leading retailers of 'sustainable' products are to merge. **Ethicalsuperstore.com** and **Natural Collection** will create a single combined business with sales this year of around £8 million.

The combined business will continue trading under both names, both online and by mail-order catalogue.

Natural Collection, founded in 1999 by Julian and Joanne Spector, is a pioneering mail-order retailer, offering natural and organic products through the pages of its catalogue and online shop. It is a three-time winner of The Observer's Ethical Awards. Ethicalsuperstore.com was founded in 2004 by Vic Morgan and Andy Redfern and is a one-stop shop for fair-trade, organic and eco-friendly products.

"Joining forces will enable both companies to build for an exciting future and to steer a good path through the challenging retail environment," said Andy Redfern, CEO of the merged business. Joanne Spector, co-founder of Natural Collection added "Our new partnership creates great energy as we join together in our drive to promote fair-trade and ecological products, which is especially important during a time when producers need the most support".

## Herbal Textiles

**Aura Herbal Textiles Ltd**, an Indian GOTS-certified manufacturer of organic textiles, has launched a new SPA collection in the UK, using a patented method of herbal dyeing. The collection was shown at Natural & Organic Products Europe 2009 - a trade fair held in early April at Olympia, London.

## Global Retail Sales Continue Sharply Upwards

# Organic Cotton Boom

Global retail sales of organic cotton apparel and home textile products reached an estimated \$3.2 billion in 2008, according to the Organic Cotton Market Report 2007-2008, released by the non-

profit organisation **Organic Exchange**.

This represents a 63% increase from the \$1.9 billion market in 2007. The top ten organic cotton-using brands and retailers globally were Wal-Mart (USA), C&A

(Belgium), Nike (USA), H&M (UK), Zara (Spain), Anvil (USA), Coop Switzerland, Pottery Barn (USA), Greensource (USA), and Hess Natur (Germany).

Organic Exchange said that, despite the global retail outlook, most brands and retailers selling organic cotton products remained committed to their sustainability plans and upbeat about market growth, with plans to expand their product lines by 24% and 33% in 2009 and 2010 respectively. This would result in an estimated \$4 billion market in 2009 and a \$5.3 billion market in 2010.

“It is a sign of the times that despite ominous financial forecasts, brands and retailers are standing fast to their commitment to making their product lines more sustainable by ever increasing their use of organic cotton and other organic fibres such as wool, linen, and silk,”

### Retails Textile Sales Top \$100 Million

## UK Organics Rise

UK sales of organic clothing and textiles in 2008 topped £100 million for the first time, according to estimates published by **The Soil Association**. The figure was boosted by a 40% increase in sales of organic-cotton products, with the UK accounting for up to 10% of the global market. The Association said that, although precise figures were not available for the size of the UK market for organic cotton, best estimates pointed to sales of £60–65 million in 2007 and £85–90 million in 2008. When sales of other organic fibres, such as wool and linen, were taken into account, the market added up to £100 million – a 25% increase on 2007.

The Soil Association says sales of organic clothing and textiles have increased more than tenfold since 2002 and that, while the current economic downturn is likely to cause a slowing of growth in 2009 and 2010, the rate of growth will pick up again in two years and sales will almost treble between 2008 and 2012, reaching £280 million.

Over 150 retail shops and over 250 web outlets now sell organic textile products in the UK.

Polyester/Wool Blend is 'World First'

## Sustainable Suiting Cloth

Japan's **Teijin Fibers** has launched a new polyester-wool blend suiting and trouser fabric within its Eco-A-Wear range, manufactured using its Ecopet range of yarns, with fibre from recycled plastic bottles. It claims the new fabric, described as soft to the touch and wrinkle-resistant, is the first environmentally friendly polyester and wool-blend fabric in the world. Other Eco-A-Wear products include blends with viscose and cotton, or 100% fully recycled polyester. Teijin says Eco-A-Wear fabrics are greener because they do not rely solely on petroleum. The recycled polyester fibre is generated from used plastic bottles that are collected, processed into flakes

then ground into pellets, and made into polyester staple fibres. "Interest in sustainability has grown, with the consumer more aware about waste output," said Moses Cohen, business development and project manager at N.I. Teijin Shoji (U.S.A.) Inc. "At Teijin, we are dedicated to create products that are as economically advantageous as they are ecologically sound. We are very committed to solving the problem of waste and through our research and development have invented a process that utilises disposed plastic bottles to create fashionable fabric. It has taken Teijin two years to perfect Eco-A-Wear and now we are bringing it to market."

said LaRhea Pepper, Organic Exchange senior director.

The amount of organic cotton grown worldwide in 2007/08 increased by 152%, according to OE's Organic Cotton Farm and Fiber Report 2008. Organic-cotton production increased to 145,872 metric tons (MT) (668,581 bales) grown on 161,000 hectares in 22 countries worldwide (from 57,932

MT produced in 2006/07).

OE notes that, during 2008, certified organic-cotton fibre supplies grew by 95% - significantly higher than the annual growth rates of 45% in 2006 and 53% in 2007.

"Farmers who planted on speculation or expanded without market partners may have shifted the market into a state of

oversupply in 2009," says Pepper, who strongly discourages farmers from taking this kind of risk. "Brands may want to explore opportunities for expanding their organic programmes with their business partners," she continued, "as for the first time in many years, supplies of organic fibre, yarns, and fabrics are more available than in previous years."

# Ethical Sourcing as a Quality Factor

It will come as no surprise to the readers of IMPACT that retailers and consumer brands make quality a priority as they deal with the textile mills that supply them.

Mills need to commit to a level of quality that meets customer expectations for durability, as well as for consistency in areas like sizing,

colour and design. All this, of course, has to be delivered for a certain cost.

Today, however, retailers and brands are approaching textile mills with two additional concerns, beyond basic quality. They also want to know about mill performance in the areas of social responsibility and environmental

sustainability.

Interestingly, many industry players are discovering that the most socially and environmentally responsible mills also provide the most consistent quality. In other words, quality, social responsibility and environmental impact tend to advance (or recede) together.



# Views of a Quality Manager

To get some insight on this, we spoke to quality and supply-chain managers of several retail chains, specialising in private-label fashion as well as home goods made with a range of textiles.

We asked one of our sources what the term ‘ethical sourcing’ really means. He told us that us that, from his perspective, times have changed markedly: "Fifteen years ago," he said, "ethical sourcing focused on fair-labour practices and worker safety, worker rights, those types of things. That model is now pretty mature. I think the apparel industry as a whole does a good job in those areas, they really do. Today, the issue of ethical sourcing has expanded considerably to include products themselves."

Elaborating on this point, he added: "Ethical supply-chain management has now become almost a norm

in the industry. The difference today is that retailers and brand manufacturers, textile mills and consumers, are all expanding this norm to include product safety, durability, etc – not upon manufacture, but for the entire life of the product."

**‘Ethical sourcing has expanded considerably to include products themselves’**

There is abundant research showing how important it is for consumers to believe a product is safe to use. And beyond this, they are increasingly interested in actively demonstrating their interest in safety and a host of other issues, including eco-friendliness, which they view, consciously or not, as adding value for their money.

The difficulty, of course,

is that the effort to achieve ethical sourcing is very inefficient when everybody is pursuing the goal separately or has multiple interpretations of what the goal is. You wind up with a proliferation of codes and code elements, using a variety of metrics. Consumers are already complaining that, in attempting to establish whether a product has been ethically sourced, they are often left to the equivalent of comparing apples with oranges.

Therefore, there is a crying need for retailers, consumer brands and textile mills to come together – and increasingly, companies are demonstrating interest in industry collaboration. After all, most ethical sourcing and sustainability programmes have an extraordinary degree of overlap. And the overriding goal to do right by workers, consumers and the environment is more or less the same as well.

## Mill Qualification Program

# The Emergence of MQP

Industry collaboration on ethical sourcing and sustainability is gathering momentum now that exciting solutions are emerging with which to manage such collaboration. One solution is the recently announced Mill Qualification Program (MQP). This first-of-its-kind initiative is greatly simplifying the process of sustainable textile procurement.

MQP was developed by an alliance of leading fabric mills, global retailers and consumer brands, in partnership with Intertek Sustainability Solutions. Intertek, the leading global provider of international trade solutions, delivered the metrics and evaluation services. The goal was to standardise mill-sustainability auditing based on accepted industry practice.

For each participating textile mill, MQP supplies ratings for the various

sustainability indices as well as comprehensive benchmark report. Also of importance to all parties using the programme is the opportunity this web-based platform provides for instant information sharing and feedback.

**‘The goal was to standardise mill-sustainability auditing based on accepted industry practice’**

The developers’ goal was for MQP to give mills the chance to proactively, voluntarily and transparently demonstrate their sustainability performance. This, they thought, would be a game-changer in a market that gave mills little opportunity to compete for brands’

and retailers’ attentions with comparable sustainability ratings – and in a market where the brands and retailers, for their part, had no consistent and therefore reliable method to benchmark and compare mill sustainability data across multiple industry sectors and geographic regions.

The idea for MQP also came out of an ongoing desire in the industry to reduce mill-evaluation costs and improve time to market. MQP therefore incorporates a quality metric along with ratings for social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

Andre Raghu, president of Intertek Sustainability Solutions, explains: "The successful promotion of responsible textile production depends on successfully integrating performance and cost benefits, in addition to sustainability value."

# The Consumer as Quality and Sustainability Watchdog

The ultimate factor to consider when it comes to ethical sourcing is the consumer. It's no secret that the Internet and cell phones, social networks and texting have made for instant information access and put the consumer in control.

And now that mass advertising is no longer efficient or effective, information has gained even more marketing power. While some commentators bemoan the fact that there is too much information and too many choices, the fact is that consumers keep surprising the experts with how much information they can handle and how well they can assimilate and differentiate it.

Protecting the environment, treating

workers properly and selling products that are made well and are safe to use are all issues at the top of the list of consumer concerns. One representative of a major retailer using MQP made this key observation: "There's an obvious link between quality,

**‘Consumers keep surprising the experts with how much information they can handle’**

ethics and the environment. Our preliminary data supports it but it's also just common sense. If you're keeping your wastewater clean, if you're reducing your energy consumption,

if you're treating your workers fairly, if you're paying your taxes...if you're doing all those things, your factory floor is going to be one of those floors that produces great quality. Because from a business standpoint, that's what you do – quality is what your company stands for."

That the definition of quality has broadened to include sustainability factors is a veritable sea change for industry, which was previously content to view sustainability and ethical supply-chain management as a function of operational-risk management. Now the big industry players recognise these elements as being intrinsic to quality as the consumer increasingly defines it.

## Primark Responds to Bangladesh Demo

# Ethical Affirmation

UK value-fashion retailer **Primark** has reaffirmed its commitment to ethical practices among its suppliers in Bangladesh, after the campaigning group **No Sweat** staged a demonstration outside its flagship store in Oxford Street, London.

A spokesman said: “Primark shares and recognises many of the concerns raised by No Sweat. We acknowledge that conditions for workers in some factories do not always meet the high standards that we and other brands sourcing from these factories, expect.

“Primark believes ethical business practices are of the highest importance and that is why we work tirelessly with our suppliers and other stakeholders, including those in Bangladesh, to raise standards and the welfare of the workers that depend on the orders placed at these factories.

Primark is working in several ways to continually improve ethical standards and working conditions among suppliers.”

The company said its ‘extensive’ audit programme showed that some of its Bangladeshi factories already meet the highest ethical standards, being well run and having experienced management and excellent conditions for workers. However, it admitted that others needed more work and said it placed a strong emphasis on remediation, working with these factories to improve standards. Many factories in Bangladesh had already benefited from this process, with labour standards significantly improving.

The statement continued: “To this end, Primark has forged an important partnership in Bangladesh with NUK,

an established and credible NGO with experience of over 20 years in addressing women’s rights and labour issues in the ready-made garment sector. Through this partnership Primark seeks to identify and address key issues around equal rights, opportunities for growth and career enhancement, as well as training needs within some of the key suppliers in Bangladesh.

“NUK’s expertise in this area helps Primark provide employees and middle management at factories with more intensive support and training on ethical issues. Furthermore, Primark has created a new ethical-trade-manager position in Bangladesh. One of the first initiatives to be launched by the ethical-trade manager will be tailored ethical training for suppliers in Bangladesh. Further plans are underway to recruit a female

Students Launch Underwear Range

# Soy Fundamentals



**Uranus Apparel**, a new eco-friendly company formed by two college students, is launching its first line of soy underwear for women under the brand name Uranus. The garments are boyshort-style and have been appropriately named ‘soyshorts’. “The idea for Uranus Apparel was developed by two University of Florida students, who sought to create a product that would promote sustainability with a sense of humour,” said co-founder Natalie San Andres. “Despite the funny name, the company is

seriously committed to utilising soy as a more sustainable alternative to cotton fibre.” Soy fabric is manufactured from the by-products of soy food production such as tofu and soybean oil. According to Uranus, it is extremely soft and comfortable, often being compared to silk or cashmere, while it is also more durable and dries more quickly than cotton. Uranus Apparel soyshorts are packaged in a burlap drawstring pouch that is both reusable and 100 percent biodegradable.

ethical-trade executive with a specific remit to focus on women’s issues in factories, which we know are particularly important in this context. This is an area of great importance to Primark. “Finally, Primark believes that by

sourcing substantial orders from developing countries, the company is helping generate jobs in those countries which would not otherwise be available, particularly for women. The work generated by Primark

orders contribute to the livelihood of over half a million people in Bangladesh. “Primark is wholly committed to ensuring that its customers can continue to shop at Primark confident in its commitment to its ethics and its values.”

**NatureWorks Claims Manufacturing Breakthrough**

# Greener Ingeo

**NatureWorks** has reported a new manufacturing breakthrough with its Ingeo plant-derived plastics that cuts CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and energy consumption.

A new, proprietary manufacturing process, commissioned late last year lowers CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 60% and reduces by 30% the energy required to produce Ingeo plastics compared to previous Ingeo production.

The company says emissions and energy reductions are even greater when Ingeo bioresin is compared to petroleum-based plastics.

The process of manufacturing PET, for example – the polymer most commonly used to make water and soda bottles and the mainstay of the synthetic fibres industry – emits 3.4 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilogram of resin produced. By contrast, the new Ingeo manufacturing process emits 77% less, with 0.75 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub>



per kilogram of resin. The new Ingeo production technology also consumes 56% less energy than the equivalent weight of PET.

**One-Stop Shop for Sustainability Advice**

# Recycling Resource

The UK environment ministry, **Defra**, is bringing together a range of bodies under the leadership of **WRAP** (Waste & Resources Action Programme), to provide a one-stop-shop to help businesses, organisations and

households become more resource efficient. The decision was made following the recommendations from the Delivery Landscape Review, set up in February 2008, to examine the seven organisations funded by

Defra that currently work on resource efficiency. Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for the Environment, said: “All these organisations have done a great job in helping businesses and households to use resources more

efficiently. But we know that some customers were confused by the myriad of services and bodies, so that is why we are making these changes. “Now, under WRAP leadership, we will provide a one-stop shop

for resource-efficiency advice, and this should make it quicker and easier for people to get what they need.” WRAP CEO Liz Goodwin said: “We welcome this opportunity to lead a single organisation for

resource efficiency. We believe it will help bring clarity for those seeking advice and support on resource efficiency – many of whom have already said they would prefer to deal with one organisation.”

### New Test Reveals Risk of Skin Reaction

## Allergen Screening

Scientists at **Hohenstein Institute**, one of the world’s leading textile research and testing laboratories, have developed a ‘revolutionary’ textile testing procedure that determines the allergenic potential of textile products. The test is an in-vitro cell-culture procedure that is claimed to reliably predict a textile product’s potential to irritate human skin. Hohenstein will certify successfully tested textile products as ‘Skin-friendly- suitable for allergy sufferers’. It says the test will be particularly helpful for textile products that use dyes, dye components or other chemicals for which no sensitivity data exist. “US consumers are recognising the role hypoallergenic textiles can play in successfully managing allergies and sensitivities,” says Sam Moore, the US-based manager of Hohenstein America Inc. “When textile products are certified ‘skin-friendly’, that will be very meaningful to people who seek to minimise irritants in their living environment.”

The new test is also expected to be very useful to manufacturers and retailers of children’s clothing and bedding products, and to performance apparel brands where a positive textile-to-skin interaction is critically important. The new test method is a complementary addition to the Oeko-Tex Standard 100, which evaluates textiles for more than 100 chemicals believed to be harmful to humans, including lead and phthalates as required under the new CPSIA regulations. Hohenstein’s new allergy test provides a fourth prong to its established textile-product safety-test portfolio. The other three components of the programme include tests for cell damage (cytotoxicity), DNA damage (genotoxicity), and irritation. Hohenstein also analyses the biological risks in medical devices in separate test systems under the EN ISO 10993 standard.

**Fast Fashion 'Hurts Environment'**

# Throwaway Style

Fast fashion is hitting natural resources in ways that would shock many consumers, according to leading UK textile-testing house Shirley Technologies **(STL)**.

STL said that, while shoppers may believe they were 'bagging a bargain' with low-price T-shirts and jeans, these products genuinely did 'cost the earth' – at up to four times the pace of higher-quality clothing.

"A pair of 'bargain' jeans may come with a low price tag, but they come with a high environmental-impact price," said Asif Shah, of Manchester-based Shirley Technologies. "Our research illustrates that somebody may keep and wear a good or high-quality pair of jeans, for instance, for

four times as long as they might keep low-price jeans.

"People purposely buy 'fast fashion' to wear a few times and throw away, but in doing so they are going through raw materials four times as fast, using four times as much water and four times as much chemicals.

"But while the word 'recycle' might be resonating around the country, there is a big issue at the other end of the sustainability chain: only 12% of textiles are recycled when they are disposed of."

Shirley Technologies Ltd (STL) is a UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) accredited laboratory providing competitive, independent, expert textile testing, certification, advisory and investigation services across the traditional and specialist textile industries.



## The New Eco-Electronic Newsletter

for Buyers, Specifiers and Sourcing Executives in the Textile Field

IMPACT is a must for buyers, specifiers and sourcing executives in the textile field. Issues reported on include 'eco' products, fair trade, employment standards, ethical brands and retail strategy, PLUS new technologies that strive to create textiles that respond to growing consumer demand in this area.

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 Margaret Marshall  
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