

Value added

With over 4,600 exhibitors and more than 66,000 visitors attending the giant Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics, the new 'All About Sustainability' exhibitor zone provided added value to suppliers showcasing eco-textiles in China.

Many of the exhibitors at the autumn edition of Intertextile in Shanghai – now housed at a brand new exhibition centre in west Shanghai – were in an upbeat mood at the recent event where Europeans and Japanese delegates noted that the continued weakness of their currencies compared with the Chinese yuan resulted in improved business with domestic buyers.

This was reflected by Olaf Schmidt, vice president of textiles and textile technologies at show organiser Messe Frankfurt, who while speaking to *Ecotextile News* during a two hour taxi ride from Pudong airport to the show, said: "We have a 20 per cent increase in exhibitors at this event and although the Chinese economy is slowing, the higher number of European buyers in particular shows the importance of the Chinese domestic market."

He also agreed that with tougher environmental legislation, which came in to force earlier this year in China, the relatively new 'All About Sustainability' zone at Intertextile provides "a highly useful focal point for environmental issues and exhibitors of eco-friendly fabrics."

This area includes a trend zone for exhibitors to show new sustainable textile developments, a forum for seminars, an area for retailers such as M&S to showcase their eco-friendly collections, and exhibition booths for overseas and local fabric manufacturers.

New Wide Group, a Taiwanese supplier, which specialises in knitted fabrics is working with Uniqlo to produce light-weight nylon/viscose/cotton blended fabrics produced with a 'new kind' of dye sublimation technique that is said to have several advantages over digital printing. Senior fabric merchandiser Hand Liao

noted: "This new 'Eco-Trans' sublimation transfer printing process can be done at lower temperatures than traditional methods (up to 220°C) of transfer printing, it uses water-based colorants, gives smoother colour transitions, deeper dye penetration into the fibre of which a large percentage can be recovered from the wastestreams."

Elsewhere, Danie Wang from Shenzhen-based knitted fabric supplier Baliso said the company was using 'natural bamboo' – not a man-made viscose made from bamboo raw material and European flax – to produce supersoft 32G knits in blends with cotton, which "did not need mercerizing to get the extreme softness. We also use Tencel and organic cotton," he said, and noted that demand for this type of apparel is on the rise in China's big cities.

Antimicrobials

Another Taiwanese company, Lily Textile Co., Ltd was showing a range of sportswear fabrics treated with a patented anti-microbial treatment derived from cinnamon and almonds. Mandelic acid – found in cinnamon and almonds – has a similar chemical structure to some antibiotics (often being used as a precursor) and is said to be very effective against problematic 'gram-positive' bacteria, which are often abundant on the surface of textiles that are worn next to the skin. It is already used in the food industry in products such as chewing gum and toothpaste.

Branded as 'Green Defence', the new natural anti-microbial is applied at the yarn production stage. Lucy Lu from Lily Textiles told us: "Unlike other natural anti-microbial treatments, Green Defence is applied at the polymer chip stage before yarn extrusion. It can be



The All About Sustainability zone at Intertextile.



used in either nylon or polyester yarns."

Questioned about its effectiveness after the active anti-microbial treatment undergoes yarn extrusion and spinning, Lu noted: "Independent testing has shown that the yarns show good antimicrobial properties. The yarns were subjected to test AATCC – JIS by both Intertek and SGS who found both anti-bacterial and anti-mould resistance."

She added: "Our new product is also non-leaching. The active ingredient is locked into the yarn in the same way as colour is for dope-dyed synthetics. No heavy metals or silver particles are involved."

The company says it is already working with one European major sports apparel brand and the medical textile sector is also said to be taking a "strong interest."

US yarn supplier Unifi also reported solid interest in its recycled 'Repreve' range of polyester yarns in Shanghai where it had several new product offerings. Among these were a new, longer staple length Repreve fibre said to be ideal for wool blends, Repreve filament with cationic-dyeable and disperse-dyeable polyester blended for heather effects and a blend with 'Reflexx' the company's high stretch fibre for improved fit and comfort.

"We are focused on providing our customers with eco-friendly products with the added performance that customers expect," concluded Ed Wickes, president of Unifi Textiles (Suzhou) Co., a subsidiary of US-based Unifi Inc. ■