

Last month's COTTON USA Buyers' Tour to Shanghai attracted a record number of companies. Make sure you don't miss out on upcoming trips to Turkey and Indonesia



Making crucial decisions about where to source and what to purchase is never easy for buyers, but in a tough trading environment it is more important than ever to make the right choices and avoid costly mistakes.

The Cotton Council International (CCI) COTTON USA Buyers' Tours help buyers do exactly that by offering opportunities to make contact and do business with new suppliers. Each tour is designed to help buyers find the most suitable suppliers, who are reviewed by CCI to ensure they can produce quality, export-ready, U.S. cotton-rich textiles and garments. So it isn't surprising that the most recent tour to Shanghai in October proved to be a winner with buyers.

Comprehensive programme

The tour, the fourth CCI has organised to China in the past 18 months, attracted a record number of participants from eight countries. Representatives from UK retailers Marks & Spencer, Ted Baker and Tesco joined buyers from leading brands in Europe, the U.S., Japan, Indonesia, Thailand and China.

The week-long visit enabled buyers to explore the advantages of sourcing U.S. cotton-rich apparel products from the most efficient and reliable Chinese and Hong Kong suppliers. CCI recruited 20 leading fabric and garment suppliers to take part, all of them COTTON USA Mark licensees. Their production encompasses woven and knitted fabrics, denims, knitwear, sportswear and fashion garments.

The programme kicked off with a detailed briefing session which included introductions to CCI and Cotton Incorporated and information about the latest cotton product innovations from Cotton Incorporated, such as Storm Denim, Wicking Windows and Tough Cotton. This was followed by a day and a half-long trade show and then two days spent visiting factories in Ningbo and Hangzhou to see each company's manufacturing facilities. The tour concluded with a visit to China's largest textile show, Intertextile Shanghai, where buyers could have follow-up meetings with the mills.

Meet your match on tour in Asia



Talking trade: buyers meet mill representatives on a COTTON USA tour

CCI, a non-profit trade association representing the U.S. cotton industry, runs the tours as part of its Supply Chain Marketing Programme, which aims to increase the use of American cotton around the world by helping to build business relationships between buyers and sellers of products containing U.S. cotton.

According to Stephanie Thiers-Ratcliffe, CCI's International Marketing Manager, the tours are an example of what the Supply Chain Marketing Programme is all about. "They bring together key buyers from the brand and retailing sector with mill suppliers to promote sales of quality products made with U.S. cotton. The tours to China, which is the largest importer of U.S. cotton and also the world's biggest consumer at mill level, allow organisations in the supply chain to establish mutually beneficial relationships."

The next COTTON USA Buyers' tour will visit denim and knit top fabric and garment suppliers in Turkey (March 30-April 4 2009). The Indonesia tour (June 1-5 2009) will visit woven and knit fabric and garment suppliers from Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand. ●

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