



East meets west: buyers from major retailers and brands including M&S travelled to Turkey to visit its cotton mills

# A taste of Turkey's cotton delights

*The latest COTTON USA Buyers' Tour helped brands and retailers identify the mills able to best supply them with U.S. cotton products*

**B**uyers face a tough challenge to maintain confidence during the current recession, but working with reliable suppliers who respond efficiently to their need for quality products helps. That's why the COTTON USA Buyers' Tours are so valuable. They take brands and retailers to key manufacturing destinations to meet leading suppliers of U.S. cotton-rich fabrics and garments who can provide the quality and quantity of merchandise they want.

The tour to Turkey in April attracted buyers from major brands and retailers in six countries, including Marks & Spencer, who were able to explore the advantages of sourcing U.S. cotton-rich clothing products from Turkish mills.

The COTTON USA tours are organised by Cotton Council International (CCI) as part of its Supply Chain Marketing programme. CCI ensures that during a tour buyers meet with the suppliers best able to satisfy their specific requirements. Buyers can, therefore, be confident that they are dealing with manufacturers who are right for them and with whom they can build long-term relationships.

As is usual on a COTTON USA Buyers' Tour, participants on the tour to Turkey were offered a programme that gave them all the information needed to get a clear picture of the country's cotton textile industry and helped them select the suppliers likely to be the most suitable partners.

CCI recruited 22 of the country's leading knit and denim fabric and garment producers to meet the buyers. All of the companies are COTTON USA Mark licensees and either spin cotton grown in the U.S. or use yarns or fabrics supplied from COTTON USA-licensed mills, another confidence booster for buyers. The COTTON USA Mark is associated only with quality U.S. cotton-rich products, so they have the assurance they are purchasing the best available.

## Comprehensive tour

The week-long tour began with a briefing session which included introductions to CCI and the Turkish textile industry. This was followed by two days of visits to suppliers' showrooms in the Istanbul area and a private trade show for buyers and sellers. Buyers were given a presentation by the Turkish Textile and Garment Exporters' Association, and visited factories in Bursa, Kahramanmaraş and Istanbul to see each company's manufacturing facilities for U.S. cotton-rich denims, knitwear, sportswear and other garments.

U.S. cotton is in demand by Turkish mills because of its consistent quality and lack of contamination, while brands and retailers seek garments made in Turkey by COTTON USA licensees for the high quality of fabric and finish. In the current marketing year, Turkey's textile industry, which is the 10th largest in the world and the second biggest textile supplier to the European

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Union, is the third largest customer of U.S. cotton fibre exports, buying almost 30% of its cotton from the U.S.

M&S assistant technologist Lindsay Yeates says: "The tour was a fantastic opportunity to get a consolidated view of the sourcing opportunities in the Turkey region. The intense programme of mill, factory and showroom visits was invaluable in obtaining a better insight into the operations of potential business partners. I would really recommend this as a valuable exercise for those seeking a variety of trusted contacts in a region."

Stephanie Thiers-Ratcliffe, CCI international marketing manager, says: "With more than 50 years' experience promoting U.S. cotton, CCI understands the needs of buyers who purchase cotton fashion products. Like all COTTON USA Buyers' Tours, this latest one gave them the chance to make contact with suppliers able to produce U.S. cotton-rich products that suit their specific requirements. Such an opportunity is useful at the best of times, but even more valuable in the current trading environment."

The subsequent COTTON USA Buyers' Tour has just returned from Indonesia this June, where buyers met with woven and knit fabric and garment suppliers from Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand. ●



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