

# Bangladesh wins over buyers on latest COTTON USA tour

*Buyers from leading international brands and retailers met suppliers of U.S. cotton-rich products on the first COTTON USA tour to Bangladesh*

Over the past few years the COTTON USA Supply Chain Marketing Buyers' Tours have given apparel executives unique opportunities to explore new markets and discover the advantages of sourcing U.S. cotton-rich fabrics and garments from key suppliers. COTTON USA has taken select groups of buyers on several tours to countries such as China, Turkey, India and Pakistan, but the most recent tour broke new ground by visiting Bangladesh (from April 18-23) for the first time.

## Massive potential

Bangladesh offers tremendous sourcing potential for buyers. Its textile industry is growing rapidly and significantly increasing its use of U.S. cotton. As a result, it is attracting much greater interest from international brands and retailers seeking 100% cotton merchandise which meets their quality standards. Bangladesh is now the fourth largest apparel exporting country in the world, having experienced a very impressive 91% growth between 2004 and 2008. It has become the largest exporter of cotton T-shirts and the second largest exporter of cotton pullovers and denim trousers to the EU.

The chance to visit such a market and have direct personal contact with suppliers, as well as checking out their manufacturing operations, is surely too good to miss. So it was hardly surprising that, in spite of the considerable travel disruption caused by the volcanic ash cloud from Iceland and the continuing difficult economic conditions, the tour attracted representatives from many top brands and retailers. They came from several European countries and also from Turkey, Japan and the U.S., and have huge buying power with a combined buying volume of more than a billion dollars.



Following the successful format established on previous tours, the Bangladesh event consisted of a two-day trade fair followed by two days of mill visits. It started with a briefing session designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the Bangladeshi market and the importance of U.S. cotton in textile and apparel production. This included presentations from Cotton Council International (CCI), Cotton Incorporated, the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. The group gained further insight into the market when it heard

**Pick up a thread: participants on the tour visited Bangladeshi mills to discuss business opportunities and view product**



from Li & Fung, the world's largest sourcing company, about its experience doing business in Bangladesh

Initial feedback from the tour has been very positive. Buyers found it interesting and well organised, and have indicated that they are now more willing to source from Bangladesh and expect to do business over the next year with companies they met.

Buyers particularly appreciated the advantages offered by the trade fair. This enabled them to optimise their time by having individual meetings in one location with 17 COTTON USA licensees, ranging from vertically integrated spinning mills to key users of U.S. cotton-rich yarns and fabrics. They also valued the chance to visit six of the most significant suppliers, who produce lightweight and heavyweight jerseys, sweaters, interlock and piqué, and see their production facilities.

As Stephanie Thiers-Ratcliffe, Cotton Council International Marketing Manager, explains: "The aim of the COTTON USA Buyers' Tours, which are a key part of our innovative Supply Chain Marketing programme, is to give buyers interested in purchasing products made with U.S. cotton the opportunity to make contact with mills which can meet their requirements on quality and quantity. This first tour to Bangladesh certainly achieved that aim and will result in the establishment of profitable, ongoing relationships which will benefit both buyers and suppliers and promote sales of products made with U.S. cotton." ●

*For more information about COTTON USA, email [sthiers@cotton.org](mailto:sthiers@cotton.org) or visit [www.cottonusa.co.uk](http://www.cottonusa.co.uk).*