



Fashion fabrics

Fashionable eco-fabrics drew a great deal of attention at the tenth edition of Material World Miami with show organizers reporting a double digit percentage increase in attendance. By Kathlyn Swantko.

This year's Material World and Technology Solutions in Miami featured 400 booths, showcasing the latest introductions from every element of the sewn products industry, including fabrics, systems, transportation equipment, and software – yet once again eco-friendly fabrics were high on buyers' lists.

As the eco-textile industry starts to develop, buyers were looking for unique organic or sustainable offerings that were more fashion forward. These happened to be found in fabrics such as new textured knits, new blends and constructions with organic yarns, and refreshing new prints on woven organic base fabrics.

Based in Los Angeles, California, fabric converter Robert Kaufman Company, Inc. specializes in a range of fabrics from fashion solids and prints and fun styles for juveniles to traditional quilting collections and contemporary prints. In Miami the company was new collections called 'Greenstyle' and 'Ultima-Eco' created from environmentally-friendly materials and fabrication methods. The company says the textiles are organic, sustainable and low-impact dyed, leaving less (or no) harmful waste, and making the most sustainable and natural use of the Earth's precious resources.

Kyle Sanchez, director of media relations,

explained, "Our Greenstyle by Robert Kaufman line is growing, as we continue to add exciting and innovative new eco-friendly content and explore more environmentally-friendly methods of production." Kaufman's Ultima-Eco collection is a blend of 65% polyester from recycled plastic bottles and 35% cotton. The eco blend is offered in constructions, including canvas, poplin, sheeting, etc. Sanchez noted, "This is our most popular fabric among uniform manufacturers ... companies such as hotels and catering, uniforms, fashion apparel, and accessories are all looking to adopt greener fabrics."

Kaufman also featured a cotton/bamboo solid and print range called 'Panda', which is a 60% cotton and 40% bamboo poplin. The company also offers a 100% bamboo eco-collection called Bermuda. Sanchez added, "Our graphic leaf print matches up perfectly to our Panda fabric. Nature themes are still strong in fashion and will only continue as awareness about our environment grows."

Garment dye

Montreal-based circular knitter Manoir Inc. says it has been inspired to develop an eco-collection by its merchandising team's frequent travels to European and North American fashion markets. This season, its fashion offerings include 100% organic cottons in new patterns and textures. A few of the stand-outs featured at the show include: garment dyed organic cotton knits with a Lurex yarn running across the fabric; a striped waffle heather with spandex; 100% organic cotton using 50% slubbed yarn; bamboo/organic cotton for a piqued tonal stripe when garment dyed; and piece-dyed soy/cotton/spandex blends.

Meanwhile, Fessler USA is a vertical apparel manufacturer, based in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania and is partnering with several key yarn suppliers and organic associations to help its customer base of fashion brands and retailers deliver sustainable apparel solutions. This includes fabrics made from sustainable alternatives to conventional cotton such as organic and yarns made from bamboo, which requires little or no pesticides.

Like some of the fabric shows in Europe, manufacturers in the USA are now starting to incorporate sustainable yarns and raw materials into their collections with minimum fuss. Marketing these products as green is still important but buyers are taking it almost as a 'given' that ecotextiles are available and that they are both fashionable and high performance.