

Features

Responsible Cotton Production & Textile Processing

Cotton conference raises awareness of options.

TW Special Report

The modern textile industry finds itself at a curious crossroads: On one hand, there is a diminishing pool of inexpensive labor; and on the other, the client base is interested in flat margins and assurances of responsible manufacturing practices — which can sometimes require significant financial investment. The second Great Ideas in Cotton conference — hosted in Hong Kong by Cary, N.C.-based Cotton Incorporated on May 22 — showcased a range of new technologies and process optimization research to help cotton textile businesses meet current industry expectations.

“This conference is a thoughtfully curated collection of responsible technologies and processing efficiencies,” explained Mark Messura, senior vice president, Global Supply Chain Marketing, Cotton Incorporated. “As a resource for the global cotton industry, we are pleased to convene this forum, so that manufacturers can be aware of the many options available for their businesses,” he added.

The day-long conference began with an overview of Cotton LEADS™ by Adam Kay, CEO, Cotton Australia; and Berrye Worsham, president and CEO, Cotton Incorporated. Cotton LEADS, a joint program with Australian and U.S. cotton producers, calls attention to the national regulatory environment, responsible growing practices and significant environmental gains achieved by the founding countries.

“The self-investment by Australian and U.S. growers in research and development, combined with the well-established national regulatory environments in Cotton LEADS founding countries, enables us to make significant environmental gains at a national level,” Kay explained.



Left to right: Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay and Cotton Incorporated President and CEO Berrye Worsham discuss the Cotton LEADS™ program with attendees at the Great Ideas in Cotton Conference held in Hong Kong earlier this year.

During the question-and-answer session, Worsham and Kay pointed out that Cotton LEADS is a complement, not a competitor, to identity cotton programs, which rely on farm-by-farm certification. A day ahead of the conference, representatives from founding cotton organizations in Australia and the United States met with local manufacturing partners of the Cotton LEADS program. Simon Corish and Lyndon Mulligan, chairman and deputy chairman, respectively, of Cotton Australia; and Jimmy Dodson, past National Cotton Council chairman, detailed growing practices on their cotton farms, as well the use of third-party verifications to measure environmental impact in the founding countries. Since the program's launch last October, 179 manufacturers and brands have acknowledged Cotton LEADS cotton as meeting their sustainable fiber sourcing criteria.

Great Ideas For Denim

The technical portion of the program included a host of great ideas for denim, a key cotton category.

Cotton Incorporated shared research pinpointing optimal levels of indigo, water and energy for traditional processing, as well as gains that can be achieved through the use of enzymatic processing.

Tonello S.r.l., Italy, presented four technologies: EcoFree, an ozone wash system capable of producing a pure indigo, as well as stonewashed looks, with a 50- to 80-percent reduction in water and chemical consumption; Laser Blaze™, a versatile machine that can laser-treat denim and dyed garments on a table, a double table or a mannequin; a Jet System that uses sulfur dyes in a nitrogen atmosphere and achieves a 70-percent reduction in water, chemical and energy consumption; and Kit Batik, an automatic machine process that can apply stain in varying degrees using 96-percent less water than traditional processes.