Press information

Five companies honoured with the OEKO-TEX® Sustainability Award

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Zurich/Frankfurt a.M. (hm) On 12 June 2013, OEKO-TEX® presented the first Sustainability Award to five companies from the textile and clothing industry during an evening event in Frankfurt/Germany. The winners in the different categories are:

• Sung Hing Industries Holding Limited, China (Category Environmental Management)
• Mattes & Ammann GmbH & Co. KG, Germany (Category Social Responsibility)
• Veramtex S.A., Belgium (Category Safety Management)
• YKK Corporation, Japan (Category Quality Management)
• Lenzing AG, Austria (Category Product Innovation)

The Sustainability Award was created in 2012 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of OEKO-TEX®. By the end of last year, over 80 companies from 22 countries worldwide and from all stages of the textile value chain had applied for the award, which is not endowed with any prize money. The contenders cover the entire range of the textile industry – from a highly specialised finishing operation with only 12 employees, to a fully integrated shirt manufacturer with around 55,000 employees who houses all stages of production under one roof while also managing cotton cultivation and distribution of the products.

Two “OEKO-TEX® Companies of the Month” were selected every month in the period between March 2012 and March 2013 – one company certified according to OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 and one certified according to OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000. A common feature of all these companies is that they proactively meet the ecological and social challenges in their segment, and that they have implemented more sustainability with respect to their products and production conditions in an exemplary way. 15 of these Companies of the Month were then nominated for the Sustainability Award – three companies in each of the five categories. A jury with seven representatives of the OEKO-TEX® Association, of NGOs, industry and research as well as associations and the trade press will select the winners of the award in the individual categories.

Further details about the award presentation and additional press releases can be found at:

www.oeko-tex.com/sustainability
Winners of the OEKO-TEX® Sustainability Award 2013

Category Environmental Management

Sun Hing Industries Holding Limited

Renowned labels from all over the world use the sophisticated and exclusive materials from Sun Hing Industries Holding Limited in Hong Kong for their lingerie collections. A wide range of products allows the company to meet individual customer requests. Around 3,500 employees work at the state-of-the-art production complex in Shenzen.

The jury particularly recognise the consistent application of the self-imposed principle of “Green at Heart” – the objective of having as little impact as possible on the environment through ongoing production. These principles can be traced through all departments and all levels – starting with the certification to the environmental management standard ISO 14001 all the way to the use of innovative production technologies for heat recovery.

The jury were particularly impressed by how responsibly Sun Hing Industries Holding Limited use the available water resources at the Shenzen location. In view of the massive pollution of the Maozhou river from private and industrial wastewater and the lack of clean water sources in the region, the company clean the contaminated river water in their own water treatment plant and pipe the clean water into their own lake as a reserve, with a capacity of around 400,000 m3. A second water treatment plant additionally supplies a luxuriantly overgrown artificial wetland as well as an oxidation pond where the wastewater from production can be biochemically degraded and cleaned. 100 per cent of the wastewater from dyeworks and finishing is purified and returned to the Maozhou river. However, the processed water is substantially cleaner than the original river water.

Category Quality Management

YKK Corporation

The Japanese YKK Corporation is traditionally one of the leading manufacturers in the field of fastening technology. This primarily includes the world-famous YKK zips but also a number of other fastening and fixing solutions made of textile material, metal or plastic. The products are mainly used in items from the clothing and textile industry as well as in the packaging industry. Around 39,000 company employees in 71 regions around the globe work in development, production and sales of an extensive product range. The products are manufactured to the highest quality standards at 109 production facilities and branches in Japan, North and South America, Asia, Europe, Africa and New Zealand.

The jury believe that the YKK Corporation is setting standards worldwide by striving for perfection and maximum quality. The meticulous quality assurance within the company guarantees products of consistently high quality, regardless of the production location. This is based on a thoroughly vertical production system where everything from
raw materials to finished products is manufactured in-house. Even the machines are
developed within the company – an approach that ensures the highest quality standards
for the company. A continuous investment policy is closely related to these factors – a
significant part of the profits goes into replacements and further development, all in close
cooperation with the customers.

**Category Social Responsibility**

**Mattes & Ammann GmbH & Co. KG**

Fine knitted fabrics for renowned car manufacturers and other technical areas of
application are the trademark of the German Mattes & Ammann GmbH. A distinct
culture of sustainability provides a maximum level of efficiency, environmentally friendly
production processes and exemplary social structures. With currently 300 employees and
a total production area of around 36,000 square metres, Mattes & Ammann produce over
56 million square metres of textile fabrics in circular knitting, circular weaving and warp
knitting each year.

The jury have found that Mattes & Ammann have established an exemplary social and
cultural management over the course of many years. Appreciation of the employees as a
cornerstone of economic success is not only firmly rooted in the company philosophy in
a convincing way, it is also continuously revived through countless programmes, offers or
campaigns. In addition to meeting basic requirements such as performance-based pay,
regular holiday times, etc., Mattes & Ammann go the extra mile to include their employees
in numerous activities such as Christmas parties, company outings, further education
courses or sports activities to encourage community spirit. They have also established
a code of conduct for respectfully dealing with one another. The employees are also
motivated by premium programmes to actively take part in the company’s success by
providing suggestions for improvements and quality optimisation.

The jury especially recognise the exemplary health management, the semi-annual health
check-ups, the health passport for all employees, vaccinations, professional lectures
about health issues and the bonus system for the healthiest employees in the overall
workforce.

**Category Safety Management**

**Veramtex S.A.**

The Belgian company Veramtex SA specialises exclusively in the treatment of fabrics
and knitwear made from natural and cellulose fibres. An innovative process especially
developed for this purpose, the so-called “Beau Fixe” technology, allows cotton, linen,
lyocell, hemp or ramie to be finished according to individual customer requirements. On
a total production area of 3000 square metres and with 12 employees, the company
treat around 10 million metres of textile fabrics each year. Veramtex consistently employ environmentally friendly and safe processes.

The jury was impressed by the efficiency of the process used, which allows the quality of all cellulose fibres to be improved with one single patented treatment step. The core of the “Beau Fixe” technology is the use of liquid ammonia. Ammonia is a chemical compound of nitrogen and hydrogen. At room temperature it is a colourless gas with a pungent smell and a latent hazard potential.

The jury believe that Veramtex SA have, in a very unique way, managed to meet their responsibility for the health of employees and residents through the in-house development of a special recovery plant. This process allows the ammonia, which is completely removed from the fabric after treatment, to be recovered, cleaned and then reused at a rate of over 99% without any air and water pollution. This innovative plant has now made the risky delivery of liquid ammonia in lorries unnecessary.

**Category Product Innovation**

**Lenzing AG**

Lenzing AG, who is based in Austria, has been producing man-made cellulose fibres from the renewable raw material wood for over 75 years. The company with a total of 6600 employees combines all stages of fibre production in one location, making it the world’s largest integrated cellulose and viscose fibre plant. With a total capacity of 770,000 tons of cellulose fibres per year, the world market leader supplies to the global textile and non-woven industry.

Lenzing AG has shown outstanding achievements in the field of pioneering and innovative fibres for many years. These products have repeatedly set standards worldwide with regard to comfort, functionality and processing modifications. The best example is the development of the Lyocell fibre TENCEL®. Due to its ideal properties and functions and its wide range of applications, it has now become firmly established in the manufacturing of fabrics in the textile industry.

In the field of environmental technology, the company also manages to impressively convey its company philosophy with a focus on sustainability. To achieve this, all manufacturing processes were independently developed by Lenzing AG and are subject to continuous optimisation. The latest achievement in terms of ecological fibres is the “Edelweiss” technology – the application of an oxygen-based process makes the modal fibres produced with this technology even more environmentally friendly and even CO2 neutral.

In the opinion of the jury, Lenzing AG are a model example of how to achieve and expand global leadership in innovation and technology through a consistent focus on innovation and close cooperation with research institutes and universities.
Special Award for Sustainable Efforts

Century Rayon

The Indian yarn manufacturer Century Rayon has been producing rayon yarns since 1954. Today the company supplies weaving mills and knitting mills that produce fabrics for the clothing and home textile sector. The range also includes special yarns for technical applications such as textile reinforcement fabrics for the tyre industry, V-belts, fabrics for flexible tubing or fire-resistant fabrics. With around 5,300 employees at two production units and many years of experience in yarn production, Century Rayon is one of the leading providers in these areas.

First-rate quality and a pronounced customer focus play a vital role in the economic success of the company. The appropriate company philosophy is reflected primarily in the successful implementation of internationally accepted management systems for quality, environment, and health and safety.

The jury believe that Century Rayon have pointed the way to a future of more responsibility for people and environment through the measures implemented and the associated objectives. Within the framework of the general challenges for the textile industry, the company have achieved a successful position and taken on a leading role in corporate responsibility, not only in their own country but globally as well.

OEKO-TEX® Sustainability Award - background information

Why an award for sustainability?

The companies in the international textile industry frequently receive negative press: Harmful substances in products, environmental pollution, inhumane working conditions or factory fires. In the framework of the OEKO-TEX® certification, the OEKO-TEX® Association have been working very closely with around 10,000 companies from the entire textile value chain for many years. And they have seen numerous facilities which are the complete opposite to this negative image of the textile and clothing industry.

These companies are characterised by initiative, social responsibility for their employees and the location, best possible product quality, a modern production concept and a high potential for innovation. They proactively set standards for sustainability, supported by a prudent management team and appropriate company philosophies. At the same time, the economic success of these companies illustrates how seemingly expensive investments in efficient and environmentally friendly production technologies, social working conditions, workplace safety, effective quality assurance, employee training and product innovation really do pay off.

On the occasion of its 20th anniversary last year, OEKO-TEX® launched the Sustainability Award to recognise OEKO-TEX® certified companies who have shown outstanding commitment in the area of sustainability. The aim of the award is to draw attention the many exemplary companies who stand out on account of their safe products.
and sustainable production conditions. They achieve this independently, on the basis of current legislation and regardless of their production location and the respective markets. The applications received for the “Company of the Month” campaign additionally show the wide range of clever ideas and measures employed by these companies to create and successfully implement sustainable conditions in everyday production.

**Categories of the Sustainability Award**

The OEKO-TEX® Sustainability Award will be presented in different categories to provide a clearer picture of the specific achievements and the unique characteristics of each company. What unites all nominated companies, though, is that they are positive examples of sustainability in all relevant company areas.

**Environmental management**

Beyond compliance with country-specific legislation, the majority of the nominated companies use independent certifications such as OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000 or ISO 14001 to continuously optimise their environmental performance. Common to all these companies are efficient production processes, optimum and economical use of existing resources, use of state-of-the-art production technologies and responsible actions with regard to emissions, wastewater and production waste. At the same time the companies distinguish themselves through numerous individual solutions such as company-owned power plants, water treatment plants or use of recycled materials and production materials. Environmental management systems ensure that planned targets can be coordinated and systematically integrated into everyday production, that they can be competently implemented by the employees and clearly communicated by the company.

**Social Responsibility**

Motivated and well trained employees identify with the objectives and the philosophy of the company as economic success can only be achieved together. The nominated companies are perfect examples for the fact that they are taking on responsibility for their own employees on a level that goes far beyond the basic requirements of industrial law such as occupational health and safety, fair pay, regular working and holiday times, absence of discrimination or child labour.

Extensive individual contributions such as free medical care for employees and their families, sponsoring of regional social projects or regular joint activities have a long tradition in many companies and are highly appreciated by the employees. The uncompromising commitment of the companies to their social responsibility also supports the economic survival of entire regions and creates fair partnerships with suppliers and customers.

**Safety management**

In all nominated companies, investments in professional training (from training apprentices and taking them into permanent employment to further education of
employees) and the well-being of the employees naturally include all measures required for occupational health and safety. Many companies use independent certifications such as OHSAS 18001 to support the implementation of an optimum safety management system. What is crucial to a maximum of health and safety as well as process reliability, however, are the specific skills at each production stage and the experience with the challenges of the individual production steps, often going back several decades.

Quality management

Another common characteristic of all nominated companies are their very high requirements when it comes to product quality. Quality assurance systems developed in-house or independent certification to ISO 9001 ensure that all production steps can be documented efficiently and transparently. This starts with inspection of incoming goods, continues through the individual manufacturing steps and product testing in in-house laboratories and ends with final quality control. Optimally trained employees and use of the best available technologies also contribute to the desired product quality. Some companies also achieve further quality optimisations by, for example, organising the cultivation and procurement of raw materials by themselves, developing their own production machines or selling their products in company-owned shops.

Product innovation

Another cornerstone of sustainable management in the nominated companies is the continuing further development of innovative products and manufacturing methods. In a highly competitive market, this allows the companies to distinguish themselves from their competitors and to open up new market segments. Innovations that are suitable for the market are not only economically sustainable, they also often contribute to the ecological aspect of saving valuable resources and reducing pollution, for example by optimising production processes and machine technologies. Another aspect is that some companies manufacture their products from renewable raw materials and recycled materials, using recycled and regenerated production materials.

Special Award for Sustainable Efforts

The jury are additionally presenting a “Special Award for Sustainable Efforts” to an Indian company as a motivation for the entire textile and clothing industry. They see this as a clear signal for the fact that ecologically and socially responsible actions primarily depend on the uncompromising commitment of the company management and are globally possible even in countries that are usually known for their poor working conditions in the eyes of the media and the public.