

Despite Economic Crisis: International Textile Retail Trade is Expanding Organic Cotton Collections

The current financial and economic crisis does not deter the international textile- and clothing chains from their consequent path of a broad offer of sustainable and fair made products. As the Non-Profit-Organization Organic Exchange / OE told in their market report Organic Cotton 2007-08 (www.organicexchange.org/Europe), has the global retail trade sales of clothing and home textile products made from the natural fiber Organic Cotton / OC in 2008 attained a value of around 3.2 Bill USD. This means an increase by 63% against the 1.9 Bill USD made in 2007. In 2002 the global sales amounted to 240 Mill USD only.

To the ten internationally biggest consumers of organic cotton belong the brands and retailers Wal-Mart, Pottery Barn, Greensource, Anvil, Nike (total USA), C&A (Belgium), H&M (Sweden), Zara (Spain), Coop Schweiz (Switzerland) and Hess Natur (Germany). It is said that most of the companies want to expand their offers in this sector in 2009 and 2010 by 24% and 33%, respectively. Hence, the global retail sales with organic cotton should come in 2009 to around 4 Bill USD and in 2010 to 5.3 Bill USD.

Organic cotton is ecologically produced, based on a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility without the use of toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilizers or genetically modified seeds and with natural crop rotation. The consumer knows the product also under a different quality term, which is kbA-Baumwolle (aus kontrolliert-biologischem Anbau – of controlled biological cul-

tivation). According to OE-market report the production of organic cotton rose in 2007-08 to 145,872 t (668,581 bales) – a plus of 152% to the in 2006-07 produced 57,932 t (265.517 bales).

In the last five years the output of organic cotton has doubled nearly every year. For the harvest season 2008-09 a production of nearly 224,722 t is predicted, which means an increase of 54% compared to the output in 2007-08. Organic cotton is grown currently on altogether 161,000 ha in 22 countries – however, it represents at the moment only 0.55% of the world cotton production.

The five biggest producers of OC in the harvesting year 2007-08 were India (51%), Syria (19%), Turkey (17%), China (5%) and Tanzania (2%). 94% of the worldwide OC-output come from these countries. Newcomers in the market are Nicaragua, South Africa, Bangladesh and Argentina. The fiber deliveries made of certified organic cotton rose in 2008 by 95% against the yearly growth rates of only 45% in 2006 and 53% in 2007.

The most important five purchasers of OC in 2006 were from the US Wal-Mart, Nike, Patagonia, furthermore Coop Schweiz (Switzerland) and Otto Group (Germany). Regarding organic cotton the Dutch clothing concern C&A is working together with Organic Exchange and supports this international organization also financially, whose long-term goal it is to change over 10% of the world cotton market to organic cotton. C&A has been offering beginning September 2007 in around 204 European subsidiaries a comprehensive

assortment of 100% organic cotton (www.cunda.de/fashion/collection/bioCotton), which has been expanded considerably beginning March 2008 and is certified according to European and international standards. The share of pure organic cotton shall be increased in the total offer continuously – in fall 2007 it were only 1,200 t, then the amount rose to 6,000 t in 2008.

Nike has set themselves the goal to have until 2010 a 5% of their clothing offer to be made of organic cotton. Koppermann Textiles (www.Koppermann.eu) came up at the Heimtextil-Fair in Frankfurt this year with two high-

quality grey fabrics made to a hundred percent of organic cotton – warp sateen and batiste. The cotton for both organic articles originates in Turkey and is woven in one of their own production plants in Thailand. Nordstrom launched its use of organic cotton in 2007, quadrupling the quantity by the end of 2008. More than half of the bedding of Pottery Barn contained until 2008 already 5% organic cotton. Timberland shifted more than 5% of its overall cotton purchases and 100% of its promotional t-shirts to organic cotton.

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