Business Week
29 Jan - 4 Feb

Record fourth quarter results from Dow

29 Jan 2007

US-based chemical firm The Dow Chemical Company has reported a new fourth quarter record of $12.2 billion sales, a 3% increase over the prior year period.

Year-on-year, volume was up 2% with solid growth in the Performance segments and Basic Plastics offsetting declines in Basic Chemicals and Hydrocarbons and Energy. Strong demand outside North America, most notably in Asia Pacific, more than offset continued reductions in both Canada and the USA. Prices rose by 1%, reflecting gains across most of its Performance businesses, weakened by negative price trends in Basic Plastics and Basic Chemicals. Net income for the quarter was $975 million, 11% higher than in the previous year.

In the Performance Plastics segment, fourth quarter sales of $3.55 billion set a new quarterly record, up 11% over the same period in 2005. Prices rose 8% and volume increased 3%, with strong gains in every geographic region except North America. Specialty Plastics and Elastomers business also reported stronger pricing and volume growth.

Sales in Performance Chemicals rose to $2 billion for the fourth quarter, an increase of 8% compared with $1.85 billion posted in the same period last year. Prices were up 3% while volume increased by 5% and sales were particularly high in both Asia Pacific and Latin America. Designed Polymers reported price gains and double-digit volume improvement.

Specialty Chemicals also reported healthy volume gains in all geographic regions.

On the downside, fourth quarter sales in the Basic Chemicals segment declined by 14% ,from $1.53 billion to $1.32 billion. Prices fell 8%, while volume declined 6%, reflecting lower demand across all geographic regions.

The company reported record annual sales of $49.1 billion in 2006, 6% higher than last year's record of $46.3 billion. Prices rose 5% with increases in all operating segments, excluding Agricultural Sciences, and in all geographic regions. Net income for the year was $3.7 billion compared with $4.5 billion in 2005.

Higher sports and outerwear sales at Columbia Sportswear

29 Jan 2007

Portland-based outdoor apparel and footwear company Columbia Sportswear Company has posted a 15.2% increase in net sales for its fourth quarter ended December 31. Sales totalled $361.8 million compared with $314.1 million for the same period of 2005. Net income was $38.4 million, a 4.9% increase compared with $36.6 million for the 2005 quarter.

US sales increased 14.6% to $212.4 million whilst other international sales increased 27.4% to reach $66 million. European sales increased by 10.7% to $55.7 million and Canadian sales increased 4.1% to $27.7 million.

Outerwear sales increased 22.3% to $180.3 million, sportswear sales increased by 20.6% to $108.5 million, equipment sales increased by 150% to $3 million, accessories sales improved by 11.5% to reach $13.6 million. Meanwhile, footwear sales decreased 10.9%.

For the full year, the company reported net sales of $1,287.7 million, an increase of 11.4% over $1,155.8 million for 2005. Net income was $123 million, a 5.9% decrease compared with net income of $130.7 million for 2005. Sportswear sales for the year increased by 13.1% to $509.1 million, outerwear sales increased by 12.8% to $496.5 million, equipment sales increased by 116.5% to $19.7 million, and footwear sales increased by 4% to $219.7 million. Accessories sales decreased by 5.5% to $42.7 million compared with 2005.

POY sales affect Q2 results at Unifi

29 Jan 2007

American producer and processor of multi-filament textured yarns Unifi, Inc. has reported a net loss of $16.5 million for its second quarter ended December 24 compared with a net loss of $3.8 million for the corresponding period in 2005.

Net sales of $156.9 million for the period fell 17.9% to $34.2 million from $191.1 million in the 2005 quarter. Relatively stable sales of the company's nylon and textured, dyed and value-added polyester yarns in the quarter were offset by significant declines in partially oriented yarn (POY).

Chief operating officer and CFO Bill Lowe said, "Earnings were negatively impacted by the lingering effect of higher-priced POY inventory and a significant decline in POY volume during the quarter. The inventory adjustments that took place throughout the supply chain during the December quarter appear largely complete, and our POY and texturing plants are now running at expected capacities. We anticipate operating at these higher run rates and also expect to achieve mix related

benefits as well, during the March quarter."

The company recorded a net loss of $27.6 million for the first half of fiscal 2007 compared with a net loss of $6.9 million in the prior year first half. Net sales for the first half of $326.8 million were down $47.4 million, or 12.7%, compared with net sales of $374.2 million for the first half of fiscal 2006.

Total debt at the end of the current quarter was $206.1 million, a reduction of $58 million over the $264.1 million in debt at the end of the prior year December quarter.

BASF recognised for corporate social responsibility

29 Jan 2007

German chemicals company BASF AG has been named as the number one company in the Good Company Ranking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The award honours companies that have succeeded in combining a high standard of human relations with environmental and social commitment.

BASF has also been included in the Global 100 list by the New York research house Innovest for the second year in succession.

The Good Company Ranking is a joint project run by Manager Magazin, audit company Deloitte and consultancy Kirchhoff Consult, which independently assess the 120 largest companies in Europe.

Calvin Klein to launch new golf sportswear line

29 Jan 2007

Calvin Klein, Inc. has entered into a licensing arrangement with Windsong Sport LLC to manufacture and distribute a new line of men's and women's golf apparel and accessories under the brand 'Calvin Klein Golf'. A preview of the line is currently being exhibited at The International PGA Merchandise Show in Florida, USA.

Fran Matthews, president of Windsong Sport, has been named president of the new Calvin Klein Golf division which will be a knit-driven line including layering tops, sweaters, pants, shorts, and outerwear, complemented by golf accessories and footwear.

As well as producing the new brand, Windsong will also operate a dedicated Calvin Klein Golf showroom within their sales offices in New York City and maintain a team of 12 regional managers throughout the USA.

Lectra launches new Fashion PLM

29 Jan 2007

France-based developer of software and CAD/CAM equipment Lectra has launched a new PLM solution, the Lectra Fashion PLM V1R3. The new product is a 100% web-based solution that allows all those involved in the lifecycle of a product—creation, development, sourcing, manufacturing, and marketing of fashion product lines—to collaborate effectively.

The new product offers an improved Product Development application, which is said to ensure effective collaboration among those involved in all specific processes related to the sourcing of fashion products and related fabrics. This includes precise synchronisation and management of multiple bids, prototype reviews, and effective cost simulations taking into account the product's multiple variants. The quality process has also been improved to define and validate different tests such as colourfastness, flammability, measurements, and finishing, that each product must undergo before it can be marketed.

Ashworth co-founder returns

29 Jan 2007

John Ashworth, co-founder of golf apparel and golf-inspired sportswear company Ashworth, Inc., has returned to the company he helped to establish 20 years ago. He has been appointed as a consultant for Ashworth's brand development with immediate effect.

Commenting on his return to the company, Mr Ashworth said, "It's great to be back. There's a positive energy in the new leadership of the company. I look forward with excitement and optimism to the opportunity to add value to the brand and to the golf community once again."

Gary Sims, Ashworth's president added, "His return to the company on its 20th anniversary has energised the entire organisation and 2007 promises to be a very exciting year for our brand and valued accounts around the world."

Creora to present future directions at ispo

29 Jan 2007

Elastane brand creora—developed by Hyosung Corporation—will showcase its new developments for sports and fitness at in the BrandNew hall at ispo in Munich, Germany on February 4-7.

Creora will present future textile trends for both women's and men's sportswear under the themes of Core Being,

Performance Pace, Pleasure Factor and Extreme.

DyStar opens textile service centre in Shanghai

29 Jan 2007

German-based supplier of products and services for the textile industry DyStar, has officially opened its new service centre for the textile industry in Shanghai, China, which will provide a range of value-adding services for textile finishers and retailers in China and other parts of Asia.

The 3000 m2 building is equipped with state-of-the-art laboratory dyeing and printing machines and testing equipment for a spectrum of requirements including wet fastness and light fastness tests. The centre will also develop solutions geared specifically to local needs.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, head of the DyStar activities in China, Eric Hopmann stressed the importance of the new location, “Our new service centre in Shanghai extends our presence in China and enables us to build a bridge between international and local retailers and textile mills in Asia and China.”

The extensive service offering of DyStar Textile Services is central to DyStar’s bid to differentiate itself from its competitors.

Lanxess exhibits at Interplastica 2007

30 Jan 2007

German chemicals group Lanxess will be showcasing its range of dyes, pigments and polymer additives for the Eastern European plastics industry at Interplastica 2007, being held in Moscow from January 30 to February 2.

Head of Colorants Marketing at the Functional Chemicals business unit Axel Schneider commented, "We consider Eastern Europe to be a growth market and the Russian plastics industry, in particular, has outstanding potential for Western companies.”

The Macrolex line of products for plastic colourations ranging from transparent to opaque will be one of the main highlights presented by the company. According to Lanxess, processing of these colorants is enhanced by the good flow behaviour, meterability and dispersibility of the microgranules. The products are suitable for the colouration of amorphous polymers such as PS, PC, ABS, PMMA and PET and are characterised by high thermal, light and weather stability, as well as strong colour properties.

It will also show organic pigments from the Bayplast range and inorganic iron and chrome oxide pigments from the Colortherm and Bayferrox range for adding colour to plastics. Pigment properties include heat-stability, colour strength, brilliance and light- and weather-fastness.

Dow Corning to appear at the Super Bowl

30 Jan 2007

Supplier of silicone solutions for the leather and textile industries Dow Corning Corporation has been invited to present its new impact protection technology at this year’s Super Bowl in Miami, on February 2.

The event will host over 3,000 representatives from the sports industry including team owners, athletes, coaches and consumer goods executives.

The company will promote its Active Protection System, a ‘smart’ fabric treated with a silicone coating. The material remains soft, breathable and flexible under normal conditions, but hardens instantly upon impact. When the impact force is removed, the fabric immediately returns to a flexible state.

It is also breathable and flexible for added comfort and freedom of movement and can be stitched directly into garments, making it less likely to shift under impact.

Finland-based manufacturer of sports apparel Rukka launched the first commercially available product to use the fabric—a motorcycle riding suit—last October.

VF Outdoor acquires Eagle Creek

30 Jan 2007

VF Outdoor, Inc., a subsidiary of branded apparel firm VF Corporation, has completed its acquisition of travel gear company Eagle Creek, Inc. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

VF Outdoor expects the Eagle Creek brand to add approximately $30 million to its 2007 revenues and to sustain high single-digit sales growth over the next several years.

Founder and president of Eagle Creek, Steve Barker, will retain his post as manager of the brand and will report to president of VF Outdoor Dave Gatto. Executive vice president Ricky Schlesinger will also continue in his current role, reporting to Nona Barker. The company will remain in its current location in Vista, California.

Li Ning partners Swedish Olympic Committee

30 Jan 2007

Chinese sports brand Li Ning Company Limited has signed a four-year agreement with the Swedish Olympic

Committee, under which the group will become the official partner of the Swedish Olympic Committee and will provide the Olympic delegation with a range of sports apparel.

Li Ning will provide specially designed sportswear to all members of the delegation for on the competition ground and at award ceremonies during the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. It is also authorised to sell Olympics-related products in Sweden.

Sweden ranked sixth overall with seven gold medals and 14 other medals at the Torino Winter Olympics in 2006.

ispo Global Sportstyle Awards set for success

30 Jan 2007

The Global Sportstyle Awards, for the best sport and fashion outfits for the winter 2007/08 season will take place at the GQ Style Night presented by Volvo, to be held on February 5 at the Dan Flavin House in Munich's Arabellapark and media quarter.

The event will include a fashion show, the awards ceremony and a party.

The product categories for the awards are Premium Sportstyle Fashion; Premium Sportstyle Function; Premium Winterstyle Fashion; Premium Winterstyle Function; Special Edition of the Year; and Brand of the Century.

Duro Textiles fined for pollution

30 Jan 2007

Massachusetts-based textile company Duro Textiles LLC, has agreed to pay a $480,000 fine to settle a federal case—brought by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Attorney's Office in Massachusetts—for Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act violations at its manufacturing plants in Fall River, Massachusetts. Duro has also made operating changes to come into compliance with federal law.

Duro Textiles produces finished specialty textiles such as camouflage and high-performance sports fabrics. Its employees conduct dyeing, coating, and finishing processes on raw bolts of fabric to produce textiles ready for construction of garments and other products. These processes generate large volumes of highly acidic and highly alkaline wastewater and significant quantities of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that promote the formation of ozone in the air.

The complaint alleges that three of Duro's plants repeatedly e violated the legal limits on low and high pH wastewater discharged into the Fall River sewer system and treatment works and also failed to routinely inspect potential sources of storm water contamination (such as outdoor fuel tanks and chemical unloading areas), which left Duro unable to address any emerging water pollution problems.

The complaint also alleges that Duro failed to maintain minimum operating temperatures at an incinerator used to control VOC emissions at one of its plants.

"While we are pleased that Duro has continued the tradition of Massachusetts textile operations when so many other companies have shut down or moved abroad, it is critically important that Duro comply with federal air and water pollution laws," said Michael Sullivan, US Attorney.

BGI adds Outdoor Industry Concentration to MBA programme

30 Jan 2007

USA-based Bainbridge Graduate Institute (BGI), which offers a MBA programme for sustainable business leadership has announced the addition of an Outdoor Industry Concentration to its MBA in Sustainable Business programme at the Outdoor Retailer Winter Market in Salt Lake City, USA. The Outdoor Industry Concentration has been developed for MBA students from the industry who wish to combine general business education with a focus on real-world projects and industry-specific challenges.

To develop the programme, BGI formed an Outdoor Industry Concentration Advisory Council involving recognised outdoor industry executives including Steve Rendle, president, Americas of The North Face; Sarah Severn, director of Horizons, Corporate Responsibility of Nike; Gary Smith, president and general manager of Timberland Outdoor Group & SVP Global Supply Chain of Timberland; Rick Ridgeway, vice president of Communications and Environmental Initiatives at Patagonia; and Sheryl O'Loughlin, CEO of Clif Bar.

Commenting on the initiative Steve Rendle, president, Americas of The North Face, said, "The BGI Outdoor Industry Concentration is a perfect opportunity to rally companies already passionate about the outdoors to develop sustainable business practices. It will bring multiple industry stakeholders—even competitors—together to dialogue and learn. Our love for the outdoors makes it only natural that our business models incorporate a vision and strategies that drive a strong understanding and commitment to environmental and social responsibility. We feel this is a win-win situation for everyone from the environment to industry to shareholders."

Patagonia begins recycling competitors' garments

31 Jan 2007

US-based outdoor gear and apparel company Patagonia, Inc., has expanded its Common Threads Recycling Programme to include any used Polartec-branded fleece garments whether they were produced by Patagonia or any of its competitor companies. It will also now recycle Patagonia cotton t-shirts through the programme which initially only accepted Capilene baselayers produced Patagonia.

With this expansion, worn-out Patagonia and Polartec fleece, Patagonia cotton tees and Capilene baselayers will feed Patagonia's supply chain to make new clothing for future seasons.

Commenting on the expanded programme president and CEO, Casey Sheahan, said, "Our goal is to assume full responsibility for our products, as well as our competitors' products, at the end of their useful life," adding, "Moving forward, we hope to expand the world view of recycling beyond just cans, newspapers and bottles—we're aiming to make clothing a recyclable resource."

Since the launch of the Common Threads programme in September 2005, Patagonia has collected over 1,000 pounds of used Capilene baselayers to be recycled into new garments.

Inaugural Global Economic Summit held at PGA

31 Jan 2007

PGA of America CEO, Joe Steranka; PGA of Great Britain and Ireland CEO, Sandy Jones; and PGA of Australia CEO, Max Garske, all contributed at the inaugural PGA Global Economic Summit, held on January 25.

In front of an audience of 250, the trio presented research focusing on the ways in which golf is affecting the economic structure of their respective nations as well as other parts of the globe such as the Asia Pacific region where a golf boom has been taking place since the start of the 21st century. There are currently 6,000 golf courses in the region and more than six million golfers. China alone has seen a 40% growth rate in golf course construction and it is anticipated that the country could challenge the golf economies of Europe and the USA in the next decade.

According to Mr Steranka, the US golf economy totals $62.2 billion annually, with 25 million golfers spending an average of $2,400 per person every year. A typical course hosts an estimated 33,300 rounds, employing an average of 17 people on a full-time basis.

Europe's golf economy features more than 6,300 golf courses that contribute an estimated $19.9 billion to the European economy. The region has an estimated 4.1 million golfers with an average yearly spend of $4,846 per person.

The Australian Golf Industry Economic Report found that the country's golf economy totalled $2.2 billion, and is home to 1.25 million golfers who play at 1,700 different courses. The average Australian golfer spends $1,700 per year.

The PGA of America is the world's largest working sports organisation, comprising 28,000 golf professionals who help to teach and manage the game across its 41 PGA Sections nationwide.

New brands, areas and events at ASR

31 Jan 2007

Next season's styles from over 500 surf, skate, snow, moto, lifestyle and youth culture brands were showcased at Action Sports Retailer Expo (ASR) in San Diego, held on January 25-27, which was attended by over 18,000 visitors.

A new Board Builder's Pavilion, dedicated to the surf hard goods, hosted 20 surfboard shapers and surfboard material producers. The Reef Board Build-Off attracted thousands of attendees to the Pavilion to bid on collectable boards built specifically to be auctioned off for charity. The auction raised over $20,000 for charities of each shaper's choice, with Rich Pavel's board going for the high bid of $3,700.

Green Steps environmental initiatives at ASR included a fully wind energy powered event and expanded recycling efforts. New lines of sustainable and organic products for autumn 2007 were also part of the initiative.

The Goldbox Mission offered a section of new, up-and-coming brands including art-driven, lifestyle brands allowing unknown companies to present their products to action sports specialty retailers.

New DRATEFS forecasting system for textiles industry

31 Jan 2007

Consultants to the textile and nonwovens industries David Rigby Associates (DRA) have unveiled the DRATEFS forecasting system. DRATEFS can track worldwide final consumption of all textile end-use products and the associated volumes and values of the different components they contain (fibres, yarns, fabrics, chemicals, dyestuffs, etc.), by volume, value, year and country. The system's initial application is for suppliers of textile products, fibres and chemicals.

The new tool is an expanded version of DRA's earlier system, which produced forecast tables in its eight published reports on future world markets for technical textiles and nonwovens. It includes a product database and a driver-based forecasting model as well as outlining the world textile end-use market in terms of 281 distinct products—garments (96 products), interior textiles (25), carpets (10), technical textiles (98) and nonwovens (52).

Products are analysed into: textile components in 20 different fibre types (e.g. cotton, polyester, elastomeric), eight yarn forms (e.g. spun, textile multifilament, monofilament) and 20 fabric types (e.g. broad-woven, warp knitted, melt-spun nonwoven); other components including dyestuffs, process chemicals, finishes and coatings; and product characteristics such as level of finish (e.g. ecru, yarn dyed, piece dyed), colour shade (e.g. light, dark), degree of stretch (e.g. power, soft, comfort) and after-care needs (e.g. hot wash, hand wash, dry clean).

The system makes annual volume forecasts for any targeted list of end-use products and then computes the implied content in that forecast (by volume) of the various components and characteristics. Monetary values are then ascribed to forecast volumes of both products and components using information on price and added value. Forecasts can be generated up to ten years ahead, for up to 210 different countries or user-defined regions.

Cognis awards Skintex technology team

31 Jan 2007

Specialty chemicals supplier Cognis has presented its internal Innovation Award 2006 to its team of employees responsible for the development of Skintex. The winning team has now developed the micro-encapsulation technology to the stage where it can be mass produced. First established in 2004, Skintex has now been used in jeans, trousers, underwear and T-Shirts.

The system is based on micro-capsules containing active naturally-derived ingredients that are released onto the skin at a controlled rate over a fixed period of time. Each capsule is coated with a protective layer of chitosan (made from shrimp shells) and slowly releases its contents onto the skin through a reaction with the body’s own enzymes and the light friction generated when clothes are worn. The microcapsules, which are undetectable to the naked eye, can be filled with a variety of contents such as emollients, perfumes, essential oils or insecticides to offer varying effects that last for numerous washes.

Record Q4 revenue at Wolverine World Wide

31 Jan 2007

Branded active lifestyle, work, outdoor sport and uniform footwear company Wolverine World Wide, Inc. has reported record revenue for its fourth quarter and 2006 fiscal year—its sixth consecutive year of record results.

The company reported revenue totalling $1.142 billion for the full year 2006, a 7.6% increase over 2005 revenue of $1.061 billion.

For the fourth quarter, revenue totalled $341.7 million, a 6.5% increase over fourth quarter 2005 revenue of $321 million.

According to president and COO Blake Krueger, "The Outdoor Group set the pace, led by Merrell Footwear, which posted strong double-digit revenue and earnings improvements.”

Polo Ralph Lauren to enter Russian market

31 Jan 2007

Polo Ralph Lauren will expand its global retail presence into Russia in spring 2007, when the company opens its first Russian retail outlets—two flagship stores in Moscow.

Commenting on the move into Russia chairman and CEO, Ralph Lauren, said, "Opening stores in Russia is more then just a strategic company initiative, the real excitement is communicating with a new culture. The Russian consumer will be able to experience my vision for the first time and it is thrilling."

New Invista knitwear at Pitti Filati

1 Feb 2007

Integrated fibres and polymers company Invista has unveiled its spring 2008 knitwear collection at Pitti Immagine Filati which is currently being held in Florence, Italy. The collection, designed by Carruthers Associates, is centred around the lifestyle choices of 'relaxing, luxury, work and sport'.

Yarns used in the ‘relaxing’ category are Lora Festa cotton treated with DuPont Teflon fabric protector plated with low power Lycra yarns from the Filix group and Addchance, and 100% cotton or cotton ramie blends plated with low power Lycra yarns from Sun Hing.

The ‘luxury’ collection uses fine delicate stitch structures, pleat effects and racked structures and includes Cashmere blends from Zegna Baruffa plated with Lycra yarns from the Filix Group; cotton with Merino wool yarns

from Botto Poala, plated with Lycra yarn from Sun Hing; and fine counts of filament silk with low power Lycra yarn from Wykes and Bamboo from Schoeller.

Machine washable Tactel fabrics and yarns from Toung Loong with Lycra fibre from Shanghai Hywell and Cordura fabric for increased protection and abrasion resistance are featured in the 'work' category. Machine-washable wool from the Chee Fong Woollen Company plated with low power Lycra yarns from the Filix Group and discharge-printed Indigo denim cotton from Filartex plated with Lycra fibre from Sun Hing are also found in this segment.

The 'sport' collection features Thermolite fabric with Pima cotton and Coolmax fabric with Pima cotton from Sun Hing; Thermolite fabric with silk and wool from Grignasco plated with Lycra yarns from Wykes; and a blend of Coolmax fabric with cotton from Miyama, in a very fine count, plated with Lycra yarn from Wykes.

H&M launches organic cotton collection

1 Feb 2007

Sweden-based fashion retailer H&M has launched a new collection for women, teens, children and babies featuring organic cotton for spring 2007.

All garments in the collection will carry a special hang tag, so they can be easily identified.

Commenting on the decision to introduce the line, H&M's head of design, Margareta van den Bosch, said: "These clothes are great pieces of the moment. They combine a conscious choice of materials with the latest design, allowing you to look just as good on the outside as you feel on the inside."

Organic cotton is grown without the use of harmful pesticides and synthetic fertilisers. The annual global production of organic cotton is still very limited and represents less than 1% of all cotton. Having become a member of Organic Exchange, an organisation that promotes organic cotton worldwide, in 2003, H&M hopes the collection will help to encourage organic cotton growers.

Under Armour signs Cat Osterman and Kimmie Meissner

1 Feb 2007

US-based branded apparel, footwear and accessories group Under Armour, Inc. has confirmed the signing of two female athletes, US National Team softball pitcher and 2006 Softball Collegiate Player of the Year Cat Osterman and 2006 World Champion and 2007 National Women's Figure Skating Champion Kimmie Meissner. Ms Meissner will wear the company's clothing during non-competition ice-time and training, while Ms Osterman will wear Under Armour its apparel and footwear both on and off the softball field.

Women's apparel is one of the company's top growth drivers for 2007 and now represents more than 20% of the company's apparel business. The line is designed to help athletes stay cool and dry during exercise.

Further decline in Eurozone clothing and footwear sales

1 Feb 2007

The Bloomberg Eurozone Retail Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) has revealed that sales fell sharply from 52.1 in December to 47.9 in January in the euro retail area. This decline is the second largest in the three-year history of the survey and, by slipping below the 50 level, indicated the first drop in retail sales for ten months, with sales falling at a rate not seen for 23 months.

The fall in month-on-month sales largely reflected a steep sales drop in Germany, which contrasted with strong growth in previous months and was widely linked to January's increase in sales tax. The drop in German sales was the largest for two-and-a-half years (an index of 43.9, down from 55.2 in December). However, sales growth also deteriorated in France, slowing for the third consecutive month to a ten-month low (an index of 50.3, down from 52.4). Modest sales growth was seen in Italy, which represented an improvement on falling sales seen in prior months (the index rose from 46.9 to 50.6), but this was at least in part due to improved car sales resulting from recent government incentives.

The year-on-year growth rate slowed sharply to near-stagnation in January, dropping further from November's three-year survey record high of 57, and from 53.1 in December, to reach a ten-month low of 50.3.

Clothing & footwear and autos both saw sales slip on a year ago, with the auto section seeing the weakest performance.

Eddie Bauer launches new swimwear tool

1 Feb 2007

Washington-based casual sportswear and outdoor accessories retailer Eddie Bauer has introduced a new mix & match swim tool to its website. The interactive tool helps customers find suitable swimsuits with the option of mixing separates, according to style and size, from its Miraclesuit, Southbeach, Sienna, Laguna and Tides collections.

The tool allows customers to see swimsuits from both front and back views according to their body shape and

colour preferences.

Q2 revenue increase at Bernard Chaus

1 Feb 2007

US ladies' workwear and casual sportswear designer Bernard Chaus, Inc. has reported improved financial results for the second quarter and first six months of fiscal 2007.

For the second quarter ended December 31, revenues increased by approximately 71.2% to $39.4 million from $23 million in the second quarter last year. The company reported second quarter net income of $1.3 million compared with a net loss of $4.9 million in the prior year period.

For the six-month period, revenues grew by approximately 29.9% to $78.9 million, up from $60.7 million in the 2005 period. Net income for the first half of fiscal 2007 was $2.5 million compared with a net loss of $4.8 million in the year-ago period.

Sock sales lift Gildan's Q1 results

1 Feb 2007

Canadian casual and sportswear company Gildan Activewear Inc. has posted net earnings of $15.6 million for its first quarter, ended December 31.

Before reflecting restructuring charges, adjusted net earnings amounted to $17 million up 4.9% from $16.2 million in the prior year period.

Sales in the first quarter totalled $185.8 million, up 54.4% from $120.3 million in the first quarter of last year. This increase was attributed to $42.6 million in sock sales resulting from the acquisition of Kentucky Derby Hosiery, a 15.2% increase in unit sales volumes for activewear and the impact of a higher-valued activewear product mix, partially offset by a reduction in unit selling prices for activewear of approximately 4% compared with last year.

Staff changes at The North Face

1 Feb 2007

Outdoor apparel, equipment and footwear company The North Face has appointed Patrik Frisk as vice president/general manager of the The North Face in Europe and the Middle East (EMEA). He has led the EMEA sales team and worked closely with the Product and Retail departments since October 2004, and will continue to uphold his current role as vice president Sales – EMEA in addition to his new responsibilities until a replacement has been appointed.

'Year of the Woman' launched at Páramo

2 Feb 2007

UK outdoor apparel and accessories firm Páramo Directional Clothing Systems has named 2007 the 'Year of the Woman' in recognition of the rising participation of female enthusiasts in outdoor activities and professions. Following the addition of two new female designers, the company has added further clothing items, specifically tailored for women, to its range.

Its ladies' Reversible Shirts are made from Nikwax Parameta S fabric and the two new styles are said to provide warmth in the winter and coolness in the summer.

Two new female specific styles have also been added to the ladies' classic Camino Shirt: the Ladies' Challenger Pull-on, a reversible long-sleeved top, with chest zip and venting/handwarming from the reversible twin-zip pocket; and the Ladies' Calluna Shirt, a short-sleeved reversible top in the new Parameta S Light summer weight fabric. Using the Parameta T lightweight and stretchy fabric, two new female specific garments have also been added to the existing line: The Ladies' Cambia Long Sleeve T-shirt with reversible performance base layer offering two levels of cooling and a relaxed fit; and the Ladies' Cambia Micro Shorts, boxer style performance underwear.

The company will showcase its new products at The Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show in Birmingham on March 16-18.

Horizontal carousel technology from Diamond Phoenix

2 Feb 2007

US-based provider of automated material handling solutions Diamond Phoenix recently launched a new horizontal carousel technology specifically for the footwear and apparel industries. This automated solution, for residual and/or break-pack picking, is said to be the first of its kind and may be implemented at low cost. The technology is based on a new version of its Horizontal Carousel, which uses the same track and chain, but a much larger bin designed for the bulkier, lighter goods of the apparel and footwear industries.

New ‘iThermX’ platform from Interactive Wear

2 Feb 2007

German wearable electronics developer Interactive Wear AG has introduced a new technology platform called “iThermX” which allows intelligent, flexible, light-weight heating systems to be incorporated into any type of textile product. The main components of the basic system include an electronics unit with a 16-bit microcontroller that manages the intelligent power and temperature control and executes custom and application-specific programmable heating algorithms; flexible thermal conductors that can be attached to almost all types of fabric/textile; flat and lightweight lithium ion batteries that can be attached individually or distributed on/in the garment in a way that is comfortable and practically invisible.

Glove manufacturer Reusch will exhibit the first product to use the platform, its Solaris line of heated ski gloves, at ispo winter 07 in Munich, on February 4-7.

Incorporating its ThermoTec textile heating system, the heat supply is governed by a microcontroller and monitored by sensors. Energy is supplied when the temperature drops below a pre-set limit at portions of the wearer’s hand that are sensitive to the cold. Using flexible heating elements, heat is generated within the glove without restricting movement.

Nike receives Climate Savers award

2 Feb 2007

According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the twelve major corporations in its Climate Savers Programme—including Nike—are on course to eliminate at least ten million tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually by 2010.

Speaking at the Climate Savers conference in Paris, director of WWF's Global Climate Change Programme, Hans Verolme, said, "Fighting climate change can provide business opportunities and spur innovation and jobs in all parts of the world," adding, "The Climate Savers companies show that sustainable development is not an academic concept but something that can be tackled with a profit—for nature, for society, but also for the companies themselves."

Nike was presented with an award at the conference in recognition of the company’s success in reaching its carbon dioxide reduction target. "Participation in Climate Savers enabled us to get an early start on an issue that has major consequences for business and society," said Sarah Severn, director, Corporate Responsibility Horizons at Nike. She added, "We have found that constraints can lead to tremendous innovation and despite growth in our owned and managed operations we have become more efficient with our energy use. Our next steps will be partnering with suppliers to further reduce our manufacturing and logistics climate footprint."