Business Week
07 May - 13 May

Intertextile Pavilion looks set for success

07 May 2007

In light of the burgeoning local apparel manufacturing industry, organisers are expecting a high turnout at the Intertextile Pavilion in Shenzhen, which will run as part of the 7th China International Brand Clothing & Accessories Fair on July 12-14.

In 2006, more than 6,400 buyers attended the fair which features cotton, silk, wool, linen/ramie, man-made, knitted, functional, lace and embroidery textiles as well as new technology, design and accessories.

More than 3,000 manufacturers are now based in the area and recorded exports of $28 billion, a 78% increase from 2005.

Unifi names new board members

07 May 2007

US producer of multi- filament polyester and nylon textured yarns Unifi, Inc has named two new board members, William Sams and Anthony Loo.

Mr Sams is currently a director of America's Car-Mart Inc. and has previously held positions with FPA Paramount Fund, Inc., First Pacific Advisors, Inc. and FPA Perennial Fund, Inc.

Mr Loo, who is based in Shanghai, is currently managing director of Rio Tinto China and Rio Tinto Asia. Prior to this he spent almost 20 years with the DuPont Company in China, North America, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

Lakeland relocates Mexican production

07 May 2007

US manufacturer of safety garments and accessories for the industrial protective clothing markets Lakeland Industries, Inc. is to close its Celaya, Mexico, manufacturing facility and is to open a new, larger facility in Jerez, Mexico.

The aim of the move is primarily to reduce the unit cost of its production as Jerez is said to present better labour, rental and transportation values than its current plant and the company believes it can realise savings of close to $500,000 annually once the move is fully implemented in August.

The new facility will double Lakeland's production capacity in Mexico and will be used for specialty woven items that are not made in China due to high tariffs and or quotas imposed by customs departments in North and South America on Chinese-made goods.

Lectra to showcase new products at Spesa 2007

07 May 2007

France-based developer of software and CAD/CAM equipment Lectra is to showcase a number of new products at Spesa Expo 2007 in Miami on May 8-10.

These will include innovations in Fashion PLM (Product Lifecycle Management), footwear and design solutions, 3D virtual prototyping and cutting products.

The company will highlight its Vector Cutting Solutions which are said to cut through higher plies with greater precision, including pieces with edges at a tangent. The range offers high speed from the brushless turbo head and has a reporting process that optimises productivity and quality.

The company's new Kaledo solution allows companies to accelerate design processes in order to launch product lines more quickly in order to keep up with fashion trends. It also enhances communication between designers and their internal and external collaborators.

RomansCAD Software 3D Design enables the designing and modifying of style lines on 3D lasts, immediately checking the result in 2D or for mapping 2D images or sketches on 3D volumes to obtain real virtual prototypes. RomansCAD Software 2D is a universal pattern-making solution for developing and refining footwear patterns. Automatic interaction between style lines and components can improve the efficiency and accuracy of patternmaking.

Rapid growth in VF International Outdoor Coalition

07 May 2007

VF Corporation's Outdoor - International Coalition—which includes Napapijri, The North Face, Eastpak, JanSport, Kipling, Nautica, Reef and Vans—continued to experience strong growth in the first quarter, with total revenues improving 52% compared with the same quarter last year. All brands in the outdoor portfolio experienced growth during the first three months of the year, six of which achieved double-digit growth.

The North Face brand in Europe reported a sales increase of more than 35%, while revenues for Vans in Europe more than doubled versus last year's first quarter. Napapijri sales in Europe rose 60% and Kipling sales were up more than 15%.

Avery Dennison to present latest solutions at Material World

07 May 2007

US-based information management, brand identification and solution-enabling products company Avery Dennison Retail Information Services will exhibit a full range of solutions at Material World in Miami on May 8-10.

Products and services will include environmentally-friendly tags and labels, new industrial grade roll-fed heat transfer bonders and ROI-centred, RFID integrated solutions. The company will also display woven and printed labels, colourful heat transfers, graphic tags, patches, integrated tags, price tickets, custom hard and soft goods packaging, electronic article surveillance tags (EAS), barcode printers, software solutions, moulded plastic fastening and application devices and the Ticket Express service bureau offering.

Donaldson Membranes makes new appointment

07 May 2007

Donaldson Membranes, an advanced materials division of filtration systems and replacement parts provider Donaldson Company, has appointed Paula Bickers as a new marketing and sales support team member.

She has substantial customer service experience as well as a degree in Public Relations and Marketing.

Ortlieb launches limited edition Roller bags

08 May 2007

Germany-based waterproof bag company Ortlieb has celebrated 25 years in business with the launch of its new limited-edition Roller bags.

The Front-Roller Classic is available in four variations: three colour combinations with bike designs from Munich's Starshot designers, and one white model that has a matching Back-Roller.

Each bag features the QL1 mounting system, an internal pocket, a removable shoulder strap and 3M reflectors.

The collection will be available from mid-May.

Falling footwear orders prompts guidance review at Puma

08 May 2007

German sports brand Puma AG's first quarter sales grew 7.4% on a currency neutral basis (2% in euro terms) to €655.8 million ($889.6 million). Footwear sales were up 9% to €413.5 million, apparel by 4.8% to €200.7 million and accessories by 4.7% to €41.7 million.

Sales in the EMEA region increased by 8% reaching €360.9 million versus €339.3 million last year. Sales in the Americas were up 4.5% to €174.3 million. Despite the announced consolidation in the US market, sales were only slightly down to $156.2 million in the first quarter. However, end-of-quarter orders for the US declined 17.6%. The Asia/Pacific region showed a sales increase of 8.6% to €120.6 million with a strong double-digit increase in China.

Consolidated orders were up by 1.4% to €1,062.8 million. In terms of product segments, footwear decreased by 4.5% to €654.5 million, while apparel was up 15.4% to €343.2 million and accessories 0.1% to €65.1 million.

Due to the order situation at the end of the first quarter, the company now expects 2007 sales and earnings growth in the low single-digits.

Tecnofilati to present Resistex Ego at Techtextil

08 May 2007

Tecnofilati, a subsidiary of Italian textile company Gruppo Tessile Abati, is to introduce its new yarn, Resistex Ego, at Techtextil, which will take place in Frankfurt from June 12-14.

The yarn ensures that AISI 316L stainless steel threads are 99.9% covered with textile fibres. The use of cotton and polyamide as covering components offers durability and resistance to scrub. The yarn can be dyed and finished easily and offers high wash resistance. It is also said to make fabrics softer and provides antistatic protection and shielding from electromagnetic fields.

Spyder launches new ski-related footwear collection

08 May 2007

Colorado-based ski brand Spyder Active Sports, Inc. has signed a licensing agreement with Catchlight Fashions, Inc. for the design, manufacture, sale and distribution of its new Spyder-branded shoes and boots.

The footwear is designed for pre- and post-skiing activities and includes waterproof materials, sealed seams, Thinsulate insulation, double-layer midsole cushioning and outsoles with anti-freeze, anti-slip and snow-release properties.

The range will be available in North America by autumn 2007.

New appointment at VF

08 May 2007

Branded apparel company VF Corporation has appointed Giorgio Presca as president - VF Jeanswear International. He will be based in Bornem, Belgium, and will report to Karl Heinz Salzburger, president EMEA and Asia.

He replaces Aidan O'Meara, who has been appointed president - VF Asia Pacific, a newly-created position.

With more than 17 years experience in the apparel industry, Mr Presca joins the company from Diesel, where he most recently served as general manager of its casualwear brand. He also served as brand director, EMEA, for Levi Strauss & Co. and marketing director for Benetton Sportsystem.

Q2 European activewear sales up 34% at Gildan

08 May 2007

Canadian casual and sportswear company Gildan Activewear Inc. has reported higher sales for its second quarter ended April 1.

Sales totalled US$232.1 million, up 26.3% from $183.8 million in the second quarter of last year. The increase in revenues was attributed to $32.8 million in sock sales following its acquisition of Kentucky Derby Hosiery and an 11.2% increase in unit sales volumes for activewear, partially offset by a reduction in unit selling prices for activewear of approximately 2% compared with last year.

Growth in international activewear sales was strong during the second quarter. In particular, unit shipments in Europe increased 34% compared with the prior-year period.

Second quarter net earnings were $21.1 million after recording a restructuring charge of $16.4 million after-tax, primarily related to the restructuring of the company's Canadian and Mexican manufacturing facilities. Before reflecting the restructuring charge, adjusted net earnings were $37.5 million, up 21% from $31 million.

Sales for the first six months were $418 million, up 37.4% compared with the same period last year. This growth reflected $75.4 million of sock sales, an increase of 12.7% in unit sales volumes for activewear and a higher-valued activewear product-mix, partially offset by a decrease in unit selling prices for activewear. Net earnings totalled $36.8 million compared with $47.2 million. Before the impact of restructuring and other charges, adjusted net earnings increased to $54.5 million.

Oerlikon CEO steps down

09 May 2007

Thomas Limberger has left his post as CEO at Swiss machinery and systems producer OC Oerlikon Corporation AG by mutual consent and with immediate effect. He will, however, maintain his connection with the company in a consulting capacity.

The board has appointed Dr Uwe Krüger, previously chief operational officer, as Mr Limberger's replacement. Mr Krüger joined the company from Hochtief, Inc. where he was senior vice president.

Higher sales at True Religion

09 May 2007

California-based lifestyle brand True Religion Apparel, Inc. has reported net sales of $36.1 million for the first quarter, up from $35.6 million in the 2006 first quarter.

The company's consumer direct business increased significantly to $4.1 million versus $677,000 in the first quarter of 2006, while its US wholesale sales were $25.1 million compared with $25.6 million. International wholesale sales were $6.9 million in the first quarter versus $9.3 million, primarily reflecting lower sales in Japan. Gross profit in the quarter increased to $20.4 million from $18.8 million in the first quarter of 2006.

The company has reiterated its previously reported financial guidance of approximately $167 million in net sales, reflecting a 20% increase over 2006.

Unistyle to stimulate Russo-Turkish trade

09 May 2007

Around 150 exhibitors have already agreed to participate at the 13th edition of Unistyle, which will take place from June 6-8 in Moscow.

Organised by Türkel Fair, a number of Turkish companies will participate at the fashion event. The textile and garments industry is growing rapidly in Turkey and trade with Russia is also blossoming, with chief export items including textiles, garments, shoes and

leather goods.

Last year 172 exhibitors attended and the event attracted approximately 8,000 visitors.

Gerber Technology strengthens North American executive team

09 May 2007

US-based developer and manufacturer of integrated software and hardware automation systems for manufacturers and retailers in the sewn products and flexible materials industries Gerber Technology has made to new appointments in North America. William (Bud) Staples, Jr. has been appointed as regional vice president, PDM/FLM and Fashion Solutions for North America and Jeff Rosenzweig has been named regional vice president, CAD/CAM Sales for North America and the Caribbean.

In his new role, Mr Staples will be responsible for sales of the PDM/PLM business throughout North America, as well as managing Gerber's strategic (key) accounts in the fashion industry across the continent. He has more than 28 years experience at Gerber Technology, most recently holding the position of regional director for Gerber's North America North region.

Mr Rosenzweig will be responsible for the sales of Gerber's software and system solutions across North America, as well as managing Gerber's strategic (key) accounts in the industrial sector across the continent. Having worked at Gerber Technology for nearly 30 years, he most recently held the position of regional director, North America South.

Lanxess posts improved earnings

09 May 2007

Germany-based producer of specialty chemicals Lanxess has once again posted a year-on-year increase in earnings (EBITDA pre exceptionals) in the first quarter. EBITDA pre exceptionals grew 6.8% to reach €219 million from €205 million in the same prior-year period.

Reported sales, after the effects of divestments and shifts in exchange rates, declined 6.8%, as had been expected, to €1,711 million compared with €1,836 million in the first quarter of 2006, however, adjusted for these effects, sales grew 3.1%. Net income improved 11% to €91 million from €82 million.

Due to portfolio changes and currency effects, first-quarter sales of the Performance Chemicals segment were 22.6% lower year-on-year, at €400 million. Adjusted for currency effects and the divestment of the Paper and Textile Processing Chemicals business units, sales were flat with the previous year. The Leather business unit boosted volumes of chrome ore and chromic acids.

The company remains optimistic about the rest of the year as economic perspectives are positive in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, as well as in Asia. The pace of economic growth in the United States is expected to slacken, with a corresponding effect on the group's business.

Adidas Group posts 9% rise in sales

09 May 2007

Adidas Group has posted a 9% increase in sales, on a currency-neutral basis, for the first quarter, mainly driven by growth in the adidas segment and the inclusion of an additional month in the Reebok segment versus the prior year. On a like-for-like basis, including Reebok's revenues for the full three-month periods and excluding the effect from the disposal of the Greg Norman Collection wholesale business, sales increased 4% in currency-neutral terms.

Sales improved in all regions except North America, where development was said to have been stable. In euro terms revenues increased 3% to €2.538 billion from €2.459 billion.

Currency-neutral revenues in the adidas segment increased 7%, whilst in the Reebok segment sales increased 22%. At TaylorMade-adidas Golf, currency-neutral revenues decreased 4%, however on a like-for-like basis, excluding the prior year, sales increased 5%.

On a regional basis, adidas Group sales posted strong growth in all regions except North America. Sales grew 10% in Europe on a currency-neutral basis, were flat in North America, improved 13% in Asia and increased 36% in Latin America.

Clariant posts 6% sales growth

09 May 2007

Swiss specialty chemicals manufacturer Clariant has posted improved sales for the first quarter of 2007. The company reported growth of 6% in local currency terms and 5% in Swiss franc terms to reach CHF2.156 billion ($1.77 billion) from CHF2.048 billion in the comparable prior-year period, driven by higher selling prices and acquisitions made in 2006.

Sales prices rose 1% on average with strong increases in Functional Chemicals and Masterbatches, whilst gross margin remained stable at 31.1%, despite a 3% increase in raw material prices during the period. Operating income before exceptionals declined to CHF152 million from CHF160 million, impacted by increased freight

costs, an 11% rise in energy costs, unfavourable currency movements and one-time costs related to the integration of Ciba's masterbatches business. As a result, net income from continuing operations fell to CHF86 million from CHF96 million.

The Pigment & Additives Division reported organic growth of 5%, with strong demand in the coatings business. Conditions remained challenging for the printing business, whilst sales in plastics were stable. Operating margins declined to 11.3% from a strong 13.4% a year earlier, mainly driven by price erosion, rising raw material prices, negative currency effects and higher freight and energy costs.

Masterbatches saw sales growth of 11% in local currency terms, supported by the successful integration of Ciba's masterbatches business. Organically, the business grew 5%, boosted by price increases and strong demand from Asia and Latin America.

Operating margins before exceptionals declined to 8.9% from 10.8%, mainly due to integration costs related to the acquisition, as well underperformance from the Australian business, which has subsequently been sold.

The Textile, Leather & Paper Chemicals Division posted organic growth of 5% in the first three months of 2007. Prices remained stable over the period. Textiles saw moderate growth, with a mixed picture across the regions. Underperformance in the USA was countered by the exit of some businesses there. Operating margins remained stable at 5.9%.

On a regional basis, Asia posted the strongest organic growth of 11%, driven by a 27% increase from China. India and Pakistan also contributed to the strong growth rate. Europe achieved 3% growth in local currency terms. The Americas meanwhile, achieved a robust 3% growth with a solid contribution from Latin America offsetting a 2% drop from the United States.

Revenues improve 20% at Warnaco

09 May 2007

US apparel company The Warnaco Group, Inc. has reported improved results for the first quarter ended March 31, as net revenues improved 20.7% to $547.2 million from $453.2 million in the prior-year quarter.

Operating income rose 71.3% to $63.2 million from $36.9 million, whilst income from continuing operations reached $38.1 million compared with $18.2 million.

Revenues for the Sportswear Group increased 40.2% to $235.4 million including the recently acquired international Calvin Klein business, the Intimate Apparel Group's revenues rose 15.9% to $175 million, whilst revenues at the Swimwear Group improved 1.8% to $136.8 million.

In light of the better than expected first quarter performance, the company now expects net revenues for fiscal 2007 to improve 6%-8% over fiscal 2006 levels.

Headquartered in New York, Warnaco designs and sells intimate apparel, menswear, jeanswear, swimwear, men's and women's sportswear and accessories under brands such as Lejaby, Speedo, Chaps, Ocean Pacific, Nautica swimwear, and Calvin Klein.

GE Plastics focuses on advanced fibre technology

09 May 2007

With a view to penetrating and growing new global markets with advanced materials technologies, GE Plastics has installed a high-temperature melt spinning fibre line at its Polymer Processing Development Center (PPDC) in Pittsfield, USA.

The new equipment will be used to evaluate materials and optimise process conditions for making low-denier (2–6 dpf) fibres with GE's flame-retardant Ultem1 polyetherimide (PEI) resin and other high-temperature resins in order to offer new options for manufacturers of fabrics and textiles that must comply with strict flame, smoke, and toxicity regulations.

Rick Pontillo, general manager, Global Application Technology, stated, "As textile manufacturers face increasingly strict compliance requirements GE Plastics will help provide new fibre solutions featuring inherent flame retardance and excellent resistance to high heat and chemicals. We expect this capital investment to enable us to quickly develop new high performance fibre applications spanning global industry."

The new line can process resins at up to 450°C and can produce continuous filaments at speeds of up to 1,800 metres per minute.

Work and outdoor sectors lift sales at Rocky Brands

09 May 2007

US footwear and apparel manufacturer Rocky Brands, Inc. has posted improved financial results for its first quarter ended March 31.

Net sales increased 7.2% to $61.7 million versus $57.5 million in the first quarter of 2006, although net income slipped to $0.8 million from $0.9 million. The sales increase was said to have been driven by gains in the work and outdoor segments, offset by a decrease in the western business.

The company continues to expect 2007 revenues to increase by approximately 5% compared with 2006 levels.

Automated high-speed digitising system from Gerber

10 May 2007

Connecticut-based integrated software and hardware automation systems company Gerber Technology has launched AccuScan, an automated, high-speed pattern digitising system that can replace manual pattern digitising. The new scanning technology can digitise multiple patterns simultaneously and outputs AccuMark pattern pieces. It is said to be 20-50% faster than manual digitising, depending on the complexity of the pieces being digitised.

It scans pattern board, oak-tag or paper plots at accuracies within 1.5 mm offering a higher level of accuracy and automatically detects notches, grain lines, internal lines, drill holes and the part perimeter.

The system can be added to an existing AccuMark workstation or installed on a standalone PC.

Paxar launches tag-free labelling solution at Material World

10 May 2007

US-based identification and tracking systems for the apparel and retail markets Paxar Corporation has launched its ChromaHD heat transfer solution at Material World, which is currently taking place in Miami.

Designed to provide high-definition, multi-colour heat transfers for tag-free labelling and garment adornment,the new solution offers multi-colour design options such as photographic images, character designs and alternative colour schemes, size data, care content information, colour by size or product code information which can also be added to multi-colour designs; overt and covert security features that can be incorporated into the transfer design to help combat product counterfeiting and diversion; and resistance to washing and stretch.

Applications include intimate apparel, sportswear and children's wear. The recyclable polyester film-based product is also environmentally-friendly. Transfers are available in a cut-single format and can be applied to standard fabric types including cotton, cotton blends, polyester and polyester blends. The application process—combining heat, pressure and time—takes between two to eight seconds.

Clariant sells Custom Manufacturing Business

10 May 2007

As part of its strategy to focus on its core competencies in colours, surfaces and performance chemicals Swiss chemicals supplier Clariant has sold its Custom Manufacturing Business to International Chemical Investors Group (ICIG) for an undisclosed sum.

The Customer Manufacturing Business supplies a range of intermediates and actives ingredients for the agrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and polymers industries and had sales of around CHF217 million ($178.3 million) in 2006.

The transaction is expected to close by mid-year and Clariant expects to record a book loss of approximately CHF70 million.

International Chemical Investors is an investment group focusing on mid-sized chemical businesses, preferably subsidiaries of large corporations, which are considered non-core, with leading positions in niche markets. Including the newly acquired Clariant businesses, ICIG will operate 14 production facilities located in Germany, the United States, France, Belgium, Ireland and Poland with total sales of close to €500 million and more than 2,500 employees.

Bayer MaterialScience to expand production capacity in Shanghai

10 May 2007

Germany-based chemical producer Bayer MaterialScience AG is expanding its production site in Shanghai for coating and adhesive raw materials.

Scheduled to come on stream in the second quarter of 2008, the company plans to build a new facility for polyurethane dispersions with an annual capacity of 20,000 tons as well as nearly doubling annual production capacity for the aromatic polyisocyanate Desmodur L to 20,500 tons during the second half of 2007. Annual capacity for aromatic grades of the Desmodur IL product line will also be doubled to 5,500 tons by the end of 2007 and production of aliphatic polyisocyanates of the Desmodur N series will be expanded by the start of 2008.

Waterborne polyurethane dispersions contribute to the reduction of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). They are used in coating and adhesive formulations, textile and leather coatings and in glass fibre sizings. Applications also include bonds for the soles of athletic shoes.

AAFA launches Product Innovation Council

10 May 2007

One of the oldest committees of the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), the Enterprise

Competitiveness Council (ECC), has been redefined and renamed the Product Innovation Council.

The mission of the council is to identify and disseminate information on innovation in consumer insight, design and merchandising, product development, pre-production and demand management, and the alignment of these activities with sourcing and production. With its roots in manufacturing research and technology, the 50-plus member council will focus on providing learning opportunities relative to designing and developing products in a market environment.

Commenting on the new council, AAFA president and CEO Kevin Burke said, “Just as our industry is evolving and changing to stay strategically connected to its customers, so too is the AAFA in bringing impact and value to our members.”

The council will examine innovative best practices both inside and outside the apparel and footwear industry.

Wellco shareholders approve acquisition

10 May 2007

Shareholders at US manufacturer of military and rugged footwear Wellco Enterprises, Inc. have approved the proposed merger between Wellco and a corporation organised by Golden Gate Capital and Integrity Brands. The merger remains subject to customary closing conditions.

Golden Gate Capital is a San Francisco-based private equity investment firm with approximately $3.4 billion of capital under management. Integrity Brands is a Boston-based investment firm focused exclusively on the consumer brand and retail sectors.

Fila strengthens focus on running footwear

11 May 2007

Following the sale of Fila to Global Leading Brands House and the appointment of a new management team, Fila now aims to strengthen its competence in the running footwear category.

Mikal Peveto, who has been leading Fila’s global footwear research and development initiatives, will move into a consulting role to contribute to the company’s efforts in footwear product and materials research as well as in design and advanced technologies in running and tennis footwear.

His experience in the athletic footwear category includes seven years at Nike where he was a product manager in the running category and six years at adidas in Germany, where he was the international business unit manager for running. Mr Peveto will work with Fila’s VP Footwear Rob Michaelis and Paul Perrone of The Genesis Agency to implement improvements to the running footwear line.

Dow Polyurethanes acquires Hyperlast Systems Business

10 May 2007

Dow Polyurethanes, a business group of The Dow Chemical Company, has completed the acquisition of British Vita’s polyurethane systems business, Hyperlast Limited. The Hyperlast acquisition includes elastomer systems enterprises in the United Kingdom and North America as well as Autothane Limited, a manufacturer of advanced automotive suspension components.

The acquisition supports Dow’s strategy to drive growth in its Performance portfolio in order to generate more consistent earnings.

With 23 facilities located across Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa, North and Latin America Dow Polyurethane (PU) Systems develops high performance, differentiated polyurethane system solutions for customers in a broad range of industries used in the production of polyurethane systems, coatings, adhesives, sealants, and elastomers, as well as rigid, flexible and integral skin foams.

Nano-Tex names new VP

10 May 2007

US provider of nanotechnology-based textile enhancements to the apparel market Nano-Tex Inc. has named Bob Moran as senior vice president of US sales. A veteran of branded apparel and footwear with more than 25 years experience in sales and marketing he will lead Nano-Tex’s domestic sales initiatives.

Prior to joining Nano-Tex, Mr Moran was executive vice president of Mulberry Neckwear, where he managed the company’s sales team and led all sales and merchandise planning activities, marketing moderate and better ties under licences from Kenneth Cole, Claiborne, BCBG, Sean John, J Garcia and Ben Sherman.

AF&Y and Plastex implement fabric and yarn recycling programme

11 May 2007

American Fibers and Yarns Company (AF&Y) has partnered with Plastex Incorporated to begin a new recycling programme whereby AF&Y produced yarns, and fabrics made exclusively with AF&Y yarns, will be regenerated to produce a variety of durable goods.

Yarns and fabrics from apparel, upholstery and industrial markets will be collected from AF&Y customers and their consumers at the AF&Y Technology Center in Bainbridge, Georgia, and then sent onto Plastex where they will be converted into inert plastic resin pellets. These pellets will offset the need for virgin plastic pellets derived directly from the world oil production flow, thus minimising environmental impact.

The resin pellets created through this process are said to be more cost effective than virgin products without comprising performance properties such as durability, UV resistance, and hydrophobicity.

Umbro adopts new PLM solution

11 May 2007

UK-based sportswear manufacturer Umbro has selected the Product Development Company's (PTC's) FlexPLM solution for retail, footwear and apparel. It uses Windchill, the company's web-based content and process management solution, to improve the product development process and to help shorten lead times and reduce development costs.

Approximately 100 personnel within the design and product development teams at Umbro's UK headquarters and in one of its Hong Kong offices will use the solution.

The company designs, sources and markets football-related apparel, footwear and equipment for professional and amateur soccer players—including national teams—which are sold in over 90 countries.

Paxar unveils new magimirror at Material World

11 May 2007

New York-based identification and tracking solutions provider for the retail and apparel industries Paxar Corporation has launched its new RFID solution, magicmirror, at this week's Material World in Miami.

When a RFID-tagged piece of clothing is placed in front of the magicmirror, it automatically displays information including brand messaging, garment description, size and colour availability, as well as mix-and-match guides that suggest other items for accessorising. When installed in a fitting room, customers can request assistance from a salesperson by touching the mirror, without having to leave the room.

April sales decline at American Eagle

11 May 2007

Outerwear, footwear and swimwear retailer American Eagle Outfitters, Inc. has posted total sales of $171.9 million for the four weeks ended May 5, a decline of 4% compared with $179.2 million for the four-week period ended April 29, 2006. Because of the 53rd week in fiscal 2006, April 2007 figures are comparable with the four-week period ended May 6, 2006. On this basis, comparable store sales declined 10% compared with a 19% increase for the same period last year.

The negative sales comparison for April, following a very strong performance in March, was largely due to the Easter period and generally disappointing traffic trends. The company noted that sales trends improved as the month progressed and were positive in the last two weeks of April.

Total sales for the first quarter increased 17% to $612.4 million compared with $522.4 million for the first quarter of 2006.

New appointment at ispo

11 May 2007

The ispo Group has appointed business economist Markus Hefter as part of its outdoor team, working alongside community manager Petra Griesel.

He has worked for Messe München since 2002 and, within the protocol department, was responsible for ispo, Golf Europe and Fairway. In December 2004, he moved to the M.O.C. Order Centre Munich as project and sales director.

Swedish gymnast to hit the slopes

11 May 2007

Former Swedish gymnast Jan-Fahrenheit Betros has joined the University of Derby's course in MA Performance Sportswear Design and is now creating clothing for skiers. Having competed at international level, he was forced to give up his career as a professional sportsman due to injury. Since retiring from competitive gymnastics, Mr Betros has travelled to Australia and across Europe, spending two years working as a sportswear consultant with several specialist outdoor retailers.

He says his designs are tailored to suit the individual in contrast to many 'off-the-peg' skiing garments. "Current skiwear clothing on the market is all about protection and being waterproof. But, while bulky jackets and other

clothes may be suitable for the professional, or skier going into adverse conditions, it does not necessarily mean that it will be suitable for the leisure skier," he said.

US travel goods sales hit record high in 2006

11 May 2007

According to a new report from the US Travel Goods Association (TGA), sales of travel goods—defined as luggage, backpacks, travel/sports bags, business cases/computer bags, handbags, personal leather goods and luggage locks—in the USA hit a record high in 2006, with consumers spending an estimated $20.7 billion. The improved sales were said to be driven by both increased travel and by the fact that travel goods such as totes, backpacks, handbags and business cases are becoming a part of everyday life.

"Because consumers now buy travel goods because they 'need' them, they are focusing on new, functional, innovative and stylish products rather than simply comparing costs. This should lead to stabilising prices after years of deflation, and since it looks like the consumers' appetite for well-designed, original and fashionable travel goods shows no signs of abating, 2007 should be another great year for the industry," stated Michele Marini Pittenger, president of TGA.

In terms of individual categories, luggage sales faced new pressures as consumers continued to opt for less traditional travel goods such as business cases/computer bags, travel/sports bags and backpacks for travelling.

While TGA estimates that the unit volume of luggage sold in the United States slipped from the record sales set in 2005, the average price of each piece of luggage sold in 2006 increased 22.1% over the 2005 average price.

The North Face relaunches youth ski challenge

11 May 2007

The North Face Ski Challenge is to evolve into a pan-European qualifying tour, climaxing with finals in Val Thorens, France, on April 12-13, 2008. It will now include category competitions for girls, as well as boys, aged 12-18.

VP/general manager, Patrik Frisk said, "We are sponsoring the expanded Ski Challenge tour and finals to celebrate Europe's undiscovered, young prodigies, and to give them a chance to rise to the top of their chosen specialities."

The tour will include nine grassroots-style qualifying sessions in both freeride and freestyle ski categories, running from November 2007 to April 2008. Qualifying events are scheduled to take place in the UK, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy.

All category winners will receive prizes and giveaways from the California-based outdoor apparel, equipment and footwear company, and the top two finishers in both boys and girls, 16-18-year-old categories, will also win sponsorship contracts.

Lower activewear sales hit revenues at Tefron

11 May 2007

Israeli producer of seamless intimate apparel, swimwear and activewear Tefron Ltd. has posted revenues of $48.8 million for the first quarter, 1.2% lower than the $49.4 million reported for the comparable quarter in 2006. The slight decline was said to be due to an anticipated reduction in sales of activewear during the first half of 2007, which was partly offset by an increase in sales of swimwear and a slight increase in sales of intimate apparel products.

Income from continuing operations was $3.8 million compared with $5.2 million in the first quarter of 2006.

Commenting on the results, Yos Shiran, CEO, said, "As pointed out during the last quarter, we anticipated a temporary decline in activewear sales in the first half of 2007, with a strengthening of activewear sales in the second half of 2007." Tefron manufactures seamless intimate apparel, activewear and swimwear sold under brands such as, Nike, Target, The Gap, Banana Republic, J. C. Penney, lululemon athletica, Warnaco/Calvin Klein, Patagonia, and Reebok.

Hanesbrands to close three sewing facilities

11 May 2007

US-based producer of innerwear, outerwear and hosiery Hanesbrands Inc. is to cease production at three sewing and assembly operations in Itabo, Dominican Republic. Production will finish by September and will lead to the loss of approximately 1,400 jobs.

According to the company, in the past two years it has added new, lower-cost textile production in the Dominican Republic and Central America and is aligning its sewing operations around those fabric production centres.

Hanesbrands goods are sold under brands such as Hanes, Champion, Playtex, Bali, Just My Size, barely there and Wonderbra.