Smartfiber's SeaCell product, Lyocell with health-giving seaweed woven into the fibre, has been around for some years, but its popularity is growing and a number of new ideas and applications have come to light.

SeaCell sees popularity grow

German fibre producer smartfiber won the award in the start-up category at the German Innovation Prizes at the start of July. The panel of judges said it wanted to honour the Rudolstadt-based manufacturer's commitment to making functional fibres from plant cellulose. Smartfiber is a start-up, although not such a recent one. It was founded in 2005 to take commercial advantage of scientific developments at the Thuringian Institute for Textile and Plastics Research (TITK). It's taken some years, therefore, but it looks as though smartfiber is beginning to win recognition for its work on developing products such as SeaCell and smartcel.

Vitamins and minerals

The company acquired the patents, the manufacturing facilities and the workforce of SeaCell in July 2007. The product delivers the benefits of the vitamins, minerals and amino acids that are present in seaweed to wearers of clothing made from specialist fabric (See WSA, July/August 2005). The base is Lyocell, produced by Austrian manufacturer Lenzing, to which smartfiber adds patented technology originally developed by the TITK; five grammes of seaweed is enough to bestow benefits such as skin-friendliness to a kilo of fabric.

SeaCell has been subjected to intensive testing over many years. In 2007, prominent Canadian yogawear brand lululemon argued against critics who said a SeaCell product it included in one of its ranges at that time brought no more benefit to wearers than cotton. Lululemon said in-depth testing by Hong Kong-based research company SGS overwhelmingly supported the claims it made for SeaCell. More recent tests carried out on SeaCell by a clinic in Jena showed very positive results on children suffering from neurodermatitis and came to the attention of a German television channel. One of the people who saw the TV report was Thuringia-based children's clothes designer Annett Ott, herself a sufferer from dermatitis on the hands. Ms Ott



Orca has combined SeaCell with merino wool to make a collection called Bodyskn.

Orca