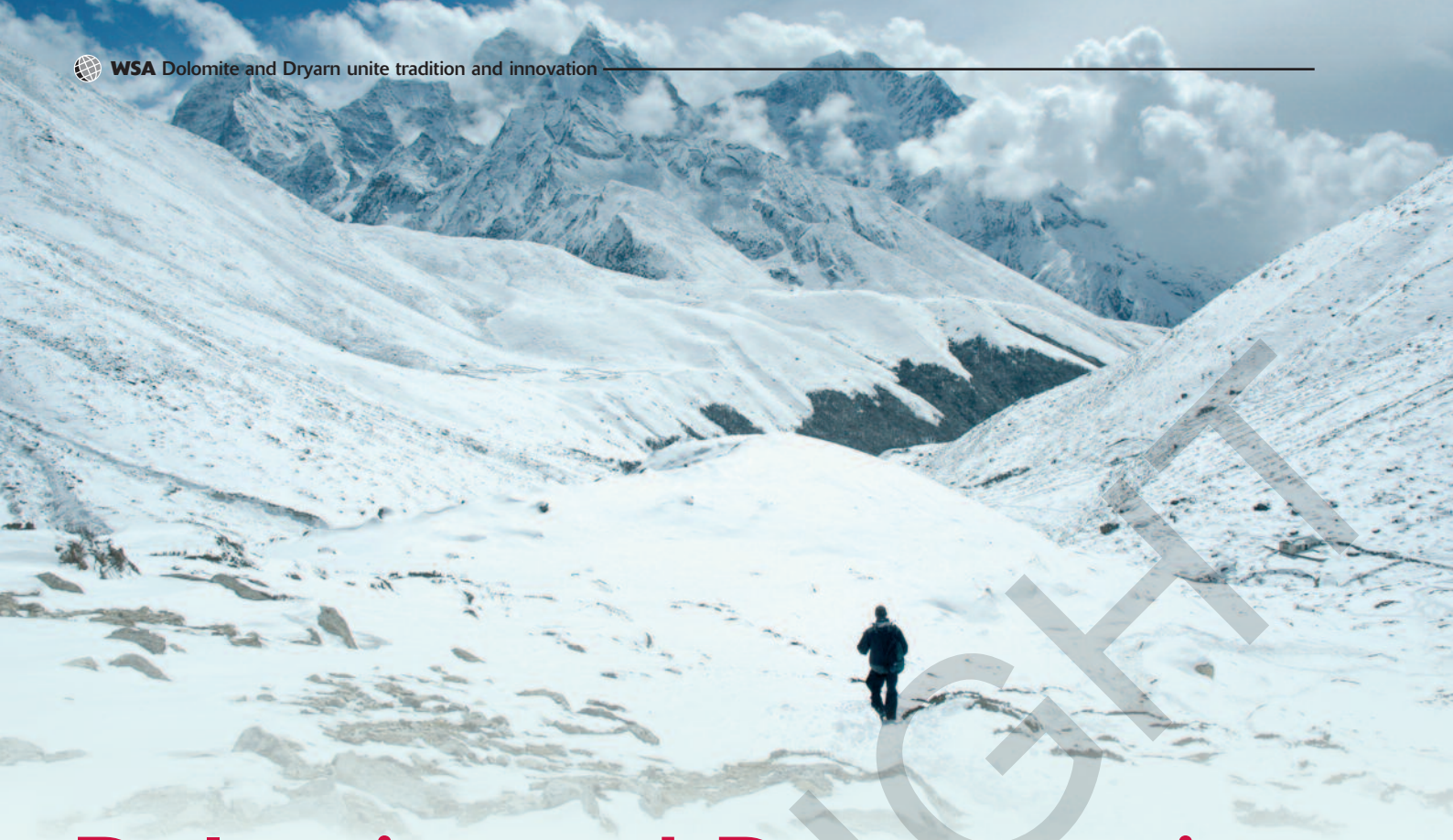


Dolomite and Dryarn unite tradition and innovation

Italian outdoor brand Dolomite is the latest textile firm to incorporate Aquafil's Dryarn into its garment collection. The company showcased its Tierra del Fuego (Land of Fire) line at the most recent edition of Pitti Immagine, in mid-January. The bright, clear colours used were chosen by the company to reflect natural elements, such as, red for fire, blue for sky, white for snow and grey for rock. However, it is the collection's technical attributes that really sets it apart.

According to Aquafil, the sweater line is lightweight and offers wearers good freedom of movement. This is partly because the line contains Dryarn, which has been combined with wool for added comfort and performance. According to Aquafil spokesperson, Nathalie de Marco, the polypropylene microfibre offers a number of benefits over other natural fibres.

Ms de Marco claims that Dryarn has several attributes that natural fibres do not. She says it is "better than wool for its insulating and heat-regulating properties" and also: "better than cotton because water, humidity and transpiration are expelled through the fabric and evaporate rapidly, reducing the proliferation of bacteria and the formation of unpleasant odours". Furthermore, she adds that it can also offer benefits that cannot be found in synthetic fibres. "It resists more than nylon to abrasion, it is anti-pilling, it is stable, requires no ironing, does not wrinkle, and it is ecological," she says.



Aquafil, which makes polypropylene microfibre Dryarn, has its headquarters in Arco, Italy.

Aquafil

Working together

Ms de Marco explains why the two brands complement each other so well. "Dolomite is the synonym of quality for mountain excursionists and for 111 years has been

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translating the soul of adventure into style and design," she says. She adds that Dolomite's ultimate aim is to provide comfort and reliability for its customers. "The brand is always searching for innovative solutions, high-performance materials and fit so wearers feel totally at ease both in outdoor situations and on more casual occasions," she claims.

According to Ms de Marco, the Tierra del Fuego line has been created to "unite tradition and innovation" by using conventional wool with Dryarn, which was launched less than 10 years ago. The collection includes four full and four half-zip sweaters. Fine ribbing and thick wool help wearers to avoid the effects of biting winds and to enjoy getting outdoors even in cold conditions. Each top features the Dolomite emblem making the range instantly recognisable to outdoor enthusiasts.

Ms de Marco explains how the two fibres work together in the collection to offer benefits that could not have be achieved if just one of the fibres had been used. "Wool and Dryarn are complementary and together can be used to produce extremely light sweaters with a greater heat regulating capacity than pure wool," she explains, adding that the end result is: "One garment that replaces many layers of clothing, increasing comfort and freedom of movement." This means outdoor enthusiasts have less to pack and carry when they venture outside.

Combined benefits

The benefits of wool have been recognised for centuries, of course. Wool fabrics can be used to retain heat as well as to keep it out, and is soft and comfortable to wear. In addition, it is sustainable, versatile, durable and is considered by many to be hypoallergenic. Ms de Marco explains the role of the wool fibres in the Tierra del Fuego collection. "The core of the wool, in the form of two distinct and extremely hygroscopic fibres, absorbs water vapour up to a third of its own weight without giving a sensation of humidity," she says. "Furthermore the outer layer of the wool is water-repellent so the water slides away in tiny drops allowing, at the same time, the passage of water vapour."

However, she believes Dryarn also has an important part to play. "On contact with the skin," says Ms de Marco, "[Dryarn] channels any transpiration towards the outer layer, reducing the proliferation of bacteria and neutralising the cause of unpleasant odours." By blending the two fibres together, she claims the benefits are even greater. "A wool and Dryarn mix, moreover, reduces problems with felting, makes the garment more long-lasting and the wool fabric, thanks to the passage of water vapour, does not crease and needs no ironing," she says.



The Dolomite Tierra del Fuego line is lightweight and offers good freedom of movement.

Dolomite

Continued emphasis on innovation

Many textile companies have been experimenting with new fibres and techniques in recent years in order to offer customers better value for money. However, because of the current financial situation, some brands are looking to reduce production costs and this could mean having to justify the use of technical innovation in new collections. It seems some are being forced to sacrifice performance in favour of lower prices.

However, Aquafil believes innovation, if anything, is an even more essential focus in the current market as it can help to set one firm's range apart from another. "It is exactly in these moments of difficult financial situations that innovation, high level of performance can make the difference. Dryarn, contrary to the other common fibres, is experiencing a constant growth not only in terms of interest but also of new developments and, therefore, of turnover," says Ms de Marco.

She says the company will continue to pursue innovation and that we can expect to see the fruits of this through 2009. "Aquafil is definitely investing in research and development. New products will certainly come out as we believe that innovation is the future of our business," she says. "As far as our production is concerned, in countertendency to an increasing shift of textile activities to the Far East, Aquafil continues to believe in the opportunities offered by the complexity of the European market and is investing not only in research and development but also in the upgrade of production plants." Dolomite also appears committed to providing clothing that will benefit wearers rather than cutting back on costs by choosing materials that are low-cost instead of high-performance.

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