Business Week

9th May 05 – 15th May 05

Africa to host export exhibition next week

09 May 2005

The Export Africa Trade Exhibition 2005 and the South African Department of Trade Industry (DTI) are hosting Export Week and Export Africa on 17-19 May in Midrand, South Africa.

The events are designed to facilitate the development of the export capacity of African companies, to promote African exports to the rest of the world and to increase inter-African trade.

Exhibitors at Export Africa 2005 will include Africa's manufacturers, exporters and investors from various sectors including the automotive, chemical, clothing, textile, leather and footwear industries.

NIEL to expand production capacity

09 May 2005

Nahar Industrial Enterprises Ltd (NIEL), an Indian producer of yarn, processed fabrics and readymade garments, is planning an expansion investment of Rs 300 crore ($69 million), aimed at increasing its production capacity.

The first and major phase of the investment will be in the textile sector, whilst the second is to provide for the set up of a power plant. An estimated 40,000 spindles are to be added to the present capacity as well as six new rotors.

NIEL aims at increasing its manufacturing capacity of processed fabric to 100,000 metres per day, from the current 60,000 metres.

Gerber Technology launches 3D Direct

09 May 2005

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 launched 3D Direct, a software solution for the transportation interiors market that will flatten three-dimensional (3D) design models to produce two-dimensional (2D) pattern pieces. The system is easier to use than other 3D-to-2D software solutions and accelerates, streamlines and automates the 3D-to-2D pattern design process.

3D Direct reduces the need for full size physical prototypes to derive flattened material patterns. Using computer algorithms, 3D Direct automatically flattens a 3D CAD model into the two-dimensional parts required for production, optimising the pattern shapes for cutting. Designed to be within reach of users at any skill level, it features a Windows interface that promotes ease of use and short training cycles. 3D Direct interfaces directly with Gerber Technology's AccuMark system, CutWorks and other CAD systems.

"We are excited about the introduction of 3D Direct to the marketplace. In developing this software, we focused on creating a product that would literally take days out of the development cycle and still be easy to learn and use," said Holly Beum, director, software product management. "3D Direct is a powerful tool for 3D flattening that will enable users to save time and money, and get their products to market faster." General availability of the new software is scheduled for June 30, 2005.

Xinjiang province to build PVC production base

09 May 2005

To meet China's domestic demand for PVC, Xinjiang Production Construction Corporation has begun construction work on a large PVC production facility at a cost of $1.86 billion. The plant is scheduled to be completed in 2010.

Government statistics have shown that in recent years the demand for PVC in China has far exceeded production capacity, as in 2004 the country imported over 2 million tons of PVC. Despite this latest investment, it is forecast that China will still be forced to import PVC as it is predicted that by 2010 the country will produce 7.29 million tons but will actually require 9.68 million tons.

Latest textile machinery to be showcased at ITCE Cairo 2005

09 May 2005

ITCE CAIRO 2005, the ninth international African Arabian exhibition for textile, embroidery and sewing machinery and accessories, that will take place at the Cairo Fair Ground from May 12 – 15, 2005, is expected to be a big success for textile manufacturers in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region, who are gearing up to make major investments in modernisation, to tackle the competition from Chinese manufacturers, following the abolition of trade quotas earlier this year. ITCE'9 will showcase the latest textile machinery, products, services, trends and technologies.

Ahmad Ghozzi, chairman, ACG-ITF, organisers of the event said: "The new era of free trade has uncovered numerous business possibilities for textile manufactures across the MENA and surrounding regions. Most countries have recognised the need to step up their modernisation and expansion efforts, as a result of opening up new markets."

"A substantial presence of Turkish exhibitors is expected to further boost visitor turnout and interest at ITCE Cairo 2005 this year, as Turkey is known for the quality of its cotton textiles and manufacturing techniques. Turkey is now among the pioneers to adopt latest textile manufacturing machinery and equipments. On the other hand, Chinese participation will be eye-catching, specially their embroidery and sewing machines," he added.

Ruddick Corporation reports 5% increase in Q2 sales

09 May 2005

Ruddick Corporation has reported that consolidated sales for the second fiscal quarter ended April 3, 2005 increased by 5.0% to $736 million from $701 million in the prior year's quarter. For the 26 weeks ended April 3, 2005, sales of $1.46 billion were 5.0% above the $1.39 billion for the comparable period last year. The increase in sales during the quarter, and fiscal year to date, was attributable to sales increases at both the Harris Teeter supermarket subsidiary and the company's American & Efird ("A&E") sewing thread subsidiary. The company reported consolidated net income of $18.8 million.

A&E's sales of $80.1 million in the second quarter of fiscal 2005 increased 17.3% from the $68.3 million for the same quarter last year. The increase was driven by domestic sales increases of 17.7% and foreign sales increases of 16.9%. Foreign sales accounted for approximately 52% of A&E sales for the second quarter of both fiscal 2005 and 2004. A&E's sales for the 26 weeks ended April 3, 2005 were $151.8 million, an increase of 11.6% from the prior year period when sales were $136.0 million. The increase for the 26-week period was driven by domestic sales increases of 9.0% and foreign sales increases of 14.0%.

Thomas W. Dickson, president and CEO of Ruddick commented: "We remain focused on executing our global expansion plans, integrating acquisitions, and optimising costs and manufacturing capacities globally. Acquiring the businesses of Ludlow Textiles Company, Inc. and Synthetic Thread Company, Inc. enhances our industrial thread business, establishes an entry into

the specialty engineered yarn market and provides further opportunities to optimize our domestic operating costs. Additionally, American & Efird continues to be committed to providing the high quality of product and service that is its hallmark."

Ruddick Corporation is a holding company with two primary operating subsidiaries: Harris Teeter, Inc., a regional chain of supermarkets and American & Efird, Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of industrial sewing thread with global operations.

EU trade chief dismisses talk of trade war with China over textiles

09 May 2005

The European Union's top trade negotiator, Peter Mandelson, has dismissed the possibility of a trade war with China over surging Chinese textile imports and rejected "precipitate" EU action against Beijing.

"There is no question of any diplomatic break or any sort of trade war between Europe and China," EU Trade Commissioner Mandelson said after a meeting with Chinese Trade Minister Bo Xilai.

"Both of us know there's much more at stake in the long term for trading and economic relations for Europe and China to allow the issue of textiles to undermine that strategic partnership."

Mandelson acknowledged that China had taken steps to check the export flow but added: "They have not had the impact that I would have liked to have seen."
Four EU textile producers - France, Italy, Spain and Greece - have asked the European Commission to apply emergency procedures that could speed up the application of limits.

Mandelson said that such special measures would be considered if it is determined that any of the nine categories of clothing imports under investigation required "more pressing or critical" action. But he insisted that the commission would not be pressured into acting hastily and said the probe would stick closely to WTO rules.

Columbia reports record Q1 results

09 May 2005

US-based active outdoor apparel and footwear manufacturer, Columbia Sportswear Company, has announced record first quarter net sales of $245.7 million for the quarter ended March 31, 2005, an increase of 18.9% over net sales of $206.7 million for the same period of 2004. The company reported record net income for the first quarter of $21.3 million, a 6.5% increase over the same period of 2004.

Compared with the first quarter of 2004, US sales increased 18.2% to $136.3 million, other international sales increased 41.4% to $36.9 million, European sales increased 8.6% to $46.6 million, and Canadian sales increased 15.6% to $25.9 million for the first quarter of 2005.

Sportswear sales increased 13.0% to $132.2 million, footwear sales increased 29.7% to $49.8 million, outerwear sales increased 26.7% to $51.2 million, accessories sales increased 11.0% to $9.1 million, and equipment sales increased 25.9% to $3.4 million.

Tim Boyle, Columbia’s president and chief executive officer, commented: “Our first quarter results reflect the continued strong momentum in our spring related sportswear and footwear product categories. Net sales increased in every geographic region in which we operate and in each of our product categories, with particular strength in the US market, which accounted for the majority of our overall sales growth during the quarter. We are pleased with the continued strength of our spring business.”

AMG outdoor appoints new PR coordinator

10 May 2005

UK-based specialist outdoor and snowsport equipment supplier AMG Outdoor Ltd, has appointed Gary Craig as the company’s new PR co-ordinator. Craig who joins the department with over five years experience in PR and marketing departments will work closely with the marketing team to provide

support for the promotion of AMG's brands that currently include Vango, Force Ten, Rossignol, Trezeta, Lichfield, Teva, Trangia, Storm and Wayfayrer.

A marketing graduate of the University of Paisley, Scotland, Gary's responsibilities will include managing and co-ordinating the company's external Public Relations and internal communications.

Commenting on the latest appointment, AMG's marketing director, Alastair Moodie said "The new addition to our marketing department is further demonstration that AMG Outdoor are determined to provide the best service to our customers. We are delighted to have Gary on board and are sure that his enthusiasm and experience will benefit the company in our quest to develop and market new and innovative products and brands."

Outlast appoints Patrick Gruber as president and CEO

10 May 2005

US-based developer and marketer of phase change materials (PCMs), Outlast Technologies, Inc. has appointed Dr. Patrick Gruber, as president and chief executive officer. Gruber comes from NatureWorks LLC (formerly Cargill Dow LLC), where he was the vice president and chief technology officer. As one of the founders, Gruber had served in this position since the company's inception in 1997.

Gruber has spent his career focused on the technology, business development and commercialisation of renewable resource based products. Gruber has been the leader in the development of lactic acid based polymers and products, in particular, NatureWorks, PLA and IngeoFibers. He has received numerous awards in recognition of his work and accomplishments and holds 48 US patents.

"Outlast Technologies has established themselves as the market leader and global innovator of phase change materials. I look forward to joining the Outlast team and furthering the company's position in the marketplace," said Gruber.

Retiring president and CEO, George Cattermole, will remain involved with Outlast Technologies by continuing to serve on the Board of Directors, facilitating co-ordination between the Board and business operations.

NZ PM predicts increased trade with Vietnam

10 May 2005

New Zealand's Prime Minister, Helen Clark, has welcomed Vietnam's Prime Minister on a visit to celebrate thirty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. During the visit the two Prime Ministers signed a Joint Declaration of Co-operation providing a framework for many areas of collaboration between the countries.

"There is much we are doing together now and there is much more we can achieve in the coming years. Trade between New Zealand and Vietnam will grow in importance. The two way trade between us was worth $248 million in the year to December 2004," stated Ms Clark.

Vietnam's largest exports to New Zealand were furniture, footwear, engines and motors, whilst New Zealand's main exports to Vietnam include dairy products, timber and leather.

The two countries will hold the first meeting of a Joint Trade and Economic Commission later this year in an attempt to further increase bilateral trade.

Bayer's sales and earnings advance strongly in first quarter

10 May 2005

The Bayer Group enjoyed a strong first quarter, with substantial advances in both sales and earnings. All subgroups contributed to this positive development, as the company announced in its first-quarter interim report, issued on May 10.

In view of the trend, group management board chairman Werner Wenning once again confirmed the full-year forecast for 2005. Bayer is targeting an increase of more

than 5% in sales, to over €25 billion. Group sales advanced 15.7% to €6,704 million and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation climbed by 27.3% to €,575 million, while operating profit (EBIT) was up by 50.1% €1,142 million.

Bayer MaterialScience performed particularly well in the first quarter, posting by far the largest increase in sales. Business expanded by 35.5% to €2,544 million, the main growth drivers being Makrolon polycarbonate, the polyurethane raw material MDI and the business of H.C. Starck.

From a geographical viewpoint, the biggest increase in sales was achieved in Europe, where revenues rose by 23.6% to €3,109 million due especially to business expansion in Bayer MaterialScience and the acquisition of the Roche OTC business. Group sales in Germany advanced by 31.0% to €1,030 million, though this was partly because sales to Lanxess are reported as external as of the date of the spin-off.

Riri zippers become a museum piece

10 May 2005

As part of the exhibition, “Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance” Riri’s patented Storm waterproof zipper is on view at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City from now until October 30, 2005. The show is divided into five categories: stronger, lighter, faster, smarter and safer. Riri zippers are in the “safer” section, due to their waterproof and chemical resistant qualities.

On April 20, Riri president Livio Cossutti welcomed over 50 American designers for a personal tour by the head curator of the museum, Matilda McQuaid. The show encompasses the latest in textiles from proposed carbon-fibre buildings, cars and sails as well as NASA spacesuits and “smart-clothing” from the US military.

Although the biggest customer for this product will ultimately be the US military, the Storm zipper is currently found on many consumer products: Simms fly fishing jackets, Hodgman fishing waders, Tommy Hilfiger-designed US Freestyle Ski Team jackets, Viking survival suits and La Sportiva overshoes for Mount Everest expeditions.

“Consumers are becoming more sophisticated,” commented Livio Cossutti, “and are demanding performance in every aspect of their clothing and gear, including the zipper.”

China issues technical guidelines for exports

11 May 2005

Following extensive research with ministries, industrial associations, import and export chambers, research institutes and local government departments, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce has released its first list of technical guidelines for exports. The ten guidelines listed give information on technical regulations, standards, and evaluation processes in the export markets.

The guidelines deal with products including leather and fur, textiles and down-padded anoraks, honey, aluminium, and electric tools.

The list will continue to be extended and it is hoped that it will feature 100 items by the end of 2006.

New insole for sandals and open shoes launched

11 May 2005

A new insole innovation has been launched that is set to help women enjoy wearing open summer shoes and sandals, without worrying about perspiration. The removable fabric strips, called “Summer Soles” are the first open shoe liners designed specifically for women with sweaty feet, who want discreet stay-dry comfort.

“Women love sandals, but not the heat and moisture that comes from standing around in leather and synthetic shoes,” said Shannon McLindon, founder of Summer Soles. “We developed and tested Summer Soles with women suffering from hyperhidrosis until we found the perfect product for even the sweatiest conditions.”

Typically, women with sweaty feet cite “slippery discomfort” as a top reason to choose flip flops over dressier summer shoes. “Flip flops are fine, but we wanted to open up the world of shoe possibilities to the millions of women who would love to wear cute shoes,” McLinden said.

Lotto Sport launches Lotto Sport North America with DCS Group

11 May 2005

Italian sportswear company Lotto Sport Italia has announced a joint venture partnership with brand focused advisory and investment firm, The DCS Group, LLC to create Lotto North America, LLC.

Lotto Sport Italia CEO Andrea Tomat said: “We have long considered entering the market with a premium focused sports lifestyle segment to mix with our core performance business, particularly in the US due to its importance in creating trends and pop culture around the world.”

David Schulte from DCS Group will take on the role of CEO at Lotto Sport NA, which will be managed from offices in Beverly Hills and Soho, New York.

Alltracel signs nanotechnology development partnership

11 May 2005

Ireland’s Alltracel Pharmaceuticals Plc., a healthcare technology company focussed on consumer woundcare, oral care and coronary health markets, has signed a technology and product development agreement with nanofibre technology specialists Elmarco s.r.o. of the Czech Republic for the development of a new generation delivery platform for Alltracel's m-doc technology. m-doc (Micro Dispersed Oxidised Cellulose) is the end product of Alltracel's patented process.

Elmarco is a specialist R&D and manufacturing company specialising in advanced manufacturing for the semi-conductor components industry as well as equipment for industrial production of nanofibrous non-woven materials.

Together with the Textiles Faculty of the Technical University of Liberic, Elmarco has developed a patented process for spinning polymers into nano-scale fibres for a range of industrial, chemical, micro-electronic and bio-medical applications.

Over the past few months m-doc based nanofibre woundcare prototypes have been developed and are now at an advanced stage of technical evaluation.

Alltracel's CEO Tony Richardson commented: "Alltracel has always been committed to innovation in our markets and we are particularly excited by the prospects for m-doc based nanofibrous advanced woundcare delivery systems.”

The North Face introduces lighter fabrics in Flight Series collection

11 May 2005

The North Face has incorporated new technologies and lighter weight fabrics into its Flight Series Outerwear. Designed specifically for the multi-sport athlete, the new range is said to provide both weather protection and breathability during high aerobic output.

One of the most exciting new developments is a moulded 3-dimensional elbow which reduces the number of seams and improves abrasion resistance. Unique to The North Face, and seen on the Lightspeed Jacket, this technology not only minimises weight, but is also said to improve both fit and comfort for the wearer.

In creating HyVent DT (Dry to Touch), The North Face has improved its breathable 2.5 layer HyVent fabric with an interior, raised microgrid print to channel away any internal moisture. Designed for high performance rain protection, the Stretch Venture Jacket combines the new HyVent DT fabric with stretch HyVent DT across the shoulders and arms to create a lightweight, packable and breathable jacket.

Thanks to The North Face’s skinny seam tape, its Prophecy PacLite Smock weighs in

at just 275g and the full zip Prophecy PacLite Jacket a mere 385g. Only 13mm wide compared to standard seam tape of 19mm or 21mm, the reduction in width means garments are not only more breathable, but also less bulky, which is said to make them more comfortable without compromising on waterproofness.

Marzotto reports improved sales and profit

11 May 2005

Italian textile and apparel producer Marzotto SpA has produced positive figures for the first quarter. Sales increased 8% to reach €572 million compared with €531 million in 2004. Operating profit rose to €89 million a 16% increase over the same period last year.

The apparel business' sales increased 11% to €518 million, which has been mainly attributed to Hugo Boss, which saw a sales increase of 14% and Valentino with a 16% increase. However, the textiles business' sales dropped by 16% to which the company said was mainly due to the drop in fabrics and woollen yarns, which suffered from a slowdown in demand during the first months of the year. On a more positive note, sales of cotton fabrics increased 14%.

Fashion Institute of Technology announces one-day workshop

11 May 2005

The Fashion Institute of Technology has announced its one-day workshop to be held on June 28 at Katie Murphy Amphitheatre, New York. The interactive workshop aims to help companies learn time-saving techniques and introduce new technologies for achieving colour specification from lab dip to final production.

The one day event has been designed to teach ways of optimising their design and creating colour specs for the most accurate colour reproduction from suppliers. It will include training on streamlining the colour communication process, and will explain methods for evaluating products as well as the benefits of electronic sample simulation.

Cambodia's garment industry grows despite tough competition

12 May 2005

Cambodia's garment industry is coping exceptionally well in the world of growing Chinese dominance. Most of the country's factories have kept their traditional retailers such as Gap or Marks & Spencer thanks to the labour programme designed to improve working conditions.

Cambodia has a strong garment union tradition which has acted as a political force in securing garment production a place in the global economy. The government, factory owners and the unions have strived to keep high standards in the industry through a system of independent factory inspections and a public disclosure of violators.

Sixteen new plants are scheduled to begin production in the forthcoming months. However, the country is still awash with corruption and crime is high where conflicting interests collide. Here, the support of the USA (involved in the programme) and of the International Labour Organization is vast in keeping the unions independent.

Factory workers are largely young women and girls who earn $45 a week, half of which they send back to their families. According to statistics, every 13 Cambodians depend on this money to survive. With the end of quotas, the industry's survival depends on keeping those wages low.

LL Bean teams up with ASC to develop outerwear system

12 May 2005

Developer and retailer of quality outdoor gear and apparel L.L.Bean and the American Skiing Company (ASC), a large operator of alpine ski and snowboard resorts, have announced their new outerwear partnership.

Beginning this autumn, L.L.Bean will be the official outerwear supplier to leading ski

resorts including Steamboat, The Canyons, Killington and Sunday River. As part of the agreement, L.L.Bean's top product developers and designers are working in conjunction with experts from the ASC staff to develop a complete outerwear system for all on-snow resort employees.

"We got together with several top instructors, lift operators and ski patrol personnel from ASC resorts and asked what they would like to see in the ultimate on-mountain uniform. Then we hit the design room with some really great ideas. We knew we wanted something that was waterproof/breathable, warm, easy to move in and looked great regardless of whether you ski or snowboard. Then we added the bells and whistles, like a built-in neoprene lumbar pad for warmth and protection, cell phone/radio pocket, and that's just for starters," says Greg Houser, V.P. and Merchandising Manager for L.L.Bean outerwear. "We are also planning to make a version of this outerwear available to our customers this fall as part of our new Gore-Tex/Primaloft Mountain Pro Series."

American Skiing Company was founded in Maine in 1996 and is the operator of eight ski and snowboard resorts including in New England Killington, Pico and Mount Snow in Vermont, Sunday River and Sugarloaf in Maine and Attitash in New Hampshire; and in the west Steamboat in Colorado and The Canyons in Utah.

L.L. Bean, Inc. is a developer and retailer of quality outdoor gear and apparel. Founded in 1912 by Leon Leonwood Bean, the company began as a one-room operation selling a single product, the Maine Hunting Shoe.

Quiksilver and Kohl’s sign license agreement for Tony Hawk clothing brand

12 May 2005

Kohl's Corporation and Quiksilver, Inc. have announced the signing of a license agreement under which Quiksilver will grant exclusive rights to the Tony Hawk clothing brand to Kohl's. The license encompasses apparel and related products, including outerwear and accessories for boys and young men's categories and will be available in all Kohl's stores from spring of 2006. Quiksilver will be responsible for product design and Kohl's will manage sourcing, distribution, marketing and all other functions.

Tony Hawk, a boardriding icon and a dominant athlete in skateboarding history, who founded Hawk Clothing, later sold to Quiksilver, said "We are really excited to expand the reach of our brand and connect the culture of action sports with the Kohl's customers. We are committed to making sure that the product, the marketing, and the vibe of the line is true to our roots."

Kevin Mansell, Kohl's president, said, "Tony Hawk has strong name-recognition among Kohl's young male shoppers and their Moms. We look forward to developing the Tony Hawk Clothing collection, offering a cool, trend-right alternative that addresses the fashion demands of today's young male shopper."

Quiksilver’s primary focus is apparel, footwear and related accessories for young men and young women and its products are sold throughout the world, primarily in surf shops, skate shops and other specialty stores.

Kohl's is a family-focused specialty department store offering moderately priced national brand apparel, shoes, accessories and home products. The company operates 669 stores in 40 states.

Russell announces Spalding agreement with Kangwei

12 May 2005

Russell Corporation’s Spalding division has signed an alliance agreement with Kangwei to design, manufacture and sell Spalding products in China. The agreement covers athletic apparel, footwear and accessories.

Kangwei has established a separate subsidiary, Guangzhou Ganwei Sports Goods Co., Ltd., to focus on the Spalding brand and will launch Spalding apparel and

footwear in June 2005. Additional plans call for Ganwei to open as many as 600 self-owned or franchised retail stores selling Spalding apparel, footwear and equipment by the end of 2006.

Founded in 1986, Kangwei is a privately held company located in Guangzhou and was one of the first companies specializing in sporting goods products in China. In 19 years, it has become one of the largest Chinese sports brands with more than 1,000 self-owned or franchised retailing outlets under the Kangwei brand.

US textile sector split over CAFTA

12 May 2005

The National Council of Textile Organisations (NCTO) and The American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition (AMTAC) are at odds with each other over the proposed Central American Free Trade Agreement supported by the Bush Administration.

NCTO chairman, Allen Gant, said the agreement was needed to ensure the US textile industry can compete with China as the six countries involved in the CAFTA agreement, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, currently source 50% of their textiles in the USA.

AMTAC, however, argues that CAFTA would cause further job losses in the domestic industry, quoting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as an example. Since its signing in 1994 the US textile and apparel manufacturing industry has fallen from 1.5 million to 666,500 jobs.

Lotto opens flagship store in Milan

13 May 2005

The official opening of Lotto's flagship store which opened in Milan in March took place on May 12, 2005.

The new store covers over 140 square metres of floor space and houses a wide range of Lotto's collections from pure performance sports (football, five-a-side football and tennis) to leisure activities. The new Milan store joins the 26 other Lotto flagship stores in Italy.

Schoeller to focus on protection at Techtextil

13 May 2005

Schoeller will show a new style of long-lasting fire protection fabrics at Techtextil, to be held in Frankfurt in June.

The new fabric, which meets standard EN 532, offers 4-way stretch, comfortable hand, superior cleaning properties and natural fibres that do not melt or form droplets, and they extinguish flames.

For work-wear and occupational safety Schoeller will exhibit versatile stretch fabrics with high sun-protection and Cordura content for all seasons, including comfortable but "indestructible" fabrics and an extended soft-shell range.

Faytex relocates manufacturing to China

13 May 2005

The Faytex Corp., suppliers of performance fabrics to the footwear, apparel and sporting goods industries, including Cambrelle, Dri-Lex, and AeroSpacer fabrics, has relocated manufacturing facilities from Taiwan to the Guangdong province of China. Effective May 13, all Faytex products will be produced by Tai Lee Textiles, Ltd. (T.L.T.)

According to Faytex, the move will offer the company additional flexibility in the footwear industry, while expanding its capabilities in becoming more meaningful in the apparel and sporting goods markets. Other benefits include its ideal location for faster China deliveries and export efficiencies worldwide, added lamination capabilities and enhanced product development opportunities.

"With this move we were able to strengthen our position in so many ways," said Faytex founder, Bill Fay Sr., "We're in an age where

new technology enables us to develop textiles that perform remarkably - much to the enjoyment of today's active consumer. This new association enables us to team up with a proven manufacturing partner that has an excellent history in textile development and production."

Specialty Group launches eco-friendly Enerfleece

13 May 2005

As the world's industrialised countries draft up legislation to reduce their energy expenditure and cut down on green house gas emissions as part of a global commitment to meet the Kyoto protocol, one company in Melbourne, Australia says it is doing its part for the environment by using naturally occurring fibres instead of synthetic fibres as a means of reducing their consumption of gas and electricity.

The Specialty Group, an Australian producer of technical textiles, announced that it has developed a fleece innovation called "EnerFleece", which is made from extra fine 19.5 micron Australian Merino Wool and uses up to 95% less energy to produce than synthetic alternatives.

"We are cutting down the number of manufacturing processes here because wool is readily available to be woven into fleece whereas polyester has to be manufactured under extreme heat and pressure using petroleum and oil based products, which is far less environmentally appropriate to work with," said vice president of marketing, Norma Leipnik.

Lead Scientist Graham Stolz says that "somewhere around 1000 kilowatt hours is saved by manufacturing a tonne of wool fleece instead of a synthetic fleece". That equates to enough electricity to power a 100 watt light bulb for over 400 days straight.

The company may have a real hit on their hands as the orders for "EnerFleece" wool fleece begin to roll in from major brands as well as Industrial work wear companies and even militaries - including a recent buy from the Australian Army.

Converse and Hurley to collaborate on footwear

13 May 2005

Two of Nike's fully owned subsidiaries Converse and Hurley have announced a partnership to produce Hurley footwear beginning with the Spring/Summer 2006 season. Converse and Hurley will collaborate together on design and development.

The Hurley Spring/Summer 2006 line will feature a selection of styles which are said to embody Hurley's deep roots in the surf and skate culture. The line consists of beach sandals, vulcanised rubber, modern skate shoes, and casual youth fashion.
"Ever since I was a kid, I wanted a pair of Converse. A great American brand," commented Bob Hurley, CEO. "We are really excited to collaborate with the Converse team. Hurley is looking forward to providing some great product to the kids we love serving." The line also features a special Hurley designed Limited Edition Converse Chuck Taylor All Star that reflects a thoughtful collaboration of the two brands.

The line will be distributed globally by Converse to better independents and specialty retail stores.

BASF establishes polyurethane system house in Thailand

13 May 2005

BASF has established its 29th system house worldwide at its existing site in Bangpoo, Thailand. From the first quarter of 2006, the plant will produce tailor-made polyurethane systems in cooperation with customers from a wide range of industries such as the footwear, appliances, automotive and construction sectors. Approval for the project is currently being sought from the Thai authorities.

"Our new system house in Thailand is a further building block to strengthen our leading position in polyurethanes in the Asian growth market," said Jean-Pierre Dhanis, President of BASF's Polyurethanes division.

“Thailand is an important market for BASF that offers good perspectives. We will use our extensive expertise to achieve a strong competitive position,” said Chew Eng Soo, Group vice president polyurethanes Asia Pacific at BASF.

According to BASF, in the coming 10 years, the market for polyurethanes in Thailand is expected to grow annually by around 6%, with Thailand already accounting for 40% of the polyurethanes market in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region.

In Asia, BASF already operates system houses in Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and China.