



# BUYERS ON TOUR

*COTTON USA's latest Buyers' Tour to China was bigger and better than ever*

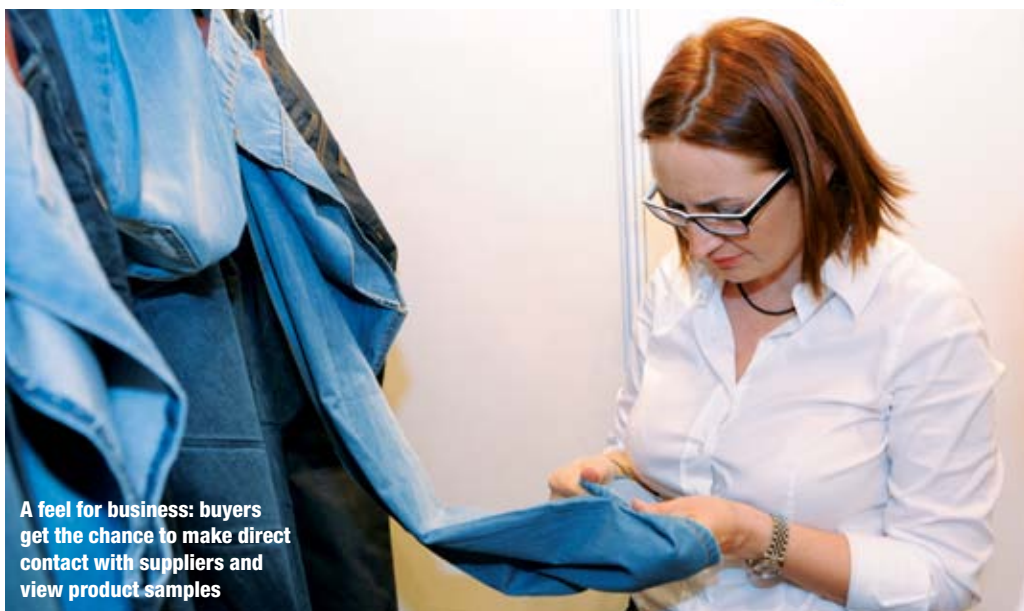
The latest COTTON USA Buyers' Tour to China was a trip with a difference, in more ways than one. It was not only the largest COTTON USA sourcing tour ever, with more buyers and suppliers taking part than on any previous tour in its history, but also included manufacturers from other parts of Asia for the first time.

This development proved to be very popular with buyers, who appreciated the opportunity to explore fresh sourcing opportunities by meeting so many suppliers of U.S. cotton-rich products in one trip. In total, COTTON USA had selected 31 of its licensee suppliers from China, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, who offered buyers a wide range of woven fabrics and garments, especially denims.

This was the fifth COTTON USA Buyers' Tour to the dynamic Chinese textile market and it was a great success, attracting 25 top brands and retailers from seven countries including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Thailand and the USA. High street leaders Marks & Spencer and Debenhams came from the UK while some of the best known global apparel brands also participated, among them Benetton, MaxMara, Polo Ralph Lauren and Quiksilver.

## Simpler sourcing

The COTTON USA tours are organised by Cotton Council International (CCI) as a key part of its Supply Chain Marketing Programme. Since CCI launched the tours, they have brought real benefits to buyers by taking much of the hard work out of finding suppliers in some of the newer textile markets such as China and also India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. It makes the sourcing process simpler and speedier because CCI ensures that buyers meet only carefully selected manufacturers of U.S. cotton-rich merchandise that are



**A feel for business: buyers get the chance to make direct contact with suppliers and view product samples**

able to meet their particular product needs regarding quality, quantity, price and delivery. Buyers can, therefore, be confident that they are talking to reliable companies with which they can build successful, long-term business relationships.

Tony Taylor, Senior Fabric Manager at M&S, certainly found the tour useful. He said: "The COTTON USA tour was well organised and opened up fresh opportunities, allowing us to make new contacts and do business with new suppliers in China and North and South Asia. These types of tours are invaluable as they can help 'fast track' our entire sourcing process, as we meet face-to-face a wide range of trustworthy factories and mills that hold real potential for us doing business."

Like previous tours to China, it was based in Shanghai and gave buyers the chance to meet suppliers and visit their production facilities. It began with an extensive briefing session that provided buyers with comprehensive

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**Tony Taylor, Senior Fabric Manager, Marks & Spencer**

information about the work of CCI and new cotton product developments from Cotton Incorporated. This was followed by a trade show, lasting a day and a half, and then by two days of factory visits in Hangzhou and Guangzhou, which allowed buyers to make contact with companies and see product samples.

The format of the tour worked well for buyers. As Peter Hevicon, General Manager of Debenhams' Far East Office, explains: "By meeting in one location with several suppliers we were able to make the best use of our time, engaging with contacts who best met our specific requirements. The event also enabled me to share experiences and information with international buyers with regard to fabric, product and the current market situation in China." ●

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