

Spring 2004, Volume 2  
Cotton Promotion Bulletin  
The Journal of the International Forum for Cotton Promotion

## Features

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### Welcome to our Site

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### The Urgent Need to Promote Cotton Internationally

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**More: [Dr. Eugene Brock's bio](#)**

### Cotton Promotion — Target or the Way to Hit the Target

**By Katarzyna Swiecicka.** Cotton is pure, natural and healthy raw material. When used in making apparel or in the sector of industrial fabrics, its values are self-evident and doubtless. In spite of the virtues — the producers and processors of cotton live hard times now. One of the reasons of this state of affairs are government subsidies let in many cotton producing countries. For some, it means retaining the growing area or even rising the production, for others its is unfair competition and hindering the possibilities of development. Since many years, the viewpoints of the opponents and advocates of this kind of aid have been clashing on the forum of WTO and ICAC.

**More: [Katarzyna Swiecicka's bio](#)**

### Strategic Perspective

**By Jeffrey P. Silberman.** By focusing your promotion domestically, you manage the scope of that promotion, and you then can control your competitive environment more successfully. Working in a market that you are intimately familiar with and connected to presents strong advantages, including a better understanding of your target consumer that will help you to more easily and effectively influence fiber preferences.

**More: [Jeffrey P. Silberman's bio](#)**

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## **Cotton Promotion — Target or the Way to Hit the Target**

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**By Katarzyna Swiecicka, Marketing Specialist, Gdynia Cotton Association**

Cotton is pure, natural and healthy raw material. When used in making apparel or in the sector of industrial fabrics, its values are self-evident and doubtless. In spite of the virtues — the producers and processors of cotton live hard times now. One of the reasons of this state of affairs are government subsidies let in many cotton producing countries. For some, it means retaining the growing area or even rising the production, for others its is unfair competition and hindering the possibilities of development. Since many years, the viewpoints of the opponents and advocates of this kind of aid have been clashing on the forum of WTO and ICAC.

Low, or even intentionally kept low, level of cotton prices could result in promoting the demand. Here, however appears a second factor — a hit of the market — chemical fibres, whose manufacturers want to replace with them a possibly great volume of natural fibres. Huge money spent on research, advertising and promotion bring effects. Nevertheless, in spite of the announcements of manufacturers of chemical fibres — they are not the future of the market.

In the time of intensive ecological campaigns and growing collective consciousness of societies, as far as the care of the environment is regarded, it seems necessary that the cotton sector all over the world creates cotton image and reminds the consumers about its virtues and possibilities. New ways of development and processing of this raw materials are looked for, starting with pro-ecological growing up to new processing technologies allowing for new applications. These activities cause that, year by year, new ways open in front of this raw material which is the companion of man almost from his very beginning.

What is important — the promotion campaigns should not be limited to producing countries only. It is true that non-producing countries were ignoring the lowering demand level. However, the spoiled balance of supply and demand cannot be disregarded any longer. Cotton sector is also the world net of trading companies involved in the turnover of this raw material, as well as the whole processing industry located in the non-producing countries. This is also the sector of machinery and instruments for cotton treatment and processing, research institutes and centres working on elevating cotton quality and on broadening of the range of application of cotton products. None of the elements of this chain can or should deny the activities supporting consumers' demand for cotton products. This is worth however, thinking over the optimal ways of promotion.

The International Institute for Cotton — active in the '60s through '80s of the 20th century, based on the financing by the member countries governments, what appeared to be not enough for creation of effective, unified world cotton promotion programme. After a series of re-structuring, financial problems and shifts of the legal ownership, the Institute had unfortunately lost its position and meaning, which could have allowed it to retain the Emblem and its wide-scale promotion opportunities.

Activities of the International Forum for Cotton Promotion established at the ICAC Plenary Session in 2000 present quite different approach to the issue, focusing on the aid and co-ordination of national cotton promotion programmes. This is compatible with the natural development process — in the '90s of the 20th century, countries being producers and simultaneously consumers — like the USA, Australia or the RSA presented the "national" approach to cotton promotion. Characteristic feature of cotton promotion in these countries is a strong position of their own national product, with no stress put on the global questions.

At present, IFCP, tightly co-operating with the ICAC has undertaken activities aiming at a close co-ordination of national plans on the international forum. The objective of these activities is dissemination of the best and most effective standards of promotion and their co-ordination.

It is worth observing in this moment, a different approach to cotton promotion, presented by the non-producing countries, being only processing and consuming customers. Here, cotton promotion turns strictly in the direction of increasing domestic demand for products made of cotton — disregarding the origin of the raw material. One of the most important factors joining all the promotion campaigns should be introduction and application of the Pure Cotton Emblem.

The example of functioning of the Cotton Emblem in consuming country is Poland - this year's host of the 62nd ICAC Plenary Session. The owner of the emblem is the Gdynia Cotton Association. It should be stated that in the whole package of activities ascribed to the idea of using the Cotton Emblem — the most important element is engraving in the client's consciousness the positive attitude towards cotton. This task is realised by the GCA through publications, addresses on the public forums and co-operation with the media — because only an effective creation of the image of the Cotton Emblem among the consumers, presenting it as a guarantee of a proper quality of goods, would contribute to the success of this way of promotion.



The emblem is registered in the Polish Patent Office and the right of its using is transferred by means of concluding the licence agreement with the GCA, under the condition that the cotton products match the strict criteria defined by the special chart of conditions. A product which is to be labelled must show that the yarns, fabrics, knitted fabrics etc. are 100% cotton. Moreover, it is very important for the evaluation and qualification of a product, that it retains high quality standards and possesses usage virtues concordant with the destination of such a product. The last one is being evaluated by way of checking technical parameters such as: changing the size after washing, white degree for bleached products, dye resistance for washing and wet ironing, limited toxicity — including formaldehyde and pure chlorine. A company interested to receive the licence for using the Emblem - besides disclosing the information about the names of the products, technological description, information about the finishing additives - must also make a statement, that the concordance of the product with the qualification requirements will be preserved during the whole period of licensing. The sample of the product should also be attached for testing. The licensing agreement is signed for 5 years, after which period it may be prolonged on the basis of the written application of the manufacturer. The 5-year validity period was established to make it possible to control the proper using of the Emblem in the rapidly changing market conditions. The Emblem owner's care about retaining its prestige is expressed by the fact, that the GCA reserved itself the right of controlling the quality of the products labelled with the Emblem at any time during the period of validity of the licence.

Among the visible advantages which can be experienced by manufacturers of cotton products labelled with the Cotton Emblem are: increasing the company's prestige in the eyes of the customers, stimulation of demand for products with such an Emblem, increasing the number of clients loyal towards this mark. Consumer — buying goods marked with the Pure Cotton Emblem has the guarantee of a good quality product, in spite of the place where the product was bought, and he has also the guarantee of an easy identification of goods. The superior objective and idea of applying the Emblem is increasing the sales of the labelled products and influencing the customers' ecological consciousness, as well as promotion of usage of products made of natural fibres, as one of the ways of healthy, natural way of living.

Multicultural world cotton market, diverse historical and social conditions, make it necessary to find an individual approach to particular groups and circles of consumers. This is the real force of national promotion programmes. On the other hand — the increase of consumers' consciousness is the aim being really within the reach. While the consumers' ecological consciousness is still growing — is the slogan "Cotton — the object of desire" not convincing?

**More: [Katarzyna Swiecicka's bio](#)**

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## **Strategic Perspective**

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### **Beginning Your Cotton Promotional Program on a Reasonable Budget**

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62nd Plenary Meeting  
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Gdansk, Poland  
September 11, 2003

Creating domestically focused promotion programs to increase world consumption of cotton is the focus of our workshop. We can probably all agree that fiber promotion at the retail level increases sales of cotton products, and thereby increases sales of raw cotton. There have been many examples of international program successes to substantiate that idea.

But today we are talking about the next generation of cotton promotion. We are talking about increasing consumer cotton demand in your own markets within your own countries, through locally funded and implemented promotional programs. Domestic promotion programs are aimed at serving the markets you know best, the markets you have the easiest access to, and of course the markets where you can have maximum control of your activities. And needless to say, you need to know your markets, understand your customer and examine how best to communicate with them.

But let's talk about how to get started on a program, and how to implement it with a reasonable budget. We'll also talk about the elements of a program and some promotional tools that can be used; some funding mechanisms, how to invest those funds to multiply the overall impact and how to sustain the effort. And most importantly, how the IFCP can help you facilitate your

program.

## Determining the Objective — A Frame of Reference

We must first establish objectives in order to be successful. Clearly, everyone's objectives will vary somewhat, but what everyone's objectives have in common is that they must be specific and obtainable. If you are able to establish some objectives that are realistic for your promotional effort, the path becomes clearer.

And so it is important to realize that domestically aimed enhancement programs are not expected to outspend enormous chemical fiber promotion budgets. The kind of programs we want to foster are funded and managed domestically, and they benefit your domestic cotton industries by increasing consumer preference for cotton relative to man-made fibers in your market.

By focusing your promotion domestically, you manage the scope of that promotion, and you then can control your competitive environment more successfully. Working in a market that you are intimately familiar with and connected to presents strong advantages, including a better understanding of your target consumer that will help you to more easily and effectively influence fiber preferences.

A domestic demand enhancement program presents fewer complications and can more easily be implemented with limited resources. When you control the promotional landscape you can function with agility and precision. The amounts of money that you need for promotional spending will generally be far less with a domestic promotion than with an internationally aimed program because you have a smaller market population to penetrate, and the promotional vehicles are usually less expensive than international media. If you choose to utilize a logo in your promotional strategy, it is easier to monitor proper and improper logo usage. Overall, it is easier to protect intellectual property and authenticity within your country boundaries — far easier and less costly than trying to monitor international infractions. But of course, not everyone will choose a program based on a mark, whether it be for certification mark or for collective marketing.

And so, simply stated, your objective is to create or redesign the landscape of your promotional playing field to the advantage of cotton. The way to accomplish this is to limit the geographic and product promotion scope to circumstances that you can control. Make it your game.

Promotion programs can be complex, or they can be very simple in structure, but they all have certain circumstances and elements in common.

Most fiber promotion programs begin with a crisis, and that crisis is usually a drop in market

share. A few people (or a few companies or organizations) realize that something must be done, and they then form a core group. This core group must invest the time and energy to bring the program forward, or at least to get it started. It doesn't take many people to move a promotional effort forward, but it does take a concerted effort. Without this group of individuals, a program can't happen.

That core group then usually extends invitations downstream (or upstream) making sure that interested segments of the industry are represented, and this group of individuals usually evolves into the organization that 'houses' the effort.

A fiber promotion company needs an organization for legal and management reasons. This 'residence' for the promotion is called different things in different countries (i.e. associations, societies, promotion boards, etc.) but it is usually structured legally as a domestic non-profit organization, and has a board of directors made up of interested parties. This organization will manage the intellectual property and the administration, including membership issues, financial issues, and more. But as important as this organizational structure is, in many ways it is not the core of the promotional activity itself. It does not have to be formally set up before activities begin, and usually does not have to be formalized until the effort gets underway. Don't wait for the organization to be formed. You will wait too long.

In summary, if you feel strongly about developing a domestic cotton program, call someone in your industry that you think may have similar interests. Discuss your objectives with them, and begin to plan. Get the right people involved from the beginning of the process, and don't let the organizational structure development slow you down.

## The Core Group and Strategic Alliances

The promotion itself is primarily driven by the strategic alliances that are formed between the organization and customers from the fiber-through-retail supply chain. The most important task with which to charge someone who is developing a cotton promotion program is to focus on developing strategic alliances with retailers and manufacturers (if they exist in your market place), and to participate as much as possible in the supply chain. That's what engineered fiber selection, education programs, and consumer ads have in common. Producers need to know where their product goes, and consumers need to know where their products come from, from point of origin through consumer satisfaction. But this is not to imply that one needs to work with a textile mill or manufacturer. Some of the most successful programs place their focus at the retail level, whether it be for branded product or private label collections, to communicate more closely with the consumer. And the promotion activity must insinuate itself into that supply chain as much as possible, and as seamlessly as possible. Your customers and their customers are the pathways that help you pull your cotton messages through to retail, and the closer you can

establish partners to the point of sale, the more the consumer can relate your product. The idea of "cotton" is enticing, but not as enticing as a "cotton towel".

Communicating directly with the consumer is usually very expensive, whether through broadcast or print — so much so that it often becomes impractical for most beginning programs. Most of the ways to 'talk' to the consumer are through retail channels, which is why these strategic alliances with retailers become so important.

And so to accomplish this communication with consumers, find a few manufacturers or retailers that currently advertise and promote their own product lines. These companies understand the value of promotion already, and will be more open to promotional ideas that cost money. You don't need many retail partners to start out with; you just need one or two. The program will grow in its own given time, and at this point, it is likely that a new program doesn't have the resources to support more than a few efforts in a meaningful way. Better to focus the resources now and demonstrate small successes. This will bring sustainability later.

Begin discussions with these customers close to retail about working together to develop a program that focuses on products made from cotton, either pure or a blend. Bring them in on the logo development by asking their opinions at different points of the artwork and strategy development process. If the program works for their customers, it will work for you.

## The Logo

Having a logo does not mean that you have a promotion program. You can also have a program without a logo, but I've never seen that. The logo becomes a focal point, a rallying point, something to tie your image to. Logo development often becomes expensive and emotional, but it doesn't have to. I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have about logo development or mark protection later today or at another meeting, but time does not permit us to go any deeper at this time. Suffice it to say, the IFCP is here to facilitate information like this. Groups like Cotton SA and COTTON USA have years of experience in this. It's at your fingertips.

So at this point, you have a group of interested individuals with like objectives, a strategic alliance with at least one (preferably more than one) partner that produces your products that meet your criteria, a product collection that exemplifies your objectives, and a logo that your group is satisfied with. What now?

## The Elements of Your Communication Strategy

We've heard about a lot of interesting programs today, and they all have some basic things in common. The first thing I noticed in reviewing the programs beforehand is that they all recognize

that a promotion strategy is just one element of an overall communication strategy. That overall communication strategy must include promotional vehicles, but also should consider an advertising strategy, a public relations strategy, media strategy, and a coordinated sales strategy.

Here is an easy way to plan your communication strategy. Ask yourselves these five key questions: What results are you looking for? Who do you want to communicate with? What do you want to say? How will you say it? And, who do you want to say it for you?

The answers to these questions are not complicated, nor particularly difficult to arrive at. The results that you are looking for translate into your objectives. You want to communicate with your target audience; what you say is your message, how you say it and who says it will depend on whether you are focusing on the trade or the consumer, and the tools you will use.

An example of satisfying the objective (the results we want) may be to get the consumer to look for cotton, or cotton-rich blends next time they are in a store, or looking at a catalogue. The target cotton customer of course, will be the one you have defined by age, demographics, etc. The cotton message is well established through research, the international programs, and publications, and there is a great deal of free cotton-rich photography available. You don't need to create a lot of original and costly material in order to begin a promotion program. The decision of whether your focus is on the trade or the consumer will have a lot to do with your budget.

You then must decide how you want to deliver your message. You may wish that your promotional communications follow the direct product flow ('push strategy'), or circumvent the product flow and go directly to the consumer ('Pull strategy'), or combine both push and pull, which is usually the most effective.

After you have answered all of these questions, you can then look at the techniques you have seen presented today and those that are contained in the second edition of Cotton Promotion Activities from Around the World, published by the IFCP for this meeting. But you will look at these techniques differently; because if you have fully answered the above questions, you will know which promotion techniques are right for you, and how to combine those techniques with the right advertising, the right public relations message, and the sales support to make your promotion meaningful.

### **More: Jeffrey P. Silberman's bio**

\*The International Forum for Cotton Promotion exists to help you realize effective and affordable communication and promotion strategies. We need you to support the organization, and to join the organization. If we can work together to increase cotton consumption in your domestic markets, we will have worked together to improve cotton's position in the world marketplace.

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## **The Urgent Need to Promote Cotton Internationally**

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**Compiled by: Dr. Eugene Brock, South Africa**

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On the other hand, the USA is the only industrial country where market share of cotton has improved over the last ten years. China (Mainland) the world's largest consumer of cotton at mill level, however, registered declines in final consumption over the last decade. The ICAC projects global consumption of cotton to reach 22 million tons in 2005 and 23.6 million tons in 2010, with a continued loss in market share to 38% in 2010. This issue has been raised and debated over the years with little substantial actions to counter the trend.

The formation of the International Forum for Cotton Promotion (IFCP) and the appointment of Jeffrey Silberman as Executive Director is a positive step to address this issue. In this regard there are a multiple of issues that rush to mind for the forum to address and we should perhaps prioritise them.

The first is that now that we have a vehicle to unite our efforts, every member of the ICAC should become a member of the IFCP. One of the weaknesses that can be identified in a swot analysis for cotton must be the dispersed and limited focus on the promotion of cotton by producing and consuming countries with the exclusion of the US, South Africa, Australia and now Egypt. If we are to make a difference, we need critical mass and dedicated support from all countries.

The second step would be to commission research to establish the main reasons why we have lost market share. Although this may be complex because of the heterogeneous nature of the cotton markets, it can be structured around the information that we already have. This information would then serve as a basis for the forum members developing an in-depth analysis of cotton strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (swot). This in turn could tell us where we are, where we would like to go and how to get there. There are for example still strong arguments that

could be made for an International Cotton Mark (brand) together with an appropriate slogan as a guarantee of authenticity and reassurance.

Further priorities must surely be to produce cotton of internationally accepted quality standards on a consistent basis. Some progress has been made in this regard and the presentations on quality evaluation and instrument classification (at the ICAC conference in 2003) will no doubt be followed up. Among the top priorities must certainly be research into and the development of new cotton products like wrinkle free technology and exploiting the excellent inherent characteristics of cotton on its own or in partnership with other fibres.

It is both an exciting and challenging opportunity to develop a promotional position for a natural fibre with inherent characteristics that lends itself to fashion, leisure wear and household usage. To make a meaningful difference, will need the cooperation and commitment of all member countries.

**More: [Dr. Eugene Brock's bio](#)**

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The site content is divided into several sections. The first section, '[Features](#)', highlights on-topic short papers that focus on the strategic elements of cotton promotion.

The second section, '[How To Do It](#)' features hands-on cotton promotion techniques written by a variety of contributors, to enable you to begin promotion activity immediately. Most of this section is written in a step-by-step format.

The third section, '[Essentials](#)', provides you with useable everyday information, including [Cotton Links](#), [Textile and Fashion News sources](#) to keep you up to date, [Trademark Search links](#), even sources for [Design Inspiration](#).

On the left hand side of the site, you will see a column called 'Contents'. Included are some documents to brief a new reader, including downloads of [Cotton Promotions from Around the World](#), 2nd Edition, and [Fiber Content Labeling](#). A [Site Map](#) can be found in the sidebar. You can also click on the Systran links to translate the page into your language.

And finally, the [IFCP Documents](#) link contains PDF's of all of the relevant documents, should you prefer to view the content that way.

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