

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

Cotton Promotion — Target or the Way to Hit the Target

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](#)

© 2004 International Forum for Cotton Promotion

Last Updated Wednesday March 7th, 2004