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

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World fibre consumption at end use level was estimated to be 52 millions tons in 2002. Cotton fibre share of this market again decreased and now stands at 39.7% (2002). Although cotton consumption increased by 3%, the demand for non-cotton fibres resumed expansion by 6% during this period. This pattern has been taking place since 1987 when cotton's market share was over 50%.

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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