

HOSIERYTECHCENTER.NEWS

TESTING LABORATORIES

Soon the HTC will be capable of testing for anti-microbial properties, according to plans announced by Manager Dan St. Louis. "We want to get into high-end testing as our reputation and credibility with retailers continues to grow."

"We have to be so good that if we lose a customer, we can go five different ways to grow our activity through service," St. Louis asserted. "That entails what a fiber does and how it performs in manufacture of socks," he continued. The successful launch of Ingeo yarn is an example of HTC opportunities.

A \$30,000 expansion of the HTC environmental laboratory is underway to allow more sophisticated testing in temperature and humidity-controlled conditions.

Testing activity at the HTC reflects a 20 per cent increase over 2004, it was reported.

PROTOTYPES

Recently a hosiery manufacturer from Western North Carolina walked into the Hosiery Technology Center to seek help in applying for a patent. According to Dan St. Louis, HTC director, this type of request is not unusual.

Helping mills develop and test new prototypes has become a major focus of the center. All facets of the process—from knitting to finishing—are covered.

Referrals and requests come from across the United States, St. Louis reports. Some referrals from small in-home entrepreneurs have resulted in new business for area greige mills.

In a "flat world", U.S. hosiery mills increasingly will be participating in the development of new products—items that will be produced economically for specialized markets.

MARKETING

Supporting hosiery manufacturers who are pursuing export markets is a priority for the Hosiery Technology Center, with Japan a major target.

An initial undertaking will take place in late September in cooperation with Natureworks, the parent company of Ingeo yarn. Four U.S. mills will participate in a special rollout of specialized socks under the sponsorship of Natureworks.

Expanded support for exporting would come from a grant appropriated through the Market Development Cooperative Program within the U.S. Department of Commerce. Top Commerce officials promised U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt of Alabama they would encourage such a grant as part of the conditions spelled out for Aderholt's support of the Caribbean Area Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

The grant would enable the HTC to develop a business plan for exports to Asia, Russia and other Eastern European Countries.

The HTC staff continues to attend trade shows including the outdoor shows and the large MAGIC show for apparel buyers in Las Vegas to monitor trends that will have an impact on sale of socks.

Also tracking trends is Dean Allred at the Randolph Community College branch of the HTC. Allred also tracks government procurement opportunities in all states as well as federal entities.

EDUCATION/ TRAINING

Dates for 2006 HTC classes:
(all on Wednesdays and Thursdays)

March 8—Hosiery 101
March 9—Hosiery 102

May 10—Hosiery 101
May 11—Hosiery 102

August 2—Hosiery 101
August 3—Hosiery 102

November 8—Hosiery 101
November 9—Hosiery 102

In-plant training is scheduled out of the Randolph County HTC operations.