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China: Finding sustainable suppliers with STeP by OEKO-TEX®

“STeP can help global operations, brand and retail enterprises to find the right suppliers which meet the operations’ environmental and social responsibility requirements” emphasises CEO Mr. Sun Wei Ting from “Zhejiang Huafu Melange Yarn Co., Ltd “.

Zhejiang Huafu Melange Yarn is a global manufacturer and supplier of middle-high grade and innovated yarn with its headquarters located in Shenzhen, China. The A share listed company was founded in 1993 and today is one of the largest melange yarn enterprises in the world, exporting to dozens of countries and regions like Europe, America, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Macau and Southeast Asia.

The yarn manufacturer has been a customer of Swiss based “TESTEX AG” since 2008, when it first certified its yarns based on “OEKO-TEX® Standard 100”. In 2009 Zhejiang Huafu Melange Yarn Co., Ltd was awarded the “OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000” certification, which used to be STeP’s predecessor. It was only a logical consequence to implement STeP or as CEO Sun Wei Ting states: Our company had been certified based on OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000 for many years, now we are a STeP certified enterprise.”

STeP – a modular certification for textile companies

STeP is the certification system by OEKO-TEX® for sustainable textile production. It is tailored to the needs of textile production facilities of all processing stages from fibre production, spinning mills, weaving mills, knitting mills to finishing facilities, manufacturers of ready-made textile items and logistics companies.

The certification system consists of the six individual modules chemicals management, environmental performance, environmental management, social responsibility, quality management and health & safety, which are individually evaluated with the help of a scoring system during the STeP certification process.

The STeP scoring system comprises three different levels to categorise the measures and activities of the companies who have applied for certification with regard to sustainable production conditions, depending on the extent achieved:

- Level 1 = compliance with the entry level
- Level 2 = good implementation with further optimisation potential
- Level 3 = exemplary implementation in the sense of a best practice example

The overall scoring for a production facility then results from the average of all module scores.

Best practice: Zhejiang Huafu Melange Yarn

The yarn producer managed to achieve level 3 in 5 of 6 modules. The results strongly reflect Zhejiang Huafu Melange Yarn’s general role as pioneer for moving forward environmental protection.

For instance, the fibre dye-then-spin techniques of Zhejiang Huafu melange yarn reduce water consumption and overall pollution by more than 50% compared to traditional techniques. Zhejiang Huafu takes lead in the development of a series of products like environmentally friendly cotton and polyester and natural fibre. The company advocates environmental protection from raw materials, to the manufacturing process and products, not only taking measures within the company but also working together with its customers. These are, for example, H&M, ZARA, Nike, Semir, adidas, Polo, GAP and UNIQLO.

Issued by:
TESTEX AG, Swiss Textile Testing Institute
Gotthardstrasse 61, P. O. Box 2156
CH-8027 Zurich
Switzerland

OEKO-TEX®
CONFIDENCE IN TEXTILES

Contact person:
Marc Sidler
Group CMO
E-Mail m.sidler@testex.com
Phone +41 44 206 42 68



The Chinese manufacturer also attained the ISO 9001 management systems certification and ISO 14001 environmental management systems certification, which simultaneously demonstrates one of STeP's many strong points: it supports other common management systems such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, SA 8000 and OHSAS 18001.

Soloman Peng Ren from TESTEX Beijing and at the same time OEKO-TEX® auditor on this STeP project: “I think that STeP can help a company that is already working on the improvement of their social and environmental impact to achieve the best possible results with their sustainability management. What is special about Zhejiang Huafu Melange Yarn Co., Ltd, is the executives' intrinsic concern on eco-friendliness. Also, the company left me with a deep impression of their appreciation of social responsibility.”

General Outlook on STeP in China

Soloman Peng Ren concludes: “As the central and local government focuses more on the quality of the environment, an increasing number of textile companies modify their equipment to improve on energy consumption, air emission reduction and waste water management. This is good news for STeP and we hope more and more companies apply for STeP out of their own motivation – and not just because they are pushed by the buyer.”

 <p>Label: STeP by OEKO-TEX®</p>	
<p>TESTEX customer Huafu produces sustainable yarns.</p>	

More about OEKO-TEX®

The International OEKO-TEX® Association, headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland, was founded in 1992 by OETI -formerly Austrian Textile Research Institute and the German Hohenstein Research Institutes. Currently, its membership of the OEKO-TEX Association includes 16 independent textile research and testing institutes with their representative offices in 60 countries worldwide. To date, more than 150,000 OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 certificates have been issued—with more than 13,300 issued per year—and 10,000 manufacturers, brands, and retailers in 98 countries are working with OEKO-TEX® to ensure that their products are tested for potentially harmful substances. Now available are the STeP by OEKO-TEX® certification for sustainable textile product manufacturing facilities, the MySTeP by OEKO-TEX® database management tool, and the MADE IN GREEN by OEKO-TEX® label for STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX® certified products produced in accordance with OEKO-TEX® guidelines. OEKO-TEX® certified products and suppliers can be located in the OEKO-TEX® Online Buying Guide at www.oeko-tex.com/products. Connect with OEKO-TEX® on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/oekotex and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/OEKO_TEX_Int.

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TESTEX AG, Swiss Textile Testing Institute
Gotthardstrasse 61, P. O. Box 2156
CH-8027 Zurich
Switzerland



Contact person:
Marc Sidler
Group CMO
E-Mail m.sidler@testex.com
Phone +41 44 206 42 68