

Walmart awards US\$2.8M for textile innovation

WASHINGTON – Five research and academic institutions have been awarded grants totalling US \$2.84 million by Walmart to fund work focused on sustainability and innovation in textile manufacturing. The money has been awarded by the US Manufacturing Innovation Fund which is overseen by the Walmart Foundation and the US Conference of Mayors. The fund is focused mainly on the development of US domestic manufacturing with recipients assessed on their ability to address key challenges which are seen as a barrier to domestic manufacture: reducing domestic textile production costs by addressing production and efficiency issues; and improving manufacturing processes. “Through these grants we hope to help remove the barriers to revitalising and growing US apparel manufacturing, while creating more sustainable production processes,” said Kathleen McLaughlin, president of the Walmart Foundation and chief sustainability officer for Walmart. “The US Manufacturing Innovation Fund is part of Walmart and the Walmart Foundation’s broader commitment to foster new economic growth and opportunity and create stronger communities.”

The 2016 Fund grant winners are:

- Clemson University for energy and effluent reduction through innovative dyeing of polyester fabrics.
 - Oregon State University for environmentally conscious dyeing of fabrics using continuous digital printing and drying of biopigment inks.
 - University of Texas at Austin for on-loom fabric defect inspection using contact image sensors.
 - North Carolina State University for developing a non-stop tying-in process to improve weaving efficiency.
 - Cornell University for recycling post-consumer textile waste and a raw material substitute for new textiles.
- In January 2013, Walmart announced a commitment to buy an additional US\$250 billion in products that support US jobs by 2023. ■



Kapok, Ceiba pentandra in Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Kapok fibre wins eco-award

SHANGHAI – Chinese textile brand, Flocus, has been awarded an eco-award from Performance Days in recognition of its work on developing a new method for processing the natural fibre kapok, a cellulose fibre found in the dried fruit of the kapok tree. The winning kapok fabric was chosen out of 846 fabrics as Performance Days’ most innovative and ecological for 2015.

Machine spinning of kapok has, historically, been a challenging process due to the brittle, short nature of the fibres. As such, Kapok fibres have traditionally been used as buoyancy aids or stuffing in mattresses and pillows due to their good thermal insulation, non-allergenic properties and low density.

However, Flocus claims to have succeeded in producing yarns made with and from kapok in a move which the company believes, “opens up new possibilities” and offers the option of using the fibre not only as a cushioning material or insulation, but also processing it as a fabric. Accordingly, Flocus is marketing Kapok – a light fibre which has very high insulation properties and absorbs very little water – as a natural performance fibre. Blends with synthetic or natural fibres are also possible.

Flocus also suggests Kapok has many active functions that react to the human body during physical activity - including sweat release, body heat regulation, odour reduction, breathability and quick dry properties.

The Performance Days functional fabric fair launched in 2008 and is the first textile show created especially for functional fabrics for sports and work clothing. The event is staged in Munich in spring and autumn.

Web: www.performance-days.eu ■

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In a ground-breaking move, subscribers to *Ecotextile News* and members of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition will be able to register for free attendance at the forthcoming Planet Textiles Summit on sustainability. The event takes place at the Copenhagen Concert Hall on 11 May. In addition, the delegate entry fee for non-SAC members or those without a current subscription to *Ecotextile News* will be kept to a minimum fee based on covering the costs of lunch, refreshments and related expenses. “Expensive delegate fees for international B2B conferences often preclude smaller companies with limited resources from attending,” said John Mowbray, publishing director at MCL. “We have always been a mission-led organisation and want all actors in the textile supply chain to hear about the latest developments in environmental and social compliance in a cost-effective way. We also want to reward those who have supported these objectives through subscribing to *Ecotextile News* or by joining the Sustainable Apparel Coalition.” A sign-up process will be available shortly online. Keep visiting www.ecotextile.com for the latest information. ■