

World Cotton Day: Cotton made in Africa celebrates World's Top Natural Textile Fibre

Around 25 million people worldwide are employed in the production of cotton, including four million in Africa South of the Sahara alone. Thirty percent of African cotton is verified by Cotton made in Africa (CmiA). As a sustainability standard under the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF), CmiA is committed to improving both the environmental impact of fibre production and the living conditions of almost one million small-scale farmers in Africa; as an organisation, it is representing these interests at this year's World Cotton Day Conference in Cotonou, Benin.

World Cotton Day was established at the initiative of the four cotton-producing countries collectively known as the C4: Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali. In 2021, the United Nations proclaimed 7 October the annual World Cotton Day. Under the motto "Cotton for Good", World Cotton Day focusses on the diverse benefits of cotton and its crucial role in the sustainable development of many countries in the Global South. Organised by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD),

and the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC), this year's conference will be the first to span two days, 7 and 8 October, as well as the first to be held in a cotton-producing country, Benin.

Together with other experts, members of the AbTF team will lend their expertise to three panels at the conference to represent the urgent concerns of small-scale cotton farmers. Particularly noteworthy is that Bagoudou Bougnon Koto, a small-scale farmer who grows CmiA Organic cotton in Benin, will join Alexandra Perschau, the head of standards and outreach at the Aid by Trade Foundation, on a panel called "Women's Empowerment in the Cotton Value Chain", thereby bringing a small-scale farmer's perspective directly to the international stage. Alexandra Perschau states, "Women play a crucial role in cotton cultivation, and we have made significant progress in achieving equality between women and men thanks to CmiA and the requirements of our standard. Access to training and education is crucial to ensuring equal opportunities for women. It is also important that existing social norms and barriers

no longer act as obstacles. CmiA is committed to continue questioning and changing these structures so that every woman can develop her full potential."

All team members' panel appearances will reflect at least one shared concern: that small-scale cotton cultivation is under existential threat. As reported in Klimareporter, for instance, people in Africa are responsible for less than ten percent of climate change, but they nonetheless bear the brunt of its effects. These include destroyed crops and devastated livelihoods as well as catastrophic droughts, floods, pest infestations, and the spread of plant diseases.

Together with experts from the spheres of industry, academia, and public interest, AbTF will call for farmers to be offered support with building up a new, more resilient form of cotton cultivation in Africa. Only by alleviating the impact of climate change and ensuring that cotton cultivation remains attractive for future generations of small-scale farmers can the world guarantee the long-term supply of cotton to its markets ■

Unspun and DECATHLON Pulse partner to advance 3D weaving technology in Europe

Unspun, a fashion-tech company, and DECATHLON Pulse, the investment arm and start-up studio of DECATHLON, a global multi-specialist sports brand, have formed a partnership to deploy unspun's 3D weaving technology, Vega™, across Europe. The partnership, which centers on the investment and a multi-year off take agreement through 2030, aims to scale unspun's 3D weaving technology throughout the region. The exact terms of the deal are undisclosed. This news follows unspun's recent closing announcement of its Series B funding round.

DECATHLON Pulse intends to collaborate with unspun as an industrial partner to expand 3D weaving throughout Europe serving multiple European brands. unspun aims at deploying Vega machines to pioneer local, low-waste, and low-inventory production in the region. Unspun's state-of-the-art 3D weaving technology, Vega, revolutionizes the manufacturing process by weaving semi-finished products directly from yarn. This collaboration with DECATHLON Pulse represents a significant milestone in unspun's mission to provide 3D-woven apparel products to European customers.

Walden Lam, CEO and Co-Founder of unspun, expresses enthusiasm for the partnership, stating: "Decathlon has been a great partner from the very



beginning. This collaboration enables us to provide apparel products that have been produced in a more sustainable way to mainstream customers in Europe. Collectively, we are contributing to carbon neutrality objectives on millions of garments in a bid to help the fashion industry reduce waste from the supply chain. Our Vega technology is a key step on this journey to bring fast, low-impact, circular, and cost-effective production in low operating volumes to Europe."

unspun's vision extends beyond reducing carbon emissions in fashion, as the company pioneers innovative garments and production methods. Vega unlocks scalable potential for on-demand production,

allowing brands to establish micro-factories for localized and automated manufacturing. With the EU's Waste Framework Directive regulations on the horizon, unspun's approach and technology offer brands better management of finished goods inventory levels, reducing waste from unsold inventory. By addressing overproduction and emissions, unspun's low-inventory method is crucial in combating the growing global waste problem, projected to increase by 70 percent by 2050.

Franck Vigo, CEO of DECATHLON Pulse, stated: "We are thrilled to team-up with unspun. This partnership will enable Decathlon to reduce waste within the manufacturing process and strengthen our commitment to sustainability. By leveraging the potential of 3D weaving, we are working to revolutionize the garment manufacturing process and offer consumers customized, recyclable, and locally-produced products."

unspun's technological capabilities and vision for the future of fashion have landed the company on America's Top Greentech companies 2024 by Time magazine, Vogue 100 innovator's list, Newsweek's Climate Change Innovators, TIME's Best Inventions, and Fast Company's World-Changing Ideas ■

Sci-Lume Labs® Inc. (USA) joins ITMF as Corporate Member

Sci-Lume Labs has created an affordable circular material (Bylon®) that is made from renewable agricultural waste. Bylon aims to close the fashion sustainability loop by making "scalably sourced, earth-digestible, and 100% recyclable clothing accessible to everyone". Sci-Lume Labs is also a winner of the ITMF Start-up Award 2024. Christian Schindler, Director General of ITMF, commented that "ITMF is very proud to have start-ups like Sci-Lume Labs applying for and winning the ITMF Start-up Award. It is important for ITMF to bring together well-established textile and

apparel companies with start-ups on the ITMF-platform. The objective is that they benefit from each other. Start-ups are bringing new ideas and technologies to the table while well-established companies have market expertise and experience that can help start-ups to scale up. For Sci-Lume Labs, membership with ITMF also provides unique access to relevant data and an international network from the entire textile value chain."

Oliver Shafaat, CEO of Sci-Lume Labs Inc., emphasized that "becoming a member of ITMF

helps us to get a better understanding of the textile industry's dynamics. Furthermore, ITMF's members come from every part of the world's textile value chain, and it is critical to build communication and collaboration between these different stakeholders. All aspects of our industry need to work together to develop the sustainable and circular solutions the world needs. Platforms like ITMF play a vital role in enabling the transition to a more circular textiles industry" ■