

IN THE MARKET

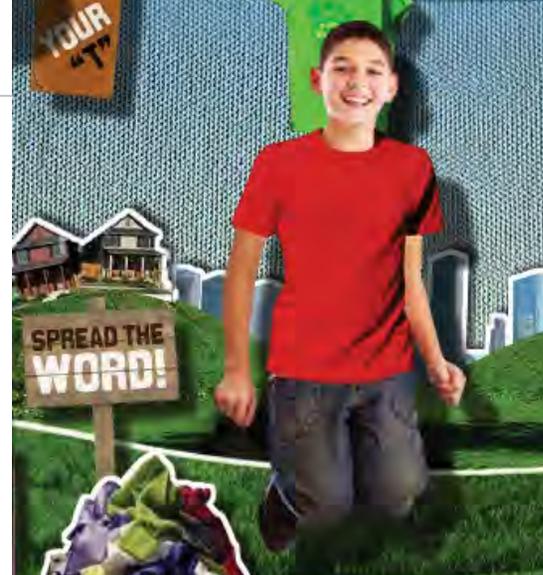
Anvil Knitwear's Organics Education Campaign

Anvil Knitwear, which claims to be the largest buyer of U.S.-grown organic cotton and transitional cotton, has launched an organics education program.

"While many understand the importance of, say, eating organic foods, they don't always see why their apparel choices are just as important. We consider it both a challenge and an opportunity, and to a certain extent our mission, to teach everyone we can about the importance of sustainability and organic farming in the apparel industry," says Anthony Corsano, CEO of New York-based Anvil Knitwear.

As part of the organics education program, Anvil has developed new TrackMyT lesson plans available on anvilcsr.com. TrackMyT.com, which Anvil developed in 2009, is an interactive website that chronicles the environmental impact of a shirt from seed to store. These new lesson plans create a fun learning experience that emphasizes the importance of choosing organic. Updated lesson plans cover everything from how cotton is grown on farms, to what role insects play in agricultural processes.

Anvil's use of digital media appeals to kids and adults alike and aligns with Anvil's commitment to being an environmentally



and socially responsible company. As part of the program, Anvil also created Shirt Scan, a Smartphone app that delivers multimedia content, such as photos and videos, through a quick response (QR) code. ●

US-Based Textile Exchange is Opening an Exchange Office in Bristol, UK

The new office will enable the organization to work more closely with the Europe-based companies driving much of the growth in the sustainable apparel and home textile marketplace. Textile Exchange Europe will be managed by existing staff and supported by a talented Board chaired by Simon Cooper, founder of CSR Consultancy Ltd.

David Bennell, who is stepping down as the executive director of Textile Exchange,

was instrumental in the expansion. LaRhea Pepper, founder and former executive director of Organic Exchange, and more recently senior director of Textile Exchange, will become the organization's managing director. She will be supported by the senior management team of Heidi McCloskey, Senior Director, Communications and Resource Development; Sandra Castaneda, Outreach Director; Liesl Truscott, Farm Engagement Director; and Anne Gillespie, Industry Integrity Director.

Textile Exchange recently launched the "Farm Hub" Web site (farmhub.textileexchange.org), a one-stop-shop for people interested in organic cotton's commercial benefits and the role it plays in sustainable development. One of the key features is the "Find a Producer" interactive web tool enabling organic cotton producers to market their products online while providing an opportunity for all stakeholders to get closer to the grower communities. ●

OUT OF CONTEXT | KURT GRAY

The Irony of Innovation and Textile Performance ...

the industry quietly threw performance under the bus years ago with its broad acceptance of the gore fabric mantra. this made life easy for retailers and brands alike. it was the apple model applied to outerwear, sure it costs more, but you don't have to make any decisions about performance, just pick your color and size and be on your way. now it is 2011 and everyone wants to promote their own unique innovations, creating a broad wave of new technologies, applications and names. first-to-market technology and increased performance, this sounds good for everybody. however, it might be tough sledding for retailers. most customers don't understand science, and the rest don't have the time and energy to sort it all out. consumers want benefits from their technology, not lectures about how it works. that leaves retailers to judge and summarize apparel technology for their customers. how will they decide what's best? can they support and explain competitive technology platforms and thus connect customers with their apparel?

the general retailer will see technology as one more slippery attribute to account for in

buying and merchandising, while specialty retail will embrace the differentiation. from more finely nuanced technology stories, to outright wild claims, the innovation stampede will increase market confusion and customer allegiance will continue to break along branded lines. people will trust brand over fabric. cultural pushback to the homegrown fog of textile science will be a continuing homogenization of concepts like 'waterproof / breathable' and 'wicking.' the truth is that we should tailor technology and performance to each individual's physiology, supporting the differences in response to activity and environment. the question is, who will put together the pieces of that puzzle?

it was more than a decade ago that John Cooley asked, when did we start selling jackets and quit selling where the jackets go...? good question. I am the first to admit that the once cherished image of the alpine hardman, soloing verglas-covered granite, hood drawn tight and garment closed against incessant spindrift, is as out of touch with the Red Bull generation as it could be.

however, the outdoor industry has recently responded to a broader lifestyle market in some really interesting and relevant ways. it is natural that when the ripples of the outdoor design ethos, that land rover-like blend of function and technology, crosses over other cultural channels, they will be distorted and shaped into a new image. this is especially true of the current urban consciousness and its intersection with the outdoor market. an emerging respect for city life, and all of the inner exploration therein, has led outdoor brands from the suburbs to downtown. expect to see the more forward outdoor companies present apparel that is aimed at an urban landscape, garments that incorporate technology and utility, while maintaining a forward fashion sense. urban outdoor has been evolving, it has simply taken time for the outdoor industry to realize that their goal is not to just to support true alpine apparel, but to encourage people to go outside, no matter where and how they define that.

- k gray