Innovation Leads The Way At ITMA 2019
18th edition ends on high note with large number of quality buyers

Themed 'Innovating the World of Textiles', the 18th edition of ITMA, the world's most established textile and garment technology exhibition, concluded successfully in Barcelona, Spain.

The global textile and garment manufacturing industry converged at ITMA 2019, chalking up new records for the exhibition which has been held every four years since 1951. It featured many exciting new product launches and innovative technologies and products, including those that leverage the Internet of Things, by 1717 exhibitors from 45 countries.

CEMATEX, the European Committee of Textile Machinery Manufacturers, and owner of ITMA and ITMA ASIA, reported that the industry support from visitors and exhibitors was tremendous, resulting in record-breaking number of exhibitors since its inception.

Mr Fritz P. Mayer, President of CEMATEX said, "The digital transformation of the textile and garment manufacturing value chain and sustainability concerns of the industry have driven up visitor interests in ITMA 2019. We had a strong turnout, despite trade tensions and poor business sentiments. Many of our exhibitors were pleasantly surprised with the large number of serious buyers attending the exhibition.

"They were also impressed with presence of new visitor segments, such as bigger numbers of fashion and sports brands. Considering that for this ITMA edition, the exhibition duration has been shortened from 8 to 7 days, we still enjoyed good visitorship."

ITMA 2019 attracted visitorship of over 105,000 from 137 countries. The top 5 countries where visitors came from were Spain (11%), Italy (10%), India (8%), Turkey and Germany (7%). They were followed by France, United States, Portugal, Brazil, Pakistan, China and the United Kingdom.

One of the exhibitors who was pleased with the visitor quality was Johan Verstraete, Vice-President Weaving Machines of Picanol. He explained: "Overall, it has been a good ITMA for us. We came with low expectations, but they have been considerably exceeded. Although we did not get a large number of visitors, the quality was very high. We had many conversations and negotiations, which was somewhat contradictory to the ongoing negative market sentiments."

An excited Paolo Milini, President & CEO of MS Printing Solutions, agreed: "We are very satisfied with the show. The positive results of ITMA 2019 were made possible thanks to a large number of visitors who came to our stand. We have had over 600 contacts a day, and they come from over 90 countries!"

Launched as a dedicated sector at ITMA 2019, the printing and inks chapter had grown by 40% compared with ITMA 2015, and featured many established and new exhibitors who were keen to exploit the digital printing sector.

VDMA Textile Machinery Association members were also happy with the visitor quality. Regina Brückner, CEO of Brückner Group and Chairperson of the Association, enthused: "A VDMA survey conducted at ITMA 2019 showed that almost 90% of our exhibiting member companies considered both the quantity and quality of visitors as 'good' or 'very good'. Visitors from all over the world came to ITMA Barcelona to discuss new projects."

ITMA 2019 also provided the platform for the announcement of a comprehensive modernisation programme for Egypt's textile industry valued at around €1 billion from exhibitors including Benninger, Brückner, EFI Reggiani, Itema, Karl Mayer, Rieter, Savio and Thies.

The innovation place

Many new technologies were launched, ranging from 3D weaving and knitting to hi-tech nonwovens processes, sustainable chemicals and state-of-the-art garment-making technologies, and wide range of software-powered automation solutions.

"I missed the last ITMA in Milan. After eight years, I find there is a big jump in technology. There are many interesting new developments, such as digitalisation and automation, as well as more eco-friendly products. I came here to also buy equipment for my factories, so this has been a fruitful trip for me," said Mr Kihak Sung, Founder of Youngone Corporation and President of International Textile Manufacturers Federation.

Another leading industry player, RakhiI Hirdaramani, Director of Hirdaramani and the Manufacturers Committee Chair of the World Federation of Sporting Goods International, said: "ITMA is a meeting of the minds. As much as it is a machinery fair, it's also about understanding new technologies; meeting with your peers and colleagues from various sectors of the industry to understand the challenges and how to address them. One of the key trends we've seen this year, is about sustainability and Industry 4.0."

Mr Hirdaramani participated in a panel discussion held at the Speakers Platform, one of the components of the ITMA Innovation Lab which was launched at this year's exhibition. The Platform drew strong interest and participation. It featured about 60 presentations, and was attended by over 900 participants.

In addition, a number of ITMA and co-located events drew over 1,000 delegates. Among the events were the ITMA-EDANA Nonwovens Forum, Textile Colourant and Chemical Leaders Forum, Better Cotton Initiative Seminar, European Digital Textile Conference, Tex-Summit Global, Planet Textiles, SAC & ZDHC Manufacturer Forum and Texmeeting by TEXFOR.

ITMA collaborated with supporting organisations, many of which sent visiting delegations from Central Asia, South Asia, Turkey and the Mediterranean countries. Among the high-level government delegations that were at ITMA included Catalan Minister of Business and Knowledge Ángels Chacon i Feixás; Governor of West Flanders Carl Decaluwé who led a press delegation from Flanders, Belgium; and the Uzbekistan Vice Minister of Silk Jumaev Olimjon and Vice Minister of Textile Jumaniyazov Fahriddin who led a delegation of 40 people.

Charles Beauduin, Chairman of ITMA Services, which organises ITMA 2019, said: "We are extremely glad that many industry stakeholders see ITMA as an excellent platform for collaboration and sharing of ideas to make the industry more competitive in the face of digital transformation and to explore cutting-edge solutions to future proof their business."

Alex Zucchi, President of ACIMIT also shares Mr Beauduin's view. He said: "This Barcelona edition has confirmed ITMA as the main B2B platform in the textile industry. The many innovations seen here, especially in the field of sustainability and digitalisation, have increased the interest of visitors. It is essential to focus on these issues also for the next edition of ITMA to be held in Milan in 2023."

The next ITMA will be held in Fiera Milano, Milan, Italy, from 8 to 14 June 2023. Some exhibitors, happy with their participation, have already started making plans for the next show.