FRENCH TEXTILE EQUIPMENT

New trends are related to sustainable developments and Artificial Intelligence.



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1) Present Status of French Textile Machinery Industry ?

In 2022, our sales were back to a "normal pre-pandemic" 1 billion euros annual turnover.
At the beginning of 2023, our orders books are quite good. Most of our members have a backlog of orders of about 5 to 6 months, and new orders are coming in at a reasonable pace. Then, we do not have any reason to be anxious about our near future.
For the long run, we believe that the apparel and home textiles productions will at least, increase with the world population and the economic growth and that many new applications will fuel the technical textile sector. Then, new investments in equipments will be needed both to keep up with

the growth of our customers and to modernize their factories. To be sustainable, this growth will need much more recycling but recycling is also a new sector by itself which needs as many equipments and workforce as the more traditional sectors.
Right now, we face two problems: inflation and shortages of some components. The rising prices of raw materials is not specific to the textile industry. After an unusually long period of worldwide low inflation, the geopolitical tensions, the war in Ukraine, the availability and prices of energy have set a return to a new wave of inflation, rising interest rates and social disruptions. In the equipment business, our companies have faced shortages and incredible price increases in electronic devices and transportation.

Bur, it is when everything looks complicated and difficult that good news may come in. Logistical disruptions seem to ease substantially, transportation prices are going back to pre-crisis levels, the inflation peak seems behind us and interest rates are increased at a lower speed. Then, it may be time to be positive!

2) Which are the new innovation by French Textile Machinery Industry ?

Let me remind you that we are particularly strong in long fibre spinning (wool, acrylic …), yarn twisting and control (including technical yarns), space-dyeing, heat setting for carpet yarns, carpet systems, bleaching and hydro-extractor equipments, dyeing and finishing, felts and belts for finishing processes, precision machining and textile ERP.
Offering off-shelves equipments for mass markets productions is not our strategy. We are focused on smaller or even niche markets, then we have to be prepared to adapt our equipments to our customers' specific needs and have design and production capacities to do this at industrial prices. This has been our strategy for many years, and this is why most of our customers are long time partners. They need flexible equipments and many services from us. Our members have to be agile to design, produce and service the equipments which are needed even for small orders. As they are mostly SME's, run by real entrepreneurs, they can sustain this strategy. R&D and service are in their DNA.

3) Which are the upcoming technology expected to show high growth potential in the future, and what are the factors driving the growth for such technology ?

We are still a few months away from ITMA which will take place next June in Milano. I cannot speak specifically of the new features our members will introduce. It is not the responsibility of our association to do so. Each equipment manufacturer has his own strategy to present its innovations to his own partners and to the general market.
New trends are of course related to sustainable developments and Artificial Intelligence.
Concerning sustainable developments, the demand comes from the end consumers themselves. The well-known global brands as the smaller ones cannot just follow this trend but have to be leaders. Then their own suppliers, the textile (fabric) manufacturers have to adapt their own production processes. This is where, we, as equipment manufacturers, have our own responsibilities. Offer energy, water, chemical, raw materials savings thanks to new design of our equipments.
For the long term, I think it will have a positive effect on our companies. Just one example: one of our members, a few days ago, showed me the energy savings from the replacement of an equipment he had computed with a customer. The pay back of the equipment he was offering was less than a year compared to the machine which was installed in the customer's factory!
The equipment we sell may run for many years but the old equipments are not energy efficient, new investments have very quick paybacks, I believe that this is a real argument to invest and then an additional chance for us to sell new equipments.
Artificial intelligence may help as it helps to focus on zero defects and traceability. Industry 4.0, is already a reality in the factories of our customers. Artificial intelligence is no more a dream but a tool

to maximize the cost reductions and the metaverse is already developed, even by us as an association, to design virtual presentations. In our R&D departments, we see the developments of digitalization and Artificial Intelligence. For example, to design new equipments we have incredible tools like CATIA which has been developed by a French software company. It is sure that digitalization within a factory or between customers and suppliers will continue to take a bigger and bigger role.

4) Your Participation at ITMA 2023? What is the share of French Textile Machinery for the year 2023 in International Textile Machinery Market ?

The French textile equipments manufacturers are the 5th exporters worldwide. ITMAs are important to meet our customers at the highest level. At ITMA we show our latest innovations but we also discuss with our customers-partners about the future. We tell them on which technologies we are working, they tell us what their markets are asking and we try to find how these could fit.
ITMA 2023 will be a great edition. I just received some statistics from the ITMA organizers. Already 120 000 square meters are booked which is about 10% more than the final figures for ITMA 2019 in Barcelona (before the pandemic). This increase does not come from the number of exhibitors but from bigger stands reserved by many exhibitors. We can suppose this means that they think positively and have many equipments to show, many improvements of course but also quite a number of breakthrough technologies. This is quite a thriller, let's wait and see!
We expect ITMA 2023 to help finalize orders already in the pipeline and to open new perspectives with new customers.

5) Role of UCMTF in Promotion of French Textile Machinery Industry ?

As the trade association grouping the French textile equipment manufacturers, we are a member of Cematex and therefore have an important role in the decision-making process of this European association which owns the ITMA brands including ITMA ASIA.
We provide our members economic information and represent them at European and French levels.
We organize road shows in the textile areas. For example, in your own country, India, they took place in Delhi and Surat. They attracted more than 300 textile companies from Delhi, Panipat, Ludhiana, Amrtisar, Ahmedabad, Silvassa, Vapi, Baroda, Vadorara ….
Our goal is to do all this even better.
Since the pandemic, we have organized two seminars in Poland and Belarus. We have redesigned our website www.ucmtf.com which is a very convenient hub to visit our members own websites. We have helped our members design new marketing tools incorporating virtual presentations.

6) Which are the most promising Present and future markets for French Textile Machinery Industry ?

China and Turkey have been our most important markets for quite a while.

India is also a lead market for us, but even if our sales have been lagging, we have set up a good service organization in your country.

We have organized road show as I mentioned, our members have a good network of representatives, spare parts are available etc.

Our sales teams can travel again. As they have established personal relationships with their Indian counterparts, I strongly believe they can go beyond usual business relationships and see how our companies can help their customers develop new markets and products. These partnerships are really important as our strategy has always been to have very stable collaborators, continuing

education and internal promotion. This is very positive to establish a mutual understanding relationship with our customers and go beyond the day-to-day business.

I would like to end this interview with a very proud moment for us. Kristian Blummenfelt, the Norwegian athlete won the Men's Triathlon Olympic Gold Medal. At that time, I did not know that the Trimtex Skinsuit he was wearing for swimming, cycling and running was made of a fabric designed and produced by the French company Payen. Even more: to dye and finish the fabric, Payen is using a machine from one of our members, Alliance. It dyes and finishes the fabric which incorporates an unusually high percentage of elastane covered polymer.
A highly technical finishing equipment for a highly technical fabric and, at the end of the story, a gold Medal!
I trust that many customers will award us "gold medals" during next ITMA. It will be an honor and a pleasure to welcome them on our booths.