

Empowering Innovation and Sustainability: A Visionary Approach by the Swiss Textile Machinery Association

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What are the main goals and initiatives of the Swiss Textile Machinery Association under your leadership?

As Secretary General of Swiss Textile Machinery, my top priority is to strengthen our members and with this the brand of “Swiss Textile Machinery”. We do this as an association in many different ways. One of the pillars of our activities can be summarised under the term promotion. On the one hand, this involves the organisation of Swiss Pavilions, as will soon be the case at Techtextil in Frankfurt (23 - 26 April 2024). Or the organisation of Swiss Textile Machinery Symposia in selected markets. In autumn 2024, we will be holding two symposia in Mexico and the USA. In a second pillar, we support companies in their innovation activities, often with company-specific workshops on selected topics. Currently this is in the area of sustainability. Pillar three focuses on skills development and training, where we work together with the Swiss Textile College. And last but not least, various activities and support for our members in connection with the ITMA and ITMA Asia + CITME exhibitions.

In what ways does Swiss textile machinery stand out on the global stage?

Switzerland has topped the global innovation rankings for the 13th year in a row. According to a study by the United Nations (UN), Switzerland is once again the most innovative country in the world. Our member companies share this claim. They stand for offering innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges in the textile industry. This focus continues to make the Swiss textile machinery industry an important partner for our global industry.

How is technology shaping the future of textile machinery in Switzerland?

Technological solutions are the answer to many of the (textile) challenges we face today. These are the topics that our industry has been working on for some time and which have lost none of their topicality. It is digitalisation, automation and solutions to the challenges of textile recycling that are driving developments in the coming years. Switzerland can make a major contribution to the last point in particular, as the spinning process is very central here and is one of the core competences of the Swiss textile machinery industry.

Sustainability is a hot topic in every industry. How is the Swiss textile machinery industry contributing to more sustainable practices?

Sustainability has various aspects that all have to work together, from ecological to economic and social sustainability.

There are many starting points here. As already described, there are developments to reduce water and energy consumption. Or the reduction or substitution of certain chemicals. Or a higher efficiency of the plants, which leads to the same result.

In the meantime, many efforts are underway with alternative fibres. This also requires machine manufacturers to be able to produce and process these fibres.

Machine manufacturers play a big role in the whole discussion around textile recycling. As solution providers, they have the opportunity to contribute significantly to the further development of technologies.

And of course the companies also invest in their own infrastructure to make production operations more efficient. They do it with building insulation or sustainable energy sources.

What are the most significant challenges facing the Swiss textile machinery industry today?

We are in a time when there are so many challenges at the same time. At the moment, the lack of demand and therefore the low order intake is one of the biggest problems. In Switzerland, however, the exchange rate issue has

also become more acute again. The Swiss Franc has strengthened again against the Euro, making it more difficult for Switzerland to compete. And then there are the geopolitical challenges and, currently, more difficult logistics routes due to the Suez Canal. All of this together is a challenge for the entire industry, and there is no real turning point in sight.

How is your association addressing these challenges?

Here I have to take a quick step back. Swiss Textile Machinery is an industry sector of Swissmem, the association of the Swiss tech industry. Swissmem takes care of these support issues, be it with legal advice or lobbying activities, mainly in Switzerland. The network within the industry is also important here in order to be able to exchange best practice.

Could you discuss any international partnerships or projects that the Swiss Textile Machinery Association is currently involved in?

One of the tasks of an association is to enter into interesting partnerships in the interests of its members. In our industry in particular, it is very important to do this internationally.



How does the Swiss textile industry adapt to the ever-changing global market trends?

Of interest to the Indian market is our cooperation with the DKTE, which we intend to develop further. But of course we are constantly evaluating and there is certainly room for further partnerships. We are also intensifying our cooperation with universities in other countries. On the one hand, they have a great deal of technological expertise, but they are also very familiar with the applied research funding programmes in which companies can participate. On the other hand, they are also an interesting pool of potential future employees.

Where do you see the Swiss textile machinery industry in the next five to ten years?

To answer this question, I would like to go back in time... Many of the companies in our association were founded in the second half of the 19th century, have experienced many ups and downs and have built up an excellent reputation over time. Thanks to their long history, Swiss companies have always managed to anticipate change, develop their business strategy and continue to evolve. For this reason, and with the 4,232 years of experience that our 44 members bring to the table, I am certain that the Swiss textile machinery industry will remain an innovation leader and important solution provider in the years to come.

What advice would you give to young professionals aspiring to make a mark in the textile machinery industry?

For various reasons, I am convinced that the textile and textile machinery industry is a very interesting and future-oriented field of activity. Firstly, because textile solutions are also needed in innovative sectors such as construction, medicine and aviation. On the other hand, we are facing major challenges, e.g. the increasing demand for the recycling of textiles. There are many opportunities here to contribute to new and forward-looking technologies. Exciting and challenging at the same time.

Closing Thoughts: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers about the Swiss Textile Machinery Association or the textile industry at large?

When it comes to bilateral relations between Switzerland and India, there are currently positive signs that the free trade agreement between India and the EFTA states will be finalised in the coming months. The details are not yet known, but we assume that this would also boost cooperation between the two countries in our sector.

