Swiss Textile Machinery in China: Innovation, Competitiveness and the Road Ahead



Cornelia Buchwalder
Secretary General Swiss Textile Machinery

1. How do you assess the current and future opportunities for Swiss textile machinery technology in the Chinese market?

China is the world's largest textile and apparel manufacturing market and therefore remains of fundamental importance to the Swiss textile machinery industry. Many Swiss companies have been active in China for decades and have established local production, sales and service organisations. The importance of the market therefore goes far beyond machinery exported directly from Switzerland.

At the same time, the competitive environment has changed significantly. Chinese textile machinery manufacturers have made substantial technological progress, and the gap to international technology providers has narrowed considerably. Combined with competitive costs, strong local supply chains and proximity to customers, this technological progress creates an increasingly demanding environment for Swiss manufacturers. Maintaining a technological lead can therefore no longer be taken for granted.

Continuous innovation is essential. Swiss companies need to remain a step ahead in areas where specialised know-how, precision, reliability and advanced process technology create measurable added value. This includes intelligent automation and digitalisation, higher productivity and process stability, reduced energy, water and raw-material consumption, as well as technologies for new materials, recycling and high-value textile applications.

China will therefore remain a highly important market for Swiss textile machinery. Future opportunities will increasingly depend on the ability to anticipate changing customer requirements and to provide technological solutions that deliver clear added value over the entire lifecycle of a machine or process.

2. What are the key technology trends among Chinese textile manufacturers, particularly in automation, digitalisation, energy efficiency and sustainability?

From the perspective of Swiss textile machinery manufacturers, these developments are closely linked to the need for more efficient and reliable production. Automation and digitalisation are not objectives in themselves; they need to contribute to higher productivity, consistent quality, better process control and reduced downtime.

The same applies to sustainability. Solutions that reduce energy, water, chemicals or raw-material consumption offer both environmental and economic benefits. This is particularly relevant as textile manufacturers need to remain competitive while meeting increasingly demanding requirements regarding resource use and sustainability.

TECHNOLOGY

For Swiss technology providers, the focus is therefore on solutions that combine productivity, quality, resource efficiency and increasingly intelligent production. The ability to demonstrate a measurable benefit for the customer is becoming more important than technology for technology's sake.

3. What technologies, innovations or solutions will your company highlight for the Chinese market at ITMA ASIA + CITME 2026?

Swissmem represents 42 companies within its Swiss Textile Machinery sector, covering almost the entire textile production chain. At ITMA Asia + CITME 2026, 18 Swiss companies will be exhibiting. Measured by exhibition space, Switzerland represents the fifth-largest exhibiting country, demonstrating the strong commitment of our industry to the Chinese market.

The Swiss exhibitors represent a wide range of technologies, from spinning preparation and yarn production to weaving, knitting, finishing, quality control and components. Their exhibits will include both new developments and further improvements to established technologies, with a strong focus on specialised solutions and high-value applications.

There is therefore no single innovation that represents the Swiss presence in Shanghai. Its strength lies in the combination of highly specialised companies, many of them technology leaders in their respective fields. ITMA Asia + CITME 2026 provides them with an important platform to demonstrate these capabilities and discuss concrete applications with customers in China and beyond.