



An Eco Index for everyone

A panel of industry specialists from Nau, AAFA, and Restore presented "An Eco Index for Everyone" based on the Outdoor Industry Association's work during Texworld USA on January 18th in New York City. Sponsored by Lenzing Inc, the seminar was attended by more than sixty mills, brands and retailers, to explain the benefits and features of the Eco Index.

The Eco Index, developed by the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), provides the tools to allow companies to incorporate environmental considerations into product design and to manage their supply chain in a way that supports their environmental goals. It is an internal and supply chain facing tool and not a consumer facing label. The beta phase 1 began in August 2010 for the industry. Feedback from members and reviewed will be assessed and the formal Eco Index Phase 1 is scheduled to launch in 2011.

The Eco Working Group was formed in 2006 and became a part of the OIA in 2007 with more than 200 members today. With an esteemed and global group of voting members, the OIA includes Adidas, Brooks, Columbia, EMS, Levi Strauss and Company, Marmot, Patagonia, REI, Timberland, and more.

The moderator of the panel, Karla

Magruder, President of Fabrikology International said, "The OIA Index was developed in a way that allows companies of any size to use some part of the index. This makes it usable for a very wide audience. In addition the index was developed keeping global regulations in mind with participation from a wide variety of stakeholders. The end result is an index that can be useful to global companies at many levels of the apparel supply chain."

The five key Eco Index principles are collaboration, open source information, transparency, scalability and global reach. "The OIA/ Eco index represents the collaboration of a whole industry that is committed to driving change to reduce it's environmental footprint. The global scope shows in our effort to harmonize and reference standards and regulations worldwide," said presenter Jamie Bainbridge, Director of Fabric and Product Development at Nau Inc based in Seattle, Washington.

Bainbridge also highlighted that companies who participated in the Eco Index are being recognized as global thought leaders in sustainability. The Eco Index was even listed in GreenBiz.com as "Top Ten Most Hopeful Green Business Stories of 2010" and also featured in the *Wall Street Journal*.

According to panelist Steve Lamar, Executive Vice President of AAFA, American Apparel and Footwear Association, the Eco Index is a key tool to help apparel and footwear executives measure and understand the sustainability consequences of their materials, processes and entire supply chains. "For an industry like ours that is on the front lines of globalization, it is essential to develop a single tool so we can talk the same language," he said. "That our products are made and sold in virtually every corner of the planet makes the sustainability mission all that more important."

Celeste Lilore, Co-Founder of Restore Clothing added: "As collaborators of EWG/OIA we are grateful for the dedication and hard work done to create this unprecedented Eco Index. We wish this open-source, one stop shop, for links, resources and education had been available before we launched our brand.

"The Index will become the anchor all brands need to benchmark their environmental (and eventually social) impact. The points of entry are accessible to brands of all sizes because the Index has been designed to be completed in bite size pieces. For us, the Index confirmed that interaction is easier when working with a supply chain and relationship based."

The presentation was a part of the seminar series held during the tenth edition of Texworld USA, organized by Messe Frankfurt. Mills at the show with environmentally responsible fabrics are now identified with a new Eco Leaf designation. "Texworld USA has been highlighting Eco-friendly exhibitors since 2009 and is proud to be a continued resource for buyers looking to source green fabrics. The January 2011 edition introduced the new Eco Leaf Branding System developed by our Interstoff Brand in Frankfurt which implements a vetting system of each exhibitor claiming to have Eco-friendly Fabrics to ensure that only those exhibitors with legitimate certificates and practices in place are listed as Eco-friendly," said Stephanie Everett, Group Show Director at Messe Frankfurt. ■

A video tape of the OIA seminar is available at www.media.lenzing.com