



INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE MANUFACTURERS FEDERATION  
FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES INDUSTRIES TEXTILES  
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG DER TEXTILINDUSTRIE

**SPINNERS COMMITTEE**

**Travel Report**

**San Joaquin Valley  
Quality Cotton Growers Association**

**Bakersfield, California**

May 18 & 19, 2004

On May 18 and 19, 2004, 3 members of the ITMF Spinners Committee and the Director General visited Bakersfield in the San Joaquin Valley of California, by invitation of the San Joaquin Valley Quality Cotton Growers Association:

**Participants**

Andrew Macdonald (Chairman)  
Ziad Bashir  
Walter Bieri  
Herwig Strolz

Santista Textil  
Guhl Ahmed  
Bühler Quality Yarns  
Director General

Brazil  
Pakistan  
USA  
ITMF

## **What is the San Joaquin Valley Quality Cotton Growers Association?**

### **History**

The Association was originally formed in 1998 when the law was changed in California that allowed any cotton variety to be planted, as opposed to the traditional one-quality law that guaranteed to all mill customers worldwide that all SJV cottons would be either approved Acalas or Pimas. A particular group of growers was concerned that the law change might jeopardize the integrity and premium reputation of SJV cottons and came together to provide a source of supply to the world's textile mills of exclusively SJV approved Acalas and Pimas. In 2001, the Association's trademark (SJV®Quality Cotton) was officially registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. In 2002, the Association licensed Weil Brothers Cotton to be their exclusive marketing representative to the worldwide market.

### **Objective**

The Association's focus is on differentiating themselves as cotton suppliers based on a total commitment to quality issues. Specifically, all Association growers are obligated to select only approved SJV Acala and Pima varieties, take all steps necessary to eliminate foreign material contamination, and follow very specific protocol to control aphids and whiteflies that are generally responsible for stickiness in California cottons. This protocol was developed by the Association's Quality Assurance Committee in conjunction with the University of California and every grower's PCA (Pest Control Advisor). The protocol requires all Association growers to submit to the Association their weekly pest management reports beginning July 15 through harvest for every field registered for marketing through the Association. The growers are required to follow University of California guidelines and all treatment recommendations from their PCAs to eliminate and control aphids and whiteflies. The Association will keep a data base on a field by field basis that will provide the Association a detailed profile of any insect activity and subsequent treatments that will enable the Association to know at harvest time whether a particular field has any probability of stickiness or not. If it is determined that a particular field had insect populations that were not successfully treated, bales from those fields will not be packaged and sold as Association cottons (each Association-approved bale will be packaged in a bag with the Association's trademarked logo). In order to further ensure that no sticky bales are marketed as Association cotton (SJV®Quality), the Association will be utilizing a Lintronic FCT machine to verify that no sticky cotton is packaged in an Association logo.

Furthermore, the FCT unit will provide the Association with measurements for neps, seedcoat fragments, trash, fineness and maturity. By having the ability to measure these characteristics, as well as having USDA HVI data, it is the Association's intention to identify quality-conscious spinning mills around the world with whom the Association can work to develop mutually-beneficial long-term relationships – based on a shared commitment to quality.

### **Invitation to dialogue**

The invitation to the ITMF Spinners Committee was extended when the management of the Association and especially, Mr. Bruce Groefsema, came about the Spinners Committee's travel report of its visit to Australia in 2003. Mr. Groefsema is Vice President of Western Operations for Weil Brothers Cotton Inc. and a former Senior Vice President of Sales for Calcot Ltd. He has a 24-year background in international cotton marketing and has served in a variety of cotton leadership roles, including President and Chairman of Cotton Council International.

In his invitation letter of July 18, 2003, Mr. Groefsema said that "I have been familiar with the Committee's work for many years and understand clearly that one of the Committee's

primary objectives has been to encourage the production of quality cottons that can maximize both efficiencies and qualities on today's spinning technologies."

"As I read the conclusion section of the above mentioned (Australia) Travel Report, it became obvious to me that the SJV Quality Cotton Growers Association shares with your Committee the objective of developing a marketing system, using today's technologies, that will return to growers the true value of their cottons. Our Association is in the unique position of being able to produce and select SJV@Quality cottons that can meet particular mill demands that include neps, maturity, and stickiness, in return for the premium prices that such cottons warrant in the marketplace."

### **Visiting programme**

On Tuesday, May 18, the Committee met with members of the Association in the morning and in the afternoon carried out a field visit to the Lost Hills Range of the Starrh family. On Wednesday, May 19, it met with a wider group of growers, seed breeders, ginners and the cotton research community and in the afternoon continued discussions at the offices of CPCSD, the California Planting Cotton Seed Distributors.

At the Wednesday morning meeting, in addition to answering to questions and making observations, Mr. Andrew Macdonald presented the paper on "Market-based Incentives for Improving Cotton Quality" which he had prepared for previous occasions, especially for the Committee's visit to Australia. He reported moreover on the outcome of the first meeting of the "Expert Panel on Commercial Standardization of Instrument Testing of Cotton" which was held in Bremen on March 22 and has been organized by the International Cotton Advisory Committee on the initiative of the Liverpool Cotton Association with the support from ITMF.

### **Observations and recommendations**

#### **"Quality" versus "spinnability"**

Spinners prefer to talk about "spinnability" rather than "quality" as the term quality may differ widely depending on the end-use the cotton is destined for.

#### **"Consistency" above all**

"Consistency" has today become the first and foremost requirement for spinners as only consistency will guarantee smooth and even running production at the mill. Consistency is not to be confounded with uniformity, the latter applying to cotton within one bale and the former to equal running cotton from bale to bale.

#### **Testing instrument readings**

With the installation of the Lintronics Fiberlab machine the Association members had to learn to understand and handle numbers which were very different from those produced by older instruments such as AFIS. Whilst the results were similar in trend, the difference in numbers was considerable (approx. 1 : 10 / Fiberlab : AFIS).

The Committee observed that when it comes to maturity the Fiberlab's double compression reading has a very good relation with HVI values.

#### **HVI information**

The Committee welcomed as much HVI information as possible as this would definitely facilitate laydowns and proper bale blending.

### **Premiums for SJV cottons?**

Asked whether the grower members of the Association could ever hope to recoup the money spent on improving the spinnability of their cotton, the Committee was unanimous in replying that whilst this will probably not be the case, the premium consisted in getting the business and, if the efforts had not been undertaken, the cotton may have to be sold at a discount.

### **SJV – a permanent marketing commitment**

In order for SJV to keep its image in the market, this will have to be communicated permanently to the potential customers. Nep limitation is a subject and in future also short-fibre content. As the yarn is only a semi-manufactured product, growers have to look further down the pipeline to the weaving and finishing stages to know how to increase the value of their cotton.

### **Effects of the multi-variety policy in the Valley**

Fine count spinners do have a problem, essentially because of colour variations even if R + b are stipulated. The problem lies in the blending.

### **Mixing of varieties**

Mixing of varieties whilst bad generally for spinners, becomes a real curse the finer the cottons are. Variety difference has a far greater impact on ELS cottons than machine measurements would suggest.

### **On-line testing in ginning**

Ginners having tested with both Uster and Schaffner equipment have obtained good results but who is going to pay for it? The Committee observed that for on-line testing to be effective it has to move to the ginning stage and that the retribution from the market will in the end come from getting the business (for gins with equipment) instead of having to suffer a discount (for gins without).

### **Influence of prep on price**

The Committee recognised that poor preparation had in the past an influence on price and was discounted. For (fine count) spinners today, however, prep is irrelevant.

### **Spinning data versus HVI information**

For breeders who have to look 10 years ahead it is difficult to guess what the textile industry's needs will be in 10 years. As the future market trends could not be predicted for such a long time, all factors influencing spinnability should be given due attention whether it is length, strength, neps, short-fibre content.

### **On maturity**

Maturity is becoming increasingly important as mature cotton gives less neps in the gin and better dye take-up in processing. Pima has better dye take-up than Upland and hence needs less chemicals. It also influences spinning efficiency and short-fibre content. It was reported that some growers were known as to check the micronaire whilst the cotton was still in the field and then harvest as soon as it reaches the desired value. There was a fairly good relationship between micronaire readings and maturity levels which was not perfect but provided a good approximation.

### **Variety influence on neps**

Variety is only one factor in controlling neps. Attention has to be paid equally to pickers and ginning equipment to bring the level down. Much will depend on the development of a fast testing method which is not yet available.

**Breeding for textile equipment?**

It is extremely difficult to breed for better values of all fibre properties. Australia has tried and failed, losing value through higher Mic. Brazil is now moving into that market which it will be difficult for the Australians to regain.

The Committee suggested that it would be wise to concentrate improvement on the basic fibre parameters that can be measured quickly and accurately. Maturity, strength and length should be brought up concurrently. The Committee which had several years ago looked into a prioritisation of fibre characteristics will put this subject again on the agenda of its next meeting.

**Genetic engineering and fibre quality**

From the literature available to date it would appear that genetic engineering has no testable effect on important fibre properties.

**Learning versus teaching**

In summarizing the discussions at the various meetings, the Chairman of the Committee observed that contrary to previous country visits where the Committee was the message conveyor, this time the Committee had learned a lot from the discussions with the many different industry segments represented at the meetings.