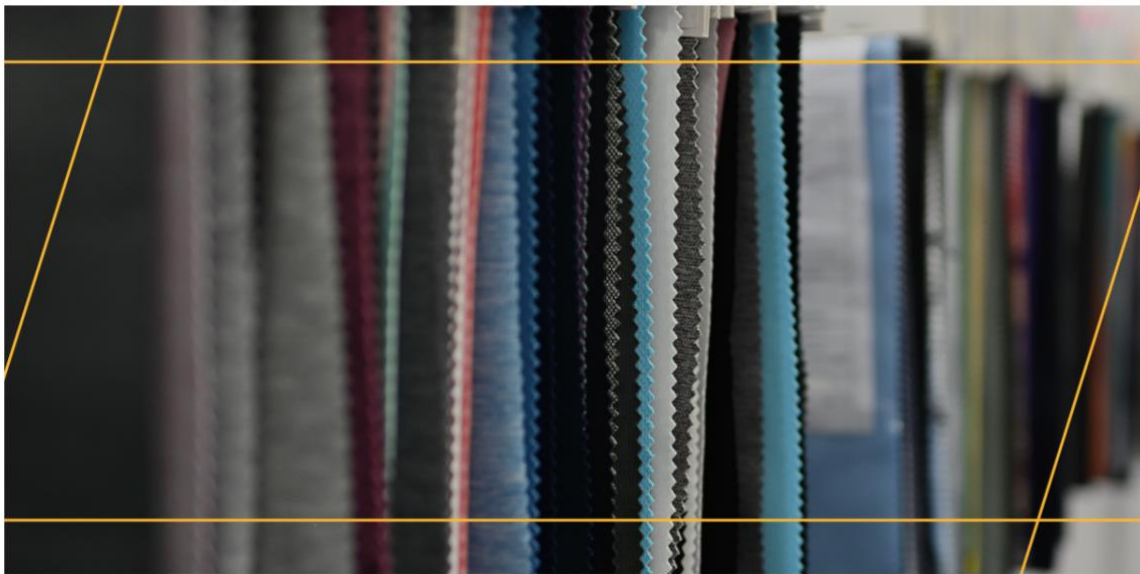




Functional Fabric Fair Dives Deeper into Sustainability for New Spring 2022 Edition

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By *SJ* Guest Editorial



CREDIT: Functional Fabric Fair

After making its in-person return to Portland, Ore. in November 2021, [Functional Fabric Fair](#) is resuming its full-year physical [trade show](#) schedule as it prepares to host its first Spring event.

[Functional Fabric Fair](#), produced by trade show giant RX (formerly Reed Exhibitions) in tandem with PERFORMANCE DAYS, will be held April 4-5, 2022 in Portland's Oregon Convention Center.

Dedicated to outdoor, lifestyle and activewear textiles and accessories, the sourcing platform is preparing to bring apparel CEOs, designers and product development executives together to feature innovative textiles for the Spring 2024 season. This includes high-performance functional fabrics, finishes, trims and accessories from a carefully curated selection of fabric mills and technology companies.

Functional Fabric Fair also is adopting green meeting practices by partnering with meeting centers dedicated to minimizing waste. In line with today's [sustainability](#) push, fabrics are presented on the show floor in minimalist booths made of biodegradable, recycled and reusable materials.

Ahead of the event, Steve McCullough, Functional Fabric Fair's event director, said visitors should look out for a broader, more diverse manufacturing audience in this season's edition.

"We have been asked to have more North, Central and South American manufacturers as well as European manufacturers," McCullough told Sourcing Journal. "Also, we're taking a deeper dive into sustainability, not just calling out some basic attributes, but really educating the raw material directors and ultimately the end use consumer, as to the process and manner in [what] makes their product sustainable."

Every show features a "focus topic" that deals with a developing core trend in functional fashion. The November 2021 event highlighted the reuse of Nylon, which is typically a non-reusable component, and even included an on-demand keynote on the fabric's future.

This show's focus topic, The Journey to Carbon Neutrality, will emphasize the metrics that manufacturers should be implementing in the production process, which includes assigning a Carbon Emission Value to its fabrics and ultimately to the finished product.

Although physical trade shows are back in full swing, the digital sourcing tool [The LOOP](#) is still a pivotal component of Functional Fabric Fair's overall value proposition. For one, the tool gives those who physically cannot travel to the events in Portland, New York, Munich or Shanghai access a global pool of suppliers and products throughout the whole year.

The LOOP is home to more than 262 exhibitors from 33 countries showcasing more than 15,000 products in an online marketplace, and includes live Expert Talks webinars, 3D fabric visualization capabilities and matchmaking services.

“We have a simple approach to our matchmaking,” McCullough said. “Each exhibitor fills out a ‘personality’ of their capabilities, and we ask the same questions to our visitors. Those who are looking for and those who carry the same needs, are matched.”

Despite adapting to the digital shift smoothly during the Covid-19 pandemic, Functional Fabric Fair now can capitalize on the long-awaited return to physical shows.

“We learned that the industry is even hungrier than we expected to return to face-to-face events,” McCullough said. “The products our exhibitors manufacture still require an in-person experience. As good as some digital representations can be, nothing will replace the face-to-face process.”



In pre-Covid times, Functional Fabric Fair would traditionally bring in approximately 1,200 individual attendees. But upon last November’s in-person return, the 2021 version achieved roughly 75 percent of this number. McCullough said attendance at the April 2022 event should be closer to pre-Covid numbers.

As topics such as climate change and sustainability in fashion continue to remain top of mind among consumers and brands alike, the trade show is introducing a new campaign geared at protecting the environment. In partnership with the reforestation nonprofit Trees for the Future, the Fair pledges to plant 10 trees for every visitor who attends the show in Portland.

Beyond the April event, Functional Fabric Fair will return to Portland in October 2022. Coinciding with the U.S. events, PERFORMANCE DAYS will host the trade show's international edition in Munich on April 27-28, and then again for the fall in October.

To participate in [Functional Fabric Fair Spring](#), held April 4-5, 2022, register [here](#).