

# Commanding Performance

The sourcing trade fair for functional fabrics, Performance Days, returns to Germany in April, loaded with all the latest industry developments. **Fiona Haran** looks back at last season's show in November to see what functions are likely to dominate future trends

Twice a year, Munich plays host to Performance Days, a sourcing platform for designers, product and purchasing managers in the functional fabrics industry. The first show of 2016 will be held on 20-21 April at the MTC World of Fashion, with organisers hoping to build on the success of the last edition in November, which welcomed 136 exhibitors from 22 countries.

Launched by Weichert Agencies in 2008, the fair offers visitors everything from textiles to yarns, finishes and accessories. The core of the exhibition is the Performance Forum – a showcase for the latest trends in fabric development, which culminates in the most innovative product of the fair receiving the Performance Award. The last prize was handed to YKK for its new elastic zipper system, SOFLEX. The zipper can be completely stretched with all components, and provides improved processing and better looking high stretch outer fabrics, whether with laminates for the outer layer models or for warp knits or knitted fabrics for the midlayer.

Meanwhile, a new category introduced in April 2015 – the Eco Performance Award – went to Flocus for the development of a new yarn based on an exceptional

natural fibre called kapok. Found in the dried fruits of kapok trees, the fibre is said to have numerous active functions that react to the human body during physical activity, such as sweat release ability, body heat regulation, odour reduction, breathability and quick dry properties.

“When designing the collections for the future, we will have to pay more attention to the customer's demand for comfort and functionality”

## Athleisure

At November's trade fair, the fashion and function trend of 'Athleisure' proved a hit with visitors. Athleisure fabrics are revered by both retailers and consumers for their blend of natural and manmade fibres, meeting the requirements of both comfort and aesthetics.

In great demand are merino wool blends, especially for the active wear

segment as they boost durability. For example, merino with polyamide is said to be more robust than pure merino products, and less subject to pilling.

Merino with polyester transports moisture away; merino with polypropylene ensures quick drying; and merino with Tencel gives the garment a very soft, silky feel coupled with climate management.

The advantages of synthetic fibres in active wear are well known, but wearing comfort and performance can now be improved further with even more blends. Polyamide with elastane, for example, is a highly elastic combination that is ideal for tight-fitting body wear or leggings, and exhibits good moisture management properties.

If quick drying is important, then polyester offers a combined advantage: the polyester side on the skin ensures rapid transport of perspiration to the surface, protecting the wearer's body from cold temperatures. Polyamide caters to durability and long life. When elastane is blended with polyester, the result is a perfect combination for highly energetic sports that call for freedom of movement. While polyester and Tencel blends create a soft, silky fabric with natural haptics and a nice sensation on the skin, with intelligent

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moisture management.

Another durable and fast-drying variant is polypropylene with polyamide. Very good moisture transport off the skin and to the surface is provided by the polypropylene. While the polyamide distributes sweat across the surface so that it can quickly evaporate, keeping the surface clean and rugged.

Discussing the brands and segments that are most concerned with

Athleisure, international designer Nora Kühner, who attended the last edition of Performance Days, said: "Athleisure can be a very diverse topic in the textile

industry. Generally speaking, when designing the collections for the future, we will have to pay more attention to the customer's demand for comfort and functionality in daily life. I am not speaking about offering a rain jacket that can be worn in the mountains as well as in the pedestrian zone, but rather about developing designs with a sense for more attractive looks, a kind of hybrid collection segment – one that can fit equally in the sports as well as in the fashion branch.

"And of course, these hybrid collections have to be accepted and promoted by the trade. Until now, the sport segment has been somewhat reluctant when it comes to the stylish interpretation of sportswear," she added.

## Presentations

Alongside the exhibitions, Performance Days holds a podium presentation every hour during the entire fair in Hall 4.

Topics to be discussed in April include: novelties in functional fabrics for summer 2018; advancements in ecology and sustainability; the scientific secret for sports bras; integrating smart textiles into product design; and fluorine-free durable water repellent (DWR) technologies.

Last season's presentations addressed novelties in reflective materials and fabrics.

German company Regine introduced reflective transfer prints that can also be applied to highly elastic materials. While 3M teamed up with Safe Reflections to offer individually coloured reflective materials, and JRC debuted a new reflective fibre that can also be processed as a circular knit. The experts said that stretch clothing can be produced in the future, which offers additional benefits and the safety aspects of reflection.

## Innovations on show

A number of manufacturers are turning their attention to coffee to produce the next generation of functional fabrics, including Singtex, which presented the world's first coffee produced bio-based material at last season's show.



Performance Days is a sourcing platform for professionals in the functional fabrics industry

well as UV protection and fast drying

functions. Singtex said it is creating more possibilities and presenting designers and customers with further innovative textile technologies. These include Airmest, a bio-based coffee foam developed for odour control, thermoregulation and eco-friendliness; and Airmem, a bio-based coffee membrane. Containing 25% of coffee oil extracted from spent coffee grounds, the membrane is aimed to replace petroleum-based materials.

In the insulation sector, Thermore presented its Thermal Booster product, which adapts to weather changes.

As opposed to many other insulation garments on the market that only provide static warmth, Thermal Booster is said to provide extra warmth. According to the company, it's just like having a heat pack – as the temperature decreases, the technology increases its warmth up to over 20%. And if the temperature decreases, it automatically re-tunes to the warmer climate, keeping the wearer "in the comfort zone".

Meanwhile, G-LOFT presented a new addition to its synthetic high-tech fibre range, G-LOFT Ci. Produced at the company's headquarters in Austria, the synthetic fibre fleece has been designed for use in fashion apparel, where compact insulation tends to be preferable and very open materials can be combined. The fibre is said to combine the benefits of natural down with the ruggedness of a synthetic fibre. Plus, due to what's called the 'memory effect', the fibres automatically return to their original form, providing warmth, even after repeated washing and hard use.

To see the exhibitor list for April, and to access the latest presentation news, visit the website below.

S.Café is a functional fibre ideal for knitted and woven apparel. Utilising the ability of coffee grounds to absorb odours, the fibre is said to provide a comfortable wearing experience as

[www.performance-days.com](http://www.performance-days.com)