

French Textile Equipment Manufacturers' Association

UCMTF

Interview for Textilegence

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January 2023

1. How was 2022 for French textile machinery manufacturers overall? How did the inflationary pressures and political crises caused by the pandemic and war affect you in reaching your goals? Were the expected sales and order figures achieved?

2020 was characterized by the pandemic. Our sales rebounded by more than 50% in 2021 to a "normal" 1 billion euros annual turnover. I do not have yet the 2022 figures but they should be around this figure both for orders intakes and sales.

Our margins have suffered from the incredible price increases in some components. You know, as well as me, the availability and price problems we had with microprocessors and the logistical bottlenecks which made the international commerce very complicated.

2. In which markets French textile machinery manufacturers were more active in 2022? In this context, could you evaluate the Turkish market? Which segments did you receive the most demand from in Turkey?

Our first market, China has been hit by so many lockdowns that our orders intakes have not yet rebounded in this major market.

The Turkish market has also known quite a number of disruptions including very high inflation and exchange rates fluctuations. In your country, thanks to very close partnerships with our customers in every segment of the textile industry, including the carpet industry based in Gaziantep, we have continued to work on many projects, some of which, nevertheless, have been slightly postponed.

Fortunately, we have made up with these headwinds thanks to such markets as the US, and some nice orders from South America and India.

3. What subjects will French textile machinery manufacturers focus on in their R&D studies in the new year? Will your investments in this field increase?

Our DNA main characteristics are R&D and service. Our strategy is to offer the right equipments to produce what their own markets ask to our customers. Within this framework, we are focusing on energy, raw materials, water and chemical savings and on recycling processes.

We are still months away from ITMA which will take place next June in Milano. I cannot speak specifically of the new features our members will introduce. It is not the responsibility of our association to do so. Each equipment manufacturer has his own strategy to present them to his own partners and to the general market.

4. *Following Industry 4.0, there is talk of Industry 5.0, where artificial intelligence is stronger and production is almost completely digitized. How are French textile machinery manufacturers positioning themselves in this regard, and what path are you going to follow about it in the new year?*

Industry 4.0, 5.0, why not 6.0. I joke but the internet of things is already a reality in the factories of our customers. Artificial intelligence is no more a dream but a tool to maximize the cost reductions and the metaverse is already developed, even by us as an association, to design virtual presentations.

The only thing which is sure is the speed at which all these technologies are developed and that digitalization within a factory or between customers and suppliers will continue to take a bigger and bigger role.

5. *What steps do the member companies of UCMTF take to reduce their carbon footprint in terms of both their company structures and their products? In this sense, what kind of contributions do you add to the global textile industry?*

I believe that most of our contributions are not within our own companies but are coming from the equipments we offer.

Nevertheless, within our own companies we continue to see mergers and acquisitions which are a source of economies of scale and rationalizations.

In our R&D departments, we see the developments of digitalization and Artificial Intelligence, we just spoke about. For example, to design new equipments we have incredible tools like CATIA which has been developed by a French software company.

6. *What kind of economic change do you expect in the global textile market next year? Do you see a positive outlook when you look forward?*

It is when everything looks complicated and difficult that good news may come in. War, logistical disruptions, high energy prices and inflation, higher interest rates make up for the headlines. But logistical disruptions seem to ease substantially, transportation prices are going back to normal levels, the inflation peak seems behind us and interest rates even if they still go up, it is at a lower speed.

Then, it may be time to be positive.

7. *What are your goals and expectations for 2023? In which markets and segments do you expect growth? In this context, what is the position of the Turkish market for you*

Our orders books are quite good. Most of our members cannot deliver new orders before the second half of 2023 and yet new orders are coming in at a reasonable pace. Then, we do not have any reason to be anxious about our near future. We expect ITMA 2023 to help finalize orders already in the pipeline and to open new perspectives with new customers.

For the long run, we believe that the apparel and home textiles productions will, at least, increase with the world population and the economic growth and that many new applications will fuel the technical textile sector. Recycling processes may dampen the production of new fibers but recycling is also a new sector by itself which needs as many equipments and workforce as the more traditional sectors.

8. The industry is preparing for a great meeting with ITMA in the new year. How many companies do you participate with in this exhibition? What kind of innovations will French textile machinery manufacturers showcase here, will there be new launches?

Yes, it is quite sure that ITMA 2023 will be a great edition. I just received some statistics from the ITMA organizers. Already 120 000 square meters are booked which is about 10% more than the final figures for ITMA 2019 in Barcelona (before the pandemic broke). This increase does not come from the number of exhibitors but from bigger stands reserved by many exhibitors. We can suppose this means that they think positively and have many equipments to show, many improvements of course but also quite a number of breakthrough technologies. This is quite a thriller, let's wait and see!

9. Finally, is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to share with you a proud moment for the French textile equipments. Kristian Blummenfelt, the Norwegian athlete won the Men's Triathlon Olympic Gold Medal. At that time, I did not know that the Trimtex Skinsuit he was wearing for swimming, cycling and running was made of a fabric designed and produced by the French company Payen. Even more: to dye and finish the fabric, Payen is using a Rotor machine from one of our members, Alliance. In fact, the very fine and technical fabric which incorporates an unusually high percentage of elastane covered polymer, needed to be rolled on a beam which rotates in the machine.

A highly technical finishing equipment for a highly technical fabric and, at the end of the story, a gold Medal!