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Institut für
Textiltechnik und
Lehrstuhl für
Textilmaschinenbau

RWTHAACHEN
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Press Release

Institut für Textiltechnik of RWTH Aachen University (ITA)

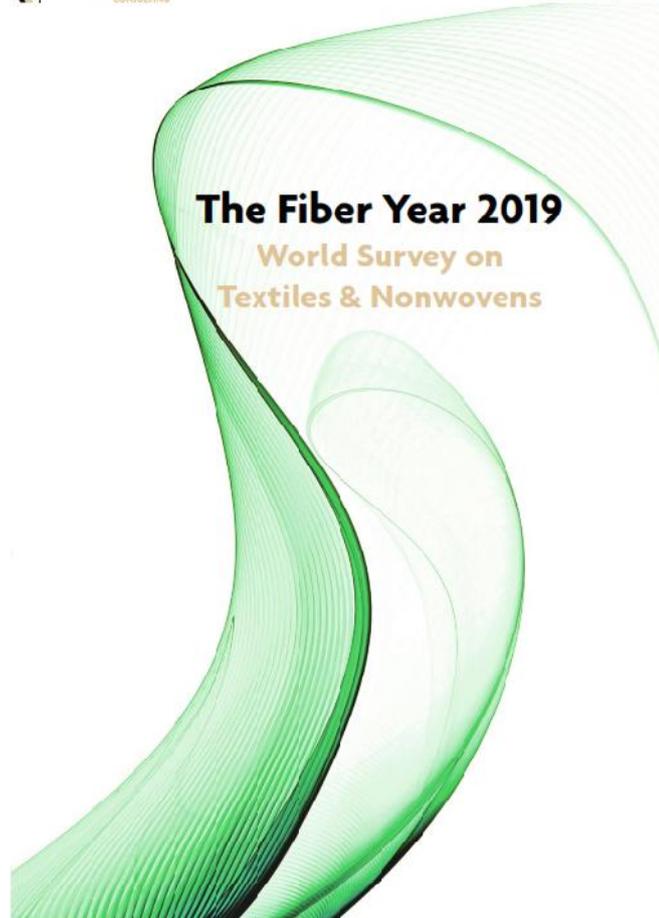
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The Fiber Year GmbH



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Issue 19, May 2019



Frankfurt, May 15, 2019

The Fiber Year 2019:

World economy started 2018 on an upbeat note driven by growth in manufacturing and trade through 2017 but the optimistic mood gave way to economic activities tending toward downswing from midyear. International Monetary Fund downwardly revised its 2018 projections for most advanced economies including significantly lower growth expectations for 2019.

Tariffs have contributed to the momentum losing steam after U.S. administration first began imposing tariffs on Chinese imports last July followed by retaliatory measures taken by PR China. The implementation of tariffs has meant uncertainty on trade and future market access, which weighs on investment decisions. It seems that protectionism is on its way back in some parts of the world given the latest decision of U.S. administration from May to increase tariffs on USD200 billion Chinese imports from 10% to 25%.

Despite these measures, the U.S. economy rose at fastest pace in three years at 2.9% stimulated by tax cuts and spending increases. The U.S. dollar has appreciated against most other currencies as growth and interest rates have outperformed those in advanced economies. The world's third-largest cotton grower and manmade fiber manufacturer recorded declines in local fiber supply, ongoing contractions in textile and apparel employment in the 24th consecutive year and second-highest trade deficit in textile and clothing in U.S. history at USD88 billion.

The worsening economic climate has taken its toll on fiber production that has experienced the slowest growth in three years at 1% to almost 106 million tonnes. Natural fibers softened nearly 2% as result of lower cotton cultivation and the manmade fiber business continued its ten-year expansion. Growth of 2% at synthetic fibers was once again outpaced by cellulosic fibers lifting output by almost 3%.

Global activity in spun yarn and filament manufacturing has decelerated likewise to 1% with the filament production growth remaining in positive territory since financial crisis. Dynamics in nonwovens and unspun applications experienced faster expansion than yarns in the fifth consecutive year at 4%.

Joint textile and apparel exports of the top ten suppliers in 2018 rose 5% to USD544 billion including the 28-nation European Union as region with its extra-EU trade only. Bangladesh and Vietnam achieved double-digit growth rates while Chinese shipments accelerated essentially from textile exports whereas value added apparel deliveries remained flat in value terms.

Corresponding imports into the ten largest countries with EU(28) included exceeded USD400 billion after growing nearly 7%. The steepest drop in major textile countries occurred in Turkey by about 11% as the depreciation of Turkish lira made textile imports more expensive, which even dropped by a quarter in second half 2018 over the same period in the preceding year.

Institut für Textiltechnik of RWTH Aachen University

The core of the ITA Group is the research and teaching institution. The Institut für Textiltechnik (ITA) of RWTH Aachen University is led by Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dipl.-Wirt. Ing. Thomas Gries. The ITA Group is an international research and training service provider for the fiber-based high-performance materials, textile semi-finished products and their manufacturing processes with 350 employees.

ITA develops textile semi-finished products and products for fields of application within the sectors Life Sciences und Healthcare, Construction and Housing, light weight design and Mobility as well as the Energy Sector. Moreover, countless additional industries are served with goal-oriented innovations for new processes and textile materials including e.g. the sporting goods industry or the ICT-sector.

Many nations are toying with the idea to setting up a lunar station and to use the moon as a source of raw materials, a research site, a stepping stone into the solar system and a tourist destination. But the transport of the material for a lunar station is very costly. The ITA's solution: Produce the building blocks directly on the moon! A lot of moon rock is very similar to basalt. ITA has already developed a production process to spin mineral fibers based on lunar rock. Within MoonFibre, ITA uses this experience for the production of fibers for the reinforcement of three-dimensional structures on the basis of moon rock and produces the fibers for the construction of the moon station directly on site.

Bio-economy in textile industry is increasingly gaining public awareness and ITA attaches more attention to relevant fields of research accordingly.

A new challenge for society at national and international levels is the implementation of the change towards a bio-economy in society as a whole. This means the change from a fossil-based resource economy to renewable raw materials. The efficient use of biological raw materials, such as plants, as an alternative raw material platform is at the forefront. The production and use of plastics based on renewable raw materials plays a particularly important role for the textile industry. The textile industry produces and processes around 70 million tonnes of man-made fibres, which are mainly produced on the basis of fossil resources. The textile industry is the third largest industrial sector worldwide and the largest consumer goods market in Germany after the food industry. Due to its economic importance and its proximity to society, the textile value chain has great potential to drive forward the overall societal change towards a bio-economy and to assume a pioneering position.

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