

Supply Chain + Tech Focus

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Obama Lifts Burmese Import Bans

The Obama administration made it official. Goods made in Burma, now called Myanmar, may be imported into the United States, except for rubies and jade, whose mining is controlled by the central government.

The executive order issued Aug. 7 by President Obama comes after the State Department waived the ban last November.

The bans had been part of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, legislation enacted by Congress that expired July 28.

Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell was the original sponsor of the legislation. He announced in May he would not seek to extend the 2003 legislation because of Myanmar's democratic progress. The legislation was renewed annually.

McConnell was, for years, one of the harshest critics in Congress of Myanmar's military rulers and a fervent supporter of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act he sponsored had imposed a broad ban on all imports from Myanmar.

Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said in a statement that it is part of the administration's efforts "to promote responsible trade and investment in support of Burma's reform process."

Before the ban took place in 2003, about half of all the textiles and clothing made in that country, located northwest of Thailand, was exported to the United States. In recent years,

Myanmar shipped as much as \$409 million a year in apparel and textiles to the United States, according to the Department of Commerce.

There is still a small garment sector based around Yangon, the country's capital, which employs about 20,000 people at 200 factories. Workers make about \$80 a month.

Last year, Myanmar exported about \$770 million in garments to primarily Japan, which received \$243 million in apparel and textiles. That may increase. The Japanese fast-fashion retailer **Uniqlo**, whose shelves are stocked with casualwear, said it will start sourcing in Myanmar.

Other recipients of the bulk of Myanmar's apparel production are South Korea and Europe.

Earlier this year, representatives from **Li & Fung**, which does some apparel production in that country, visited Myanmar to talk with top ministers about revving up the apparel industry.

Myanmar was ruled by a military dictatorship for nearly five decades and was quite repressive. A new government came to power in 2011, releasing many political prisoners, holding elections for a new Parliament and freeing democracy advocate Aung San Suu Kyi from nearly 20 years of house arrest.

Since her release from house arrest, the opposition leader has visited Norway to collect a Nobel Peace Prize she won in 1991 and gone to Washington, D.C., to be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.—*Deborah Belgum*

Lacoste Launches Chinese E-tail With Accenture and Demandware

When **Lacoste** decided to launch e-commerce in China, the international brand enlisted the help of two technology companies, Burlington, Mass.-based **Demandware Inc.** and New York-based **Accenture**.

Accenture designed and built Lacoste's online store with Demandware's digital commerce software. Accenture will manage Lacoste's online business in China, including providing tech support, customer services, logistics payment services and social-media networks.

"China presents brands with an enormous opportunity, but it is a unique environment that requires a unique approach," said Eric Mestre, managing director in Accenture's consumer goods and services practice, in a statement. "Brands must overcome legal and cultural challenges that many will not have encountered in other markets. The successful navigation of Chinese social and regulatory hurdles, while still providing a quality experience to Chinese consumers online, requires brands to adopt a tailor-made approach as Lacoste is doing with Accenture and Demandware."

Accenture's Multichannel Commerce Solution for China is an end-to-end solution that enables retailers to launch a customized online store with support provided for the back-end business functions. Accenture and Demandware plan to release a version of the solution for the ASEAN and European markets, as well.

"Our newly forged relationship with Accenture further validates that our cloud platform is the best alternative for large, rapidly growing retailers looking to expand their digital commerce businesses globally," said Tom Ebling, chief operating officer of Demandware, in a statement. "By leveraging the power of Demandware Commerce, Accenture's clients can rapidly and confidently execute their omnichannel digital commerce strategies around the world."

For more information, visit www.accenture.com or www.demandware.com.—A.A.N.

Taiwan Textile Matchmaking at CMC

The **Taiwan Textile Federation** is hosting its first-ever business matchmaking session in Los Angeles Aug. 22–23 at the **California Market Center**.

The event showcases textile, apparel and accessories suppliers and full-package producers, including makers of fashion merchandise, functional products and eco-friendly items.

Among the exhibitors are woven jacquards from **Merryson**; sun-protective, quick-dry and recycled PET fabrics from **Hans Global**; wovens and knits, prints and warp-

stretch fabrics from **Triad**; labels, tapes and ribbon from **Yu Shin**; legwear and shapewear from **Jin Minng**; and legwear from **Paultex**.

There is also a Taiwan Textile Select section, featuring made-in-Taiwan products and fashion trend information.

The event runs from 1 to 5 p.m. on Aug. 22 and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Aug. 23. For more information, visit export.textiles.org.tw/tradefair.html or email Debbie Lin at debbielin@textiles.org.tw.—Alison A. Nieder

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Bayer E³: Traceability From Field to Finished Product

A new program launched by **Bayer CropScience**—a division of healthcare, agricultural and high-tech materials giant **Bayer**—lets retailers and consumers track the supply chain right to the farmer who grew the cotton.

Bayer E³ has been in development as a pilot program for the last three years, according to Brent Crossland, fiber-development manager for Bayer's cotton and seed operations in the United States.

"We started out with a core group of farmers in southeast Missouri and also some farmers in south Texas," Crossland said. "We worked with them through two seasons and delivered sustainable product to some customers, and it was fully traceable."

The farmers are using Bayer's **Fibermax** and **Stoneville** cotton seed. Fibermax produces a longer, finer fiber typically used in apparel made from a higher-count yarn fabric. Stoneville produces a strong fiber, which is used for coarser yarn-count fabrics such as denim.

Bayer is currently working with retailers and apparel and home-furnishing brands to roll out the E³ program, named to reflect the program's mantra of "equitable, economical, environmental." The program provides supply-chain certification and visibility for the retailers and brands and incentives for the farmers to monitor and maximize the sustainability of their fields.

For certification, Bayer is working with **Wakefield Inspection Services**, a 107-year-old company with offices in Liverpool, England; Dallas; and Jakarta, Indonesia.

"It's a good program for the farmers," Crossland said. "It encourages them to work toward continuous improvement in the sustainable area. It gives the brand a comfort that they have a product that is [certified] through third-party verification, and they get a relationship at the farmgate and they learn what the farmers are doing and vice versa."

The program starts with a voluntary enrollment at the farm level, followed by a self-assessment using the **Fieldprint Calculator**, a sustainability test developed by **Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture**. Bayer is a member of Field to Market, an alliance organization founded to "create opportunities across the agricultural supply chain for continu-



SUPPLY-CHAIN VISIBILITY: Retailers and brands that sell products made with Bayer's Fibermax cotton can already track the fiber through the supply chain. With Bayer's new program, E³, the company expands the concept to its Stoneville cotton seed and adds incentives for those at both ends of the supply chain.

ous improvements in productivity, environmental quality and human well-being." The group has about 50 members, including retailers, food companies, agribusinesses and conservation organizations.

"Certainly, there's other sustainable programs out there globally," Crossland said. "We think our program is unique in the fact that it's third-party verified and the farmers are subject to audit. But most importantly is this Fieldprint Calculator. We're using that to understand where the farmers are compared to their neighbors."

Farmers supply information about water and pesticide usage, soil management, energy conservation, and health and safety compliance. This data is gathered at the end of the production year and used to generate a comparison analysis against neighboring farms to show areas for improvement.

For example, a dryland farmer can see how different types of cultivation practices affect water usage. An irrigation farmer can see the impact of surface irrigation, high-pressure irrigation systems, low-pressure irrigation systems, precision irrigation and what Crossland calls the "gold-seal" method: an under-

ground precision drip system "which takes them to high-90s efficiency," he said.

"The problem is, like anything else, it costs a lot of money to convert an acre to drip versus the overhead irrigation systems," Crossland said. "But we feel like this is an opportunity through this program for [farmers] to get some incentives to increase the adoption of drip irrigation."

In addition to the cost savings gained from measuring efficiency, the E³ program also provides a financial incentive, Crossland explained.

"The retailer that participates in the program—what they're really wanting is the certification, to know that their cotton was grown sustainably," he said.

Retailers and brands pay a certification fee to Bayer, which takes out some administrative costs before passing on the balance to the farmer.

"[Retailers and brands] get the product that they're looking for, the farmer gets to learn more about where he needs to make improvements, and he gets some monetary incentive to make those improvements," Crossland said. "It's a great story for a brand to be able to say they're actually making a difference and getting to the farmgate, saving water, saving energy and helping the farmer along the way."

Once retailers sign on to the program, they can pass this information on to the end consumer, as well.

"Under E³, the consumer will be able to know exactly where the cotton was grown," Crossland said. "I think that seems to be something consumers are interested in. They want to know where the product comes from. I think it's beneficial for everybody in the channel."

Bayer has already been letting retailers, brands and consumers take a closer look at the supply chain through its certified Fibermax seed program, which lets companies and consumers track the supply chain from finished garment to initial cotton field.

"The way the supply chain is structured, it's very rare that a cotton farmer gets very close to the retailer," Crossland said. "Usually, the closest they get is working with the cotton merchant. So this is a little bit unique, we think."—Alison A. Nieder

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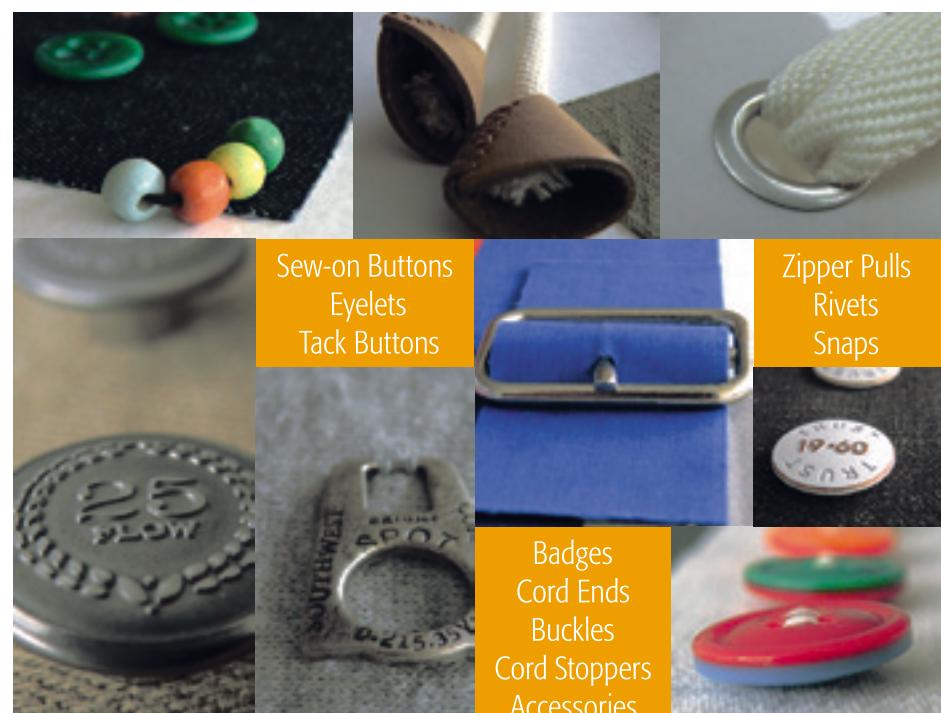
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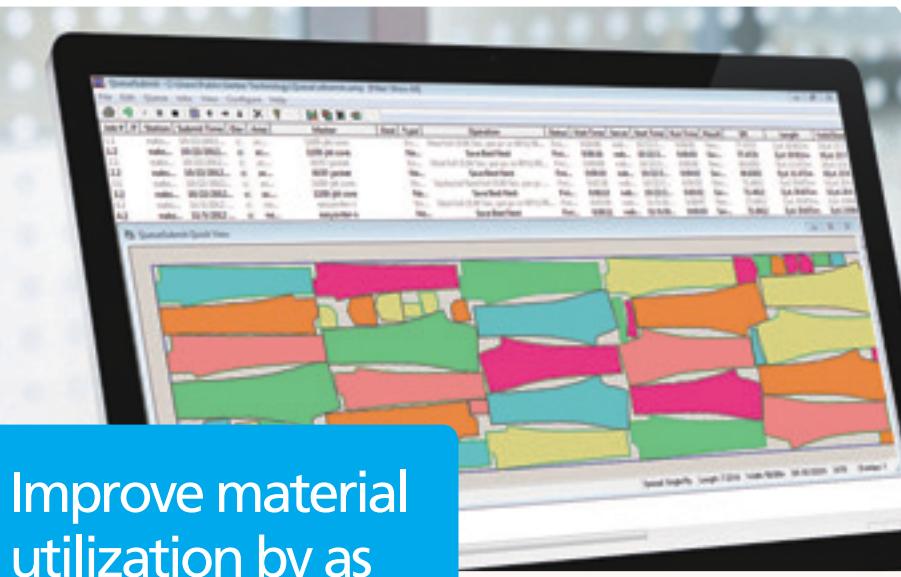
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