Bestseller takes big step in organic cotton, also pauses Myanmar orders

By Sandra Halliday - March 23, 2021

Jack & Jones owner Bestseller said Tuesday that its long-standing supplier Artistic Milliners — a major denim specialist — has worked with it to secure “farm-to-fashion traceability for its indigenous Organic Cotton in a direct-to-farm approach to benefit the entire community” in Pakistan.

Its “new generation of organic cotton” is now being used by the Jack & Jones brand and has been described by the company as “a game-changer for the industry”.

Artistic Milliners has been working with WWF-Pakistan and Baluchistan’s local government “to curate a project that speaks to the farmer community and is based on local realities and issues at hand. The project is also informed by the lessons and experiences from organic cotton cultivation elsewhere in the world”. Bestseller said it incorporates solutions that address social inequity and certification integrity at the design stage.

The supplier’s CEO Omer Ahmed said that Besteller’s support includes funding the project but also working with it on “blockchain-based traceability to implement processes that eliminate all kinds of loopholes from the value chain”.

He also said the project “holds great potential of scalability on global standards. Pakistan’s organic cotton sourced via Milliner Cotton Organic Project is being grown in one of the most underdeveloped communities. With long-term pre-orders for their cotton, the farmers are seeing a new ray of light. The entire community will prosper”.

Meanwhile Kim Frydensbjerg Klausen, Production Buying Manager at Jack & Jones, said that “direct-to-farm is unquestionably a good and well-founded approach when it comes to sourcing organic cotton. We have a long-standing, prosperous relationship with Artistic Milliners that has lasted more than six years. We are in constant close collaboration with them on how to innovate and renew the denim business and a lot of innovative projects been launched together with them over the years”.

MYANMAR DECISION

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The news comes at the same time as Bestseller said it has become concerned about the escalation of violence and the unpredictability of the situation in Myanmar, which makes it very difficult to operate safely in the country. Of the 36 factories producing for the firm, only seven remain operational and all at reduced capacity.

"Inbound/outbound shipments and operations are highly unstable and the security situation is deteriorating in a way and at a speed that makes it difficult to carry on", it said.

It has decided to provisionally pause all new order placements in the country. "This decision has been made with the intention of reengaging when operationally and ethically possible," it explained. It’s still "in close dialogue with our suppliers, trade unions, peers and in-country experts to understand how we can help mitigate the impacts on workers", Responsible Sourcing Manager Felicity Tapsell added.

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