

## COTTON USA Sourcing Program Develops Business Opportunities for Ocean Sky Apparel



Ocean Sky, an El Salvador-based apparel manufacturer, has switched its sourcing to include more U.S. cotton fabric and also found a new retail customer after participating in COTTON USA Sourcing Program events. Ocean Sky has joined COTTON USA events since 2005, including Sourcing Fairs in Costa Rica and Panama, as well as two Manufacturers Tours in North Carolina. Key retailers, such as Nordstrom, also visited Ocean Sky in 2009 to forge business connections during a COTTON USA tour.

The COTTON USA Sourcing Program's tactic of methodically cultivating relationships between Western Hemisphere manufacturers, such as Ocean Sky, and U.S. textile mills, brands and retailers has yielded valuable business opportunities. Ocean Sky made its first purchase of fabric from a U.S. mill, ordering 35,000 pounds of U.S. cotton-rich blend fabric, valued at about \$182,000, from a family-owned mill in South Carolina.

U.S. retailers' repeated participation in COTTON USA sourcing fairs and tours has also developed business opportunities over time. After attending COTTON USA events, a major U.S. retailer placed an order with Ocean Sky for U.S. cotton-rich T-shirts.

Ocean Sky now buys 5 percent of its fabric from U.S. mills and purchases the remainder from Central American mills. Ocean Sky consumes about 1 million pounds of fabric per month, also utilizing about 600,000 pounds of U.S. Supima cotton yarns through one Central American mill.

Ocean Sky, part of Ocean Sky International in Singapore, specializes in knit T-shirts, shorts, pants and hoodies and has design, cutting, sewing, printing and finishing operations. Ocean Sky provides apparel for Gap/Old Navy, Reebok, Adidas, Puma, Talbots, Perry Ellis and Columbia Sportswear.

The COTTON USA Sourcing Program's objective is to develop business relationships throughout the entire cotton textile and apparel supply chain from the U.S. cotton yarn and fabric supplier to Western Hemisphere garment manufacturers to the U.S. apparel retailer and brands. CCI has developed relationships with around 700 companies throughout the region through private trade events, regional trade shows and personal visits. Funding for the Sourcing Program comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cotton Incorporated, and participating U.S. mills.

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