

EDITOR'S PAGE

Environmental and ecological concerns demand unique solutions

Many chemicals used in the textile industry cause environmental and health problems. These problems may occur during the production process, with respect to emissions or occupational health problems. Other problems caused by these chemicals appear due to their presence in the final product. A number of processes are applied, using different chemicals to process the fibers and to reach the final stage of the textile end product. During the past few decades, the awareness regarding environmental problems has increased considerably and has become an important issue in the textile trade due to various environmental and health legislation, and also environmental policy is increasingly dictated through market forces.

However, worldwide environmental problems associated with the textile industry are typically those associated with the water pollution caused by the discharge of untreated effluent and those because of the use of toxic chemicals, especially during processing. The textile industry is facing challenges due to social and environmental compliance issues from US and European buyers. The impact of environmental regulations on the textile sector of Pakistan can be classified according to many parameters. However, the major area of concern for the textile-processing sector is wastewater.

The public awareness and the growing perception of social cognizance about the environment have forced the textile industry to produce environmentally friendly products. For this reason, nowadays many companies and organizations focus on the environmentally friendly way of production. In order to create a sustainable textile, the main change factors have been linked to eco-materials so less and harmless waste, reusing/recycling, lesser usage of energy, water and chemicals and ethical issues in production processes.

With the technological developments in recent years, developments in the textile sector as well as in many sectors have played a major role in the increase of environmental problems. At present textiles is the most important manufacturing sector of Pakistan and has the longest production chain, with inherent potential for value addition at each stage of processing, from cotton to ginning, spinning, fabric, dyeing and finishing, made-ups and garments.

The sector contributes nearly one-fourth of industrial value-added products, provides employment to about 40% of the industrial labour force and consumes about 40% of banking credit to the manufacturing sector. Barring seasonal and cyclical fluctuations, textile products have maintained an average share of about 58% in national exports. All leading suppliers of finishing and printing technologies are providing innovative solutions for savings of energy, water and chemicals to meet the ever increasing demands from the final consumers and the environmental controlling authorities in the European and American markets.

The current issue is devoted to the crucial sector of textile processing with a review of sustainable technologies and auxiliaries necessary for the high value addition to compete in the global competitive environment. ♦



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