



# Swiss Textile Machinery companies welcome return to in-person customer contact

Shanghai show heralds investment revival

**The recent ITMA Asia + CITME exhibition was marked by a strong showing from Swiss Textile Machinery members, in what was the sector's first major face-to-face showcase since the pandemic restrictions.**

With an attendance comprised of 99% Chinese visitors, the show still proved a satisfactory venture, the Swiss companies reported. There was real product innovation, and meaningful customer interest, prompting a genuine mood of optimism among exhibitors. The event was held from June 12-16 in Shanghai, with 18 Swiss exhibitors, of whom 13 were Swiss Textile Machinery member companies.

"Our members were first of all delighted to be able to meet their customers in person again," said Cornelia Buchwalder, Secretary General of Swiss Textile Machinery.

"And the feedback was extremely positive regarding the post-pandemic future market situation. From an admittedly low base in recent times, we see a real revival in investment.

"Despite the lack of many show visitors from other countries, it is still the case that China itself is a pre-eminent market for textile machinery – so it is the ideal place to restart our exhibition campaign."

## Catch-up effect

Rieter Group, including the Graf, SSM and Bräcker businesses, described the event as "a success despite the restrictions." Lower visitor attendance overall was outweighed by the response to the company's 'virtual booth'.

Norbert Klapper, Rieter CEO said, "At the moment, the textile machinery market is booming due to a catch-up effect." Orders for the first half of this year are already expected to be more than triple the level in the corresponding period of 2020, and customer feedback at the event was also positive.

Rieter also sees changes in the Chinese market for spinning equipment, driven by cost development in the country. "On the one hand, Chinese customers will foster investments outside China, in particular for their export business. At the same time, they will invest in their operations in China in order to stay competitive," he said.

### Biggest customer base

The importance of the China market was also emphasized by Loepfe Brothers Ltd., whose CEO, Dr. Ralph Mennicke commented: "ITMA Asia means meeting our biggest customer base in the world – physically by our local partners, and virtually via our virtual meeting point at the Loepfe booth. While we expect to see a major transformation of exhibitions, we are determined to shape this transformation our way."

Both new and existing Loepfe customers visited the company's booth, with two new products attracting great interest. "We have seen a great pick-up of investments into spinning mills in 2021...the starting point for a new era of sensor solutions for fibres and filaments," Dr Mennicke said.

### Boom period

Stäubli is also looking ahead to a boom period after Covid-19, and the Chinese market is viewed as "still very stable," with potential for growth in the denim industry in the Guangdong region, although companies from here were unable to attend in Shanghai because of travel restrictions.

The chance to meet customers face-to-face was an important factor for Stäubli, for this event and for those scheduled during 2022. "Real customer contact is very important to us," said Fritz Legler, Vice-President Marketing, Sales & Service. "Digital trade fairs will not replace the feeling to 'experience' the machines, when all five senses are activated, and the performance of the product can be presented directly."

Stäubli was able present a broad range of machinery at its booth, with a number of new launches, and special interest reported in weaving preparation solutions, dobby and Jacquard machines.



### Innovations interest

Despite the pandemic, Uster Technologies was able to launch three significant innovations during 2021, all of which attracted serious interest – both technical and commercial – when presented at ITMA Asia + CITME.

Sivakumar Narayanan, the company's Executive Vice-President, said: "We closed quite a few contracts, and we were generally very satisfied with the response at the show. It was handled 100% by our Chinese team, who did a fantastic job in setting up the exhibits and handling Chinese and international visitors. It was predominantly visited by Chinese companies but there were a few from other countries, such as Pakistan and Turkey. We were also pleased to

return to 'live' exhibitions, but our virtual showroom was a valuable extra channel to stay in contact with customers and prospects."

Like other companies in the industry, Uster is in a high demand phase, striving to meet delivery times, despite an ongoing semiconductor supply chain challenge. While the company hopes demand will sustain, its aim is to maintain flexibility and adapt to the needs of the market situation.

The Swiss Textile Machinery member firms exhibiting at ITMA Asia + CITME 2020 were Bräcker, Graf, Hunziker, Loepfe, Luwa, Polytex, Rieter, Santex Rimar Group, Sedo Engineering, SSM, Stäubli, Uster Technologies and Willy Grob. ♦

## About Swissmem and the Swiss Textile Machinery Association

Swissmem is the leading association for SMEs and large companies in Switzerland's mechanical and electrical engineering (MEM) industries and related technology-oriented sectors. Swissmem enhances the competitiveness of its 1200 or so member companies both at home and abroad by providing needs-based services. These services include professional advice on employment, commercial, contract and environmental law, energy efficiency and technology transfer. Swissmem operates a number of strong networks, including 27 specialist groups. The Swiss Textile Machinery Association is the oldest division, founded in 1940. It represents the interests of the Swiss textile machinery manufacturers. Swissmem and the Swiss Textile Machinery Association are headquartered in Zurich. ♦