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The Textile Industry in Canada: Focus on Technical and Other Value Added Textiles

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Abstracts

The Canadian textile industry has lost much of its competitiveness since the global elimination of quotas at the end of 2004, particularly in mass markets. Between 2005 and 2009 total factory sales by textile mills and textile product mills fell by 44% while sales by the clothing manufacturing industry dropped by 50%.

The textile industry has faced a number of challenges, including: competition from developing countries; offshore manufacturing by its traditional main customer, the clothing industry; availability, retention and training of the workforce; the strength of the Canadian dollar; trade regulation; capital availability; and access to specialised markets.

By 2006 it was apparent that the industry needed to diversify into specialised materials such as technical usage textiles (TUTs) and other value added textiles (OVATs). By targeting TUTs and OVATs the industry would be better able to meet, and stimulate, customer demand for products which met special requirements and offered heightened performance.

To ensure widespread adoption of this strategy, it was proposed that the strengths of the entire value chain be focused on TUTs or OVATs. This was to be achieved through: the utilisation of scientific and technical resources; the implementation of dynamic research and development cooperation platforms; innovation; commercialisation; and business networking.

The aim of this initiative is to help the industry to compete in the international market place and develop a critical mass. Consequently, its image will improve in the eyes of the public, the business community and the financial community, and the industry will be taken more seriously when major public and private clients are structuring their projects.

The initiative has already achieved some success. Between March 2007 and June 2009 the number of companies involved in technical and other value-added textiles rose from 241 to about 400, and in mid-2010 it was estimated that this figure had been more or less maintained.

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