

On the road to success with CO₂

Johann Müller AG textiles finishing



In the annals of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100, the 27th September 1993 is an important milestone: for the first time ever, the dyeing process in a textiles finishing business, Swiss-based Johann Müller AG, was designed so that all processed threads and fabrics met the requirements of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100. Owner Dr. Kurt Müller is proud of his cutting edge role in environmental protection, “We played a decisive part in the design of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100. Our audit as an environmentally-friendly production site in accordance with the OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000 in 2000 was a logical continuation of this commitment and of our generally high standards of quality.”

With its environmental commitment, Johann Müller AG was in an ideal position for certification under the OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000. According to auditor Adrian Meili from the Swiss Textile Testing Institute Testex they only needed to take a few additional measures to meet the requirements, “The exclusion of environmentally-harmful additives and dyes, the observance of threshold values for waste water and exhaust air treatment, economical use of energy, avoidance of noise and dust and workplace safety were and are a matter of course at Johann Müller AG.”

Important communication tool

Dr. Müller stresses the great benefit of the audit for his company, “The public perception of being certified as environmentally-friendly industrial premises by a neutral institute is very important to us. It affects our customers, who value such commitment highly. At the same time it is also reassuring for the community and residents to know that there is no potential risk for humans or the environment coming from our textile

finishing business.” Auditing in accordance with the OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000 also represents an important building block for a major customer, the shirt and blouse manufacturer

“Use of environmentally-friendly production processes, and the human ecology qualities of finished products are a matter of course at Johann Müller AG.”

Adrian Meili, OEKO-TEX® auditor of the Swiss Textile Testing Institute Testex

Eterna Mode GmbH, as it is aiming to achieve the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100plus for its products (see info box). It also contributes to the strength of this long-standing relationship.

Award-winning environmental work

Away from the auditing too, Dr. Müller is always on the search for improvements to the production process that reduce the demand for energy, water and additives in his 60-strong business, “Savings in these areas not only pay off for the environment, but also in francs and centimes in our operational result.” So in 2001 the chemical engineer refitted the business’ heating system to burn renewable fuel. This saves roughly 1000 tonnes of

heating oil each year, equivalent to a CO₂ saving of 3200 tonnes a year. This pioneering work led to Johann Müller AG receiving the Swiss Solarpreis environmental award in 2002.

About 50-70% of the CO₂ output when producing a textile product is due to textile finishing. Yet with the many environmental efforts he has already made, Dr. Müller views the current CO₂ debate calmly, “For companies throughout the textiles chain which have made early, intensive efforts for sustainability, there are now real competitive advantages from those measures.” For instance, the Swiss Coop chain is looking to make its range CO₂ neutral and is holding talks with suppliers who can help them achieve this goal. “We are in a good position, as we’ve already done our housework,” Dr. Müller smiles.



2 neutrality and OEKO-TEX®



Dr. Kurt Müller with the first general OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 certificate dated 27th September 1993.

Picture on left: Quality is constantly monitored in the laboratory at Johann Müller AG.



Johann Müller AG – at a glance

Thread, tricot and fabric finishing, garment dyeing

Location: Strengebach, Switzerland

Founded: 1845

Number of employees: approx. 60

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Dr. Kurt Müller contributed significantly to the development of the economical modular system of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100. At the start, the idea was only to certify products, but not to include processes. For a dye works that produces tens of thousands of different dyes, this would have resulted in having to carry out an incalculable number of tests of dyed and finished substrates. This would have made the effort and costs of testing and certification disproportionately high.

The international OEKO-TEX® Association recognised the need to incorporate textiles finishing businesses into the testing and certification system in order to achieve the necessary market penetration, so together with Dr. Müller it sought a practical solution.

So on 6th April 1993 Dr. Müller recommended to the Hohenstein Research Institute in Bönningheim, Germany, that instead of testing the many end products of a dye works it should test the individual elements of their processing.

His basic concept: if all the dyes and chemicals met the criteria of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100, and likewise the textile substrate, then all the end products derived from them would consequently meet the criteria of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100. In order to realise the concept of a modular system, Dr. Müller sent the safety data sheets of all dyes and chemicals believed suitable to the Hohenstein Research Institute for testing.

On 8th July 1993 Dr. Rainer Weckmann wrote from the Institute to Dr. Müller, "Today we took an important decision: we would like – entirely in line with your and my concept – to create an OEKO-TEX® Standard for the certification of textiles finishers and dyers. For this reason I would like to be in close contact with you and develop a feasible procedure with your help and experience." This was the birth of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 in its present form, whereby the process technology for textiles finishers is established on the basis of current lists of dyes and additives using example worst-case investigation.

The OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000 und 100plus

Starting from the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100, since 1995 companies have had the option of making declarations about the environmental production conditions, as well as the product-oriented safety checks.

The certificate for an environmentally-friendly production site under OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000 applies for three years.

To be awarded OEKO-TEX® Standard 100plus it is necessary to have products tested under OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 as well as certification of the production conditions under Standard 1000. However, in addition it is also necessary to prove that the entire production chain, i.e. all businesses involved in the manufacture of a specific product, is certified – at least for the product line concerned, according to OEKO-TEX® Standard 1000.