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**I**nternationally  
recognized  
collective mark a  
pledge of quality

Joint ventures by Swiss firms – all highly individualistic enterprises – are not exactly everyday occurrences. After all, no one, and least of all a Swiss textile industrialist, likes showing his hand. Nevertheless, in 1969 a consensus was reached that Swiss textile products could be more effectively promoted, both nationally and internationally, by a collective mark and that a common quality mark could only be of unqualified benefit to the intensified export drive.

# SWISS FABRIC

## **SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHING OF THE SWISS FABRIC COLLECTIVE MARK**

In 1969, the Association of Swiss Woollen Manufacturers abandoned its lamb mark for Swiss woollens, when with lavish financial backing the International Wool Secretariat introduced its woolmark for pure wool articles in all Western countries. The steadily increasing consumption of man-made fibres for mixed fabrics and pure synthetics also highlighted the need for a mark which would identify Swiss textile products as quality goods, irrespective of the fibre. The Association then threw open its doors to the silk industry, and changed its name to the Association of Swiss Textile Manufacturers (VSTI), with the sub-title Silk-Wool-Synthetics. Then the new Swiss Fabric collective mark, featuring four stylized rolls of fabric, was created, thanks in large measure to the conscientious efforts of



VSTI Director, Ernst Nef. Now all VSTI members could identify their quality textiles. The pledge of quality carried by the mark attracted notice, particularly on the export market, and soon non-members of the VSTI in the embroidery, cotton, linen



and finishing sectors began applying for permission to use the coveted Swiss Fabric collective mark, which until then had been reserved exclusively for VSTI members. The Association's Executive Board turned a sympathetic ear to the requests of the non-member textile firms, whose ranks by then included the man-made fibre industry.

Since 1975, all textile firms belonging to one of the relevant trade associations are licensed to use the Swiss Fabric Mark, provided that their goods comply with the stringent quality requirements. Swiss Fabric's flourishing reputation and highly successful foreign advertising campaigns – a top priority for export-oriented firms – have boosted the number of licencees to over 200. The textile organizations also signed the licensing agreement so that they too can sail under the Swiss Fabric flag in joint advertising campaigns.

### INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

Given the divergent interests and multilayered structure of Switzerland's textile industry, Swiss Fabric's broadly based success was no foregone conclusion. But the mark's obvious utility, its simple, economical application and the unrestricted freedom it allows the licensee have dispelled any lingering misgivings. Besides, it has since been recognized that no other branch and no other country possesses a mark like Swiss Fabric that confers such international resonance on the products that carry it.

One vital ingredient of the mark's success is the Swiss Fabric collective stand, to be found at all major international fairs. Articles from the collections of the participant firms are presented in a "Fabric Library", each firm being entitled to a maximum of 50 samples per fair. For a nominal fee, interested firms may hire a table, where they can discuss business and make closer contact with clients. The stands are manned by competent staff who handle visitors' enquiries. Detailed information concerning all licencees and their products is also published annually in the handy-format trilingual "Swiss Quality Textiles Directory". This year's international diary of events includes participation in **Interstoff** in Frankfurt, **Fashion Fabrex** in London, the **New York Fabric Show** in New York, **SOL carpet show** in Paris, and, earlier this year, **Heimtex** in Frankfurt.

The Swiss Fabric mark is proving itself an invaluable asset in the increasingly competitive textile product market. Plans are afoot to publicize the mark on the domestic front. The guarantee of quality conferred by the mark has the backing of well-established firms with an unbroken tradition of total commitment to service, and is helping all licencees to secure their share of the world market and win new clients for their special lines. A product of the private sector, the collective Swiss Fabric mark has long since undergone its baptism of fire and come through with flying colours.

Ruth Huessy



**E**rnst Nef, VSTI Director, moving spirit behind the introduction of the Swiss Fabric mark in 1969 and stalwart champion of its broader implementation ever since, takes a confident view of the future. Here are the reasons for his optimism and his realistic appraisal of the problems.

"The steadily increasing annual volume of Swiss clothing and lingerie imports – only one article in five is made in Switzerland – means that the domestic market for the indigenous spinning and weaving mills is shrinking and the shortfall must be compensated for by increased exports. The import influx also means that the Swiss Fabric mark can't be used on the overwhelming majority of articles sold over the counter here at home, which makes it difficult to attract wider attention to the mark. Imports of ready-to-wear textiles amounted to 3.7 billion francs in 1985, an increase of 2.9 billion francs.

On the other hand, Swiss Fabric is very well known in the foreign textile world, and luckily there was a further boom in textile exports in 1985, a 20% increase over the 1983 figures. With exports amounting to 3.3 billion francs, a new record was set. The increase amounted to 1.4 billion francs.

Our plans for the Swiss Fabric collective mark in 1986? We've had a million copies of a Swiss Fabric poster printed, which features all the flags of the world and detailed information about the mark. This appeals strongly to school children and young people. It's a long-term PR project because most owners will hang it up for a year. We also plan to provide all licensee firms with a poster for their trucks – another long-term project. Both ventures are aimed at publicizing Swiss Fabric at home.

On the export scene, Swiss Fabric collective stands will be a prominent feature of foreign fairs in 1986, because exports are our destiny. Despite all foreign measures to hinder textile imports (except for the EC and EFTA), we must do our utmost to boost Swiss textile exports in the future. As a medium-term goal, I see textile exports of around 5 billion francs, including 1 billion to non-European regions. Given the high productivity of our textile enterprises, this is no utopia. The Swiss Fabric collective mark will be an immense asset to our efforts."