

The wool trade : an indispensable link in the chain

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Textiles suisses [Édition multilingue]**

Band (Jahr): **- (1976)**

Heft 25

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-796637>

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THE WOOL TRADE— AN INDISPENSABLE LINK IN THE CHAIN

A link in a chain holds two rings together. If a single link is missing there is no chain.

The wool trade is just such a link, serving as the indispensable connection between wool producers and the wool industry. One would probably be justified in saying that if the wool trade did not exist, there would be no wool industry as we know it today. Ever since man can remember, there has been wool, but originally it was worked by hand for the artisan's own use. The first cottage industry led to the beginning of a trade in which merchants delivered, bartered and bought raw wool and woven fabrics. Modern worldwide trade relations and the growth of a real industry have led to the geographical concentration of production and wool processing. The wool trade had always had to overcome the difficulties created by geographical distances, but today this is greatly simplified by a well-developed transport system and a highly efficient banking system.

Very few other raw materials require such expert knowledge on the part of dealers as wool. The properties of wool, such as length, fineness, colour, crimp, cleanness, strength and elasticity, vary greatly from one country of origin to another depending on climate and breed of sheep. In Australia alone, some 2000 qualities are officially listed, and it is obvious that the individual manufacturer would find it impossible on his own to cope with the tremendous variety of this raw material, let alone buy the often limited amounts direct from the different producing countries. In addition, wool shorn from the sheep contains a great deal of suint (perspiration) and many impurities of vegetable origin (above all burrs), which have first of all to be removed by washing, carbonizing or combing. The wool processing industry is interested only in the cleaned product, and it is the job of the dealer, through his experienced buyers, not only to determine right away the percentage of impurities in the wool, i.e. to estimate the percentage of clean wool, but also to arrange for the raw wool to be cleaned in washing and combing plants. Only a few very big concerns today can afford to have their own combing and washing works, and consequently the wool trade offers mainly wool that is already combed, washed and carbonized. This represents a considerable saving for the wool industry.

An article published under this title in "Textiles Suisses" No. 24/ November 75, and written by B.C. Simonius, Partner in Simonius, Vischer + Co., Basle, President of the Association of Wool Traders and Dealers in Switzerland, aroused considerable interest among readers. In view of the important part Switzerland plays in the international wool trade, we would now like to reply to a popular request for the English version of the article that appeared in German in the November edition.



A further service rendered by the wool trade is the financing of transactions. As a result of the geographic concentration of the main wool producers in the southern hemisphere there is often a delay of 3 to 5 months between the purchase of the raw wool and the actual delivery of the cleaned product to the industry, which the wool trade has to bridge by providing financial aid. In addition, the wool industry very often also demands payment facilities in order to be financially burdened as little as possible with the raw material. Obviously the interest rates of the different currencies as well as the currencies themselves play an important role and also represent a big risk.

Storage is another service, also involving considerable financial outlay, provided by the wool trade. This storage by the wool trade of raw wools of different origins allows the wool industry to make its purchases at comparatively short notice and consequently to keep the large sums, which would have been spent on storage, available for other requirements.

Below we describe the way in which the wool trade works, even though this description can only be diagrammatic as the great differences existing

in the trade with regard to both sources and methods cannot be portrayed in a few words.

Wool is produced in practically every country; the main sources for today's wool trade however are Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America (Argentina and Uruguay). The big wool trading firms all have their own purchasing firms in these regions. In Australia, New Zealand and South Africa purchases are made mainly at auctions, which are held in the big towns up to four days every week. In South America purchases are for the most part made direct from the farmers. Other possibilities of purchase have existed for some time now from big overseas washing works.

The wool dealer ships the wool to the consumer country, where it is combed, washed and carbonized. These operations are very often carried out at the expense of the wool dealer, who then proceeds to sell the wool as combed, washed or carbonized goods. Shipping as well as processing is carried out in lots or batches, consisting of varying quantities of bales of wool of the same quality. Samples have to be taken from each batch for use as a basis for sales to the industry and as a check on later deliveries, which must be absolutely identical with regard to quality. When

one realizes how many differences can exist in the properties of wool mentioned at the beginning of this article and also considers that each of these properties comes into the calculation of the price, it will be readily understood what an important part is played in this trade by expert knowledge and reliability, and how important it is for the wool industry to be able to work with wool trading firms that can guarantee identical deliveries. There is no other raw material trading that raises such difficulties. Consequently it is not just anybody that can deal in wool. On the other hand, there are wool trading firms which can look back on many years of fruitful activity.

In the firm of Simonius, Vischer + Co., Basle, Switzerland can boast a long-standing Swiss wool trading firm that celebrated its 250th anniversary in 1969.

Today, with its main office in Basle and its many branches in Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and various European countries, the firm numbers over 100 employees and enjoys an excellent reputation all over the world. In the Basle trade register it is listed for the first time on 1st March 1719; its origin must therefore date back much earlier.

Its chief merchandise has always been wool, even though at the start, it also traded in cloth which was sold on the European market. In the beginning too, its circle of clients was restricted to the regions round Basle, and only the double revolution at the end of the 18th century made possible its growth from a regional concern to a big international trading firm. Today, in addition to the above-mentioned foreign branches, the firm has its own network of agencies throughout the world and everywhere places itself wholeheartedly at the service of the wool industry. The main office in Basle gives instructions by telex for purchase, despatch and processing, and concludes the major part of its purchases direct with the clients or through its agents. The batches of wool sold are despatched from overseas, from warehouses in several ports or from the combing or washing works direct to the customers, while small samples of the various batches of wool are sent to Basle.

In the last few years, in addition to wool, which remains the firm's chief article of trade, this company has diversified into other fields. Thus, for example, it now goes in for the dia-

mond trade, and small loan business, as well as the development of various novelties, among which particular mention must be made of a process for the rapid measurement of shrinkage in textiles, as well as a new washing

process for wool which prevents the wool from felting even in boiling water.

The partners (the firm is constituted in the form of a limited partnership) are interested not only in the problems of

their own firm, but also in general economic matters and work in close collaboration with big banks and insurance companies, as well as playing an active part in public life. The commemorative booklet "2 ½ Cen-

turies in the International Wool Trade", written by Gustaf Adolf Wanner on the occasion of the firm's jubilee in 1969, bears eloquent witness to Swiss business courage and initiative.

NOTIZEN

HAKA — Tendenzfarben für Frühjahr/Sommer 1977

Eine in drei Gruppen gegliederte Farbskala bestimmt die Tendenz für die modische Herrengarderobe im Sommer 1977. Dabei steht Braun als Promotionsfarbe an erster Stelle. Man liebt hier warme, vom hellen Caramel bis zum satten Noisette spielende Farbtöne, die durch drei ins Bräunliche schimmernde Graunuanzen erweitert werden. Als Ergänzung dazu sieht man metallisches Blau, sanft abgestuft von lichtem Taubengraublau bis zum markanten Stahlblau. Dunkelbraun, gebrannte Siena und Marine werden vor allem als Begleitfarben wichtig sein, während man für besondere Effekte wie auch für Accessoires immer noch Schwarz-Weiss-Kombinationen als richtig erachtet. Das elegante Hemd ist in hellen, den Anzug geschickt ergänzenden Farben gehalten, man hat sich von der Ton-in-Ton-Kombination etwas entfernt und wählt oft diskret kontrastierende Kolorite. Intensiver, jedoch nie grell ist die Palette beim Freizeithemd, Camel, Kirschrot, dunkles Braun, grünstichiges Dunkelblau und ein gräuliches Blau geniessen den Vorrang. Sommerlich hell und leicht sind auch die Farbendenzen für die zum Anzug passenden Herrensocken; sie runden das attraktive Farbbild der HAKA-Kollektionen 1977 harmonisch ab.

Sonne und Licht bestimmen DOB-Tendenzen für Frühjahr/Sommer 1977

Strahlend frische Farben und markante Dessins werden für die modischen DOB-Kollektionen des Sommers 1977 prophezeit. Gelb, Blau, Rot, Grün und subtil abgestimmte Naturtöne sieht man als Grundfarben, wobei die einzelnen Farbgruppen in Faux-Camaïeux-Abstufungen gehalten sind. Als effektvoller Blickfang sollen Pink, Apfelgrün und Violett zum Einsatz gelangen. Weiss, Marine und Schwarz werden als Klassiker der attraktiven Frühjahrsmode weitergeführt. Innerhalb dieser Skala bevorzugt man interessante, ja aggressive Kombinationen, die das Farbbild noch lebhafter gestalten sollen. Bei den Geweben wird eine natürliche, mattglänzende Optik in leichten, geschmeidigen, oft voluminös scheinenden Qualitäten gepflegt. Kühle, männliche Tissus bilden dazu den fesselnden Kontrast. Die äusserst lebhaft Kolorierung bestimmt auch weitgehend die Dessin-Tendenzen. Man liebt offene Fonds und flächige Muster, wobei die Grösse der Dessins von dem Thema abhängt. Trendsetters sind vor allem kleinrapportige, naive Geometrie und Graphik aus Afrika und Asien, neben schlichten Schaff- und Jaquardmustern; man zeigt allgemein mehr Fond, der in den Tendenzfarben und sehr oft in Weiss gehalten ist. Ergänzend dazu stehen maurische Kachelmotive und Borten à la grecque. Grosszügig sind die exotischen Blumenmotive, Dschungelbilder und flächige, buntkolorierte Blüten mit ungewöhnlichen Hell-Dunkel-Effekten. Zarte Chiné- und Moiréoptik sowie zierliche Porzellanblumenmalerei komplettieren die vielseitige Dessinskala.

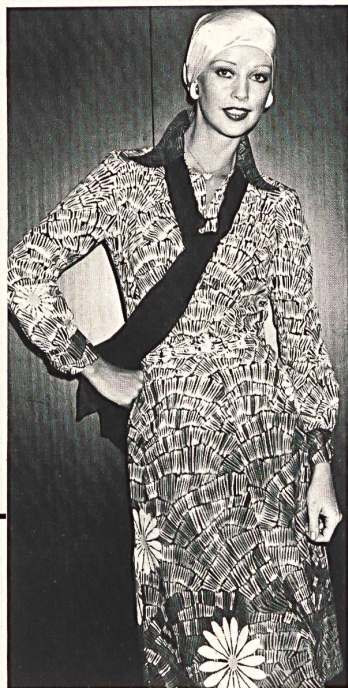
«Swiss Cotton» — ein Passepartout

Hochwertige Qualität, modisches Flair und Exklusivität sind seit je Kennzeichen schweizerischer Baumwollgewebe. In Zusammenarbeit mit sieben Schweizer und elf deutschen Konfektionären hat die Publizitätsstelle der Schweizerischen Baumwollindustrie eine Verkaufskollektion von Damenkleidern aus «Swiss Cotton» zusammengestellt, die sich vor allem an die aktive Frau «ohne Alter» richtet, also an eine Kundschaft, die gerade die besagten besonderen Eigenschaften zu schätzen weiss. Die im Herbst des vergangenen Jahres präsentierten Kleider werden in diesem Frühjahr in den Detailhandel gelangen, wobei auf einer eigens für diese Modelle geschaffenen neuen «Swiss Cotton»-Etikette auf die wichtigen Vorzüge des Gewebes hingewiesen wird: «Swiss Cotton — In der Schweiz nimmt man sich noch Zeit, erstklassige Baumwolle besonders fein auszuspinnen und zu zwirnen und daraus feinste Gewebe und Jerseys herzustellen. Charakteristisch sind zudem der sorgfältige Druck und die hochwertige Veredlung.» Das internationale Baumwollzeichen und das neue VSTI-Emblem ergänzen die neue Etikette.

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Swiss Cotton

