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## French Textile Machinery: It All Started With Jacquard

UCMTF President Bruno Ameline discusses the role of his association, its achievements and main activities.

Jürg Rupp, Executive Editor

France is world-famous for its high fashion, and is in an eternal fight with the Italians for the throne. The French textile machinery sector is known for its innovative and tailor-made products. In an exclusive interview, **Textile World** spoke to Bruno Ameline, president of the French Textile Machinery Manufacturers' Association (UCMTF), about the role and the self-understanding of France's textile machinery industry.

UCMTF was founded in 1921. As a member of the European Committee of Textile Machinery Manufacturers (CEMATEX), UCMTF takes part in the decisions made by CEMATEX for the organization of the industry and textile machinery exhibitions such as ITMA and ITMA Asia + CITME. UCMTF's member companies design, produce and service specialized machines offering the latest innovations. "This is in our DNA," Ameline says. "Remember Jacquard, the most well-known textile machinery inventor — he was French! Today, with our skills, expertise and experience, we develop creative and innovative solutions for our customers."

### Targets And Objectives

UCMTF comprises 30 specialty textile machinery manufacturers that are, in Ameline's words, "often world leaders in their specific markets." Their total annual consolidated turnover of 1 billion euros (US\$1.3 billion) makes France the sixth-largest textile machinery exporter globally. UCMTF members' strengths include long fiber spinning, yarn twisting and texturing, heat-setting, Jacquard and dobby, dyeing, nonwovens, and recycling technologies.

*TW: What are the targets of the association?*

**Ameline:** The first objective of a trade association is to group, in a spirit of professional solidarity, the companies operating in the same economic sector. This goes in line with providing services to its members; being a special forum for their exchanges; defining the industry's strategy in its relations with the socioeconomic environment; and representing the companies with the national, European and international authorities and trade organizations.

The second objective is to support our members' international initiatives, in particular for international events. In addition to the exhibitions directly organized by CEMATEX, the French manufacturers participate in regional and national shows. UCMTF is instrumental in their selection and provides substantial logistics assistance via the organization of French pavilions and their promotion.

It can also organize symposiums, study missions and receptions of foreign delegations. As the future of an industry is linked to its capacity to attract talented young people, engineers, marketing and sales people and junior managers, UCMTF targets the best French and international textile universities, and contributes to the funding of many projects.



## Achievements

**TW:** *What are the association's achievements?*

**Ameline:** We have set up specific task groups to study collectively important strategies for our future, like how to deal with copycats or how to organize our spare-parts distribution. We are also working on sustainable development. We have to design machines and production processes that save energy, water and raw materials.

All this is embedded in our corporate strategies, and for it, we invest heavily in technical expertise. To deliver sustainable profits for our companies, we have to act in the context of a sustainable development framework for all our stakeholders and for our global community. Our machines themselves have to be manufactured to leave the smallest possible footprint on the environment. We have to put more emphasis on their eco-design, propose upgrading schemes and plan how the materials used will be recycled at the end of their product life.

[Click here to view Table 1: Traditional & Industrial Textile Machinery Suppliers \(see enclosure\)](#)

## Going Global

**TW:** *What are the main activities of UCMTF?*

**Ameline:** We are very active in promoting our members' offerings worldwide. At major textile shows, UCMTF helps the smaller companies organize a national pavilion and promote collectively our exhibitors.

UCMTF organizes seminars, quite often with the help of Ubifrance and the French local representations, and invites the local textile companies to attend. Ubifrance is the French Agency for International Business Development under the guidance of France's Ministry for the Economy, Industry & Employment. It promotes technologies, products, services and know-how from France, and puts France-based professionals in contact with their international counterparts.

In the last 12 months, UCMTF has focused its efforts on the Indonesian and the Indian markets. I am glad to report that the seminars that took place in Bandung, Indonesia, attracted more than 150 Indonesian companies from Jogjakarta, Samarang, Solo and Surabaya. In March, in Delhi and Surat, Gujarat, India, we attracted more than 300 Indian companies. Very interesting contacts have been initiated, and it is now up to our companies to follow up on these. The next seminar will be held, in the second semester, in Algeria.

Last but not least, UCMTF organizes press conferences and meetings with you, the textile press. We trust you are an efficient and neutral link among the different textile stakeholders.



***Laroche SA is one of the market leaders for the production of machinery and complete lines for recycling textile waste.***

**TW:** *What is the main focus for the president of UCMTF?*

**Ameline:** Our president is the chairman and CEO of one of our member companies. Of course, he has been selected by his peers for his leadership. His main focus is to maintain UCMTF's members' high motivation in collective actions and to be the spokesman.

**TW:** *How would you describe the difference between French and other textile machinery products?*

**Ameline:** We are not competing on the mass markets like cotton spinning, but we are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises in design, production and servicing of specialized machinery. As I said, R&D is in our DNA as well as our strategy to be, always and everywhere, the best partners of our customers.

## Market Situation

**TW:** *How do you see the current market situation in general for textiles?*

**Ameline:** There are two answers: For traditional textiles, the consumption is growing steadily but slowly. In fact, the annual world consumption is quite stable from year to year. For technical textiles, the growth rate is high. Technical textiles can to a greater extent be substituted for other more expensive or heavier materials.

**TW:** *How do you see the current market situation for your member companies?*

**Ameline:** We are back to the best levels that we reached before the crisis that hit the global economy from 2008 to 2010. In 2012, many of our companies achieved record sales and order intakes. So we are very positive for all of 2013 and into 2014.

**TW:** *Where currently are the most significant markets for your member companies?*

**Ameline:** Geographically speaking, the differences are huge compared with what prevailed before the crisis. For quite a while, our national market for apparel and home textiles has been collapsing. More recently, it has been the case also for many of our historical European markets. The markets have shifted to countries such as China and India and to specific places like Turkey, but each market can be quite volatile. China has been less buoyant recently, but seems to be coming back. India is quite active with the governmental and local investment incentives. For technical textiles, which represent close to 40 percent of fiber consumption, the situation is more balanced, as the production of these fast-growing products is approximately one-third each in Europe, the Americas and Asia.



**Andritz Perfojet recently opened a laboratory facility equipped with a neXline spunlace pilot line for the production of hydroentangled nonwovens.**

**TW:** *Is the euro distorting the markets and the business of your members?*

**Ameline:** Well, the euro is quite high compared to the U.S. dollar and the Swiss franc, but that may not be a real issue, as our members are offering machines that are really specific. The low rate of the Chinese and Indian currencies may be more important as they make copies even more attractive, at least in terms of prices.

## The Future

**TW:** *Where do you put the main focus on UCMTF's activities in 2013?*

**Ameline:** A real danger for our industry is copycats. So far, each company has had its own policy. However, recently, within our association, we have established an active working group on this strategic topic. We absolutely need to protect our intellectual property — it may be our most important asset. We have collectively concluded that the counterfeited machines or parts come from a small number of countries. We will sue the counterfeiters very aggressively. We have strong arguments: our patents, our brands. Most of our customers who are our long-term partners understand that this strategy is in their long-term best interest. We will become more and more pro-active concerning the use of counterfeited parts as we cannot guarantee a machine that uses counterfeited parts.

**TW:** *Is this more of a European problem, too?*

**Ameline:** Absolutely. Each company, the national associations, and CEMATEX and the machinery shows have to work together on this strategic sensitive feature of our business. Fortunately, in this war against copycats, we are receiving more and more support from the governments, the international bodies and the judiciary systems.

**TW:** *How important is the technical textiles/nonwovens market for your member companies?*

**Ameline:** More and more important. The technical textiles market is growing at a higher rate than traditional textiles. We have just come back from Techtexil in Frankfurt, where some of our members were exhibiting. They have made very interesting contacts with technical textiles producers who have many innovative projects. There are also many innovations in the nonwovens industry that need specifically designed lines. We offer very interesting machines to fill part of these lines. On top of that, we are particularly active in the fast-growing textile recycling sector thanks to nonwovens technology.

**TW:** *Do you think that any of your member companies are market leaders in certain segments?*

**Ameline:** Yes! Our members are market leaders in many of their markets. They are working with their customers as long-time partners. From the design of a new machine up to the service, we want to offer our customers the opportunity to open new markets for their products and to provide great opportunities both in terms of turnover and profitability. If this happens, we can see our own future with optimism.

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***"The French manufacturers have already found many ways for success: fine-tuning machines, finding new processes for individual machines, optimizing a whole production line," says UCMTF President Bruno Ameline. "The producers of apparel, home textiles and technical textiles are extremely sensitive to energy, water and raw material savings; and they compare precisely the investment costs and the savings. Often, their own desire to promote sustainable development is supported by profitable returns on their investments."***



***UCMTF President Bruno Ameline***

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## Traditional & Industrial Textile Machinery Suppliers

<b>N Schlumberger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-staple fiber spinning preparation machinery</li> <li>Long-staple fiber spinning machinery</li> <li>Cards</li> <li>Complete lines</li> </ul>
<b>Stäubli Lyon S.A.S.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weaving preparation machinery</li> <li>Rapier weaving machinery</li> <li>Other weaving machinery &amp; accessories</li> </ul>
<b>Verdol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doubling machinery</li> <li>Covering machinery</li> <li>Other man-made fiber production machinery &amp; accessories</li> </ul>
<b>Dollfus &amp; Muller</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other machinery &amp; accessories</li> </ul>
<b>Superba S.A.S.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texturing machinery for artificial turf yarns (industrial)</li> <li>Winders &amp; packaging machinery (traditional)</li> <li>Complete heat-set lines (traditional)</li> <li>Thermofinishing machinery, 300 cm (traditional)</li> <li>Space dyeing machinery (traditional)</li> </ul>

Five French textile machinery manufacturers responded to a survey requesting information about the products they offer. Their answers are shown in the table above.