



dressed by nature

HEMP INFO

Who is HempAge?

The company Colour Connection, a fair trader from its very beginning, merged with the company Hanfzeit to become HempAge AG in 1999. The fair production and distribution of organic textiles has been the basis of all entrepreneurial activities. The raw material hemp – which has been neglected in the past few decades – was to be put back on the fashion map.

It was the beginning of a long journey that started with hand-woven and plant-dyed hemp fabrics from Thailand continuing with industrial production in Romania and excellent qualities that we currently achieve together with our Chinese partners.

However, our commitment is not just limited to the development and distribution of hemp textiles but also encompasses extensive research in the field of fibre production and further processing. Moreover, we are working in European bodies to promote hemp in other areas such as insulating materials or fibre-reinforced composites.

In 2011, HempAge AG founded Bast&Faser GmbH as research and development company together with three like-minded partners. Overcoming technological bottlenecks in the further processing of hemp constitutes our entrepreneurial objective. This not only includes the further processing of the textile use of hemp fibres but also that of high-performance materials for technical applications such as fibre-reinforced composites.

Today, hemp fabrics are still many times more expensive in production than comparable materials made of cotton. We are working to make sure that soon all people can hopefully afford hemp clothing. We are consciously relying on a timeless style in our collection and do without cost-intensive advertising measures in order to make our goods affordable already today. In comparison with large brand manufacturers, where advertising budgets amount to up to 40% of sales, HempAge only spends around 2% on advertising.



Hemp harvest
in Inner Mongolia

Why hemp?

Hemp is a raw material that has served people well for several millennia. Only after the World War II, hemp was stigmatised as devil's drug due to the interests of individual business tycoons. Unfortunately, this bad image persists in the Western world and now literally cries out for a renaissance based on reason.

On the one hand, the excellent qualities of the hemp plant should be named. Due to its self-sustainability it does not leach out soil and thrives in a fast-growing manner from the polar circle to the equator. It binds more CO² than most other crop plants in a short time and loosens up compressed soil as deep-rooted plant. The water consumption of hemp is significantly lower than that of cotton. This considerably improves the ecological balance sheet of this textile raw material. Its resistance to pests is unique. With its variety of special substances, the cannabinoids, the plant is fully unattractive to them, which is also why it is planted around other fields as protection against beetles and the like. Latest research has shown that endangered bee populations recover best in hemp cultivation areas although hemp does not offer them any nectar in contrast to other flowering plants.

On the other hand, the fibres of the magical hemp plant are the most stable natural fibres. Carmakers already take advantage of this circumstance with fibre-reinforced composites for interior trims and even for bumpers.

Levi Strauß also produced the "original jeans" from hemp fabric, which he found on sailing ships in sufficient quantity. For there was confidence in ropes and canvas made of hemp fibres. Even in wet conditions, they are not prone to rot due to their antibacterial qualities. Furthermore, hemp fibres can quickly absorb and release moisture.



Therefore, it is hardly surprising that hemp fashion brings concrete benefits. Intensive moisture absorption and quick release produce a cooling feel, which is especially pleasant on hot summer days. In addition, the fibres and their natural antibacterial effect prevent odours. This benefit – if you do without chemical coatings – is unique to hemp textiles. And, in contrast to chemical imitators, hemp textiles permanently benefit from this quality. A microelectronic charge corresponding to human skin and higher UV protection than comparable material densities should also be pointed out in this context.

Manufacturing the Products

FIBRE PRODUCTION

Until the 2010s, hemp was cultivated, harvested and also instantly further processed (roasted and peeled) by small Chinese farmers in a very traditional manner. This thousand-year-old tradition came to a halt after the introduction of agricultural reforms and subsidies.

Today, there are state-of-the-art harvesting machines for any type of field crop but for hemp. There is above all no adequate technical substitution for the delicate handwork during the plant peeling process.



Hemp offshoot



After harvest is done



Degummed hemp fibers



Sliver made from carded hemp fibers

This circumstance and the (pointless) ban of water retting in the hemp scutches, which were supposed to enable a changeover to industrial processing, have led to the development that today's fibre qualities no longer reach the level they had in times of peasant manual processing. Today, new techniques and processes combining industrial efficiency with high quality are intensely sought after.

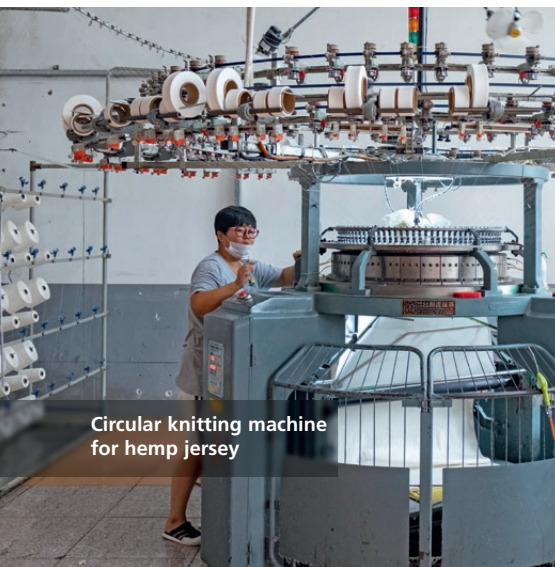
Hemp for fibre production is primarily cultivated in Inner Mongolia and the province Heilongjiang but also in all other agricultural regions of China. Our long-term partner meanwhile established their own cultivation and processing in the province Shandong. In addition to numerous experimental plants with new approaches to fibre production, above all classic scutches are used – as they are also used for linen. To a large extent, the production plants come from Belgium. The shives (inner wood of the hemp plant) also accumulating are largely processed to high-quality activated carbon.

FIBRE FINISHING

Upon arrival in the spinning mill, the fibre bundles are now split up into elementary and fractal fibres. The technique used particularly depends on the quality of the fibres provided. Water-retted fibres or very well dew-retted fibres can be separated and combed well with simple mechanical processes – however they have to be “bleached” after the spinning of the rove.

This bleaching corresponds to the chemical degumming, which is at the beginning of the process in another technique. Cooking the fibres in caustic soda during degumming dissolves the “glue” (pectin, lignin) that connects the fibres.

A biological treatment plant prevents damage to the environment. The sludge produced is a classic fertiliser for agriculture. Then, the fibres are washed, dried and further separated and cleaned by mechanical processing.



Circular knitting machine for hemp jersey



Looms for hemp fabric

In several steps of the combing process, the fibres are separated according to length and quality. The so-called long fibres become the 100% fine hemp yarn.

The shorter fibres are further processed in the same way as cotton and particularly used in blends with other natural and synthetic fibres. Blends with recycled polyester are particularly popular in the USA. We at HempAge completely do without such blends with synthetic fibres as it is meanwhile generally known that they – whether recycled or not – pollute the oceans and soils and thus our entire food chain with microfibres.

FURTHER PROCESSING

Our partner company in the province Shanxi not only takes care of the fibre finishing. The fibres are also spun to yarn and subsequently further processed to woven fabrics. The factory works 24/7 in shift operation in some areas. The dayshift has a day off after four working days, the early and late shifts have a day off after three working days. Workplaces with a particularly high concentration requirement – as in the manual fibre control – have even shorter working hours. In addition, employees are provided apartments, a supervised kindergarten, a school and a hospital. The FWF also audited this company on our account.

The woven material is further processed in the province Shangdong until manufacture. Our knitted fabrics – from fine jerseys to thick fleece and sweat wear – are also produced in the same factory.

Our flat-knitted designs are produced by a company close to the Chinese “culture capital” Suzhou. Our partner companies along the entire production chain are certified in accordance with GOTS, Textile Exchange and partly also further organic standards. The manufacturing companies are regularly audited by the FairWearFoundation.

Another fibre preparation, where our left-over fabrics etc. are recycled into spinnable fibres constitutes the only exception. The quantities we have recycled there are too low in total in order to finance complete certification of the otherwise conventional company.



Final QC for
hemp fabrics

Ecology

Our partners in China are meanwhile certified in accordance with the “Global Organic Textile Standard” (GOTS).

The spinning company obtained its own certification, the remaining production chain was taken over by our strategic partner in China.

As for the raw material certification, we have only processed certified organic cotton in our textiles for a considerable time, the remaining ingredients such as zippers etc. are also at least certified in accordance with Öko-Tex 100.

Nonetheless, there will be no product certification for HempAge in accordance with GOTS in the short term. There is one primary reason: The last still non-certified item remains the raw material hemp.

Except for the enormous financial expenditure to have tiny terraces (peasant economy) certified, it is difficult to substantiate the necessity to do so as hemp does not require any pesticides or other polluting substances. No peasant will make a financial effort for something that he or she does not need for a good crop yield.

Under these conditions, we would not be able to use hemp sharing a field with other field crops for the purpose of pest control for textile fibre production.

Meanwhile, it would be possible for a small part to use certified hemp, however, we consider this measure questionable from an environmental and social perspective. On the one hand, we would cut peasants who have provided us with raw material even in the years of low-scale hemp production out of their sales opportunities. On the other hand, cultivation and processing in the large, certified cultivation areas in the north of China cannot be considered more environmentally friendly than the hemp farmers in the direct vicinity of our spinning company in general.

Today, HempAge is working to change the requirements for GOTS certification to the benefit of hemp with these and other arguments and to establish stricter authenticity controls within GOTS at the same time. For hemp is still the second most falsified natural fibre worldwide, following cashmere. We hope that, first and foremost, you as our customer and in the medium term also the decision-making bodies come to the conclusion that this is comprehensible and supportable.

The increasing occurrence of fraud with kbA certificates is an aspect that we already preventively counteract. In this context, we opted for an organic content standard blended (OCS blended) product certification. It assures the tracking of the cotton kbA from the field to its textile use.



Typical terrace cultivation in Shanxi Province



Social Responsibility

In 2008, the first audit by the FairWear-Foundation was implemented at our Chinese partner. Shortly after the second audit (verification audit and additional workers training), HempAge was so convinced by the seriousness and professionalism of the FWF that we became a member in 2009. Meanwhile, we consider the FWF THE authority to be taken seriously when it is about socially acceptable textile production. This is not just our opinion; the number of members has constantly and strongly increased.

What distinguishes the FWF from many other labels and associations is the “multi-stakeholder approach” that is also lived during the auditing of the companies. Thus, audits are generally implemented together with local NGOs (non-governmental organisations) committed to the cause itself and not only by freelance auditors that are commissioned and paid by the auditing company. We wish that this successful example will also be taken over by organic certifiers and NGOs in the future. In our opinion, will it only be possible in this way to make sure that the billion-dollar certification business becomes a truly trustworthy system for the consumer.

As we have gone to great lengths in the past few years to proactively audit all suppliers where possible, HempAge can claim to have been almost fully monitored by the FWF. Therefore, we are particularly pleased that due to his development, we were allowed to use the FWF logo for communication purposes as one of its first members.

Meanwhile, it has been replaced by a rating system and we are proud of having had the “leader status”, the highest rating level that you can achieve as FWF member, for many years.

The results of the audits are annually recorded in the brand performance check and published by the FWF on their website. This creates transparency and enables anyone to get an idea of the current state of HempAge in terms of social responsibility.



Cutting & Sewing
in Shandong

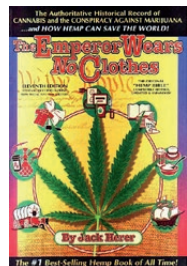
Recommendations



YOUTUBE

In our Youtube channel you will find the latest product videos and general information about hemp
HEMPAGE AG

THE TRUE COST
Documentation about the true cost of clothing
UNTOLD CREATIVE, LLC.



THE EMPEROR WEARS NO CLOTHES

Hemp and the Marijuana Conspiracy
JACK HERER - QUICK AMERICAN ARCHIVES

THE HEMP BOOK
Book about the potential of hemp in the ecological crisis
MAREN KRINGS



FURTHER TIPS

You will find links and recommendations about websites, books and movies here:
hempage.com/recommendations



Due retted hemp ready for pick up

Hemp fashion by HempAge can be found here:



www.hempage.com



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