



Yorkshire industry's £6m boost

September 17, 2009

Advanced textile manufacturers in the Yorkshire region of the UK are set to benefit from a £6m investment from Yorkshire Forward and the European Regional Development Fund.

Woven aircraft components and anti-counterfeiting for the fashion industry are just two of the focuses of the new Textile Innovation Programme, which will provide practical and financial backing for manufacturers to work with experts from universities and research organisations in order to create new high-value, high tech products.

The programme, which is being run through the Textile Centre of Excellence in Huddersfield, follows a series of feasibility studies conducted earlier this year.

"The value of the technical textiles market, which covers a wide range of sectors including medical, engineering, construction, automotive and aerospace has grown to an estimated £30 billion," said the centre's managing director Bill Macbeth. "New technologies, coupled with increasing environmental concerns, are opening up major opportunities for companies that can create lighter, stronger components, and materials that can sense and adjust to their environment."

Boeing is currently developing its new 787, a significant portion of which is to be made from woven carbon fibre composites. The Textile Innovation Programme's feasibility studies demonstrated that these components can outperform titanium and aluminium, and the potential market opportunity for these strong, lightweight woven components is vast.

Another area where the programme is set to make an early impact is anti-counterfeiting. Currently, the high quality textile and fashion markets along with other key regional sectors like pharmaceuticals are facing a growing crisis, where counterfeit products are accounting for up to 10% of sales.

"Our companies provide cloth for the most famous fashion houses across the world, and counterfeiting can seriously damage those brands and revenues," said Mr Macbeth. "It's even more serious in other sectors of course, where counterfeit medical products kill thousands of people every year."

The centre is already working with Applied DNA Science, a US company based at Stony Brook University in New York, and has succeeded with its SigNature DNA project in impregnating fabrics with botanical DNA, enabling them to be authenticated with 100% accuracy with the same testing methods employed by forensic labs for criminal investigations

Applied DNA Science sells patented DNA security solutions to protect products, brands and intellectual property from counterfeiting and diversion. It also provides BioMaterial GenoTyping by detecting genomic DNA in natural materials to authenticate finished products. Both technologies protect brands and products in a wide range of industries and provide a forensic chain of evidence that can be used to prosecute perpetrators.

"Yorkshire Forward is very pleased to invest in new platform technologies that will foster growth and, ultimately, reap positive economic benefits to the Yorkshire business community, and the UK and European public at large," said Jim Farmery, assistant director of business at Yorkshire Forward. "SigNature DNA is a true platform technology that has exciting and practical applications that extend to multiple industry sectors."

The Textile Innovation Programme will also support a wide range of environmental improvement activities through the University of Leeds, which will allow manufacturers to use more environmentally friendly chemicals in wool processing and reduce the use of power and water at all stages of production.

The issue of textile and clothing waste recycling will also receive a major investment boost as the programme brings together key environmental organisations to focus on a problem that has exploded with the advent of cheap clothing imports.

Other applications from the programme include the use of nano and plasma technologies to produce fabrics which are self-cleaning, conductive fibres to make 'smart' clothing that can monitor a wearer's body functions and dressings that monitor wounds, prevent infection and deliver medication.