

China to Continue Environmental Crackdowns as it Works to Green Supply Chains

By Tara Donaldson



China's crackdown on factory pollution in 2018 should serve as a sign of things to come in the country—sustainability is now taking precedence in what was once the world's factory, known for rampant environmental pollution.

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At a Textile Talk at Texworld USA Monday, Yan Yan, director of the China Textile Information Center and Office of Social Responsibility, said China now wants to remodel itself with a focus on three key labels: Technology, Fashion and Green.

“The three labels can make our textile and apparel industry have a new image,” Yan said. “We want to offer better life and better cost-effective production to the whole world.”

And the country plans to achieve those things with an emphasis on sustainability and chemicals management, adopting standards for green, clean production and the technology to deliver it.

“The Chinese industry has been evolved in the last 15 years,” Yan said. “Almost every day we are facing challenges. We are also looking for our winning solution.”

That said, China is on track to make changes.

“We have a five-year plan to have a green industry environment,” Yan said. “Both with international requirements for the better environmental protection, but at the same time the local laws are more strict.”

China has been focused on tightening its policies around the environment in recent years. Last year it established the Laws of Environmental Protection Tax, which helped see non-compliant factories shuttered in 2018, and this year, it’s embracing a Soil Pollution and Prevention and Control Law, to minimize the havoc some factories have been wreaking on their local environments.

“We would like to increase the compliance of the whole supply chain,” Yan said. “While Chinese textile and apparel enterprises seek global presence, their social and environmental impacts are attracting increasing attention from international stakeholders.”

As such, China has taken strides in chemical and carbon stewardship, as well as environmental protection. As part of its chemicals stewardship goals for 2020, the country partnered with UN environment, chemicals suppliers and textile and dyeing enterprises to register more than 26,000 chemicals into a database for better knowledge of the use and management of chemicals in the supply chain. Companies in Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Guangdong have gotten on board.

Separate from its standard Belt & Road initiatives, China is also embracing a Sustainable Belt & Road effort, where it’s partnering with supply chains in Asia to collaborate on regional efforts to improve sustainability.

In conjunction with GIZ, its German partner for sustainable development, plus seven industrial organizations, China signed an MoU with Cambodia, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan to promote responsible supply chains at a regional level.

“Now we are aligned we are working together for a better regional garment industry,” Yan said. “We do more together with international organizations.”

What’s more, the goings on between the U.S. and China on trade last year spurred China even further into reevaluating its offering. With 2019 marking the 40th year of diplomatic relations between the two countries and ‘life beginning at 40’ as the saying goes, Yan said it’s time to start fresh.

“When we are in 40th anniversary year, we need to figure out how to develop our relationship new this year,” she said.

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