IBTEX No. 53 of 2025 April 28, 2025

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85.19	96.69	113.30	0.59

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Will Trump Tariffs Help or Hurt U.S. Garment Workers?

As garment workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lesotho and Vietnam brace themselves for some of the most expansive of President Donald Trump's so-called "reciprocal" tariffs, currently on hold, their counterparts in the United States are feeling the pressure from the stiff levies that are already in place, including an extra 145 percent—perhaps 245 percent?—punitive tax on Chinese goods.

They include women like Maria, a Los Angeleno who asked that only her first name be used because of potential retaliation. If the trade war drags on—or worse, escalates—the American businesses and workers that the president claims to want to put "first" will be hit hard as the rising cost of necessary imports such as fabric, buttons, zippers, threads and machinery wipe out any advantage that increased orders from companies looking to avoid hefty tariff payments may afford. Already, the 10 percent "universal" tariff that will serve as a baseline while the 90-day pause is still in effect is beginning to add up.

"Many people may not know this, but garment workers typically have to bring their own tools to work, and most of these tools are made in other countries, so this will take more money out of garment workers' pockets because our tools—trimmers, feet, sewing tweezers, bobbins—will become more expensive," she said. "Tools like sewing feet get worn down quickly and we have to replace them often. It's going to be hard to afford to replace them if they become much more expensive."

As is the case elsewhere in the world, it's the worker at the supply chain's lowest rung that ends up bearing the brunt. Maria expects her already meager paycheck to shrink further still. Despite a 2021 law requiring Californian factories to pay the people who stitch their clothes the minimum wage, violations are still widespread.

She pointed out that while factories may gain more work, they may also lack the wherewithal to take it on. "Basically, all the textiles we use to make clothes will also become more expensive," she said, adding that the additional costs will end up hurting everyone, whether employer or employee. They could even lead to layoffs, which would have the opposite effect of what Trump said he wants.

It isn't for nothing, either, that former L.A. County district attorney George Gascón once dubbed Los Angeles the wage theft capital of America. A 2022 Department of Labor survey of 50 randomly chosen garment manufacturers in the Southern California area, for instance, found that half of them were illegally paying their workers off the books, including through the outlawed piece-rate system. In what investigators called a "particularly egregious" case, one garment contractor paid its workers as little as $1.58 per hour. Garment workers elsewhere in the country have even fewer protections, though it hasn't been for a lack of trying.

All of which is to say that cutting into already razor-thin manufacturing margins could make unscrupulous employers behave even worse.

"While tariffs are often framed as a way to protect American jobs, they can actually backfire when it comes to apparel by increasing jobs for brands without addressing the root causes of why domestic apparel manufacturing has declined," said Katrina Caspelich, executive director of Remake, a fashion advocacy group that has been lobbying for federal legislation in the form of the Fashioning Accountability and Building Real Institutional Change—or FABRIC—Act.

Like its California predecessor, the FABRIC Act wants to end piece-rate payments, albeit at a national level. But it also proposes giving domestic manufacturers a leg up through a $50 million-a-year support program, administered by the Department of Labor, that would dole out grants and technical aid to help manufacturers with facilities and equipment upgrades, workforce development and safety training and improvements.

Caspelich said that fashion made in the United States can be part of a thriving future, but only if it's people-first. If the Trump administration wants to bolster local production—and in a way that's ethical and sustainable—it needs to pour in real investment, including expanding workforce development programs, bolstering labor protections, enforcing existing laws against wage theft and unsafe workplace conditions and offering tax incentives and grants to businesses that commit to fair labor practices at home.

"If we truly value 'made in America,' we have to value the people who make it possible," she added. "Instead of blanket tariffs, we need policies that directly invest in rebuilding the infrastructure for responsible domestic manufacturing."

An ‘absolutely terrifying’ time

The fact of the matter is that the strength of domestic apparel manufacturing isn’t what it used to be. After the advent of free trade and China’s entry into the World Trade Organization sent production fleeing to cheaper climes overseas, only 2 to 3 percent of clothing sold in the United States is also cut and sewn in the United States.

The sprawling ecosystem of cotton ginners, yarn spinners, textile mills and dyeing and finishing houses that once underpinned any semblance of self-sufficiency has mostly been broken up and sold for parts. And the rest have been struggling to hang on, with more than a dozen textile plants permanently shuttering in 2024, according to the National Council of Textile Organizations, a lobbying group.

But Marissa Nuncio, director of the Garment Worker Center in Los Angeles, still can’t help but feel a twinge of indignation whenever she reads takes that dismiss the existence of an American labor force. Roughly 100,000 garment workers still toil in the United States, most of them concentrated in downtown Los Angeles and New York City’s Garment District.

“It’s really important that the impact on workers doesn’t get lost,” she said. “It’s also really important that there is a growing ecosystem of sustainable, ethical, high-road fashion businesses that are trying to change the industry from within, and they’re directly impacted by this. Without attention to what it takes to support and bolster and build up domestic industry, we’re going to see the negative impacts of these tariffs.”

Leaner paychecks aren’t the only concern for garment workers. As the prices of groceries spiral upward, adding to the higher-than-average cost of living in cities like Los Angeles and New York, the squeeze is going to come from both sides, creating more financial duress.

Garment workers also tend to be of immigrant extraction, with many of them undocumented women from Latin America and Asia. The White House’s aggressive push to apprehend and deport as many people as it can has created a climate of fear and uncertainty over potential sweeps of their factory floors by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"It's an absolutely terrifying time," said Nuncio, whose organization has held at least half a dozen "know your rights" workshops in the various regions in L.A. County since November, complete with free consultations with immigration lawyers.

"We speak to our members; they have a lot of questions: what does this particular news or this executive order mean?" she said. "We've heard from multiple members who said we had a real increase in ICE activity in the south L.A. region, where a lot of our members are, where our factories are. And we've heard from members who said, 'I didn't go to work today. I'm scared to go out.' That's a real direct impact. Folks need to be able to live their lives."

Thousands of miles west in Brooklyn, where Roopa Pemmaraju, founder of Refugee Atelier, helps equip refugees and asylum seekers with the tailoring skills that will allow them to seek fair-paying jobs, the mood is one of resigned acceptance. These are people, she said, her voice barely rising above the factory floor din, who are used to being taken advantage of because of their desperation for a better life.

"They just say that if they have to get picked out, that's the reality and nobody can change that," Pemmaraju said. "But meanwhile, I'll continue to help them fill out their paperwork and get the right wages, connect them with affordable housing. That's what I'm focusing on now."

Garment workers frequently skew older, too, with many already on the verge of aging out of the business, said Jennifer Guarino, president and CEO of the Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center, or ISAIC, in Detroit, which trains young people in the fundamentals of advanced and automated apparel production at its "factory classroom."

Especially with technology in play, the problem isn't so much the labor force, she said, but whether there is a long-term commitment to sustain it. Consider, for instance, the rise and then collapse of the domestic personal protective equipment sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. As soon as China resumed exports of masks and gowns, the American businesses that rallied on a shoestring were abandoned en masse. The same fear infuses the industry today. What if American suppliers threw everything they had at expanding their capacity, only to see tariffs dissipate and orders dwindle once more?

"I think businesses have to get beyond this reactionary hair-on-fire response to tariffs and say, 'Oh, you know what? If it's not this, it's going to be another,'" Guarino said. "What we really need to do is commit to a transformative supply chain that will be good no matter what happens with tariffs. And that it'll be better for us in the long term, for our business and the environment."

ISAIC is an example of how garment jobs, with the proper investment that Caspelich was talking about, can be transformed for the better. It sees its trainees as more than just future bodies on a production floor. It's not just training sewing operators, she said, but "flexible product fabricators" that, yes, can sew, but they can also run digital cutting machines or interface with digital embroidery and printing. Making jobs higher-skilled and higher-wage will make it more appealing to the next generation, but it also requires reassessing talent development.

"When I hear manufacturers say, 'We can't find enough sewers,' well, it's just not the right answer. It's just doing it the old-fashioned way," she said. "So, at least from our perspective, the talent will be there, but you have to present a different career value proposition. You need the dedicated commitment that the jobs will be there."

Taking the high road

There are a few certainties in the domestic garment production sphere. American military uniforms have to be made in the United States by law. And since 2012, Team U.S.A.'s opening and closing Olympic ceremony uniforms have been manufactured by Ralph Lauren's stateside contractors.

But the fact that the online shopfront for the L.A. Olympics in 2028 has, to date, no products that are made locally is a sign that larger impediments are involved, said Daniel Cardozo, CEO of Ethix Merch, a responsibly sourced swag merchant that founded the Alliance for Responsible Apparel Manufacturing & Purchasing—ARAMP, for short—with the Garment Worker Center, the Sweat-Free Purchasing Consortium and others to provide a vetted marketplace of high-road L.A. manufacturers that "take care of their workers the right way."

"I can't tell you how many labor unions there are that we talk to—that we lose business to—because they go and they buy imports for their rallies, events and giveaways without any kind of labor regulations behind them, because it's written into the DNA of the economy at this point that you just get the best deal, and you don't have to do the work to identify the impact that your purchases have," he said. "And now there's no system in place for the L.A. Olympics to support its own garment industry whatsoever."

Cardozo thinks that the tariffs, done properly, could bring some clothing manufacturing back to the United States. The problem is that he has little faith that this is the case. He wouldn't be surprised, in fact, if most of the new work ends up going to sweatshops.

"There's no prep work being done to invest in the industry on the front end so that we can have the capacity to take advantage of these opportunities," he said. "There's no guarantee that these tariffs are going to last. The administration has been extremely capricious about it. They're coming, they're being lowered, they're being raised, they may be paused, etc. It doesn't give the industry the opportunity to invest because you don't know what's coming down the road."

Then there's the fundamental flaw that Christian Birky, founder of Because Capital, a firm that focuses on reducing overproduction in fashion, and co-founder of ISAIC, sees as that reason many garment workers, including those in the United States, have to grapple with near-, if not below-poverty wages. For reshoring to take, he said, brands will have to recognize that the current tack of massive overproduction, followed by selling off the surplus at deep discounts, is not a viable financial strategy.

"The capital that we need to invest in better wages and to treat people fairly in this industry is tied up in huge amounts of clothing being produced that we don't need," he said. "That's the reality of it. And until we address that, we're going to be playing in the margins. We make too many garments for the number of garments that we sell."

Nuncio agreed. The notion that tariffs are going to rebuild American apparel manufacturing is an incomplete analysis, especially from a worker organizing standpoint. And ARAMP, she said, is getting close to being able to run a pilot to see what "forward-looking" partnerships and solutions might look like. Otherwise, fashion production will continue to be a race to the bottom, whether in the United States or overseas.

"Workers are the backbone of the industry," she said. "They're the ones who can articulate what are the needs of the industry. And for us that that needs to be a focus in this conversation: What's needed to keep good, dignified jobs present and growing for them?"

New York and California are among the states suing the Trump administration for “illegally imposing” tariffs through the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which imbues the president with extraordinary economic powers during a national emergency. But the cities where garment workers are concentrated, like Los Angeles, could do more to help garment workers, too, Maria said.

“The city would have the power to price things at the necessary level for the workers to make what they should be making,” she said. “The city could make the choice to invest taxpayer dollars in good-paying jobs. In the end though, it’s not just our tools and materials that will increase in cost, but likely everything in our lives will go up: cost of food, everything. And this will cause more financial stress in our lives.”

Source: sourcingjournal.com– Apr 25, 2025

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Chinese manufacturers are scouring the world to find new buyers

Wang Chengpei runs a Chinese textile company selling polyester and nylon fabrics to garment manufacturers that make work and athletic wear. Until recently, about 30% of revenue at his company, Suzhou Feimosi Textile Technology, came from orders destined for the U.S.

Now, around a third of his buyers' orders are on hold due to the U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports , and he is on the hunt for other markets. That has brought him to Indonesia, where he hopes to sell to local manufacturers.

"We came here to see if we can open up new markets" and make up for the loss of U.S. consumers, said Wang.

At a textile and garment trade fair this month in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, he offered swatches of fabric with colorful designs that block ultraviolet rays, hoping they would appeal to local manufacturers making clothes for Indonesia's tropical climate.

With the White House imposing 145% tariffs this year on Chinese goods , Chinese manufacturers are fanning out around the world in search of new markets to offload products that would have served U.S. demand.

It won't be easy to find alternatives to America's voracious consumers. The U.S. is by far the largest single-country buyer of China's exported goods, accounting for roughly half a trillion dollars of products, or about 15% of China's goods exports, last year, according to Chinese customs data.

About a fifth of China's goods exports to the U.S. have a high dependency on the U.S., Oxford Economics found. At stake are about 10 million to 20 million jobs in China geared toward making products for American consumers, according to Goldman Sachs estimates. Also on the line is the health of the world's second-largest economy.

Many Chinese manufacturers have little choice but to find new overseas markets for their goods, since they face brutal competition and a stagnating economy at home.

China’s leaders said they plan to boost domestic consumption and support tariff-hit sectors, and some e-commerce companies such as Jd.com have announced initiatives to help exporters transition to the local market.

But demand from households and businesses in China is weak. After an epic property-market collapse and slowing economic growth, Chinese people are saving more and spending less. Consumer prices have flatlined, factory-gate prices have fallen for more than two years and imports have declined, a reflection of how tepid

domestic spending is in China.

Qian Xichao, a representative of Wujiang City Hongyuan Textile, said he came to Indonesia for the fair for the first time because of how tough the domestic market is in China, where factories are churning out so many excess goods that price wars have broken out, killing profits.

“To be frank, personally speaking, all we can do is go out and look for new opportunities,” Qian said.

The European Union, the U.K., Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mexico, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria are the most likely to absorb Chinese exports previously bound for the U.S., according to Allianz . China’s exports to those countries could grow about 6% annually over the next three years, the firm estimates.

At the Jakarta trade fair, one of the largest for Indonesia’s textile and garment industry, Chinese exhibitors outnumbered domestic manufacturers by more than two to one in the directory. About 400 Chinese manufacturers were listed as exhibitors, and many said it was their first time in the country.

The squeeze on many exports to the U.S. is rippling to the Chinese manufacturers that produce fabrics, threads, yarns and other materials used to make clothing and other textile products. Some Chinese factory owners at the

Jakarta trade fair said a portion of their production has already been suspended, and are bracing for a further slowdown in orders.

They are now on the hunt for new customers—and Indonesia, with its robust manufacturing sector and consumer market of around 280 million people, looks promising.

The Chinese exhibitors could also piggyback off any boom in Indonesian textile producers selling to the U.S., given that the Trump administration's proposed 32% tariff on Indonesian goods is lower than the duty on Chinese imports. Martin Sutanto, sales and marketing director for Indonesian fabric producer Fabriku, said he noticed an uptick in inquiries from agents for the U.S. market.

Still, some manufacturers say pivoting from the U.S. to other regions might not be so easy.

At the trade fair, many booths of Chinese manufacturers were sparsely attended compared with those of Indonesian exhibitors. Some salespeople were glued to their phones as few passersby stopped to check out their products. Baoji Changxin Cloth, a Chinese exhibitor, displayed samples of thick cotton and polyester fabrics that could be difficult to sell in Indonesia's climate.

Xi Ya, a manager at the company, said it was her first time in Indonesia and she noticed local buyers favored silkier fabrics.

"Our product may not match well in the market," she said.

Many manufacturers said they weren't making big business decisions given how fast-changing the Trump administration's tariff policy has been. Some are also exploring other consumer markets such as Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"There's nothing we can do about the tariffs. We'll have to wait until the tariffs stabilize before proceeding, otherwise you wouldn't dare take the risk," said Michael Wang, a manager at Shaoxing Double-color Textile.

Meanwhile, Sutanto, the executive at the Indonesian fabric producer, is worried about competing with a potential deluge of cheap goods from China if manufacturers there divert exports to Indonesia. Countries in Asia, Latin America and Europe have filed trade complaints against Chinese exporters that have sold cut-rate products in those markets.

“If China’s product floods the Indonesia market, that’s going to be hard for us,” he said.

At stake are about 10 million to 20 million jobs in China geared toward making products for U.S. consumers

Source: pressreader.com– Apr 28, 2025

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Growth in EAP to slow down to 4% in 2025 from 5% in 2024: World Bank

The World Bank projects growth in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region to slow down to 4 per cent this year compared to 5 per cent last year.

Prospects for higher or lower growth depend partly on broader growth prospects, but also on how country policies respond to uncertainty in the global environment, the bank said in its EAP Economic Update April 2025.

Poverty rates in the region will continue to decline. Around 24 million people in the region are projected to escape poverty between 2024 and 2025, based on the upper-middle-income poverty line, the bank said in a release.

China is expected to grow at 4 per cent this year; Cambodia at 4 per cent; Indonesia at 4.7 per cent; Malaysia at 3.9 per cent; Mongolia at 6.3 per cent; Laos at 3.5 per cent; the Philippines at 5.3 per cent; Thailand at 1.6 per cent; and Vietnam at 5.8 per cent.

Growth in the Pacific Island countries is projected at 2.5 per cent this year.

The EAP region outpaced most regions in economic growth last year. To sustain this momentum and generate jobs, EAP countries must navigate global uncertainty and tackle long-term challenges tied to shifting global integration, climate change, and demographic trends, the report noted.

Growing global uncertainty is having an impact on business and consumer confidence, inhibiting investment and consumption. Trade restrictions are expected to affect the region’s exports, while slower global growth is likely to further reduce external demand.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Apr 28, 2025

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Sri Lanka's apparel industry backs government's trade talks with USTR to boost exports

The Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF) has welcomed the Government of Sri Lanka's proactive engagement with the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in Washington D C. JAAF expressed appreciation to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and the Sri Lankan delegation for prioritizing discussions aimed at strengthening equitable and mutually beneficial trade relations.

The United States remains a vital trading partner for Sri Lanka's apparel sector, which directly employs 350,000 people and supports another 700,000 livelihoods. JAAF commended the Government's commitment to addressing key trade barriers and safeguarding market access and competitiveness for Sri Lankan exports.

The association emphasized the importance of achieving tariff parity with other apparel-producing nations, ensuring a level playing field for Sri Lankan exporters. It urged both governments to consider the long-term sustainability of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, a critical pillar of the national economy and a global leader in ethical manufacturing.

As discussions move towards a potential bilateral trade agreement, JAAF highlighted the industry's adherence to full traceability, transparency, and sustainability standards, and called for special concessionary tariffs in recognition of these practices. JAAF expressed full support for continued dialogue, aiming for a future-focused agreement that enhances trade, attracts investment, and drives shared prosperity.

Source: fashionatingworld.com– Apr 28, 2025

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China's apparel exports to Nigeria drop 35%, fabric 8% in 2024

China's exports of fabric and apparel to Nigeria saw a declining trend in 2024. Fabric exports to the country fell by 7.97 per cent to $2,124.592 million during the year, while apparel exports recorded a sharp drop of 35.86 per cent to $837.682 million. Recent local media reports indicated a sharp 114 per cent rise in Nigeria's total goods imports from China.

China's textile exports to Nigeria, including fabric, were significantly higher than its apparel shipments. However, the decline in apparel exports was steeper than that of fabric. Nigeria is emerging as a garment manufacturing hub in Africa but still imports apparel from China.

China's apparel exports to Nigeria dropped 35.86 per cent to $837.682 million in 2024—the first time in recent years that shipments fell below $1,000 million. Apparel exports stood at $1,305.210 million in 2023. The downward trend has been consistent since 2021, when shipments were valued at $1,742.178 million, declining to $1,383.570 million in 2022 and further to $1,305.210 million in 2023, according to Fibre2Fashion's market insight tool TexPro.

In 2024, trousers and shorts were the dominant items in the apparel export basket from China to Nigeria, accounting for 22.90 per cent of total exports. Jackets and blazers made up 19.22 per cent, dresses 8.67 per cent, T-shirts 8.35 per cent, and ensembles 7.64 per cent. Other top exported garments included skirts, innerwear, accessories, jerseys, and socks.

China exported $3,088.914 million worth of fabric to Nigeria in 2021. This figure consistently declined over the following years—to $2,701.428 million in 2022 and $2,308.733 million in 2023—before falling a further 7.97 per cent to $2,124.592 million in 2024.

Fabric exports accounted for over 97 per cent of China's total textile exports to Nigeria. In 2024, textile exports were valued at $2,185.193 million, with fabric making up 97.23 per cent of the total. Textile exports stood at $3,159.934 million in 2021, $2,776.637 million in 2022, and $2,365.794 million in 2023, according to TexPro.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Apr 28, 2025

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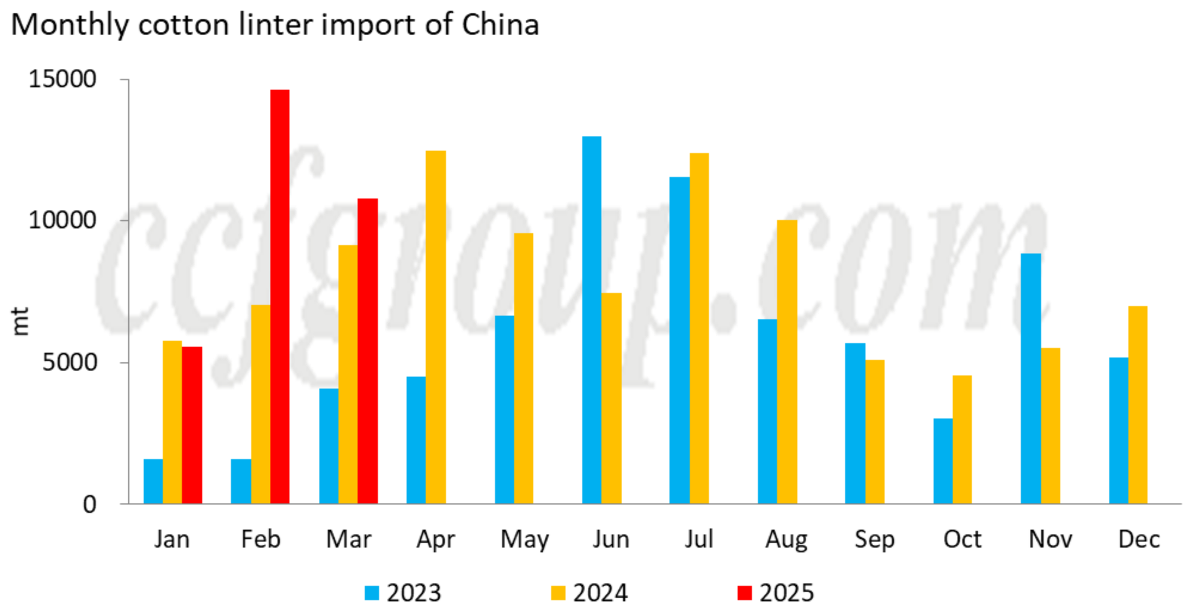
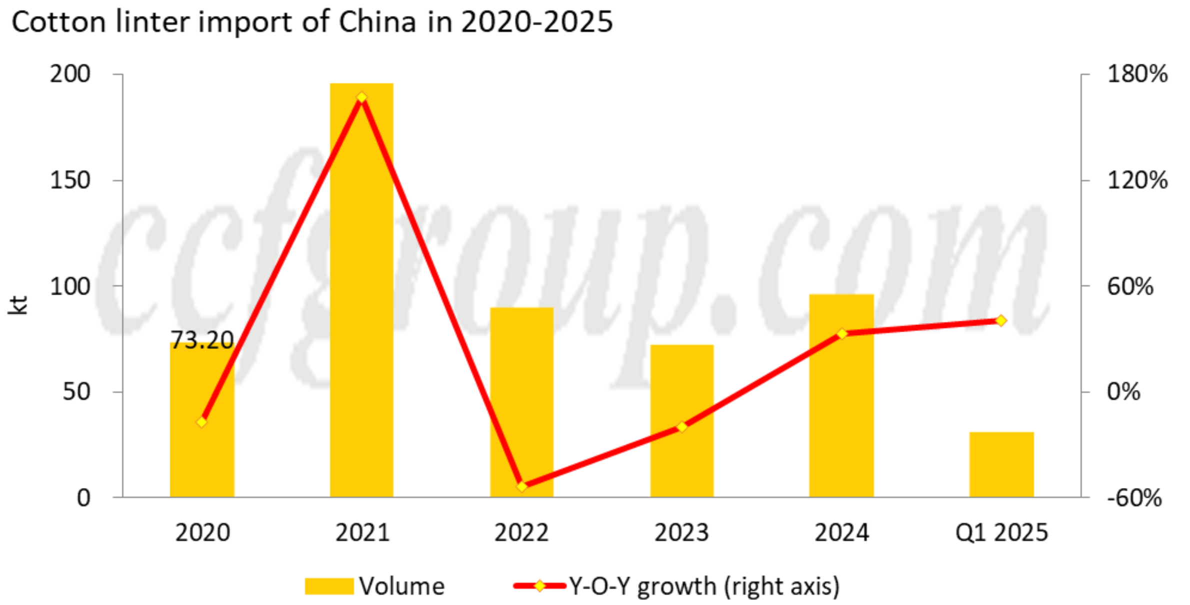
The imports of Turkish cotton linter stand out in Q1

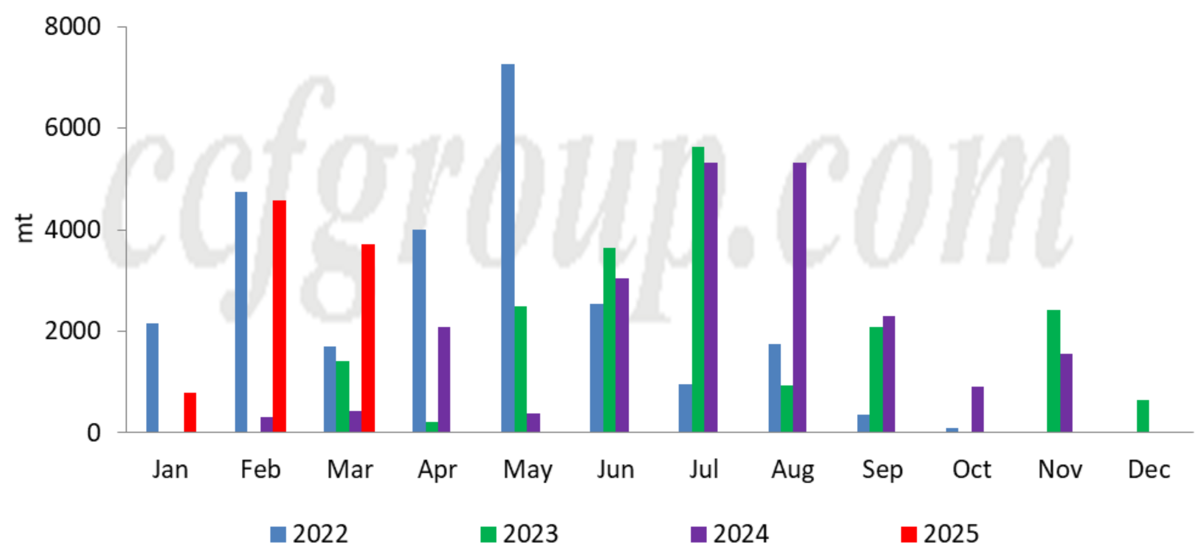
In the first quarter of 2025, China's cotton linter import volume performed remarkably, with a significant surge in Feb and continued stability above 10kt in Mar. Notably, the imports of Turkish cotton linter have outshone all others, with import volumes skyrocketing.





Influenced by various factors such as price differences between Chinese and import markets as well as changes in demand, cotton linter import market was quite vibrant in the first quarter.

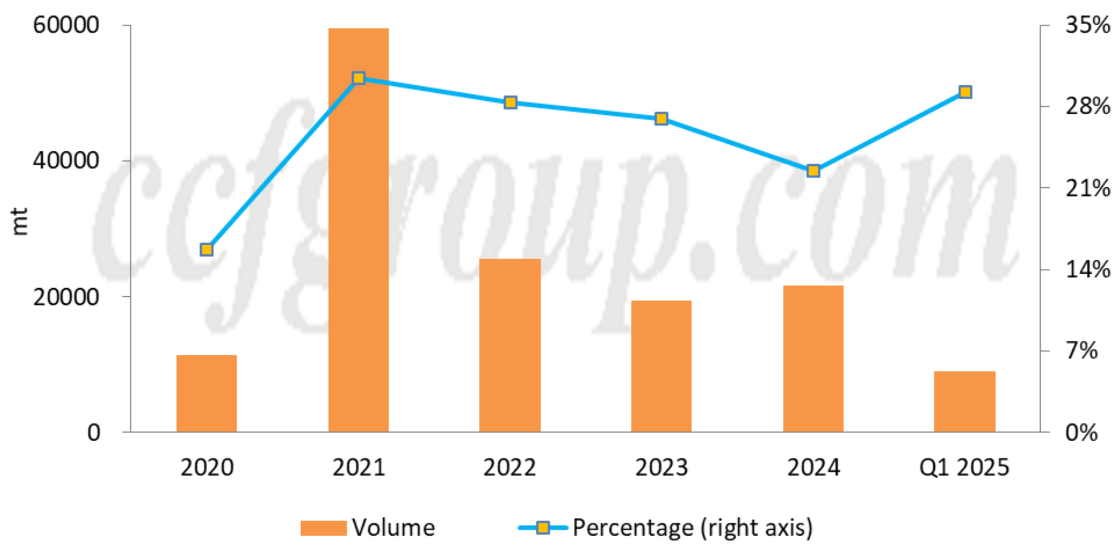
Monthly cotton linter import of China from Turkey



The monthly import volume in Feb reached a three-year high (the highest since Jun 2022), and continued to stabilize above 10kt in Mar at 10,764.52 tons, posting an increase of 17.6% year-on-year. The cumulative import volume in Jan-Mar was about 30,933.6 tons, reflecting a year-on-year increase of 40.8%.

From the perspective of origins, the imports show a high concentration this year, primarily from Turkey, Turkmenistan, India, and Brazil, which together accounted for as much as 96.5% in Mar, and 93.5% in Jan-Mar.

The import of Turkish cotton linter in 2020-2025



Among these, the imports of Turkish cotton linter have significantly increased, exhibiting a "standout" trend.

In Mar, imports from Turkey were 3,706.6 tons, accounting for over one-third (about 34.4%) of total imports and showing a remarkable year-on-year increase of 784.4%. In Jan-Mar, the import volume was 9,053.9 tons, accounting for 29.3% with a year-on-year growth of 1,159.1%.

The reasons for this phenomenon, aside from changes in downstream demand, mainly relate to cost-effectiveness. The price of Turkish cotton linter is significantly lower than that of Chinese cotton linter, as well as that from Turkmenistan and Brazil.

In Mar, the national average import price for cotton linter was $444.48/mt, with the average import price for Turkish linter at $392.15/mt, which is 11.8% lower than the average. In Jan-Mar, the national average import price was $439.8/mt, while the average price for Turkish linter was $420.6/mt, 4.4% lower than the average.

In summary, the cotton linter import market showed impressive performance in the first quarter, with Feb's monthly import volume reaching a three-year high, and continuing to stabilize above 10kt in Mar. The main origins were Turkey, Turkmenistan, India, and Brazil, particularly with a dramatic increase in imports from Turkey, driven primarily by changes in demand and resource availability, as well as cost-effectiveness factors.

Source: ccfgroup.com– Apr 27, 2025

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North American freight up 2.1% YoY to $131.6 bn in Feb

Transborder freight between the United States, Canada, and Mexico rose to $131.6 billion in February 2025, a 2.1 per cent increase compared to February 2024, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS).

US-Canada freight reached $63.2 billion, up 2.2 per cent from the previous year, while US-Mexico freight totalled $68.4 billion, reflecting a 2.0 per cent rise.

Trucks remained the dominant mode of transportation, carrying $86.6 billion worth of goods, up 3.9 per cent year-on-year. Pipeline shipments surged 23.1 per cent to $10.0 billion. Air freight also increased, rising 4.8 per cent to $4.8 billion. However, rail shipments fell 11.7 per cent to $15.1 billion, and vessel trade dropped 22.9 per cent to $7.7 billion, BTS said in a release.

For US-Canada trade, trucks moved $35.2 billion in goods, followed by pipelines at $9.3 billion, rail at $7.7 billion, air at $3.1 billion, and vessels at $2.6 billion. US-Mexico trade included $51.4 billion moved by truck, $7.5 billion by rail, $5.1 billion by vessel, $1.7 billion by air, and $0.7 billion by pipeline.

Detroit, Port Huron, and Buffalo were the top truck ports for trade with Canada, while Laredo, El Paso, and Otay Mesa led on the southern border. For rail, Detroit, Port Huron, and International Falls were key for US-Canada flows, whereas Laredo, Eagle Pass, and El Paso handled the most rail freight with Mexico.

Pipeline connections were led by Chicago, Port Huron, and Minneapolis on the northern border, and El Paso, Hidalgo, and Laredo on the southern side. For waterborne energy shipments, the top US ports with Canada were Boston, Arthur, and Portland, while with Mexico they were Houston, Arthur, and Texas City.

Detroit and Laredo remained the most active land ports for both truck and rail trade.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Apr 28, 2025

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UK goods trade with US declines in 2024; exports down 3.7%, imports 2%

The United Kingdom imported £57.1 billion (~$76 billion) worth goods from the United States last year—9.7 per cent of all goods imports and a 2-per cent decrease year on year (YoY)—and exported £59.3 billion (~$79 billion) worth goods there—16.2 per cent of all goods exports and a 3.7-per cent YoY decrease, according to the UK Office of National Statistics (ONS).

The latter was the former's largest export partner and third-largest import partner (behind Germany and China) for goods last year, an ONS release said.

Machinery and transport equipment continued to be the main commodity traded with the United States in 2024, with £20.1 billion of imports and £29.1 billion of exports.

The proportion of total goods imported from the United States has been stable since 2022, remaining unchanged at 9.7 per cent of total imports.

However, the proportion of total goods exported to the United States has increased gradually since 2022, indicating that the United States may be becoming a relatively more important export partner for the United Kingdom. Over this period, the proportion of British goods being exported to the United States increased from 13.8 per cent to 16.2 per cent.

The United Kingdom imported £8 billion worth chemicals from the United States last year—a 1.1-per cent YoY increase. Chemical imports from the United States accounted for 11.9 per cent of all UK chemical imports in 2024.

Chemicals were the second-largest commodity exported, with £10.8 billion of chemical exports to the United States in 2024, accounting for 19.6 per cent of the country's total chemical exports.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Apr 28, 2025

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Vietnam GDP growth projected at 5.8% in 2025, 6.1% in 2026: World Bank

Vietnam's gross domestic product (GDP) growth is projected to moderate to 5.8 per cent this year due to a rise in trade policy uncertainty, according to the World Bank's latest East Asia and Pacific Economic Update.

The bank predicted that Vietnam's medium-term growth outlook remains positive, with GDP growth estimated to rebound to 6.1 per cent in 2026 and 6.4 per cent in 2027.

The United States is the largest export destination of the country, accounting for 30 per cent of its total exports, while China comprises 38 per cent of its imports.

Uncertainty may also further weaken consumer confidence and spending, which has lagged GDP growth in recent years, the World Bank said, highlighting financial sector vulnerabilities persist with the average loan-loss coverage ratio among 26 banks at 83 per cent compared to 150 per cent in 2022.

While the government has fiscal space to support demand, effective implementation may be hampered by chronic under-disbursement in public investment. Keeping in view the country's exposure to the external environment, stronger-than-expected distortions in trade policy could adversely affect exports and growth, the bank noted.

A slower-than-expected global growth could also reduce external demand and affect exports and private investments, including foreign direct investment (FDI). Despite these challenges, poverty rates in Vietnam continue their downward trend. The share of the population living on less than $3.65 per day (the lower-middle-income poverty line) is expected to decline from 3.8 per cent in 2024 to 3.6 per cent this year.

However, lower growth in the agriculture sector suggests more limited gains among the poorest.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Apr 28, 2025

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Vietnam urges SYRE to build a sustainable textile industry in the country

During a meeting with Sussana Campbell, Chairperson, SYRE and Johan Ndisi, Swedish Ambassador to Vietnam, Pham Minh Chinh, Prime Minister, Vietnam urged Swedish textile recycling company SYRE to invest in building a green and sustainable textile industry in the country

Chính invited SYRE to tap into Vietnam's surplus textile materials and waste for sustainable production. He also emphasized on using clean energy and eco-friendly materials in the manufacturing process.

Further, praising SYRE's proposed investment location in Bình Định province, Chinh termed it as a 'strategic choice' due to its favorable business environment and well-developed infrastructure, including an international airport and a deep-water seaport.

Reaffirming Vietnam's commitment to fast but sustainable development, Chính said, aiming for 8 per cent economic growth this year, the country aspires to reach double-digit growth in the near future. He emphasized on the critical role of science, technology, innovation, and digital transformation in achieving those goals, while also calling for international cooperation in finance, governance, talent, and technology.

Sharing the company's ambition to expand globally with a strong focus on green transition, Campbell expressed SYRE's desire to partner with Vietnam to develop the country into a global hub for circular textile production.

The company's fully circular manufacturing model creates textile-grade materials from recycled inputs, said Campbell. Vietnam is a strategic location for it, especially with growing global momentum for sustainable production, she added.

SYRE plans to invest $1 billion to build a polyester fabric recycling complex in Bình Định, with the aim of making Vietnam the first high-tech circular textile center in the world. The project will align with EU and U.S. sustainability standards and contribute to Vietnam's net-zero emissions goal.

PM Chính highlighted Vietnam's regional leadership in renewable energy and its strong implementation of commitments made at COP26 through COP28, particularly in circular economy and green manufacturing. He also reaffirmed the government's openness to high-tech foreign investment and pledged full support for SYRE's operations in Vietnam.

Ndisi welcomed the growing partnership between the two countries, stating that Sweden remains committed to supporting Vietnam's green transition. He noted that more Swedish businesses are seeing Vietnam as a long-term investment destination and expressed hope for advancing bilateral relations to a higher strategic level.

Source: fashionatingworld.com– Apr 25, 2025

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Bangladesh overtakes China in Turkiye's apparel market

Bangladesh surpassed China to become the largest apparel supplier for Turkiye in 2024. Although Turkiye is a major apparel-exporting nation, it also imports apparel in significant volumes. Its apparel imports from Bangladesh surged to $692.226 million last year. Interestingly, Turkiye's imports from partner countries have increased 3.5-fold over the past four years.

Turkiye's apparel imports from Bangladesh rose by 50 per cent to $692.226 million in 2024, up from $460.884 million in 2023. Bangladesh's share in Turkiye's total apparel imports also grew to 18.73 per cent, with total apparel imports reaching $3,695.179 million in 2024. In 2023, Bangladesh held a 15.58 per cent share of Turkiye's total apparel imports, which stood at $2,958.582 million, according to Fibre2Fashion's market insight tool TexPro.

Turkiye's apparel imports from Bangladesh were valued at $190.726 million in 2021, rising to $381.323 million in 2022 and $460.884 million in 2023. Bangladesh's share in Turkiye's total apparel imports was 12.72 per cent in 2021, increased to 16.06 per cent in 2022, eased slightly to 15.58 per cent in 2023, and then climbed to 18.05 per cent in 2024.

China fell behind Bangladesh as Turkiye's top apparel supplier due to slower import growth from the former in 2024. Turkiye's apparel imports from China increased by 28.07 per cent to $666.904 million in 2024, accounting for an 18.05 per cent share of total apparel imports.

Turkiye's apparel imports from China rose by 130 per cent since 2021, when imports were recorded at $289.384 million. The value increased to $478.048 million in 2022 and further to $520.945 million in 2023. China's share in Turkiye's apparel imports was 19.30 per cent in 2021, 20.14 per cent in 2022, 17.61 per cent in 2023, and 18.05 per cent in 2024, according to TexPro. Turkiye's total apparel imports rebounded to $2,373.725 million in 2022 from $1,499.024 million in 2021. They further rose to $2,958.582 million in 2023 and $3,695.179 million in 2024. The country exported apparel worth $17.444 billion in 2024.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Apr 27, 2025

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‘Sustainability’ still looms over India-EU trade talks

The India-European Union free trade talks have gathered pace with both partners starting sector-specific negotiations for the first time after narrowing chapter-wise differences, but their key disagreement over “sustainability” issues persists, which they hope to address in the forthcoming 11th round of talks starting next week in New Delhi, according to people in the know.

Significant achievements have been made on core chapters related to market access, hence sector-specific discussions have been initiated, starting with the automotive and medical devices industries, they said requesting anonymity.

Market access is core to any FTA and the proposed India-EU free trade talks have built a “considerable” consensus on several chapters such as trade in goods, sanitary and phytosanitary issues, technical barriers to trade, trade remedies, rules of origin, government procurement, services and investments, they added.

The two partners aim to conclude the agreement by the end of 2025.

After the meeting between leaders of both sides in New Delhi on February 28, trade matters have now gained precedence in negotiations over vexed non-trade issues such as sustainability, carbon tax and deforestation regulations, they said. They were referring to European Union president

Ursula von der Leyen and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting during the college of commissioners' India visit in February this year.

While the EU's insistence on making sustainability a "binding" part of the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) is still a contentious issue, the two sides have agreed to discuss the matter in their next meeting scheduled from May 5 in the Indian Capital, they said.

India is all for environment protection, but it does not want to make it a part of an FTA that could be used against India by any of the 27 EU members as a non-tariff barrier, they added.

"Good that the EU has softened its rigid position and progress on core trade subjects has been fast-tracked. We have already started sectoral negotiations covering industries like automotives and medical devices in our last round of meetings in March," one of them said.

According to the people mentioned above, chief negotiators have been able to progress fast with support from top officials from both sides. Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal is expected to visit Europe next week, which may see some tangible outcomes in the proposed 11th round of talks expected from May 5 in New Delhi, they said. Goyal is expected to visit London, Oslo and Brussels, the headquarters of the European Commission.

A second person said Goyal is not in favour of including sustainability issues in the FTA. "In principle, India may agree on a chapter on TSD [trade and sustainable development], but with fair dispute settlement provisions and without any binding commitment so as to ensure that the clause would not be misused by any party as a non-tariff barrier to trade," he said, adding that deliberations are on to narrow the differences.

At the 9th Global Technology Summit co-hosted by Carnegie India and the ministry of external affairs (MEA) on April 11, Goyal was candid about India's position on this matter. He said no self-respecting nation can have a free trade agreement with the EU unless the latter stops superimposing its non-trade agenda into bilateral trade negotiations.

He, however, hinted that some solution to this contentious matter was in the offing. "My sense is, we'll be able to complete most of the discussions quite amicably," he said at the summit. Explaining the reason, he said the

EU cannot impose non-trade commitments on India when it is not the real culprit on matters related to climate change. HT reported this on April 12.

Citing him, the second official said that the EU is saddled with impractical standards that are nothing but non-tariff barriers prohibiting any country from having a meaningful bilateral trade pact. “I am actually a worried man for the very future of the European Union and their businesses, given the kind of… difficult non-tariff barriers that they have set up, both for their own businesses and for the rest of the world,” Goyal said at the summit.

India and the EU resumed the FTA negotiations in June 2022 after a gap of nine years. Since then, they have finished 10 rounds of negotiation. The 10th round was resumed on March 10 in Brussels after elections in Europe.

According to the people mentioned above, the EU’s insistence on including non-trade matters is the reason that a deal could not be agreed upon for the last 18 years.

The FTA negotiations between the two partners were first launched in 2007 and then suspended in 2013 due to “a gap in ambition”. The talks resumed in 2022 after the India-EU leaders’ meeting in May 2021.

While many members of the European block are keen to close the FTA deal with India amid trade uncertainties and the tariff war, the EU is pushing sustainability measures such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and the EU deforestation regulation (EUDR).

India believes the CBAM is a form of tax that can lead to tariffs of up to 35% on imports of high-carbon goods such as cement, aluminium, fertilisers, chemicals including hydrogen, and iron and steel from India. The CBAM will be levied on carbon intensive products to offset “carbon leakage” involved in importing high-carbon goods.

Carbon leakage occurs when firms in the EU move carbon-intensive production abroad to countries where less stringent climate policies are in place, or when EU products get replaced by more carbon-intensive imports. The tax is being implemented in phases from October 2023 and will become fully effective from January 2026.

The EUDR or the regulation on deforestation-free products covers production of commodities such as cattle products, wood, cocoa, soy, palm oil, coffee, rubber and some of their derived products such as leather, chocolate, tyres and furniture.

This demands certification from importers to prove their products didn't originate from recently deforested land or contributed to forest degradation. The EUDR will begin to apply from December 30 this year.

Source: hindustantimes.com– Apr 28, 2025

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State nod for rules on code on wages, industrial relations

“Most of the rules are along lines finalised by the centre and they will be enforced as soon as the central government ascertains the date of implementation,” an official from the labour department told Hindustan Times

Mumbai: The state government has given a go ahead to rules framed for implementing the Maharashtra Code on Wages and the Maharashtra Code on Industrial Relations. The rules make it mandatory for employers to pay minimum wages, as determined by the state government, but also enable them to shut factories and fire workers with ease.

“Most of the rules are along lines finalised by the centre and they will be enforced as soon as the central government ascertains the date of implementation,” an official from the labour department told Hindustan Times. Rules for the two remaining labour codes – on social security and occupational safety – would be framed soon, he said.

According to the rules pertaining to the code on wages, the entire staff of an establishment including those in supervisory and managerial positions would be counted as ‘workers’, whereas according to existing rules, only employees with wages below ₹24,000 are considered ‘workers’.

The state government will ascertain the minimum wage based on employees’ skills, experience and geographical area, the rules state. They mandate the payment of additional wages to those working in adverse conditions, such as hazardous jobs and underground work.

“Existing rules pertaining to payment of minimum wages are advisory in nature, not mandatory. But the new rules make the minimum wage framework statutory and all employers including those in the unorganised sector would have to abide by them,” said a labour department official.

The rules have reduced the portion of salary that can be paid in the form of allowances from the current 75% to 50%. Deductions, including for loans and advances, have also been capped at 50% instead of the current 75%. All establishments with more than 20 employees would have to pay bonus, though employees found guilty of sexual harassment would be deemed ineligible for the same. Gazetted officers would handle disputes pertaining to bonus, floor wages and salary, the rules state.

The rules pertaining to the code on industrial relations further promote the ease of doing business, a key priority of the central government, by making it easier to lay off workers and close factories.

Government permission will no longer be needed to lay off workers, cut staff strength or shut down establishments with less than 300 workers, compared to the 100 workers now. Employees' unions with over 51% membership would be recognised as authorised unions; in case no union has such representation, existing unions would collectively form the negotiating council, the rules state.

The rules also mandate the establishment of a workers' reskilling fund and employers would need to deposit 15 days' salary of laid-off workers in the fund within 45 days of the termination of their services.

Source: hindustantimes.com– Apr 28, 2025

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Chinese firms turn to Indian exporters to help fill US orders

Some China-based firms hit hard by US tariffs are reaching out to Indian exporters to fill orders on their behalf and help them retain their American customers as they navigate a trade war causing seismic shocks in global commerce.

At the Canton Fair that runs through May 5 in Guangzhou — the world's biggest trade fair — several Indian firms were approached by Chinese companies to supply goods to their US customers, said Ajay Sahai, director general of Federation of Indian Export Organizations. In return for the sales, the Indian firms would pay a commission to the Chinese businesses, he said in an interview.

Most Chinese exports to the US have been hit with levies of 145 per cent. In contrast, goods shipped from India to the US are currently charged a 10 per cent tax, which will be raised to 26 per cent in July if US President Donald Trump follows through with his reciprocal tariffs after a 90-day pause ends.

Many Chinese exporters targeted by Trump's tariffs in his first term turned to Southeast Asian countries, setting up factories in Vietnam or shipping goods to places like Thailand, where they were then exported to the US. This time around, with Trump hitting countries like Vietnam with 46 per cent reciprocal tariffs, Indian exporters may see more orders diverted their way.

Unlike Southeast Asia, though, India's government maintains restrictions on Chinese investment, making it difficult for firms to set up operations in the country or ship goods through India to the US. Indian firms at the Canton Fair were instead approached to supply goods to US companies under the brands of the Chinese firms, or co-branded with the Indian firms, Sahai said.

Most of the queries came in sectors like hand tools, electronics and home appliances, Sahai said, adding there are hopes some of the US customers may directly start negotiating with Indian suppliers. The commission paid to the Chinese firms would be negotiated between the buyers and suppliers, Sahai said.

Jalandhar-based OayKay Tools, which manufactures hand tools such as drop forge hammers and cold stamp machine, is in talks with both China-based American firms and Chinese companies to supply the US market.

“Some four to five companies have approached us,” said Siddhant Aggarwal, export officer of OayKay Tools. “They have a brand name to maintain so they have to service customers.”

The increase in export orders comes as India’s government makes significant progress in its talks with the Trump administration on a trade deal, which New Delhi hopes will help it escape the higher US tariffs. Vice President JD Vance called for a new era of collaboration between the two during a visit to India last week, where he highlighted the progress the two sides have made on a bilateral trade deal that they aim to seal by fall of this year.

The US and China, meanwhile, remain at loggerheads over the tariffs, with Beijing calling the high levels of levies “meaningless.” Trump said his administration was talking with China on trade, after Beijing denied the existence of negotiations on a deal and demanded the US revoke all unilateral tariffs.

It’s uncertain how much the US might allow the Indian companies to fill the gap left by Chinese firms as Washington tries to keep pressure on Beijing to make concessions.

The American presence was thin on the ground as the Canton Fair got started earlier this month, but the new tariffs were at the center of almost every conversation. Trump’s 90-day reprieve was also spurring Chinese firms to double down on their investments in Southeast Asia to circumvent the US controls. Victor Forgings, which has been manufacturing hand tools such as pliers, hacksaws and hammers since 1954, is another Indian firm seeing an opportunity to increase business as the US and China remain at loggerheads.

“We were not just approached by Chinese suppliers to fulfill orders from US customers on their behalf but also from American firms which have plants in China but are unable to supply now due to high tariffs,” said Ashwani Kumar, managing partner of Victor Forgings, based in Jalandhar, a city in the northern state of Punjab.

Kumar said the company is looking to expand and set up two more manufacturing facilities to fulfill the surge in demand. He said American companies are willing to share technical know-how with Indian firms to expand their presence in the South Asian nation.

Source: thehindubusinessline.com– Apr 28, 2025

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Spreading the Bets: India’s need to create a new textile export map

India’s textile and apparel sector, finds itself entangled in a rapidly shifting global trade environment. As geopolitical uncertainties and reciprocal tariffs threaten traditional markets, India must stich a new strategy—one rooted in diversification, strategic alliances, and innovation.

The tariff tango and market diversification

With the threat of reciprocal tariffs looming large, India's reliance on a few export markets poses a significant vulnerability. To reduce this, a broader understanding of the global textile and apparel trade market is essential. Market size, product preferences, and trade agreements all factor into the equation as India evaluates its next moves.

Table: Textile and apparel importers (2023)

Country	Import Value ($ bn)	Major Import Categories
US	130	Apparel, Home Textiles
EU (Total)	180	Apparel, Fabrics
UK	35	Apparel, Home Textiles
UAE	18	Re-exports, Apparel
Australia	12	Apparel, Home Textiles
Japan	25	Apparel, Technical Textiles
Canada	15	Apparel, Home Textiles

This data highlights the opportunity intertwined with caution. These countries represent both India's most lucrative targets and its most delicate dependencies.

The US, high-value market, high-risk scenario

The US, with textile and apparel imports valued at $130 billion, continues to be one of India's largest and most rewarding markets. Indian exporters thrive here, especially in categories like apparel and home textiles. However, the very volume of trade that makes the US attractive also heightens the risk of exposure to tariff retaliations.

Reciprocal tariffs could erode margins and competitiveness, making it crucial for Indian exporters to not only enhance product value through quality and innovation but also reduce dependency on this high-risk yet high-reward market.

The European Union, an anchor

The European Union, with $180 billion in textile and apparel imports, is the largest market in this analysis. Its appetite spans from high-street fashion to premium fabrics, offering a vast canvas for Indian products. The ongoing India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations are central, as a successful conclusion could provide preferential access and ease tariff burdens. The EU also places a premium on sustainability and compliance—two areas where Indian manufacturers must continue to evolve. A stronger EU partnership could anchor India's textile exports for the long term.

Australia and Canada, stable growth markets

Australia and Canada may not match the scale of the US or EU, but their consistent demand and stable economic environments make them valuable allies. With import values of $12 billion and $15 billion respectively, they offer room for growth, especially in categories like home textiles and casual wear.

The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) already offers a tariff edge, making it easier for Indian exporters to enter and expand. Strengthening presence in these markets can provide much-needed balance in India's export portfolio.

Japan, the technical textile niche

Japan's $25 billion textile import market is highly specialized, with an increasing focus on technical textiles—a segment where India is investing heavily. This aligns perfectly with India's ambitions to move up the value chain and capture high-margin sectors.

However, there are challenges. Tariffs on imported machinery or raw materials for technical textiles could inflate costs, underscoring the need for domestic capacity building in this segment. Yet, with the right focus, Japan could become a key partner in India's value-added textile journey.

The UAE, a re-export gateway

Though not a traditional end-user market, the UAE's $18 billion re-export business in textiles makes it a critical node in the global trade web. For Indian exporters, the UAE offers a logistical and commercial hub to access Africa, Europe, and Central Asia. Leveraging this re-export potential requires agility, competitive pricing, and supply chain efficiency—but the rewards could be significant in tapping into secondary markets via the Gulf.

Diversification, resilience the new realty

The data underscores a clear message: India must spread its bets. The textile and apparel sector must pivot from dependency on singular markets to a diversified export strategy. Here's what the path forward entails.

- Strengthening the EU connection through a successful FTA to secure tariff relief and long-term stability.
- Leveraging the India-Australia ECTA to deepen trade relations and capitalize on the Pacific's growing demand.
- Expanding footprints in Canada and other mid-tier markets for consistent, stable growth.
- Tapping into Japan's technical textile segment, with a focus on quality and innovation.

Utilizing the UAE as a re-export base, broadening global access through a strategic hub.

Source: fashionatingworld.com– Apr 25, 2025

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India seeks new trade opportunities with Croatia and Netherlands to diversify trade partnerships

In an effort to diversify its trade partnerships and explore new markets, India has actively engaged with Croatia and the Netherlands.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal met Zdenko Lucic, State Secretary for Foreign Trade and Development at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in Zagreb, on April 22, 2025, strengthening bilateral trade ties and exploring investment opportunities, a post on social media platform X by the Indian embassy in Croatia, said. "Team India and Croatia engaged in fruitful discussions during the meeting," the post by India in Croatia read.

Commerce Secretary Barthwal also held a meeting with the Netherlands's DG Foreign Economic Relations, Michiel Sweers and discussed the ways to forge a strong bilateral trade relationship and economic ties.

Commerce Secretary Mr. Sunil Barthwal & Ambassador @ktuhinv met DG Foreign Economic Relations Mr Michiel Sweers in The Hague to discuss strengthening - bilateral trade & economic ties. Discussions focused on enhancing collaboration through the Joint Trade & Investment Committee (JTIC) and advancing strategic economic cooperation," India in the Netherlands said in the X post.

Amid the global trade tensions and uncertainties, India is making an effort to diversify its trade destinations across the globe. Indian officials and leaders want to capitalise on emerging markets such as Croatia amid shifting global economic dynamics.

Croatia is also important for India because recently, the country re-elected President Zoran Milanovic. During his visit, Commerce Secretary Barthwal also held a meeting with key Industry leaders.

The Netherlands is India's 11th largest merchandise trading partner in the world and the largest in the European Union during FY 2023-24. The total merchandise trade with the Netherlands stood at $27.333 billion (₹226,360 crores) during FY 2023-2024, accounting for 2.45 per cent of India's total merchandise trade.

India has a trade surplus of $17.40 billion (₹144,160 crores) with the Netherlands. For FY 2024-25 (April-Nov), the Netherlands is India's 9th largest merchandise trading partner, with a total trade of $19.62 billion (₹164,407 crores) and a trade surplus of $12.971 billion (₹108,545 crores).

The Netherlands is India's largest merchandise export destination in Europe and the third largest in the world (after the USA & UAE). In FY 2023-2024, India exported $22.367 billion (₹185,260 crores) worth of goods to the Netherlands.

Source: thehindubusinessline.com – Apr 27, 2025

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India’s transshipment revocation should be a wake-up call

On April 8, 2025, India revoked the transshipment facility that allowed Bangladeshi exporters to use Indian land routes and airports—especially Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport—for exporting goods to third countries. The facility had been extended to Bangladesh on June 29, 2020, enabling Bangladeshi exporters to move goods via Indian Territory for faster and more cost-effective international shipment. It is speculated that this was done to send a political message, but according to the Indian government, they withdrew the facility based on Indian exporters' demand.

The sudden revocation came as a blow to many Bangladeshi exporters who had become increasingly reliant on the Indian routes due to persistent inefficiencies and high costs at home, especially at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA). Despite all the hue and cry over this issue, it should be noted that only 18-20 percent of Bangladesh's air exports were routed through India. Approximately, 20-30 trucks used to travel from Bangladesh to Delhi each day via the Benapole-Petrapole land route but many exporters did not mind transporting goods almost 1,900 km overland through India for several reasons.

Among the key reasons were the higher cost and congestion at HSIA. While it costs $3 per kilogramme (kg) to ship garments from HSIA to European destinations, the same costs only $1.2 via Delhi. There are some additional charges as well such as handling charges, scanning charges, daily warehouse charges, etc. Besides, HSIA's cargo handling capacity has already been exceeded causing tremendous congestion. Operational inefficiencies also occurred due to delays from the frequent breakdown of explosive detection scanners (EDS), lack of ground handling proficiency, frequent congestion at cargo terminals and Biman's monopolistic attitude among other factors. Goods were often stuck for days, jeopardising shipment deadlines and causing huge losses for exporters.

India's decision must serve as a turning point for Bangladesh's export logistics strategy. The dependence on a foreign nation for transshipment or the reliance on foreign carriers for cargo export exposes a structural vulnerability in the country's trade infrastructure. As a part of the solution, the third terminal must be immediately made fully operational. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, once operational, the third terminal will increase handling capacity from the existing 200,000 metric tonnes to over 500,000 metric tonnes annually. This should be considered as the most immediate fix and must be expedited with urgency.

Besides, Shah Amanat and Osmani international airports should also be equipped with modern cargo terminals, customs clearance systems, and scanners to decentralise cargo movement and reduce pressure on Dhaka. Establishing digital customs clearance system, automating documentation, and introducing AI-based cargo routing can cut delays and enhance traceability. The rates of cargo transporting and other handling charges should be brought down to reasonable amounts.

Globally, cargo movement by air transport has been significantly increasing over the past few decades. Transportation by air has been marked for its speedy and reliable movement of time-sensitive and high-value goods. Therefore, it is preferred to sea transportation despite its higher cost. This led many countries to increase their cargo transport capacity by air to capture the international market.

However, Bangladeshi airlines have yet to add any dedicated cargo aircraft to their fleets. Neither is there any Bangladeshi cargo airline in operation to take the opportunity. As such the country's exporters had to rely heavily on foreign carriers. Biman carried only 43,044 tonnes of cargo in FY2023-2024 out of a total 343,643 tonnes. This means over 85 percent of air cargo transport to and from Bangladesh is being carried out by foreign carriers, reflecting that the country's logistics sovereignty is not only under threat but also drains a huge amount of foreign currency from Bangladesh.

Source: thedailystar.net – Apr 27, 2025

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MP urges PM to allocate textile park to state

Buxar: RJD MP from Buxar, Sudhakar Singh, on Sunday wrote to PM Narendra Modi, demanding allocation of Prime Minister Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM-MITRA) park to Bihar.

The MP said under the PM-MITRA scheme, recently announced by the central govt, establishment of parks has been announced in seven states, barring Bihar.

He added that Bihar was an industrially backward state with ample potential for the textile industry and it had selected 1,719 acres of land for this scheme, and the preliminary project report was submitted to the ministry of textiles before the last date of March 15, 2022.

While states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka already have developed textile industries, Bihar does not have any such modern textile cluster. He said due to lack of opportunities, workers migrate from Bihar. If such a project was set up in Bihar, it would not only generate local employment, but large-scale migration could also be prevented, he added.

Source: timesofindia.com – Apr 27, 2025

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Reviving 'white gold': how regenerative cotton farming can be a gamechanger in North India

Once hailed as "white gold," cotton—the backbone of India's textile economy—is facing a crisis in North India. Farmers in Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan have been grappling with steep declines in area, yield, and quality due to persistent pink bollworm (PBW) infestations, whitefly attacks, Cotton Leaf Curl Virus (CLCuV), and soil-borne diseases such as boll rot and root rot. Coupled with erratic weather patterns, including prolonged dry spells and irregular rainfall, the cotton belt of North India is at a crossroads. In this backdrop, a groundbreaking demonstration of regenerative cotton farming in Haryana's Sirsa district has shown a promising way forward when the cotton sowing season has just begun in North India.

During the Kharif 2024 season, the South Asia Biotechnology Centre (SABC), Jodhpur, under Project Bandhan and with support from the PI Foundation and Indian Council of Agricultural Research's Central Institute for Cotton Research (ICAR-CICR) in Nagpur, conducted a high-tech regenerative cotton sowing trial at the North India High-Tech R&D station in Gindran village. The results, recently published in a report titled "Reviving Cotton in North India through High-Tech Regenerative Farming," have led to new hope across the cotton-growing community.

Launched at the Cotton Association of India (CAI)'s farmer training programme on April 11–12 in Mumbai, the initiative garnered the attention of leading agricultural experts, including CAI president Atul S Ganatra, Indian Society for Cotton Improvement (ISCI) president Dr C D Mayee, and SABC's Dr Bhagirath Choudhary.

During the demonstration, around 2,500 farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan were trained in the regenerative cotton farming technique. The demonstration plots – which integrated modern agronomic practices with drip fertigation and other regenerative techniques – recorded significantly higher yields than traditional methods. Fertigation is a technique that applies fertilizer directly to plants through an irrigation system. The scientists adopted several methods including drip fertigation and mechanical detopping (flat bed), and got 16.70 quintals yield per acre; drip fertigation, raised bed, polymulch and mechanical detopping, and got 15.97 quintals yield per acre; drip fertigation, flat bed and canopy management (mepiquat chloride) and got 15.25 quintals yield per acre;

while with conventional control plots they received just 4.21–6.53 quintals yield per acre.

"Micro-irrigation techniques, especially drip systems, helped participating farmers save up to 60 per cent of irrigation water compared to conventional flood irrigation methods. Moreover, drip fertigation dramatically improved fertilizer use efficiency—with 54 per cent higher nitrogen uptake, 33 per cent for phosphorus, and 79 per cent for sulphur," said Dr Choudhary, adding that these productivity and resource-use gains translated into substantial economic benefits. The net profit ratio of demonstration plots stood at 2.99, far surpassing 2.21 and 1.54 recorded in conventional control plots.

Farmer Manoj Kumar of Gindran village said he had brought 1.5 acres of land under regenerative cotton farming under the guidance of Dr Dilip Monga, former head of ICAR-CICR RRS, Sirsa, and who is part of this demonstration, and Dr Choudhary. Kumar recorded a yield of 16 quintals per acre. In contrast, the yield from the traditionally sown field was only 8 quintals per acre, even though the same seed was used in both plots—the only difference being the technique.

"This time, I am planning to bring around 8 acres under this technique," he said. Kumar added that last year, several farmers from Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan visited his fields to learn about the method. He emphasized that farmers need proper guidance to enhance their yields. He said, "If I am earning double from the same field with lower input costs, why wouldn't I increase the area under this method?"

Ganatra said that in this study, the key technological interventions were drip irrigation and fertigation which ensured precise delivery of water and nutrients, improving plant stand and reducing wastage. Pink bollworm (PBW) management using PB Knot technology was very helpful for mating disruption and pheromone traps and cutting pesticide usage by 18–27per cent.

Scientists said climate-smart tools were used which encouraged solar-powered irrigation and water storage tanks to enhance sustainability. And the main emphasis was on disease prevention by using resistant varieties and pre-emptive disease control strategies. The result was enhanced germination (up to 95 per cent), healthier crop growth, reduced chemical dependency, and more sustainable cotton cultivation.

Experts believe the Gindran demonstration could be a template for cotton revival across North India, provided certain systemic supports are ensured, including mainstreaming drip fertigation as a standard farming practice, scaling up Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approaches, promoting climate-resilient infrastructure like solar pumps and water tanks, and ensuring access to finance, inputs, and training for small and marginal farmers.

Dr Choudhary emphasised, "This is not just about higher yields; it is about transforming cotton into a sustainable, profitable, and environmentally responsible crop once again."

"Beyond boosting farm income, this model offers hope for ginners (who remove seeds and debris from cotton), spinners, and the textile industry that have been hit hard by declining cotton supply in the North. Punjab alone has seen several ginning units shut due to reduced cotton arrivals. By restoring productivity and area under cultivation, the regenerative cotton model could help North India reclaim its position as a leading cotton-growing region—a much-needed boost for both livelihoods and the rural economy," said Ganatra.

Can regenerative cotton farming bring back the glory days of 'white gold' in North India? The farmers involved in this demonstration say 'yes'. Now, it's about scaling the impact.

The North Indian cotton belt – Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan – has witnessed a significant decline of around 5.58 lakh hectares in the area under cotton cultivation last year (2024-25), with Punjab leading at 50 per cent less area compared to 2023-24. In Punjab, the cotton area reduced from 2.14 lakh hectares in 2023-24 to just 1 lakh hectares last year. Rajasthan followed with a decline of 34 per cent, as the area under cotton fell from 10.04 lakh hectares in 2023-24 to 6.62 lakh hectares last year.

Haryana experienced a 17 per cent decline, with cotton area decreasing from 5.78 lakh hectares in 2023-24 to 4.76 lakh hectares last year. Due to declining area under cotton, the area under paddy is increasing manifold in Punjab, which is bad news because of how paddy depletes already-low groundwater levels.

Source: indianexpress.com– Apr 26, 2025

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