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C&A warns of supply shortage for organic cotton / C&A brochure "Let's take Bio Cotton to everyone every day"

Düsseldorf (ots) -

Despite an increasing demand in international markets, global production of organic cotton continues to decline. This development bears ecological, social and economic consequences for all in the worldwide supply chain for organic cotton. Measured against the global production of cotton, the share of organic cotton today is only 1 percent.

For C&A Europe, which has been dedicated to promoting organic cotton production for 10 years already, counteracting this step backwards is a special priority.

Thorsten Rolfes, Head of Corporate Communications Europe, explains, "We are now at a critical point in which the demand for organic cotton is exceeding the supply. The availability uncertainty tied to this threatens to endanger long-term investment in organic cotton."

After worldwide production of organic cotton continuously rose up to the year 2011, crop yields subsequently sank by 8 percent in the following years. Regardless of the fact that, at the same time, 50 percent of the production countries increased their production of organic cotton. Reasons for this are e.g. lack of knowledge regarding organic cultivation methods and lacking cooperation between the communities.

To spread awareness of this problem, C&A is now publishing the informational brochure "Let's take Bio Cotton to everyone every day." This comprehensively explains the added value and current challenges of organic cotton production, and shows opportunities for all those in the global supply chain. Here, C&A sees garment industry companies as having particular responsibility.

"Brands play a key role in the development of organic cotton as a sustainable resource. Some brands are taking action, but the supply crisis shows that much more needs to be done. Collaboration is the key - working in partnership with experts, local communities and governments can enable organic cotton to realize its full potential," says Rolfes. "But firms can make a difference not only in the production countries but also in the sales markets by making their customers aware of the subject of organic cotton. In our experience, it is possible to create awareness, fulfill the demand and be profitable."

C&A is currently the largest buyer of organic cotton and sold over 100 million products made from organic cotton in the fiscal year 2013 - another significant increase in comparison to the previous year. The share of organic cotton against the total cotton collection is 38 percent. All cotton in C&A products labelled with Bio Cotton is 100 percent certified organic cotton - never blended. Seventy-five percent of the processed organic cotton, which is cultivated without the use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers, comes from farm projects supported by the C&A Foundation - around 60,000 farmers in India benefit from these projects. The social- and environmental programs place focus on the local communities in the production regions with the aim of improving the living conditions of the cotton farmers who work there. Examples of projects include drip irrigation and the provision of organic seeds, along with instruction for the farmers and other important partners in the organic cotton supply chain.

"CottonConnect" also adheres to these principles and is an independent company founded by C&A in partnership with Textile Exchange and Shell Foundation. The objective of "CottonConnect" is to more sustainably structure the global cotton supply chain through collaboration with 22 textile retail companies and fashion brands. All profits are exclusively reinvested.

C&A has set itself the long-term goal of procuring its entire cotton collection from sustainable production by the year 2020. At the same time, C&A Foundation is supporting a number of initiatives aimed at increasing organic production and improving farmer livelihoods. Recently, the foundation, in partnership with CottonConnect, held the first Organic Cotton Roundtable in India as a "Call to Action" for stakeholders to come together to address the decrease in production. You can find more information on organic cotton at C&A and the brochure "Let's take Bio Cotton to everyone every day?" at www.canda.com/biocotton.

About C&A Europe:

With over 1,575 stores in 21 European countries and over 37,500 employees, C&A Europe is one of the leading fashion retail firms in Europe. C&A Europe is a company of Cofra Holding AG.

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