



The world never stands still

Shaoxing-based Dry-Tex is another fabric producer with its eye on winning a share of the lifestyle performance textile market. It too is a bluesign member and it too has invested to build a state-of-the-art production facility, with 200 weaving machines and a finishing floor with high-end lamination and water-based polyurethane coating equipment. Its managing director, Andy Dong, is energetic and ambitious and has built up a detailed understanding of the way the global outdoor industry functions. "He's strong technically," says Chris Parkes, sales director of the company's international marketing partner, Concept III, of Mr Dong, "but he also understands and firmly believes in the importance of marketing Dry-Tex as a brand and in investing in the best technology

An example of this is a new low-tension coating machine that Dry-Tex has acquired from European technology providers. It will use it to endow fleece and other fabrics with performance characteristics such as wind- and moisture-resistance without the need of a membrane layer. This will make lighter garments feasible without compromising on durability, an attractive proposition in the face of warmer winters and a decline in sales of heavier garments. It's not proprietary technology, but insiders say Andy Dong may have seen something in the machine that most have not. What is certain is that major outdoor brands are now in talks with Dry-Tex about it; they are intrigued by what Mr Dong believes the technology can do.

It may be the autumn-winter 2018-2019 season before we see the results. Dry-Tex likes to look ahead, it says, because that's what its customers do. Brands have to keep asking themselves what comes next. Subjects that are high on the agenda include translating what labtesting and measurements tell us is comfortable and water-resistant into a clear perception (on the part of wearers) that new garments perform better than earlier ones. Ultra-marathon runners, for example, have said they don't want clothing to wick moisture away from the skin too quickly in desert conditions as they'd either have to carry more water or risk dehydration. In other



garments, lowering the level of rain protection may be one way of reducing weight, which could be of great help to athletes.

Linked to this is the ambition that many outdoor brands share today of using less durable water repellent (DWR) finish, for example, when it is possible to use less and only using more when the wearer's requirement is for a high level of protection, "DWR has definitely been overspecified in some areas," a materials innovation expert at one prominent outdoor brand says, "and this is certainly something we are working on. We can give customers enough protection for their needs without offering the full armour coating to everyone."

He is confident the work of innovative textile developers will never cease. He says: "Athletes are now doing things that, once, we thought were not possible. Likewise, we will need textiles to do things in the future that we think are impossible today." 🗨️

Dry-Tex's newly completed production facility in Shaoxing, China.

🗨️ Dry-Tex