HIGH FASHION HOUSES REVALUE THE HIGH QUALITY NETTLE FIBRE TEXTILES

In the European Countries, the high fashion houses are rediscovering the ecologic and high quality textiles produced from nettle fibres. This new trend represents a relevant opportunity of *green economy* for the territories characterized by rainy weather.

From the nettle, yarns of excellent quality can be produced: they are thin, flexible and strong. Nettle fibre is soft, resistant and transpiring as the linen, and bright as silk. It is a natural 100% biodegradable fibre. It owns antistatic, transpiring and thermo-regulating properties. Depending on the kinds of processing, from the nettle fibre light or heavy textiles can be obtained.

Among the many qualities of the textiles obtained from the nettle fibres, the hypoallergenicity of these latter and the environmental sustainability of their production have to be listed. Nettle plants are resistant to disease and vermin and therefore don't require any contaminating pesticides and herbicides. The plant just needs a relevant availability of water and an organized production can be realized only in the places characterized by rainy weather.

In Europe, the textiles made in nettle fibre were widespread until the industrialization process substituted them with other products more profitable from the economical point of view. Today, their production is being developed in the Countries with a stronger tradition, as Germany and Holland, where they could recover the whole chain. The family-run Dutch factory Netl is an example of actors operating in this value chain, producing an interesting collection of nettle fibre clothes. But the recently rediscovered nettle fabric has become a choice in more Countries, just because of its ecologic and high quality characteristics.

In order to obtain the yarn from the nettle plant, the stalk of this latter is macerate in water, with the aim of dissolving the pectic substances that keep the fibres connected. Then, the scutching process separates the fibres from the other wooden components of the stalk. Successively, the yarn spinning and the weaving occur. The hollow trunk gives the thermo-regulating properties to the fibre, so this latter can accomplish several functions, depending on how it is processed. When it is very twisted (and so the cave, containing air trunk is pressed), it takes cotton-like characteristics. Otherwise, the air remains into the trunk, and a wool-like, strongly cold protecting textile can be obtained.

The maceration water, the leaves and the waste products can be utilized as a natural organic pesticide. Nettles may also be used as a dye-stuff, producing yellow from the roots, or yellowish green from the leaves. The whole process can be realized with technologies reachable by small and medium enterprises and, when all the value chain is carried out locally, it induces evident economic advantages.

In Nepal, the production of nettle yarns is still carried on by hands by small producers spread all over the Country. The Natural Fiber of Nepal enterprise gathers the yarn produced by the small producers and markets it internationally through societies as Swicofil of Swiss, whose website offers interesting information about the processing techniques. Also in the website of the Barkha corporate, that trades nettle textiles in the USA, interesting information about nettle products can be found.

To know more

Sustainable technology in nettle growing by Camirafabrics

The sartorial sting of nettles by Ecosalon

The productive process by Netl images

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