

## **Country Profile: Mauritius positions itself as a strategic partner for trade.**

Situated in the 'golden triangle' connecting Asia, Africa and Australia, Mauritius is the converging point of global nations - a place where one can feel the cosmopolitan pulse of the world. Denoted also as the "**star and key**" of the Indian Ocean, the small island has been a model as an innovative nation in the Sub-Saharan Africa region where quality has been touted as first rate. Mauritius has also been ranked first in different indexes, namely: in the 13th edition of **World Economic Forum's Global Information Technology Report (GITR)**; in the **United Nations e-Government Survey 2016**; in the **Africa Human Development Report 2016**; 2016 Index of Economic Freedom amongst others.

Once dependent on sugar exports, the island has successfully diversified its economy towards a strong outsourcing and financial services sector, and an important tourism industry. Now Mauritius boasts one of Africa's highest per capita incomes. The industrialization evolution has contributed in making the **Textile and Apparel industry** as one of the key contributor to GDP and has spearheaded the structural transformation of the Mauritian Economy to such an extent that it has acted as the engine of economic growth, attracting FDI from various countries, creating new employment opportunities, uplifting the social strata and strengthening the manufacturing base of the economy.

This achievement has been possible based on our strategy to increase market share in the US and European countries. We further want to penetrate new and emerging markets. Mauritius stands to take more share of the apparel market in Africa which will further boost the economic and social conditions of the country.

Today, Mauritius is working with world-leading brands like **Calvin Klein, Gap, Mango, Topshop, Tommy Hilfiger, Zara, Guess, Marks & Spencer, Adidas, Levi's**, amongst others. Mauritius has built over the years a solid world-wide reputation in the export of quality Knitwear, pullovers, T-shirts, Polo shirts, Shirts, Trousers, denim products in a competitive time-line. The Textile and Apparel industry is a flexible sector always adapting to latest smart technologies to be competitive. Mauritian manufacturers adhere to social and technical compliance norms and standards. We always strive for quality products.

## **Why source from Mauritius?**

The new era of global competitive world implies faster delivery time of quality products. Therefore the production cycle should be efficient and effective with minimal disruptions risks including political instability or discontent workers, who can lead to strikes. Mauritius is seen as a model of stability and economic

prosperity in the region. Hence these issues have not plagued the manufacturing sector in Mauritius.

What is more interesting is that Mauritius is known for its investment-friendly regulatory requirements within established legal framework. The official language in Mauritius is English; the most frequently used international language which definitely improves the ease of communication for buyers. Furthermore, Mauritians are also at ease with French Language.

The World Bank ranked Mauritius first in Africa for 2016 in terms of ease of doing business there, and it was also ranked first in Africa in the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report for 2015.

### **Technological drive for quality products**

State-of-the art infrastructure and forward-thinking manufacturing companies have contributed in making Mauritius an attractive option for innovation as the country upgrades its apparel production offering.

*“Operators in Mauritius have invested in new technology to decrease production cycle times, costs and many companies are vertically integrated. Many Mauritian apparel and textile manufacturers are flexible with order quantities and add value via their contribution to the design of the products, meeting cross culture fashionable trends”,* according to Enterprise Mauritius division manager Geerish Bucktowonsing.

*“Today, certain companies can deliver samples in shorter time due to automated CAD [computer aided design] systems they have invested in for patternmaking,”* stated Mr. Bucktowonsing. *“Further to other investments like automated handling systems, some companies are also adopting lean manufacturing practices to better serve their clientele.”*

### **Moving vertically**

Mauritius has a 40-year history of making Textile and Apparel and was once one of the largest producers of knitwear. Over those years, the country has evolved from its initial cut, make, trim capabilities to a vertically integrated manufacturing where value-added, sophisticated product such as technical garments.

The Textile and Apparel industry in Mauritius consists of facilities for spinning, knitting, weaving and finishing for dyed and printed fabrics, denim fabrics and for knit-to-shape items.

Investment in advanced production technologies, like computer aided design and manufacturing, printing services and automated dyeing systems, have

positioned Mauritian manufacturers to supply a wide range of quality garments in a shorter time-frame.

### **Trading partners**

Mauritius also enjoys preferential trade access to USA, EU and African countries.

The country's main export markets are Europe and the U.S. In 2015, Mauritius exported 39 percent of its textiles and apparel to Europe (21 percent to the U.K.), and 24 percent to the U.S. market. "We want to increase our export of apparel products to Africa." stated **Mr. Arvind Radhakrishna**, CEO of Enterprise Mauritius.

To further facilitate trade, Mauritius recently launched the **Speed-to-market Scheme**, an air freight rebate initiative that would reduce costs to the European market by 40 percent.

Mauritius is also a member of the **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)**, which became a free trade bloc in 2000, representing a market of more than 400 million people. Membership within **the Southern African Development Community (SADC)**, has contributed in positioning Mauritius as a major supplier of garments to South Africa.

### **Compliance to international norms**

The workforce in Mauritius is known for being savvy and peaceful. Mauritians are known to be bilingual; most are fluent in English and French language, which can ease communication.

*"Our operators have over the last 40 years earned a good name as a reliable sourcing destination, especially when it comes to adherence to international norms, workers welfare and on-time delivery,"* Bucktowonsing said.

Most manufacturers in Mauritius adhere to social compliance standards, some are adopting eco-friendly ways of production, becoming WRAP certified, Fair Trade certified, and most also meet technical compliance standards, including Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) regulations, and some meet organic standards, with Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certifications.

## **Enterprise Mauritius**

Enterprise Mauritius is the National Agency responsible for Export Promotion and Export development in Mauritius.

**Mr. Arvind Radhakrishna** explains that it is a great idea to host **Origin Africa 2017** in Mauritius. It will be a good platform to showcase Mauritius '**savoir-faire**' in the apparel sector. **Mr. Arvind Radhakrishna** furthermore stated that Africa is a major market potential for Mauritius apparel exports and we further want to increase the market share in Africa. As such through participation in **Origin Africa 2017** our main goals will be market consolidation and expansion and to position Mauritius as a leading exporter of competitively priced, quality textile and apparel products.