



Photo: Marin Melchior

Ed Kiniry, Outdoor Industry Leader, is New Vermont Organic Fiber Co. CEO

Native Vermonter and avid wool fan finds his niche in sustainability sector

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Middlebury, VT – Vermont Organic Fiber Company (VTOF), the nation's leading manufacturer of fabrics, blankets, and hand knitting yarn made with certified organic wool, has hired veteran outdoor industry entrepreneur Edward ("Ed") Kiniry as CEO December 1, 2008. Kiniry will be responsible for driving the growth of the company's popular O-Wool® brand of products made with wool grown and certified to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's organic standard. Formerly, he was president of Winterquest, LLC, the parent company of Tubbs and Atlas snowshoes, selling the company to K2 Inc. in 2003. Kiniry is credited with the re-invention of snowshoeing as a \$100 million worldwide market.

Matthew Mole will continue as VTOF founder and president, responsible for materials sourcing and developing new products.

Kiniry, an avid outdoorsman and long-time fan of wool, was attracted to VTOF's commitment to providing high quality organic wool products as well as the company's sustainability mission.

"By making organic wool products, VTOF has taken nature's best fiber and applied sustainable practices and processes to make it that much better," said Kiniry. "Whether for wearing, wrapping up in after a long day in the outdoors, or knitting, organic wool is the fiber of choice."

He was also intrigued by the opportunity to drive the inclusion of organic wool as part of the dramatic growth of the multi-billion organic fiber industry, currently dominated by organic cotton.

"When we reintroduced snowshoeing to the American market it was at the height of the hiking boom. Interest in fitness, the outdoors, and a healthier life style were all evident," notes Kiniry. "Today, providing products made from organic wool produced in a healthy, humane, and sustainable fashion once again gives the market what is being demanded by today's more conscious consumer."

Immediately prior to joining VTOF, Kiniry was a board member of the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (appointed by the Governor in 2007). The Fund provides seed funding and technical assistance for economic sectors exemplifying the best practices of sustainable development including renewable energy, forestry and forest products, solid waste and pollution abatement, sustainable agriculture and environmental technology.

Kiniry also worked with several Fortune 500 companies. He was president of a regional business brokerage company, vice-president of international operations at Allied Van Lines, and held several operating positions with Wilson Sporting Goods. He has an MBA from Loyola University in Chicago, IL, and a B.A. in economics from the University of Vermont.

About Vermont Organic Fiber Company (www.vtorganicfiber.com)

Vermont Organic Fiber Company (VTOF) is the nation's leading organic wool fabrics, blankets and yarn manufacturer. Current and recent designers using O-Wool yarns and fabrics include Bahar Shahpar, Linda Loudermilk, and Diane von Furstenberg, who featured 'O-Wool® by Jasco®' fabrics on the runway at Earth Pledge's Future Fashion show in New York City in February, 2008. In addition, companies from North America to Europe and Asia that have used O-Wool include Ecobaby Organics (San Diego, CA), Fox River Mills (Osage, IA), IBEX (Woodstock, VT), J. Crew (New York, NY), Loomstate (New York, NY), Maggie's Organics (Ypsilanti, MI), Patagonia (Ventura, CA), Wildlife Works (London, UK), and Mitsukoshi Department Stores (Tokyo, Japan).

VTOF offers a wide range of O-Wool knit and woven fabrics, including blanket, flannel, herringbone, interlock, jersey, melton, pile, and wool suiting, as well as 'O-Wool® by Jasco®' fabrics. O-Wool yarns and fabrics are made from certified organic Merino wool spun, knit, woven, and finished at facilities in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. Woolen spinning in the U.S. is certified to the new Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) (www.global-standard.org), as is worsted spinning carried out with partner mills in China. GOTS addresses all post-shearing stages such as dyeing and finishing, and includes social criteria. VTOF is one of the first and few companies in the U.S. to have partner spinning mills certified to GOTS and is getting all subsequent processing phases certified to the standard. Sales of O-Wool products grew 107 percent in 2007.

Organic wool is part of the approximately \$1.9 billion global organic fiber industry, according to the *Organic Exchange Organic Cotton Market Report 2007*. For wool to be certified as organic, the U.S. Department of Agriculture requires that sheep be fed organic feed and forage from the last third of gestation and be raised without the use of synthetic hormones or pesticides. In addition, organic livestock producers are diligent in ensuring they do not exceed the natural carrying capacity of the land on which their animals graze, resulting in agricultural practices that are healthy for both the animals and the environment.