AAFA LAUNCHES HEAT STRESS TOOLKIT TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM EXTREME TEMPERATURES

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) has launched a new AAFA Heat Stress Toolkit at Cascale's Annual Meeting 2026 in Athens, Greece, providing manufacturers and brands with practical tools to help manage rising global temperatures and workplace heat-related incidents across production regions. As extreme heat events become more frequent and persistent, protecting workers from heat stress is an increasingly important operational priority for our industry.

> "As extreme heat becomes an increasingly common reality worldwide, our industry must act to protect the workers who are at the heart of our supply chains."
> *AAFA Executive Vice President Nate Herman*

The five-part toolkit builds on AAFA's Guide to Protecting Workers from Heat Stress (published in April 2026), translating its recommendations into ready-to-use guidance and a companion workbook for manufacturers, plus implementation guidelines and a standard supplier survey questionnaire for brands. The toolkit is open to all industry stakeholders for widespread sharing of best practices.

The toolkit is designed to be practical, accessible, and grounded in operational reality. It is not an audit protocol or another compliance standard, but a framework for manufacturers to develop facility-level heat stress plans. For brands, it helps them establish their own heat stress management processes while avoiding duplication.

Commissioned by AAFA, this toolkit was designed through a collaborative process. The AAFA Heat Guidance Working Group—consisting of brands, manufacturers, and worker-advocacy groups—developed the Brand Implementation Guidelines and Supplier Survey. Meanwhile, the Fashion Producer Collective (FPC) developed the manufacturer-specific guidelines and workbook, with support from the Heat Guidance Working Group. Key contributing authors included Elevate Textiles, Inc., Epic Group, Shahi Exports, and YKK Corporation, with additional review support from Crescent Bahuman Ltd, MAS Capital (Pvt) Ltd., TAL Apparel, Yee Chain International, and the Vaada Hope Foundation.

"As extreme heat becomes an increasingly common reality worldwide, our industry must act to

protect the workers who are at the heart of our supply chains," said AAFA Executive Vice President Nate Herman. "Given the fashion industry's global, interconnected, and diverse nature, it was essential that the AAFA Heat Stress Toolkit be informed by perspectives from across the supply chain. By bringing together the voices of workers, manufacturers, and brands, we have created a practical resource that supports meaningful progress on protecting workers from heat stress."

"Co-creating these guidelines demonstrates the power of a manufacturer-led approach: those who manage heat stress on the shop floor designed the tools they will implement, with input from brands and others," said the key contributing authors of the AAFA Heat Stress Toolkit. "We appreciate AAFA putting suppliers in the driver's seat. Given the mounting climate urgency and rising global temperatures, this must be an inflection point for our industry. We call on brands, auditors, and MSIs to adopt these unified guidelines, and avoid fragmenting the supply chain with duplicative standards. To truly protect workers, we must share the risks — creating the enabling conditions for manufacturers to invest in long-term climate resilience."

"We are proud to have contributed to the work informing the Heat Stress Toolkit by providing a forum for meaningful dialogue among the apparel and footwear industry's diverse stakeholders," said Cascale CEO Ying McGuire. "The practical, actionable solutions reflected in this resource were only possible through active listening and bringing perspectives and implementation realities from across the supply chain into collective industry efforts to address the urgent challenge of heat stress."

The AAFA Heat Stress Toolkit is built around five principles that put shared risk and responsibility at the center of the approach, recognizing that managing heat stress requires more than asking manufacturers to collect more data, go through another audit, or absorb the cost of investment.

- Protecting workers. The goal is to identify and address heat stress early, with facilities retaining the flexibility to choose controls that fit their context rather than using the toolkit as an audit or verification protocol.

- Measuring to act. Data should be used to trigger protection and target investment, while remaining with the facility and avoiding unnecessary or duplicative reporting requests.

- Sharing risk and financial responsibility. Brands and manufacturers should share responsibility for the investments and potential disruption involved in building resilience, creating the commercial conditions needed to protect workers.

- Prioritizing context over prescription. Heat stress management needs to reflect the operational, financial, technical and local realities of each facility; there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

- Making communication two-way. Brands and manufacturers should work together to plan for

heat stress, communicate expectations and investment needs early, and address potential impacts on production before they become crises.

The five-part AAFA Heat Stress Toolkit can be accessed on the AAFA website.

About the American Apparel & Footwear Association
The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) is the national trade association representing apparel, footwear, and other sewn products companies, and their suppliers, which compete in the global market. Representing more than 1,100 world famous name brands, AAFA is the trusted public policy and political voice of the apparel and footwear industry, its management and shareholders, its more than 3.24 million U.S. workers, and its contribution of more than $561 billion in annual U.S. retail sales. AAFA drives progress on three key priorities: Brand Protection; Supply Chain & Sourcing; Trade, Logistics, & Manufacturing. AAFA approaches this work through the lens of purpose-driven leadership in a manner that supports each member's ability to build and sustain inclusive and diverse cultures, meet and advance ESG goals, and draw upon the latest technology.

About the Fashion Producer Collective
The Fashion Producer Collective (FPC) is a producer-led sustainability think tank that enables manufacturers to collaborate and safely amplify their collective voices on what matters most to them from the perspective of the supply chain.
Founded in 2025, FPC provides a collaborative, opt-in platform where producers can co-create, share insights, and influence effective sustainability strategies that directly impact their operations.

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