



YADKINVILLE, N.C. – A North Carolina-based producer of synthetic fiber has launched a program that over time could keep millions of pounds of textile scraps out of landfills each year.

Unifi, Inc. said the Repreve Textile Takeback Program would give scraps from clothing manufacturers' cutting room floors a second life by recycling them back into new fiber.

Unifi has been recycling fiber waste at its sprawling Yadkinville plant since 2007 and using it to manufacture its REPREEVE brand synthetic polyester yarn. It's taking the effort to a new level, partnering initially with Lawrence, Mass.-based Polartec, a clothing manufacturer and major customer, which will send its textile scraps back to Unifi.

"Where they do have fabric waste or their customer has fabric waste, we're able to reach out into the supply chain and bring back fabric waste all the way back to Yadkinville, N.C.," said Roger Berrier, the company's president and chief operating officer. "We're combining plastic bottles along with fabric waste and converting that back into a REPREEVE first quality yarn."

The plastic bottles and textile scraps otherwise would have been downcycled into a lesser end use or disposed of in a landfill. The new program will change that.

"The fabric is loaded onto a conveyer belt on our extruder," said product development manager Meredith Boyd. "It then rides up and is dropped into a shredder."

The extruder is used to melt the material, which is processed into new yarn.

"And customers like Polartec will take this particular yarn, recycled yarn, and convert that back into a fabric that's used for The North Face or Patagonia or some of the top outdoor brands," Berrier said.

The program is beginning with one customer, but Berrier hoped to see it expand in the years ahead.

"It's going to start somewhat small, maybe anywhere from a 100,000 to 500,000 pounds per year," he said. "But as more and more people sign up and get encouraged that, hey, I can recycle my fabric waste, then this is a program that's going to evolve the more education and the more people become aware."