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How Vietnam's garment factories benefited from Trump's trade policy

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FEATURE | One year after the Trump administration introduced new tariffs, Vietnamese manufacturers of clothing and sports shoes are exporting more than ever to the US and Europe. But young people are turning away from these exhausting jobs.

The two back pockets are embroidered. The hip seam is triple-stitched. And the hem of these jeans is designed to be pulled on over cowboy boots. "Ideal for horseback riding," these pants, which sell for around €100 from the American brand Ariat, come out of the Saitex factory, located in the Amata industrial park less than 40 kilometers from Ho Chi Minh City, the economic capital of Vietnam. It took 17 minutes to assemble them, starting from organic cotton denim woven and dyed by the manufacturer in another ultra-modern facility, located an hour's drive away in the vast Nhon Trach district.



At the Desiper lingerie factory, in an industrial zone located southwest of Nha Trang, Vietnam, on March 27, 2026. NHAN TRAN FOR LE MONDE

The final step involves placing the jeans under rotating brushes as powerful as milling machines to "give them that natural worn look," explained Jérôme Lallouette, director of operations at Saitex. Then, like the 15,000 other pieces produced every day, these jeans are washed, dried, folded, packaged and transported in a container to the Cat Lai River port, on one of the barges visible from the banks of the river in what was once known as Saigon, before being loaded onto a cargo ship.

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Once it arrives at the quays of Vung Tau, a port on the South China Sea, the jeans set off on a 40-day journey before being delivered to the Ariat brand. And "there

is a strong chance" that it will end up on a ranch in the "American Midwest," said Lallouette on March 31, at the end of the five-hour tour of the Saitex facilities.