

Plan to bring top architects to NZ to look at our wool

Annette Scott

An International Wool Textiles Organisation workshop aimed at engaging the wool industry with interior design could bring the world's leading architects to New Zealand.

In a move to promote the message of wool as an interior textile the IWTO is proposing an architects' workshop that will target top of the industry leaders with the ultimate goal to sustainably increase and improve wool as an interior textile.

The target markets will be Europe, North America, Japan, Korea and China.

IWTO executive committee member Jo Dawson of UK-based H Dawson and Sons Co (Wool) Ltd said the workshop's focus is to get interest from a grassroots perspective.

"This target group will gain interest from the decision-makers in the contract field."

The workshop aims to engage the wool industry with architects to create design concepts that will ensure wool is used more widely in buildings and interiors.

"We need to excite leading architects and as well there is opportunity for influence and lobbying from all stakeholder interest," Dawson said.

In its planning stage at present NZ is top of the shortlist as the global workshop host.

"There is opportunity for NZ to get involved. NZ looks to be the obvious place. It is the right place for interaction and to show off the whole process of wool to textile," IWTO chairman French-based Olivier Segard said.

In Christchurch last Thursday Segard joined Dawson to address an industry stakeholder meeting facilitated by the National Council of NZ Wool Interests.

The National Council in conjunction with Meat & Wool NZ is participating in and funding a joint lobby project with the IWTO collaboratively working to re-establish wool in its rightful position in the interior textiles market and counter a highly active synthetic textile sector that effectively has potential to destroy NZ woolgrowers' years of investment.

The National Council is the organisation representing NZ on the IWTO.

Membership of the council comprises each industry sector from the woolgrower to early processor including exporters, merchants and research organisations.

The IWTO is the international body representing the interest of the world's wool textile trade and industry.

As such its membership covers the woolgrowers, traders, primary processors, spinners and fabric makers of wool allied fibres.

It provides a forum for discussion of problems of joint concern. The key concern currently is the ongoing misuse of wool.

Wool growing countries including NZ, Argentina, Uruguay, South Africa, Australia and the United Kingdom have joined forces through the IWTO as an international lobby group to fight back and protect wool interests.

"Wool is attacked every day. To do nothing is a slow suicide," Segard told the meeting. "Wool industry stakeholders need to get united to defend themselves and wool's reputation. There must be action globally through the IWTO and locally through the National Council.

"Start small with concrete things and get concrete achievements."

The IWTO needs NZ and NZ needs the IWTO but currently the NZ wool industry is not represented in relevance to its wool industry's importance, Segard said.

"For New Zealand to put its case and ideas it must have more presence. It needs more communication opportunity, stakeholder and industry input at the IWTO Congress level for example. Occasionally it (NZ) has had representation but it needs more commitment. It's a matter of presence."

In the nine months since the lobby project started there has been significant progress in repositioning wool in the European and American interior textile markets. Stakeholders at the meeting applauded

the lobby project.

"This is the first real initiative that we have seen for a long time to improve a dwindling demand. It is to be applauded," one grower said.

"This is positive and to be commended. There is opportunity here for New Zealand and we need to support this project," was the general tone of the meeting.



MUST ACT: IWTO chairman Olivier Segard says wool is under attack every day and to do nothing is "slow suicide".
Photo: David Alexander



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