

For immediate release

Wool Industry Seeks to Increase Market Share in the Outdoor and Activewear Market

Education of Young Wool Professionals & Wool Sheep Farmers to Play Key Role in Wool's Sustainable Future



WOOLGROWER STEPHANUS VAN DEN HEEVER OF EXCELSIOR FARM IN CENTRAL KAROO, SOUTH AFRICA, PRESENTING AT THE IWTO WOOL ROUND TABLE

30 November 2016 BIELLA, ITALY

More than 120 members of the international wool community gathered on the campus of Citta Studi in Biella, Italy for the annual Wool Round Table of the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO), where educators from around the world highlighted current opportunities in textile education, and emphasized the need for collaboration between industry and universities.

“We have a central message in wool: sustainability and environmental excellence,” said IWTO President Peter Ackroyd in his opening remarks. “The woolgrowing countries are dedicated to education; the question is how can we carry this forward to the full benefit of students and industry.”

Educators underlined the need for corporate investment in industry-led research projects, where government funding currently falls short. These types of collaborations, educators say, are necessary in order to develop the skills that are relevant to the future of the industry.

IWTO committed to the educators present to continue the focus on education in future events and proposed special rates and working groups to support wool textile education going forward.

Participants also heard from young woolgrowers farming in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The challenges and opportunities for economic growth through wool sheep farming were evident in all presentations, along with a true commitment to eco-friendly farming practices. Passion for the land they manage and the animals they live with stood out as a common element across all three wool growing countries.

“Wool in a digital age” will be the theme for the next IWTO Congress, taking place 3-5 May 2017 in Harrogate, UK, and a presentation by Prisca Rolando of Lanieri perfectly matched this theme, demonstrating how the consumer can now order made-to-measure Italian wool suits online through their innovative platform.

Participants also heard from the European Outdoor Group how outdoor apparel brands would like to incorporate more wool in next-to-skin base layers, a key segment of the outdoor apparel market. This market values the benefits wool-on-skin can bring to their customers, but need the wool chain to supply hard and fast evidence of sustainability, best practice in animal welfare and eco-friendly farming practices, before committing to growth in this area.

The outdoor industry sees itself – and is seen by consumers – as a steward of the environment, explained Dr Pamela Ravasio, Head of CSR and Sustainability for the European Outdoor Group.

Sustainability was also the focus of a presentation by Lorenzo Dovesi, COO of Benetton Group, who shared Benetton’s vision of a wool-rich future, moving away from the fast-fashion model.

IWTO President Peter Ackroyd very much welcomed this new business model and the move towards slow sustainable fashion, where wool will play a significant role.

About IWTO

With a world-wide membership encompassing the wool pipeline from sheep to shop, the International Wool Textile Organisation represents the interests of the global wool trade. By facilitating research and development and maintaining textile industry standards, IWTO ensures a sustainable future for wool. For more information on IWTO and its activities, visit www.iwto.org.