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## Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE WOOL INDUSTRY: SHEEP TAKE SUSTAINABILITY TO A NEW LEVEL**

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA - The take-away message is clear: the wool industry has an opportunity to do something quite incredible. Speaking at the 83rd Congress of the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) on 29 April 2014, grassland ecosystem pioneer and biologist Allan Savory described how only a system of properly managed livestock will stop the desertification of our planet - a process that is taking place in most of the world's land.

"Even if we all stop using fossil fuels, we cannot stop desertification unless we use livestock," Mr Savory told the audience of wool community leaders from around the world. One delegate described the message as one of the most important moments in the industry.

Most of those present were not aware of Savory's work, which comes at a time when a number of woolgrowers are diversifying farms due to a sustained period of low wool prices. With global wool production generally acknowledged to be in decline, Mr Savory's message comes as a further wake-up call to an industry that is working hard to demonstrate the natural benefits, technical properties and overall positive environmental credentials of their noble fibre.

Mr Savory's holistic system of managed grazing has proved successful in countries across the planet including some of the most damaged grasslands in the world, such as Patagonia in Argentina. Congress delegates also heard from Natalie Dudinszky, Sustainable Grazing Coordinator in the Patagonian region, where holistic land management is being implemented with impressive results, through a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, Argentine rancher network Ovis XXI and Patagonia Inc. The Merino wool being produced under these sustainable grazing practices - Grassland Regeneration and Sustainability Standard, or GRASS - is bought

by Patagonia Inc. for use in its performance base layer line. The direct traceability of the wool is a crucial advantage in the marketplace, where consumers increasingly demand information about provenance and environmental impact.

The traceability point echoes themes made by the Key Note Speaker, renowned South Africa trends analyst Dion Chang. Emphasizing the connection consumers feel to a brand when they understand the process behind the product, Mr Chang urged delegates to remember that wherever they are in the supply chain, they are hooked into the ultimate user. "Consumers like it when their brands reflect their values," said Mr Chang. "How is wool paying it forward?"

The question resonated. Sustainability, provenance, and "fibre accountability" featured highly in the programme of the annual three-day forum for leaders from all parts of the wool supply chain. Establishing wool's environmental credentials is a top priority for the fibre that is increasingly seen by caring consumers as a sustainable lifestyle choice for fashion and interiors.

"Wool has clearly established its true environment credentials. We now need to take this message to the world of fashion, interiors and lifestyle," said IWTO President Peter Ackroyd, speaking in his capacity as COO of The Campaign for Wool. IWTO, as the globally recognised authority for standards in the wool trade, has worked with the Campaign for Wool since its inception in 2010 to provide scientific support for wool's environmental and health benefits. Originally conceived as a five-year initiative to raise awareness about the unique, natural, and sustainable attributes of wool, The Campaign's patron, HRH The Prince of Wales, made clear through Mr Ackroyd that he would continue his patronage for an indefinite period. The world's leading environmentalist, HRH publicly endorsed the work of Allan Savory last year.

Other Congress sessions included a presentation on research into wool recycling by Prof Stephen Russell of the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom and Dr Paul Swan, General Manager - Research at AWI, Australia; innovations in wool in sleepwear and extreme condition apparel by Jo Dawson, CEO of H. Dawson, United Kingdom and Trond Sleipnes, Marketing Director of Devold, Norway, respectively; waste water management in the wool scouring process presented by Pedro Otegui, Director of Lanacel, Uruguay; an overview of the new chlorine-free "Superwash" standard by Kurt Haselwander, CEO of Schoeller Group, Austria; and a market intelligence session featuring South African economist Dawie Roodt of Efficient Group.

More than 225 representatives from the international wool community attended, from countries including Argentina, Austria, Australia, China, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

## **A b o u t I W T O**

The International Wool Textile Organisation is the international body of the world's wool-textile trade and industry. Since its creation in 1927, IWTO has been the globally recognised authority for standards in the wool trade and custodian of industry regulations. Its mission is to confirm wool as the world's leading sustainable premium fibre. Among its members are the woolgrowers, traders, primary processors, spinners and weavers of wool and allied fibres in its member-

countries, along with organisations related to wool products and the wool business in general. IWTO provides a forum for discussion of joint concerns and acts as an official voice of the wool trade. [www.iwto.org](http://www.iwto.org)

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