

Livestock producers as promoters of welfare standards

Geoff Kingwill

International Wool Textile Organisation, Rue de Industrie 4, Brussels.

Email : Geoff@kingwill.co.za

IWTO is the recognized global authority for standards in the wool textile industry and has represented the interests of the wool textile trade, from farm gate to shop floor, since 1930. More information on this organisation can be found on <http://www.iwto.org/>.

We coordinate research through the IWTO Working Groups on sustainability, wool sheep welfare, biosecurity, LCA and product wellness. The IWTO Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare were published in 2013, based on best practice in the global wool sheep production industry and closely aligned to the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. LOHAS Consumer Buying Patterns were identified in the late 1990's and retail has been chasing their spending money ever since. This Lifestyle of Health & Sustainability also focusses on wellness, personal development, resource conservation and natural products. They purchase around \$350 billion of goods and services annually. In 2012 it was estimated that this consumer segment comprises at least 18% of the U.S. population. Animal Friendly and Green products have moved from the niche market into main stream in the past 30 years and the mass market retailers were forced to adopt strict regulations to satisfy their customer's demands for transparent sourcing. At the same time, consumer pressure is rising around the sustainability of the intensification of animal industries and the potential damages on the environment, human health and animal welfare. The buck literally stops at the farm gate, with the farmer having to balance his business plan between the consumer pressure on animal friendly farming practices and the retailer pushing for faster turn-around and increased volumes, but still supplied under strict terms and conditions. Research into better ways of doing things is vital and the first step. This gives farmers new tools with which they can replace existing practices. Best Practices are always evolving and this is the same in Animal Welfare. A clear animal welfare policy needs to form the corner stone of the business plan for the farm of the future.

Key words : farming - responsible - sheep - sustainable – welfare – wool.