



Wool Finds Resilience Amid Recovery at the IWTO Round Table

BRUSSELS, 7 DECEMBER – Following a two-year delay, members of the International Wool Textile Organisation met in Nuremberg, Germany 1-2 December for the annual Wool Round Table.

Hosted by the German Wool Federation and the Südwolle Group, the event brought together 80+ representatives from the global wool textile industry.

The wool industry has proven resilient in the face of Covid and supply chain disruptions, and now inflation and energy shortages.

“Covid has contributed to a change of awareness to purchase something more valuable and long lasting,” Klaus Steger, former IWTO board member and president of ERWO Holding, parent company of the Südwolle Group, told attendees.

“Wool finally sits at the sweet spot of natural, sustainable, fashionable, and cool. Wool is also affordable, if you take into consideration the longer-term effects of a woollen garment compared with one made of other fibres.”

Wool holds 1.3% of the today’s global fibre market. This includes both the finer wools used for apparel, and the coarser wools used across a range of applications such as bedding, blankets, rugs, carpets, air filters, insulation and more. European wool is predominately the latter, and speakers from France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom offered insight into the lucrative niche markets they have created offering traceable, European-produced wools.

In Europe’s present economic conditions, price is a factor that cannot be overlooked. High inflation and elevated uncertainty mean people are spending their money more carefully.

“But wool has a very unique market value proposition that can take us through,” noted Isak Staats, chair of the IWTO’s Market Intelligence Committee. And to this end, wool businesses are working to activate demand for wool, in ways that resonate with consumers.

The Woolmark Company highlighted two collaborations, one with Sease and one with Hugo Boss. Both are examples of a “sartorial revolution” in which streetwear upgrades through a fresh use of formal fabrics while formal looks find versatility and comfort through new knitting technologies.

Other recent wool innovations have improved skin health, air quality and sleep in children and adults. Wool has shown significant filtration qualities in face masks and now in the air filters of the latest NASA space shuttle. Wool fibres can enhance performance and wool streetwear carries a powerful message to urbanites.

“There’s a world full of people on bikes and scooters,” said Dalena White, Secretary General of the IWTO. “Our challenge today is how do we dress them in wool.”

The wool industry continues its discussions at its 92nd Congress, 16-18 May 2023 in Kyoto. www.iwto.org



About IWTO

The International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) represents the collective interests of the global wool industry. Through scientific research, wool textile education, and knowledge sharing, IWTO ensures a sustainable future for wool. www.iwto.org.

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