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MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN AWI KITTY

By David Everist

The Australian Wool Growers Association has called on industry leaders to urgently address the immediate need for increasing the market share for wool in a highly competitive fibre market.

Following Australian Wool Innovation's consultation forum last week, AWGA Chairman, Chick Olsson, expressed concern over the lack of urgency on the crucial issue of demand creation for current wool products.

Mr Olsson said as AWI had indicated, there was \$68 million of unallocated grower funds, an opportunity existed to urgently approach the issue of marketing of current wool products.

"AWI has several good projects in the pipeline, but the reality is that these new product developments, encompassing new uses for wool, will not be available in the short term, with some projects years away from commercialisation," he said.

"For woolgrowers seeking a profitable and sustainable existence, there has to also be resources for funding the marketing, retail support and development of current products and future uses for wool."

Various representative bodies throughout Australia had all acknowledged woolgrowers want money spent on marketing, however not the generic type promotion of the past, but rather specific product brand development and support to lift demand levels for wool.

As a result of AWGA calling for a National Wool Forum, it has been invited by AWI to present a marketing plan for consideration and perhaps subsequent adoption.

"This is a significant step forward in the right direction, and AWGA hopes to be able to put forward a product development and marketing blueprint within a matter of weeks," Mr Olsson said.

This blueprint should become the focus for woolgrower discussion, he said
"Certainly grassroots growers are overwhelming in their support for this type of activity and they want urgent action."

A proposed AWGA national wool forum planned to be held in Melbourne will not be held until a plan has been prepared.

Mr Olsson said AWGA would ensure that any marketing plan will be made publicly available and all woolgrowers will be asked to contribute.

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