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NEW TARGET MEANS MORE AUSTRALIAN WOOL

The influential Australian Wool Growers Association (AWGA) is urging woolgrowers to start rebuilding the Australian sheep flock, following the recent changes to the leadership of the Australian wool industry.

AWGA Chairman Martin Oppenheimer has also welcomed the recent AWI Board decision to make 2010 a “target date” for mulesing alternatives, saying “the new commitment to research funding for alternatives is positive and should include pain management and improved mulesing accreditation. The new AWI Board has more balance and this has given woolgrowers new confidence to grow more wool again. We now have the ability to increase the market presence of our product and, importantly, we have new business and marketing skills on the AWI Board and management.”

“We need to lift wool production and demand at the same time. The new target for the Australian sheep flock should be 120 million by 2012. Current estimates of Australian sheep numbers are around 82 million head, with unsustainable matings of the important merino breed. If we continue to rely on supply reductions to drive demand, then the same old boom/bust industry conditions will prevail.”

“We must learn from the experience of the past decade that changing wool production to consumer friendly fine wool, without supporting targeted marketing and promotion has put extreme pressure on woolgrowers and processors. Overall wool production has dropped to levels not seen for 100 years.”

The AWGA Chairman is encouraging the Australian wool industry to capitalise on the welcome return to natural fibres by consumers and fashion leaders. In a world that is becoming increasingly aware of fossil fuel use, carbon and greenhouse emissions, wool is well placed as a renewable and naturally produced fibre.

“We must do more to show wool’s environmentally friendly credentials. Just as with recent improvements in animal welfare, the Australian sheep industry must do more and get credit for it.”

“Positive leadership and the improved seasonal outlook in many regions have lifted woolgrower confidence. It’s time to rebuild the Australian sheep flock and grow more wool. Clever and positive marketing is required now to protect the lift in wool prices and increase production.”

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