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## Prince Charles boost Britain's wool industry

**PRINCE CHARLES** is being hailed as the Prince of Wools for helping to revitalise one of the industries that made the country great.



The Prince has been titled The Prince of Wool [GETTY]

His determination to help sheep farmers and champion the benefits of wool has created a renaissance for the traditional textile.

High street sales of everything from woollen casuals to bespoke suits and home furnishings are soaring and the price of the natural fibre has tripled on the international market.

We now spend £3 billion a year on wool products and mill sales have soared 70 per cent from £180 million to £300 million last year since Charles launched his historic campaign.

Exports are also booming and the desire to wear British-made clothing has become the height of fashion in the Far East where worsted and tweed materials are seen as a status symbol.

When the Prince of Wales conceived his Campaign for Wool crusade five years ago, bringing together all sectors of the industry, farmers were being paid less for a fleece than it cost to shear. Today wool prices have tripled.

As the campaign celebrates the start of Wool Week today/Sunday, Prince Charles has spoken of his delight that the passion he holds for one of the natural world's great resources had helped bring the industry back from the brink.



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He said: "I take to heart that my Campaign for Wool, which I brought into being because I feel so passionately about these things, has already had some success in alleviating this alarming state of affairs.

"Obviously all sorts of factors play a part in the health of a business as far-flung as the wool industry but it is encouraging that sheep numbers, which had been in almost continuous decline since the 1990s, first stabilised, and have now actively started to increase in number again in Britain and Australia and several other important markets."

The Prince says the price of wool has tripled since his campaign got going and means farmers and wool producers in Britain and across the Commonwealth are receiving more money and will be less inclined to leave an industry they love.

But Charles believes there is more to be done to promote a natural fibre that has such wonderful insulating and breathable qualities. It is also extremely resilient and single fibre can be bent 20,000 times without breaking.

He added: "As I never tire of pointing out, wool is not only one of the oldest fibres known to mankind, it is also one of the most beneficial, and it fills me with dismay when we overlook it.

"It horrifies me, for example, to learn that only 1.3 percent of clothes today are made from wool, when 60 per cent are made from synthetic materials. In the world of carpets, only 20 per cent still use wool, while 80 per cent are synthetic which will take decades to biodegrade in landfill, if they biodegrade at all.

"At least we are no longer faced with the ghastly situation whereby farmers were being paid less for a fleece than the cost of shearing it, which was the reality when I convened this Campaign, and brought together wool interests and wool organisations, and encouraged them to work together for common benefit.

"The primary aim of the Campaign is to increase the demand for wool by explaining its many benefits to consumers. Quite simply, for far too long we have managed to forget what a wonderful fibre it is. Because wool grows naturally, it has a natural cell structure, which allows it to adapt to its environment; wool absorbs moisture and releases it later to regulate humidity.

"Most importantly, wool has these remarkable fire resistant and fire retardant qualities and as a natural chemical-free insulating material it is second to none."

Tomorrow/Monday will see the cream of the British high street taking part in Wool Week events with hundreds of retailers putting on window displays as well as supporting high profile events and offering up to 10 per cent discounts.

Among the well known brands and stores celebrating wool are Harvey Nichols, John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Pringle of Scotland, Barbour, Jigsaw, Gieves & Hawkes and Lyle & Scott.

Peter Ackroyd, the vice chairman of the Campaign for Wool, said: "We have recently seen an unprecedented demand for traditional British style abroad.

"The fashion is for smart, traditional outfits and suits in tweed and checks and nobody has a stronger brand for that than Britain.

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“Very few, if any, have such a distinctive look. There is a massive revival in British menswear. Demand is very strong in Japan, the US and Korea and the Chinese market is becoming increasingly important as is the German.

“Wool in both worsted and in tweed is seen as a status symbol in Japan and is growing as a status in China

“Interior furnishings are also booming with wool curtains, carpets and rugs all selling well. Even upholstery for trains and planes are providing a boom as manufacturers rediscover the hardiness, safety features and practicality of the natural fibre.”

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/518803/Prince-Charles-boost-Britain-s-wool-industry>