

Dear Members,

Welcome to the latest edition of your newsletter. In this issue we report on some of the highlights from our conference in Ulaanbaatar Mongolia, which saw over 200 delegates, made up of government officials, scientists, other NGOs and herders, coming together for two days of focussed debate and the sharing of ideas on sustainability in the cashmere sector. I was pleased to be involved in such a varied discussion, including how the SFA can continue to develop its work with herders, both to secure measures leading to sustainable grasslands, and to demonstrate good and compassionate animal husbandry. Key organisations such as Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (AVSF) and the Asian Development Bank, amongst others, were keen to find ways in which we can work together and boost our capacity to reach further across the country.

To me, this will be one of the key challenges for the future, along with putting measures in place to demonstrate that our actions are providing the conditions in which the route towards sustainable fibre can be substantiated.

The support generated for the SFA after our first conference in 2017 is now bearing fruit - our work has recently been acknowledged by the Mongolian government - but there is still much to do, and I look forward to where the impetus from this year's conference will take us.

Chas Hubbard

Chairman, SFA



Spring Weather Report

Spring in Mongolia is a hugely significant time for herding families: livestock births, cashmere harvesting, castration of male goats, and the migration from winter to summer pastures may all take place. Migration can involve moving up to 10km, carrying the traditional home 'ger', furniture and other belongings: a minimalist and efficient lifestyle is essential!

Herders are anticipating that this summer will be good in terms of rain to replenish the land, and forage to help their livestock grow and remain healthy.

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A warm welcome to our newest SFA members!



• The London Cashmere Company •

BRODIE
FINE CASHMERE



ROBERT TODD
EST. 1888

INDITEX

SFA Progress Update

Training of Assessors

Training for assessors was conducted by the SFA during 4-7th June 2019 in Ulaanbaatar and Lun soum of Tuv province, Mongolia. A total of 9 trainees participated in the training.



The overall objective was to build the capacity of trainee assessors to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out independent assessments for herder organisations looking to adopt and implement the SFA's two codes of practice: Rangeland Stewardship, and Animal Welfare and Fibre Harvesting. As herder organisations vary in governance as well as in number of households, assessors need to be well informed as well as able to demonstrate competence in consistency of evidence collection.

Training covered topics such as key requirements, capabilities, and ethics of assessors in general, along with the main principles and methods of assessment. It also covered areas such as how to collect evidence in line with ISEAL principles, and clear instructions and tactics for when preparing for and conducting assessments, and providing recommendations for herder organisations.

The training workshop provided participants with a thorough understanding of how to deliver assessments at field level, and how to learn from previous years' assessment experiences.

Meet the Class of 2019!

On the 20-21st May, a training of trainers event took place at the Headquarters of Khan bank, Ulaanbaatar, attended by 60 herder representatives from various regions.

The presentation of the certificates took place on the first day of the SFA's Sustainability in the Cashmere Sector conference, witnessed by delegates, and the friends and family of the herders.

Congratulations to all our newly registered trainers!



Clean Fibre Code of Practice

Earlier this year the SFA Board approved the development of a Clean Fibre Code of Practice. The first draft of this document is now available and members and stakeholders are invited to review and feedback on content and their thoughts on its application.

Members who wish to take part in this review are asked to register their interest with admin@sustainablefibre.org

Feature: Dornogobi Province



Dornogobi province is about 500km south-east of Ulaanbaatar on the border of China. This area is considered a steppe ecoregion and is a semi-desert with hard and sandy soil, and a hot and windswept climate. There are no large rivers in the province, so the main source of water is hand-wells, deep-engineered wells, and small natural springs. There are many annual and perennial grasses in the rangeland, but one of the most important types of plant are perennial bunch grasses such as *Stipa krilova* and *Cleistogenes squorrosa*. These are characterised by dense foliage that protects the soil from the wind, and are considered excellent forage grasses.

The SFA are working in Dornogobi with the Delgerekh Ulaan Yamaa cooperative. This cooperative has nearly 50 herder families, who own primarily red cashmere goats. Between them these families own over 32,000 livestock, and approximately one third of these are cashmere goats. This means they can sell over five tons of raw cashmere per year.

Leaders of the Delgerekh Ullaan Yamaa cooperative have previously participated in the SFA's Training of Trainers, and in August 2019 the cooperative is scheduled to undergo a certification assessment by the SFA.



Conference Highlights: Sustainability in the Cashmere Sector Conference 22-26th May, Ulaanbaatar

An inspiring conference that encouraged information and knowledge exchange between the industry players for all to understand more on the issues and to come together for solutions — Tammy Tam, John Lewis Partnership



Last month the SFA successfully hosted a conference in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar to discuss the current and future development of cashmere sector sustainability. The conference was well attended by over 200 delegates, with many of our brand members experiencing Mongolian hospitality for the first time. The focus for the conference was to promote joined-up implementation at the international, regional and national levels, with a view to also informing the review of proposed Sustainable Development Goals.



The conference also provided a great opportunity for peer to peer exchange of experiences and ideas.

Key speakers included Mr. Batkhuy from the Mongolian Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry, Mr. Iain Cox, Deputy Head of Mission of the British Embassy in Ulaanbaatar, Mr. Javkhlan, Vice President, Khan Bank, Mongolia, and Ms. Una Jones, Chief Executive, Sustainable Fibre Alliance, Mongolia and the United Kingdom.



The SFA's CEO Una Jones gave an emotive address to the conference, reminding everyone that *"Humans and the environment are coupled, and it is important to also invest in social projects and build partnerships"*.

She went on to talk about the 'long-term' nature of the SFA's goals, and that this requires commitment and a shared vision to build the roadmap for the next 10 years.



After two days of lively discussions (and a drinks reception hosted by the UK Ambassador to Mongolia, His Excellency Philip Malone), the delegates had the option to participate in field trips to Khustai National Park, visit a herding family in Tov province, Alanbulag soum, try their hands at combing, and sample some local hospitality. In addition to this, they had a tour of vertical manufacturer Gobi Cashmere and Khanbogd Cashmere Scouring and Dehairing plant facility.

Partnership Projects

SFA Collaboration with Green Gold Animal Health project, Swiss Development Cooperation

A meeting took place between Green Gold manager Ms. Ts. Enkh-Amgalan and the SFA's chair Mr. Charles Hubbard to share best practice, knowledge and lessons learned, in order to work towards one common goal: addressing environmental and social challenges.

It was agreed that the SFA and Green Gold will hold a joint technical meeting to define the term "Responsible Herder", and how this can be used to support herders in continuously improving through the SFA's Bronze, Silver and Gold awards.

The resulting definition, as agreed by both organisations, will inform future outcomes of the SFA's Rangeland Stewardship code of practice training.

Memorandum of Understanding: Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (AVSF)

A Memorandum of Understanding is to be developed to support future collaborative action in relation to our existing Codes of Practice and our proposed code of practice for Clean Fibre Processing. This will see the two organisations looking at the cashmere supply chain: from the collection of fibres from herding communities up to the completion of the scouring and dehairing process.

To begin this working relationship, the SFA has agreed to share its first draft of the Fibre Processing CoP with AVSF, other key stakeholders and the SFA's member organisations simultaneously. Feedback will result in a second draft being produced from which potential monitoring and evaluation criteria will be developed.

SAVE THE DATE!

Working Group meeting 7th November 2019, LONDON



Tell us about your personal journey to working in sustainability at Alex Begg.

I've got rather a long history (as you can tell from looking at me!) I came to Alex Begg about 4 years ago, because the company wanted to establish sustainability at its heart. I have been fascinated to see how many of my varied previous jobs have been useful in this - a science degree, various supply-chain manufacturing jobs, 2 years spent in a developing country (Rwanda) working with an NGO, experience as a trainer, working with ISO standards, and in textiles. Sustainability is such a varied job and I love it.

How important is it to Alex Begg to be part of a sustainable value chain in Mongolia, and what are the challenges faced?

It was clear from the early days of the SFA that we should join because we were committed to working more sustainably and cashmere is an important fibre for us. It's not essential - we *could* continue to purchase dyed yarns in Europe without knowing where they come from - but it's clear that what worked in the past will not suffice for the future, for all sorts of reasons. We all have to act differently to address the many significant sustainability challenges we face.

Alex Begg sources much of its fibre from Mongolia. What are the advantages of using Mongolian fibre?

It's not easy - our cashmere supply chain is the most complex of any fibres we use; Mongolia is far away and it's *very* big. I'm just back from a trip where we drove 1700km in just a few days! It has been a fantastic experience, though.

Do consumers care about where their clothes come from?

We talk about this all the time, but I still haven't got a clear answer! It is very complex: if you think just about the clothes you are currently wearing and the food you have eaten today, there's already a lot of supply chains involved. It's hard to cope with all that detail.

I think that ultimately it does not matter whether consumers care: our motivation has to be beyond that. Like many other companies, Alex Begg has mapped its work against the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We try to work on those where we can make a difference. Of course, it's important for us to know what consumers care about: we believe that it is also important to educate and inform customers.

Alex Begg is located in Ayr on the south-west coast of Scotland. Tell us about the relationship the weavers have with the town, the folk of Ayr and the landscape.

We're 153 years old and we have been in Ayr for most of these. We're very proud of our Scottish heritage and our place in the Scottish textile industry. Many employees live locally, we support quite a few local charities and we work with schools and colleges/universities to encourage young people to consider textiles as a career. One recent and very interesting development has been our involvement with textile training at Dumfries House, which is quite close to us.

Ian Whiteford was interviewed by Philippa Farnese (SFA UK)

Photographic Credits

Thank you to Fiona Jones and Lotti Blades-Barrett for their photographic contributions to this issue.

Contact Us

Contact us for more information about our Codes of Practice, Projects, Membership details and how you can support the work we do at admin@sustainablefibre.org

Visit our website at www.sustainablefibre.org to see our work in action and details of SFA joint initiatives.