

This is going to be a very busy and important year for us at the SFA. To reach our target of supporting over 4,000 herding families in 35 communities we are expanding our capacity in the regions of Khentii, Arkhangai and Bayankhongor, and looking to increase the number of SFA trainers.

Our actions, supported by you, our members, will see these families gain the skills and knowledge required to improve their practice and understanding of environmental resilience and good animal husbandry.

We will also be helping the next generation of herders through our Young Herder Training Programme. Here young people will be developing the key skills needed to overcome the challenges of climate change.

Our main event this year will be our Conference in Ulaanbaatar on the 22nd – 26th May. Our staff in Mongolia and the UK are getting things ready and we hope to see many of you for a full week of events.

We look forward to working with you all in the coming year.

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## Winter Weather Report

Winters in Mongolia are long and harsh.

According to the Central Laboratory of Environment and Metrology of Mongolia, this winter has been average or even a little bit milder. This means the regions where SFA are working have faced temperatures ranging from -18°C to -32°C and have had between 20 or 30 centimetres of snowfall.

Wind strength during this winter has been lower than in previous years.

*A warm welcome to our newest SFA Members!*



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## SFA Progress Update

SFA staff in Mongolia have been able to implement the requirements of the Rangeland Stewardship, Animal Husbandry and Fibre Harvesting Codes of Practice. This includes a Monitoring and Evaluation framework developed in partnership with members and herding families over the past two years.

Interest in the Animal Husbandry and Fibre Harvesting Code of Practice is increasing, with 29 herding communities committing to manage their animals more responsibly in the last three months of 2018.

To support the ongoing objective of continuous improvement, the SFA has launched an Assurance Programme to ensure the quality of the training provided to communities to enable them to meet the requirements of the compliance indicators set out in the Codes of Practice.

As a result, we have 45 detailed Accreditation and Assessment reports with supporting evidence. These reports will support herding communities to drive change and continuous improvement by highlighting areas for improvement and provide strong evidence that SFA certification is driving environmental and social change.



### Celebrating Success – Certificate award ceremony, December 2018, Ulaanbaatar

Representatives from 24 herding communities received their certificates following the external assessment at an event hosted by Dr B. Batkhisig Baival the Country Director of the SFA.

## Stories from the Field

### Cashmere goat breed insight: Zalaa Jinst White

- The only entirely white breed of cashmere goat in Mongolia.
- Found in the southwest region of the Gobi Desert, where it has adapted well to Gobi Desert nomadic herding.
- The average cashmere production is 380 grams for males and 290 grams for females.
- Fibres average 15-16 microns in diameter.

SFA is working with Zalaa Jinst silky herd herder cooperative and Shinejinst soum in the Bayankhongor region.

### Training Community Trainers

A 2-day training event took place at the Khan Bank training facilities in Ulaanbaatar which saw 40 herders from 24 herder organisations across 9 provinces gain knowledge, skills and understanding of the requirements of the SFA Codes of Practice for Rangeland Stewardship and Animal Husbandry and Fibre Harvesting.

All 40 participants received a certificate acknowledging them as a trainer, enabling SFA to roll-out our two Codes of Practice across Mongolia.

## Consultations – Needs your views

The SFA is seeking input from members on two areas of future activity:

1. COLLABORATIVE ACTION: Consultation on the application of the Rangeland Stewardship and Animal Husbandry and Fibre Harvesting Codes of Practice to Cashmere producers in Inner Mongolia (China)
2. CHAIN OF CUSTODY: Consultation on a potential model and supporting Code of Practice

Members interested in finding out more and becoming involved in the consultation process should contact [admin@sustainablefibre.org](mailto:admin@sustainablefibre.org) for more details.

## Partnership Projects



Students with artificial nest stations, made as part of their class project work using affordable and locally available materials. Birds of prey are the natural biological control for steppe voles.

### Supporting Young Herders

Johnstons of Elgin launched their Young Herder in November 2018 in Bayan-Ovoo, Norolin, Bayankhutag, Galshar, Bayanmunkh and Khentii provinces. The programme is intended to educate and train children in sustainable pastureland management and traditional herding practices.

The programme is now in its second phase, and training materials have been developed, printed and distributed in 7 schools for 450 children.

The SFA will support the schools and monitor progress throughout the 33-week course.

### European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

The SFA has secured support from the EBRD to implement Rangeland Stewardship, Animal Husbandry and social welfare programmes that improve herders' livelihoods in Dornogobi and Shinejinst soums, in the Bayankhongor region.

This 3-year project will support activities involving the Cashmere fibre value chain, the Mongolian Government and investment institutions.

Outcomes include the investigation and testing of a model for tracing the progress of harvested fibre through processes leading to the manufacture of garments.

### Sustainable Finance for Sustainable Communities

This project builds on initial work funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office using the good offices of the UK Ambassador to Mongolia. As a result of this work the SFA and Khan Bank have signed a Memorandum of Understanding where Khan Bank will collaborate with the SFA on launching new products that reward sustainable livestock practices.

Preferential loans and other bank services will be available to SFA herding communities that can demonstrate completion of an SFA external assessment and SFA Code of Practice accreditation.

This facility should become available to herding communities during 2019.

### Green Gold and SFA Collaboration

SFA is working with the Green Gold Project and the Mongolian National Federation of Pasture User Groups to support herder communities in their endeavours to eliminate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

The key areas of cooperation will be increasing awareness about the social, environmental and economic values of Mongolian Cashmere, and the importance of responsible and sustainable sourcing of raw materials.

## Sustainability in the Cashmere Sector – SFA Conference, Ulaanbaatar, 22 – 26 May 2019

The SFA are organizing a multi-stakeholder conference bringing together representatives of the cashmere value chain and wider stakeholders to discuss current and future development of the cashmere sector.

In addition to a range of topics on sustainable cashmere, and case studies from herding communities, the conference will include:

- Multi-stakeholder round-table workshop to discuss challenges and opportunities in the sector, including best practice.
- Tour of processing and manufacturing facilities. This tour will take an in-depth look at the cashmere industry's operation, including downstream cashmere processing (classifying, scouring, dehairing) and manufacturing facilities.
- Field trip to the countryside and visiting herding families. This tour will allow participants to experience the culture and beauty of the country, including a visit to one of Mongolia's National Parks.
- High level dinner and drinks reception with ambassadors, government officials, conservation organisations, and senior execs of brands and retailers. (Evening hosted by the British Embassy.)

Early Bird booking offer expires on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March.

## Feature Interview – SFA Country Director, Dr Batkhisig Baival

Introducing our Country Director Dr. Batkhisig Baival:



**Can you tell me about the SFA team in Mongolia and the work they have been doing?**

The SFA in Mongolia works with herder organisations to champion sustainable environmental practices. For example, the young herder education program, for the next generation of herders and community-based herd quality improvement projects etc.

**In your PhD thesis, you introduced the concept of 'Nutag' to the western academic world. Could you explain more about the concept of Nutag and its cultural importance?**

As part of my PhD research, I looked at social ecological resilience building in complex pastoral systems. It was interesting to study this topic not only from a scientific perspective, but also from a practical stance, to make the principles of resilience beneficial and understood by practitioners and communities.

Nutag is a Mongolian word that has currency with Mongolians. It is not a technical word, but refers to homeland in a holistic sense. So that when we talk about sustainability or resilience building, it is impossible to avoid the term, as it is culturally acceptable and appropriate for herders. When we talk about being good stewards of the environment 'Nutag' is a term that is all-encompassing to herders.

**The Nutag framework is about resilience building and this is because novel ideas are meaningful to herders when they are communicated in Nutag terms. For example, social and cultural meanings are Nutag people or Nutag customs and stories. Ecological or natural meanings could be Nutag pasture, Nutag waters, Nutag landscapes, etc. In terms of economic systems, Nutag wealth, resources, dairy etc.**

**One of your research fields is local ecological settings. How Mongolian herders interact with their ecological system, what would you say about their traditional knowledge and experience of it?**

Herders have a particular knowledge that is relevant to [their] local ecological and social-economic settings. For example, herders share their concerns related to changes in vegetation in pastureland, and how this affects herd composition and animal welfare. They have a strong willingness to exchange their observations and thoughts. In this way rural herding communities learn to live with changes that are happening and constantly shape their adaptive capacity. Traditional knowledge provides a backdrop to local solutions and practices in natural resource management.

**How do SFA's projects relate to and support regional ecological systems?**

We work with different herder organisations across the country and each represent different ecological regions with distinct wildlife and landscapes. The areas where they come from are home to white-tail gazelle, ibex, big-horn sheep, migratory and non-migratory birds such as cranes, falcons, etc. Within the Rangeland Stewardship Code of Practice we encourage them to identify and list key species of plant and wildlife present in the defined rangeland area and their habitats. The Code of Practice also requires them to identify and manage areas where plants or wildlife are regularly seen, areas used by wildlife for breeding or as migratory corridors, and any other areas that are important to the healthy functioning of wildlife populations.

**Dr. Baival was interviewed by Bataa Tserenbat (SFA UK)**

### 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](mailto:admin@sustainablefibre.org)

Visit our website at [www.sustainablefibre.org](http://www.sustainablefibre.org) to see our work in action and details of SFA joint initiatives.