

Australian Wool Innovation will in the next 3 years newly position the Woolmark-Label

The Woolmark-Logo was implemented in 1964 by the Australian wool industry as worldwide known symbol for wool. In October 2007 the Australian wool branch instructed their representative enterprise - Australian Wool Innovation (AWI), Melbourne - with the task to revitalize this historic symbol and to newly implement it in the global clothing industry. The AWI (www.woolinnovation.com.au), founded as a Non-Profit-Organisation and financed by 30,000 Australian sheep farmers, works on all steps of the supply chain, starting with wool production to processing up to the textile production, building partnerships with important producers, brands and retailers, to promote Australian merino wool. Furthermore they have their own research labs and work together with the Australian CSIRO, Hong Kong Polytechnic and the University of Manchester.

Woolmark (www.woolmark.com) improves itself nowadays together with their about 2,000 licensees. For this the AWI with their subsidiary The Woolmark Company, with employees in more than 20 countries, will invest for the next three year for about 80 Mill. EUR in marketing actions. Woolmark-offices are present worldwide, also in Germany (Düsseldorf, johann.mittermayr@woolmark.de).

On the Pitti Filati AWI presented the new project "fifteen & finer", where very fine yarns are utilized. More than 40% of the Australian wool is in the area of less than 19.5 micron – 1 micron = one thousandth of a millimeter.

Innovations are pushed. In December 2007 in Japan was Merino Fresh introduced, in Europe it is scheduled for September 2008.

This is about washable suits, which can simply be cleaned with water instead of pollutive soaps. End of 2008 AWI is planning the presentation of a 100% natural wool-membrane, acting similar to Gore-Tex – due to the addition of keratin, a protein made from wool, which is extracted during the weaving process.

Moreover, they have set themselves the goal to develop a high-end label. Here they are going to work together with designers who are looking for exceptional high-quality fibers. On the latest yarn fair Pitti Filati in Florence the prestigious collection "Grand Cru" was presented by the AWI together with Italian spinning companies and Australian fiber producers under the heading "fifteen&feiner". Mercerized merino-wool was developed here mainly for clothing products, which are „worn on the skin“. On the Pitti Filati also the 10 innovative knitwear-creations of the finalists of the 2008 re-introduced Woolmark Prize-competition were shown. The Chinese designer Qiu Hao came out as winner here in Paris.

The next AWI-presentation is going to take place on the Spin Expo from 8 to 10 September in Shanghai.

Since 2004 the AWI has spent more than 6.1 Mill. EUR to develop practicable alternatives to the operative "Mulesing"- process at the backside of the Australian sheep, which is rejected by many clothing retailers, consumers and animal protectionists. Until 2010 the painful intervention on the sheep against the usually deadly worm attack by the aggressive blow-fly (*Lucilia cuprina*) should be stopped.

There are three alternatives (www.woolisbest.com), which promise success:

clips for tightening the rear, a special needleless injection and genetic research in the breeding of sheep with hair-/wool-free backsides. According to an estimation of the Australian Wool Innovation Production Forecasting Committee (AWPFC) the Australian shorn wool production in the season 2008/09 will weaken somewhat compared to 2007/08 by 4% to 385 (400) Mill. kg greasy wool. The number of sheep to be shorn will go down by 5% to 86.2 (90.2) Mill. animals, where, how-

ever, the average yield of wool per shorn sheep will increase by 1% to 4.46 (4.43) kg. The weaker tendency of the wool emergence was explained by the declining population of sheep in connection with the high prices for grain (pasturages partially became farmland) and the continuing drought in some parts of Eastern Australia. The absence of rain in fall in Victoria, Southern Australia, Tasmania and parts of NSW led to increasing slaughtering of sheep and an increase of live-sheep-export.

Gert Krockert,
Translation Dr. Heidi Arndt