



ATELIER

Laines d'Europe

Chantemerle, 18 July 2015,

Dear Sir,

The *ATELIER-Laines d'Europe* association invites you to the European meeting "Wool scouring in Europe: Urgent and ecological solutions". It will take place in Saugues (Haute-Loire), in France, from 4th to 6th of November 2015.

In recent years, sheep farmers and associations of sheep farmers, craft and small textile enterprises have developed initiatives in several European countries at local or regional levels with the aim being to get a better return on wool. All steps in the chain of processing wool, from scouring to finishing, are essential to the sustainability of these projects.

Washing the wool is the first step in the chain of transformation and it is unavoidable. The disappearance or difficulties encountered by companies scouring wool in Europe in the last few years is worrying us.

During the meeting, we will take stock of the situation and discuss several proposals for a better future: a more active part of the agricultural organisations, use of wastewater as an ecological resource and closer coordination.

We would be happy if you could participate and present your experience and realisations in this field.

You find some more explanations on the back of this letter and, enclosed, the programme and the registration form. Please fill it and return it to us as soon as possible.

Please contact me for further information. Looking forward to hearing from you,

Best regards.

Marie-Thérèse Chaupin

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European Association for Study, Liaison, Innovation and Research into Textiles

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Wool initiatives in Europe

In recent years, groups and associations of sheep farmers, craft and small textile enterprises have developed initiatives in several European countries at local or regional levels with the aim being to get a better return on wool. These initiatives are based on:

- A regional dynamic development of local products
- The protection and promotion of endangered breeds of sheep
- A strong concern at the environmental level
- Direct links between producers and wool processors
- Strong involvement of farmers in obtaining better returns for their wool
- An organization grouping batches of wool by breed, a classification according to the quality, the establishment of appropriate logistics to bring the wool to the market place
- Commission processing of lots of wool by different companies, large or small, depending on the batch size, geographical proximity and the necessary processing techniques
- The development of products with a strong local and cultural identity and full transparency of the production chain
- Marketing organized by groups and associations for quality finished products (tops, yarns, fabrics, knitwear) through direct sales to the consumer.

These efforts have received great interest from the public, as well as regional bodies. Small subsidies were sometimes granted locally for their start-up. Modest in terms of the quantities of wool being involved in each project, these initiatives have however a strong regional impact. Direct contact with the public is important and allows wool promotion on a broad level. Raising awareness of the public and the generic promotion of European wools are also provided with the travelling exhibition "Wools of Europe".

Concerns about the future

The wool scouring is the first step of the processing chain and is unavoidable. It is the link between the agricultural product, the greasy wool, and its use by craft and industry. By scouring, a resource is created, the wool fibre.

Note that the EU regulation on animal by-products regulates the movements of greasy wool, but not of scoured wool.

The disappearance of wool scouring enterprises in Europe in recent years and the difficulties for some companies worry us. Scouring facilities sizes are very different, from small installations integrated in spinning mills (a few tons per year) to large plants processing import wool (from 10 to 100 tons / day). Nevertheless, they are complementary and interdependent. The industrial network is diminishing a lot over the last ten years and we must strengthen the links between these different levels, or we will risk seeing the entire activity move to Asia.

Scouring is a complex process, for one hand to remove impurities and secondly to obtain quality fibres. The yield of the operation is on average 50% for European wools, ranging from 35% for merino wool to 60% for coarser wools. Meaning that about 50% of initial weight is residue. These impurities (organic, vegetable, mineral, fat ...) and the amount of water used (washing and rinsing, and treatment) are important and it is a major challenge of this process.

Objectives of the meeting

1. Take into consideration the operation of wool scouring as a final link in the livestock sector. Can farmers and agricultural organisations take a more active part of the running and development of this process?
2. Examine the possibilities of integrating the 50% impurities of the weight of the greasy wool as a valuable resource and not as waste that must, expensively, get discarded.
3. Decide whether closer coordination in the sector, exchange of experiences, research and pilot projects for ecological scouring.