

Responsible Cashmere Round Table (RCRT) Meeting #3

Wednesday, June 26, 2019 | 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM EST

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Insights from Mongolia
3. UNDP Meeting Outcomes – Nicolas Petit
4. Brand role discussion
5. Next Steps

Insights from Mongolia – Anne's report

Anne traveled to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia to participate in UNDP Mongolia's meeting, "Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for System Change", on June 12, 2019; she then participated in some field trips in the days following.

- During the field trips, herders were enthusiastic and keen to really engage and understand what it is brands/stakeholders are asking for, and to explain what they do and how they do it.
- When looking at things through an animal welfare lens, these herders grow up with the goats – they absolutely love their animals and are fully integrated in their lives; the lives of the herders is intertwined with the lives of the goats. One herder said they moved around 12-15 times just to keep the animals of fresh grazing ground.
- Apart from some moments of handling, the goats live mostly free-range and have access to vast areas of landscapes; the humans are there to essentially keep them alive and healthy, and to harvest the fiber.

UNDP Meeting Outcomes – Nicolas Petit

Nicolas Petit is a Senior Commodities Advisor for the UNDP's Green Commodities Program and is currently focusing on Ivory Coast, Ghana, Liberia and Papua New Guinea. Nicolas has 20 years' experience working on sustainable agricultural commodities, rural livelihoods and rural labour markets. He has worked for the European Commission, the UN and various NGOs. In his last position, Nicolas was the Director of Standards and Assurance for the Better Cotton Initiative, a multi-stakeholder initiative focusing on the promotion of more sustainable production practices in this sector. He is based in Hong Kong and is also focusing on strategy for the UNDP's efforts in Mongolia.

Quick Introduction on the UNDP Green Commodities Program

- One program in the UNDP, focusing on sustainable commodities; enhancing the lives of farmers, communities, and on conservation/environmental efforts.

- Pineapples, fisheries, palm oil, cattle, coffee, cocoa, soy, and most recently started working on cashmere.

National Commodity Platform

- Collaboration for systemic change – trying to get a holistic approach by getting everyone together to discuss the issues
- One methodology UNDP has been using over the past 5 years is the “National Commodity Program”

Consensus Building

- Trying to bring everyone together on a common framework of action
- Driven by participants; enabled by the UNDP just in the early stages and then passed over to the national institutions
- Multi-stakeholder groups and technical working groups; platform steering committee and platform management committee with full-time staff

Collective Action for Change

- National Action Plans
- Collective vision for the future
- Road map to guide investments and activities

Benefits of participation

- In line with the RCRT, the UNDP would like to build a **shared understanding** and agreement of the problems that need to be addressed supported by credible data
- An agreed **plan that brings value to all** as it ensures coherent thinking and coordinated action, avoiding gaps and overlaps
- Greater **insight and understanding** of what other stakeholders need and how they perceive value from sustainable production
- **Expanded network** and **better relationships** with organisations that work on issues that mutually matter
- International and domestic public **visibility on how sustainability problems are addressed** at a national and systemic level

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for System Change | June 12, 2019 | Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

- Started engaging Mongolia about 6 months ago, bringing the expertise the UNDP has on commodities to the issues at stake in Mongolia
- Engaged with Textile Exchange and other over the past 6 months to prepare for this conference
- Had around 100 participants: key organizations working on cashmere sustainability, government, private companies, associations, brands, herders

Objectives

- To advance positioning Mongolia as a leading producer of Sustainable Cashmere by accelerating current efforts;
- To support the Government of Mongolia in the implementation of its Cashmere Program from a sustainability perspective;
- To jointly identify best mechanisms available for national dialogue and collective action for Sustainable Cashmere in Mongolia.

Outputs

- Agreement on priority themes calling for aligning interest to be considered for future national dialogue and collective action;
- Agreement on potential mechanisms for national dialogue and collective action on Sustainable Cashmere in Mongolia;
- Individual commitment to actions to increase collaboration in the short to medium term.

Advantages

- Can address a more complex issue than you can tackle alone
- Partners can access complementary skills and resources from each other
- Results will have broader ownership (more sustainable)
- Learning and collaboration increases chance of systemic change

Limits

- Requires time and resources to design and implement properly
- Can only work if there is sufficient representation from stakeholders
- Will often not deliver short-term success: patience is required
- Not easy to find funding for processes that are relatively open-ended and the topics of which may evolve over time
- Success is never guaranteed

Multistakeholder Partnerships

Initial Stage: Some Common Problems

- Lack of trust between key actors - Misaligned interest and agenda – no common vision
- Lack of shared understanding on key issues to be addressed for sustainable production
- Business case for engagement not adequately developed – resulting in weak buy-in
- Focusing on negatives rather than language of opportunities
- Sensitive issues are denied or avoided
- Weak representation – unbalanced group of stakeholders, key decision makers absent from the process and/or low market share representation
- Zero or fragmented collective action and investment
- Dialogue not adequately institutionalised / governance structures missing for continued dialogue

- Dialogue not necessarily leading to concrete outcomes – players not made accountable
- Unclear roles for government and private sector on how to participate

Before beginning commodity work in Mongolia, the UNDP country office organized two separate studies: one on demand side and one on the supply side. These analyses set the tone for the meeting in Mongolia.

(outcome of these studies can be through the meeting materials from RCRT Meeting #1: <https://textileexchange.org/responsible-cashmere-round-table/>)

See slide #'s 29-31 to see UNDP meeting discussion strategy and exercises

Comments and questions from meeting participants:

I would really like to see us come together re: cashmere from Inner Mongolia (China). As the cashmere is "farmed" it seems like a good option to use the same framework as the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) / Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS).

From what I understand it's the white, white cashmere that's from Inner Mongolia ... and the suppliers that I have seen they know the regions it has come from etc.

When it comes to segregation of the fiber, we are also observing this in the standard (AbTF Sustainable Cashmere Standard), but we are working on different solutions for the segregation of the farmed cashmere and the herded cashmere. In Inner Mongolia, we mostly find farmed cashmere. Working on a system to recognize certified cashmere to be visible to brands (through an online platform), the other system we are working on is a platform for labeling (which need to be applied for and will be sent to users to attach, and need to meet criteria in order to qualify for using them).

Although washing of Mongolian fibre needs to be done by law in Mongolia, dehairing of Mongolian fibre is often done in China.

Some data showed the temperature is rising by 2.1 or 2.2 degrees in Mongolia (not 4 degrees)

4Paws thoughts on the combing process: combing is a painful procedure, so would rather support shearing if there was a gentle way of doing it; would prefer to phase out combing

- Inner Mongolia uses shearing processes

One participant saw combing in action – thoughts are that in an ideal world, they should switch from combing to shearing. But from what was observed, there are pros and cons because in some cases shearing may not be appropriate for the weather.

From another experience in Mongolia, I would agree with the comment being done right now: shearing in Mongolia is dangerous because of temperature. Combing enables to keep the goats warm in Spring time (which is a quite cold season, with a lot of wind).

Email follow-up note from Zara Morris-Trainor, PhD Researcher in Sustainable Cashmere Production

There were a few questions regarding the combing and slaughter of goats that didn't have the opportunity for a full response yesterday, so I thought I'd share my insights. Some of these are covered in the blog article that you have already shared with members (thanks for doing so!).

A few key points should be made:

- **Shearing is not an easy solution for the majority of rangeland herded goats in Mongolia.**
 - Firstly, as was emphasised by Karen yesterday, this would leave goats with inadequate coat to withstand weather changes following the spring moult and subsequent cashmere harvesting.
 - Secondly, shearing would require electricity, which many herders do not have sufficient access to (many herders I visited relied on a single portable battery, only sufficient to charge mobile phones).
 - Thirdly, shearing can nick skin and cause bleeding when done carelessly and with speed (just as combing can be done in a manner which causes unnecessary discomfort, so can shearing).
 - Fourthly, sheared cashmere adds significant processing time as it removes all hair (much of which is guard hair), so processing companies would be bearing additional time and costs.
 - This isn't to say that shearing should be entirely avoided (it can be done in an ethical way)...it's just important to recognise the constraints facing Mongolian herders and the consequences that shifting to shearing would have.
- **Combing can be carried out in a way that minimises suffering.**
 - The strategy that many herders adopt is to start with a larger toothed comb and to select finer combs once the hair is less tangled. This helps ensure that all cashmere is harvested, but also reduces discomfort caused by yanking of tangled hair.
 - Herders that own their own herd are more motivated to treat their animals ethically. People that are contracted during the combing season, and do not have personal ties to the family that owns the goat herd, may be more motivated by money and may rush the combing process. This is one of the benefits of family farming.

- If herders were less constrained by time, they could take more time over each goat. Taking more time means they can comb less vigorously and with more care, thereby reducing discomfort. If herders felt more secure regarding the price they would get for their cashmere (via contracts, for example), then they would not need to rush to get their cashmere to the market at the start of the season (prices generally decline as the season progresses).
- **Slaughter is carried out in a way that minimises suffering**
 - I witnessed several goat slaughters during my fieldwork, and I have described the process in detail here (<https://goatsandgers.wordpress.com/2019/05/22/animal-welfare-and-cashmere-production/>).
 - There are strong cultural traditions around slaughter and it is taken very seriously (to the point that some words associated with death are taboo in the Mongolian language).
 - From what I personally witnessed, Mongolian herders use a slaughter technique which ensures death occurs as fast as possible (generally a couple of seconds). Skins are sold at local markets or used around camp, and all body parts (with the exception of the head and feet) are consumed. It's really important that no blood is spilled during the slaughter process (there are religious taboos about this, but the blood is also used to make different foods).
- **Goats are generally slaughtered when they are over 5 years of age.**
 - This is when cashmere quality starts to decline (micron thickens). All of the goats I saw slaughtered were male (I'm not sure when females are slaughtered, but it may be related to their fertility).
 - One of the reasons that Mongolian cashmere quality has declined is thought to be related to keeping castrated males alive for longer. Castrated males have thicker micron, so a higher proportion of castrated males means an overall decline in micron quality in the herd.
 - Encouraging a higher frequency of slaughter of castrated males has been proposed as one of the strategies that Mongolian herders could adopt to increase the quality of their cashmere.