

NAMC'S VIEW OF THE WOOL CONGRESS 2018 HELD IN PORT ELIZABETH

By: Bonani Nyhodo

The Wool Industry held its annual Wool Congress on the 12 – 14 June 2018 at the Pine Lodge in Port Elizabeth and the NAMC was in attendance through Mr B Nyhodo. The congress went well as planned. It is interesting to note that there were very encouraging facts shared during the proceedings and the work the CSIR is doing regarding the temperature variation as wool is on transit.

Take home points – very impressive

Firstly, the industry's approach to the way of doing business is commendable considering the attitude toward ethical trade. The industry identified that training of shearers is not just a business requirement but also a good intervention in terms of welfare of animals. The feeling of the congress is that sheep are not the growers of wool but living organisms that need to be treated as such. Secondly, the congress was very clear that all the stakeholders need to approach to predators in a way that recognises that these predators are part of the ecosystem/environment and as such the approach needs to be systemic and restlessness be avoided at all costs. Thirdly, the congress agreed unanimously that all acts of unethical treatment/trade stand to compromise the good image of the South African Wool Industry as producer of quality wool.

Position of SA Wool

It is important to note that South Africa's wool clip has been increasing over the past ten (10) years or so. The increase has been coupled with increases in the world prices of wool and coupled with the performance of the exchange rate the industry has been doing well. In spite of the increases, South Africa's share of world production declined from over this period meaning increases in other producing countries were much more rapid than SA. However, South Africa is a producer of quality wool, with South Africa account for about 30% of world Apparel Wool. As a result, the prices

South Africa has been receiving for its clips is above the world average. Another important development is the performance of farmers operating from communal areas of the country as part of the mainstream value chain of the wool industry. Communal farmers account for a reasonable proportion of the increase over the past 20 years or so. This presents the wool industry as one of the few industries that can without any doubt point to the mainstreaming of black farmers.

New development

The Wool Industry has resolved to establish a Development Fund to be funded through a levy to be collected by SAWAMBA and administered by Cape Wools. The objectives of the Fund is three fold: i) wool promotion both local and international, ii) training of shearers and iii) development of communal farmers. The industry agreed on R0,22/kg of wool sold to be reviewed annually.

Industry challenges

A concern regarding the continuation of the genetic improvement programme was noted. The issue of stock theft was also noted – the problem of thieves being given bails does not assist in resolving the problem. The problem of predation was also raised and farmers were warned that dealing with this problem needs systemic and more ethical approach.