

Quality wool is not the only thing Reda look for when they buy Australia's top superfine wool



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Sheep



Bruce Dunbabin "Mayfield" Tasmania with Fabrizio Botto Poala and Francesco Botto Poala of Reda.



In an age where sustainability and traceability are what makes the millennial generation tick, one Italian fabric manufacturer is leading the way with Australia's superfine woolgrowers.

At a conference in Hobart recently, 35 woolgrowers who produce and sell Australia's finest Merino wools to the iconic family company Reda were presented with expanded plans for the future including marketing strategies and developing closer relationships between the grower and manufacturer.

Reda buys about 20,000 bales of superfine Merino wool annually, with about 80 per cent of that coming from Australia and sells enough top-quality woven wool fabric to luxury fashion houses such as Zegna, Boss and Armani to make the equivalent of 12,000 suits per day.

About 85pc of Reda's wool cloth is used to make suits, although close-to-skin, activewear and technical fabrics are an increasing part of the production.

Fashion houses and customers are increasingly wanting to know more about where their Merino wool comes from and how the sheep and environment is managed are treated.

Appropriately embodied into the conference was the inaugural presentation of the Reda Sustainability Award – an award that supports growers from Australia that have distinguished themselves in advancing sustainability.

This year the award went to New England woolgrowers Peter and Rosemary McNeil, "Europambela", Walcha.



Peter and Rosemary McNeill, "Europambela", Walcha with Francesco Botto Poala, CEO, Reda (right) and Fabrizio Botto Poala, raw material procurement manager, Reda.

Managing director of New England Wool, Andrew Blanch, said not only do the woolgrowers supply high quality wool to Reda, but environmental credentials, sustainability, traceability and animal welfare are all important things that Reda require to sell the story to their brand partners.

“Reda has recognised the work of Peter and Rosemary – but the sustainability award it is about sending a valuable message,” Mr Blanch said.

“It’s a two-way street – these growers are the best producers selling to Reda – but it’s also telling the group, going forward, this is a really important aspect.”

Reda chief executive Francesco Botto Poala, said it is their aim to build a closer relationship to their suppliers.

“The growers are our partners, so we can have complete transparency right through the supply chain about each farm our wool comes from,” Mr Botto Poala said.

“The consumer preference is for sheep that are not mulesed and our customers want to know everything; it’s all about sustainability, the farm environment and the welfare of the animal.”

Tasmanian Merino wool producer Bruce Dunbabin on Sunday showed Mr Botto Poala around his superfine wool farm near Swansea on the island’s east coast.

He was one of the first woolgrowers to sign a five-year supply contract with Reda three years ago, which sees the majority of his wool snapped up by the Italian business.

Mr Blanch said in essence most growers are already into the third year of their contracts.

“Newer members have started new two-year contracts to bring everyone in line. The idea could be to have between 3 and 10 year contracts in the future,” Mr Blanch said.

Long-term contracts with premium prices up to 30 per cent above the fine wool average auction index are being offered to encourage increased Merino wool production and to reduce price volatility.

Mr Blanch said that Reda Future Project growers were invited to be part of a number of working groups working with Reda early next year to come up with the most beneficial contract for both parties along with other important topics such as education and sustainability.

“The plan is to build a contract and a future that all of the group has had input in,” Mr Blanch said.

“The conference focused heavily on ‘what can we do to create more benefit out of the group – what do we want in the future and what are we working towards?’”



First place in the Supplier of Quality and Quantity, John and Caroline Chappell, Deepwater, NSW.

“From the growers’ side they want price security, they want to know that their wool is wanted in the future and they want to be able to invest based on that.

“They are also enthusiastic about working closely with Reda.”

He said from Reda’s point of view they wanted the great story from their growers, a close relationship with suppliers and surity of supply.

“Reda want to know that their suppliers are sustainable in their production, that they are thinking about their environment and animal welfare. This is the message coming from the consumers of Reda’s fabrics,” Mr Blanch said.

“There’s the bigger picture of ‘the world’s out there – what do they want and how can we provide that as woolgrowers?’.

“The millennials are pushing this direction, it is not all about price, it’s about value for what they buy and how they feel about it – and the Reda Future Project group have to be part of that.”

The first place supplier of quality and quantity of suitable wool for Reda for 2017/18, as part of the Reda Future Project was John and Caroline Chappell, Dundee, Northern NSW.