THE IWTO GREEN BOOK PUBLICATION:
WOOL RECLAIMS ITS SUSTAINABILITY STORY

November 2026



The International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) launched in 2026 its new Green Book: Wool Reclaims Its Sustainability Story.

In the presentation of this *guide to wool sustainability and supply chain integrity standards*, IWTO underlines that "For centuries, wool has clothed and protected humanity from the elements. Growing naturally on sheep, wool products are long-lived, and the fibre is highly valued for numerous benefits and qualities. Even while being used by the most prestigious brands and designers, wool is entirely at home in nature's own cycles. And yet, by measure of today's most widely used environmental rating tools, wool is routinely ranked as more damaging to the planet than synthetic fibres spun from fossil fuels".

With the launch of its new Green Book, the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) intends to change that.

The Executive Summary of the Green Book underlines that "Wool is a biogenic fibre, grown from sunlight, water and grass through the process of photosynthesis, and forming part of nature's own carbon cycle. Every kilogram of clean wool embodies approximately 1.7 kilograms of biogenic CO_2 equivalent, stored in a durable, recyclable and ultimately biodegradable form. Wool garments are worn more times before washing than any other fibre type, washed at significantly lower temperatures, and kept in active use far longer. A commercially profitable wool recycling industry has existed for over 200 years. At the end of its life, wool biodegrades readily in soil and water, returning nutrients to the earth. These are not marketing claims. They are documented, peer-reviewed findings. The broader ecological picture reinforces this. The world's grasslands cover 40% of the terrestrial land surface, and the sheep that graze them play an active role in soil health, water retention and carbon drawdown. Responsible grazing is one of the few genuinely scalable responses to the global carbon crisis - one that simultaneously produces food and fibre while sustaining the photosynthetic systems on which all life depends.





Despite this evidence, dominant product environmental footprint tools consistently rank wool as more damaging than synthetic fibres derived from fossil fuels. The reason is methodological. Current life cycle assessment models were built around linear, industrial production systems. They cannot account for biogenic carbon flows - the continuous cycling of carbon through living organisms that underpins wool's renewability, biodegradability

and circularity. The result is a systematic overstatement of wool's carbon footprint and an equally systematic understatement of the geological carbon burden carried by polyester, acrylic and nylon. New peer-reviewed research commissioned by IWTO, published in Agricultural Systems and certified to ISO 14067:2018 by TÜV SÜD, corrects this. By incorporating bidirectional biogenic carbon flows, the model demonstrates that wool's true emissions intensity is dramatically lower than conventional LCAs suggest. IWTO is now developing biogenic modelling tools for wide use, alongside a harmonised global definition of regenerative wool farming, recognising that the best wool production systems do not merely avoid harm, but actively restore soil health and biodiversity. Supporting all of this is a growing infrastructure of traceability and certification tools that give brands, retailers and consumers the verified evidence they need to make genuinely well-informed sourcing decisions."

Unveiled at IWTO's 95th Congress in Dalang, China, the Green Book aims to provide wool stakeholders with verified data to support product claims, combat misleading narratives, and make informed decisions about natural fibres. From the outset, the Green Book was envisioned as a project that would benefit the global wool industry. It was developed with lead funding from the Italian trade association *Confindustria Moda* and co-investment from partners including Cape Wools SA, WoolWorks NZ and Australian Wool Innovation.

The Green Book covers five areas:

- *A sustainable fibre by nature.* Wool is biogenic, biodegradable, recyclable, and energy-efficient, with these properties documented and peer-reviewed.
- *Time to lift eco-accounting standards.* Why conventional LCA tools systematically overstate wool's carbon footprint, and the science that corrects them.
- *Wool's role in the planetary ecosystem.* From photosynthesis to soil systems, how wool sustains ecosystems and stores carbon.
- *Wool's role in grazing systems.* How responsible grazing practices improve soil health, biodiversity, and carbon balance.
- *Responsible sourcing & traceability.* Supply chain transparency tools, from farm to finished product.

IWTO is the global authority for standards in the wool textile industry. Since 1930, IWTO has represented the collective interests of the global wool trade. Its members come from all stages of the wool textile pipeline, from farm to retail. Through scientific research, wool textile education and knowledge sharing, IWTO ensures a sustainable future for wool.

To know more

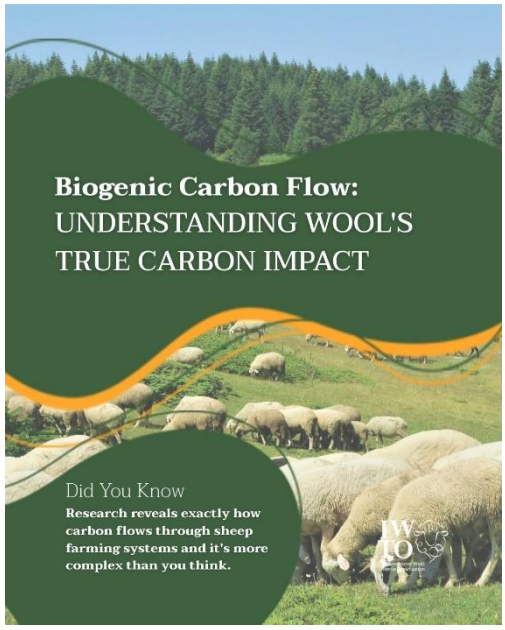
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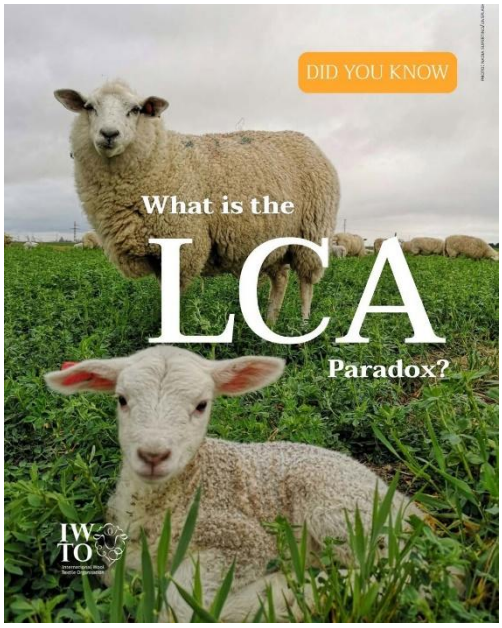
IWTO Activity Report 2025

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