

Ermenegildo Zegna

raw materials

WORLD MAP

The importance of selecting the best natural fibres directly from the markets of origin, has been the cornerstone of Zegna's pre-eminence in the luxury fabric market. A positive and fair relationship with the communities, regions and countries was essential for the success and for the constant improvement of fibres.

Today Zegna is noted in the world for being one of the most important buyers of the best natural fibres.



WOOL

Every year two billion kilograms of wool are produced worldwide. The most prized variety comes from the fleece of merino sheep that are shorn once a year and their fleeces have fine and very curly fibers, used exclusively for clothing.

The most prestigious wool is called superfine, amounting to a mere 15% of annual production, which comes with an average fineness of less than 19.5 micron (thousandths of a millimeter). Every year, Lanificio Ermenegildo Zegna selects and buys the best batches of wool in auctions in Australia.

There are around 20 parameters for classifying wools. The key parameters are fineness, length, cleanness, strength, limited percentage of short fibers, uniformity of length and fineness, color, absence of impurity, style.

Only one of these is objectively measurable and thus indisputable:
fiber fineness

Fineness means the average diameter of the fiber.

The standard unit of measurement is the micron (μ), which is one thousandth of a millimeter.



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MOHAIR

Mohair is the fiber produced by the Angora goat, whose name derives from Ankara, the capital of Turkey, where it has been bred for over 2,000 years. From Turkey the breeding of Angora goats spread as far as Texas, though South Africa is now where the finest quality animals are to be found. South Africa mohair offers outstanding luster, cleanness and uniformity of fiber and absence of impurity.



Mohair's main characteristic, apart from its shine, is its resiliency, making it the most crease-proof natural fiber and therefore the most suitable for producing permanent-press clothing.

Mohair is used extensively in both knitted and woven fabric production. Finer fabrics are made of kid mohair, the fiber from the animal's first clip, which is done in the first six months. These produce the finest and most beautiful batches, with smooth, shiny transparent white fibers between 27 and 30 microns.

Kid mohair is only about 19% of South Africa's annual production. Lanificio Ermenegildo Zegna buys the finer varieties ($< 27 \mu$) at the annual auctions and is in fact the world's biggest purchaser of kid mohair for weaving.

CASHMERE

Cashmere is a particularly rare and precious fiber. Annual world production of cashmere is only five million kilograms in fact.

Cashmere fibers are obtained from a certain species of goat, commonly known as the Kashmir goat, which is bred in places such as Iran, Russia, Afghanistan, Turkey and India. But the most beautiful and most prestigious cashmere in the world comes from the highlands of Inner Mongolia, in China, a territory with a very harsh climate. Inner Mongolia Cashmere is outstanding for the fineness of its fibers (14 - 15 μ), their length and uniformity and for the particularly soft handle they give.



To protect themselves from the cold, Kashmir goats have two coats: one superficial, of bulky hair, and one closer to the body, consisting of a short, fine and very warm down known as duvet. In springtime, shepherds collect the wool manually using special combs with long teeth. The fibers of the two coats are then separated, because only the duvet makes real cashmere.

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ALPACA

The alpaca is one of the four species of South American camelides, the others being the llama, the vicuña and the guanaco.

Unlike the vicuña and guanaco that are free-ranging wild animals, the alpaca and llama are domesticated and have lived with men since prehistoric times.

The alpaca comes from Bolivia and even more from Peru, at the highest altitudes of the Andes (4000 - 4700m).

The coat of the alpaca can be black, brownish red, mixed or piebald, or even white. The adult females – which have seasonal pregnancies and a gestation of eleven and a half months – during the rainy season they produce 2.5 kg of wool annually while the male animals produce 4.

The farms that raise alpacas are generally operated by native families that care for their own flocks using traditional methods.



VICUNA

In South America, the vicuña's natural habitat, their fleece is called the "fibre of the gods", a "golden fleece" not dissimilar to the object of Jason's quest, in Greek mythology.

In the Inca civilisation, which started around 1200 A.D., vicuña fabrics were reserved for their kings and the seasonal sheering was a ceremony involving the whole community. Following the Spanish colonization, these animals were hunted so intensively as to greatly reduce their number.

By 1965, they had reached the negative record of only 5000 living specimens, and the Peruvian government took steps to establish natural reserves for this endangered species – offering incentives for the application of newbreeding methods on large ranges and prohibiting the sale of vicuña wool. Thanks to this action the species is no longer in danger of extinction.

The Peruvian government has also created an international consortium for the distribution of the vicuña fibers, and two production plants that are a fundamental resource for the population of the Andes. Zegna Group is associated to the consortium that is authorized to distribute vicunas fibres under control of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).



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THE TROPHIES

Ermenegildo Zegna gives out Trophies since almost 50 years for top quality in raw materials production. These prizes are much coveted by natural fibres producers and are a powerful incentive to gearing production to superior quality.

To take part in the Ermenegildo Zegna Trophies, farmers must choose a fleece and submit it to a panel of independent judges. The main criterion is fineness but the fibres are also assessed according to other parameters with a decisive bearing on the quality and performance of the raw material.

Of these the most important are: cleanness, regularity, appearance, style, length and others. At the end of each year's competitions, Ermenegildo Zegna buys all the raw materials the farmers submitted, thus securing the world's finest fleeces.



ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA EXTRAFINE WOOL TROPHY

The Trophy was instituted in Tasmania in 1963, which was the first of its kind in the natural fibre world. This was followed by a trophy for the whole of Australia in 1980. Its purpose was to stimulate production of the finest merino wool in Australia, the best wool producing country in the world.

At the time, the industry was geared to guaranteeing high profit margins for farmers. However, Zegna was already convinced about the future of fine fabrics. Since fine, or even better superfine wool fibres are needed to make such fabrics, Ermenegildo Zegna decided to encourage fine wool growers to make even finer, higher quality fibres.

The Trophy is now a keenly awaited event for all the world's superfine merino wool producers.



Extrafine Wool Trophy 1980

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA VELLUS AUREUM TROPHY

In 2002, celebrating the incredible advancements made by Australian woolgrowers in fineness, the first 'Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum Trophy' (Golden Fleece) was launched for wool 13.9 micron and finer. This award recognized the quest for excellence and benchmarked the finest woollen fleece, with the winner receiving gold in equivalent weight to the winning fleece and a replica of the famous Not Vital 'Vellus Aureum' sculpture.

In the following year, the next logical step, the 'Vellus Aureum Trophy' became the 'Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum International Trophy', also open to New Zealand wool, the only other country which could compete with the preciousness of the best Australian wool.

In occasion of the Centennial year the Zegna Wool Mill has woven twenty cut lengths of the world's finest fabric from the world's finest 'Vellus Aureum Trophy' winning wool.



Vellus Aureum Trophy 2002

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ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA CASHMERE TROPHY

Ermenegildo Zegna Cashmere Trophy was hosted in Inner Mongolia in 1985 and 1986. The trophy was subsequently suspended for the political development of the Chinese government, however relationships with the best Mongolian cashmere-growers have remained as close.

Lanificio Ermenegildo Zegna selects only the best cashmere, which is then transformed into superior quality worsted or woollen fabrics.



Cashmere Trophy 1975

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA MOHAIR TROPHY

Ermenegildo Zegna Mohair Trophy: In search for the best mohair, in 1970, the Ermenegildo Zegna Mohair Trophy in South Africa was debuted, which this year celebrates its 40th Anniversary. Since the first Mohair Trophy began, strong bonds have gradually been developed between the Zegna family and all the best mohair growers, working closely to improve this natural fibre, to their mutual benefit.

Ermenegildo Zegna is the world's biggest purchaser of South African kid mohair. South African kid mohair is only 8% of world production but is the finest (25 - 27 μ), with long, lustrous white fibers. It is only these carefully selected fibers that are used to make the fabrics Ermenegildo Zegna calls Mohair Trophy, with a very special look and extraordinary natural performance.



Mohair Trophy 1970

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VICUNA PROJECT

Ermenegildo Zegna is proud to be a part of the International Vicuña Consortium, since 1994, and to have worked alongside the Peruvian government and local communities, to protect and safeguard this rare animal.

The consortium was granted the honour of returning the fibre to the market and the locals received vicunas as their national right, and could legally count on their revenues derived from shearing, as long as they pledged to protect the animals from poaching. Thanks to this action, the vicuñas have been protected and saved from extinction, by the end of the 1980's no more than 5,000 of the animals remained, today the total is over 150,000.



Zegna works with local communities

During the dry Andean winter months of June, July and August water shortage is at its height. This coincides with the Vicuña reproduction season, and many of the young do not survive these harsh months. The Ermenegildo Zegna exclusive project will protect and safeguard human and Vicuña's alike, through the basic provision of water, and improve the ecosustainability of the area.

A new philanthropic project has been established in Peru by the Fondazione Zegna, developing water facilities in the Picotaini community such as dams, wells and over 10km of channels. Fresh water is essential for Vicuña breeders and their livestock improving further the survival of the specie an their capacity for reproduction.