



Asociación  
Internacional  
de la Alpaca  
International Alpaca Association



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Internacional  
de la Alpaca  
International Alpaca Association

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## FOR A WORLD WITH MORE NATURAL FIBERS BY 2030

In recent years, the debate between natural fibers and synthetic fibers has becoming even more relevant than before. Natural fibers are extracted from different species of animals and plants and are a more sustainable option than synthetic ones because they are a renewable resource. However, some studies to evaluate the sustainability of a product with questionable methodologies have questioned the sustainability of some natural fibers.

In August 2020, the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) published an updated version of its Higg Materials Sustainability Index, which somehow favored synthetic fibers. The methodology and sources used in determining the score assigned to each material of the Higg index was harshly questioned not only by experts and opinion leaders in sustainable fashion, but also by the unions and representatives of the affected sectors, so in the middle of this year the SAC had to pause the visibility of its results.

On the other hand, the European Union continues to work on the development of Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) that seeks to evaluate the impact of products on the environment based on the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). However, its current design could have a biased or incomplete look, since it only includes the environmental approach of sustainability, leaving aside the social, economic and cultural dimensions; All of this could negatively impact the environmental score of natural fibers. In addition, there is great concern that organizations such as the SAC and other organizations with evident favorable bias for synthetic fibers are leading this initiative.

In that context, the four main natural fibre industries represented by the International Alpaca Association-IAA (alpaca), Mohair South Africa (Mohair), The Schneider Group/Wool Connect (Lana) and The Sustainable Fibre Alliance, SFA (Cashmere) came together in an unprecedented virtual event to develop the first edition of Natural Fibre Connect (NFC) in September 2022; in order to analyze the current context of natural fibers of animal origin and define common challenges and challenges.

Likewise, and considering that today the new consumer is more aware and demanding regarding the sustainability and traceability of textile fibers, the IAA is promoting and carrying out various actions in terms of good practices and sustainability in the alpaca value chain, such as the Implementation of the Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS) in Peru and the improvement of the quality of the information needed for Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of Alpaca fiber.

Finally, on behalf of the International Alpaca Association, we wish you a happy Christmas season, wishing you the best personal and business successes for next year 2023.



**Chairman at International Alpaca Association**



# How does the product environmental Footprint affect alpaca sales in the european market?

By Ester Xicota

Einstein once said, " Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted" This sentence might summarize what is represented by the methodology of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) that the European Commission is developing to have a homogenized system of environmental impact assessment of products sold on the European market.

There are now many methods to measure the environmental footprint of a product and each of them uses a different methodology and assumptions to evaluate the progress of companies and products towards sustainability. But what happens when each company can decide which methodology to use? The result is that the measurements are not comparable, and confusion is generated in consumers, giving space for companies to greenwash.

The alpaca is no stranger to this situation of confusion and false allegations. The Higg Material Sustainability Index (MSI) mistakenly calculated that alpaca fiber was the second most polluting after silk using a system that inexplicably favored synthetic fibers.

To counteract this situation, in 2013, the European Union began the development of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) tool that seeks to evaluate the environmental impact of products marketed on the European market and offer homogenized and reliable information to consumers. Although the tool has a legitimate purpose and has been working on for almost 10 years, its current design has important shortcomings that can negatively impact the environmental score that alpaca garments will receive in the European market.

## THE PRODUCT ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT TOOL FOR ALPACA

The Product Environmental Footprint tool seeks to standardize the measurement of the environmental footprint for all products, materials and accessories sold in the European space. Ultimately, the European Union's goal is for both businesses and consumers to be able to easily compare the environmental performance of two similar products.

The PEF methodology is based on the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodology and evaluates 16 environmental impacts, but, unlike an LCA that would evaluate all products under the same group of parameters, the PEF has created the Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEF-CR).





The logic is that the same criteria cannot be used when evaluating, for example, milk production and the manufacture of an alpaca sweater. That is why category rules are a set of rules created to measure each group of products in a specific way and thus ensure comparability between similar products.

Once rules are defined to calculate the environmental impact of the fashion product group, these are used as the basis for creating a PEF for a particular product within the group. In this way, when alpaca products enter the market, they must be evaluated according to this standardized methodology and label their garments or accessories according to the guidelines.

This will allow the consumer to compare between two sneakers or two similar jackets and make informed decisions when it comes to the environment.

In addition to the comparability between products, an obvious advantage of this system is that it will allow companies to perform LCAs of their products in a faster and more efficient way.

If we stick with these reflections, the European tool may seem to us an advance in the fight against greenwashing and confusion in the market. But the tool has important shortcomings in 2 areas: the quality of the basic information and the omission of truly important aspects to evaluate if you want to show the value of alpaca fiber in an integral way to European consumers.





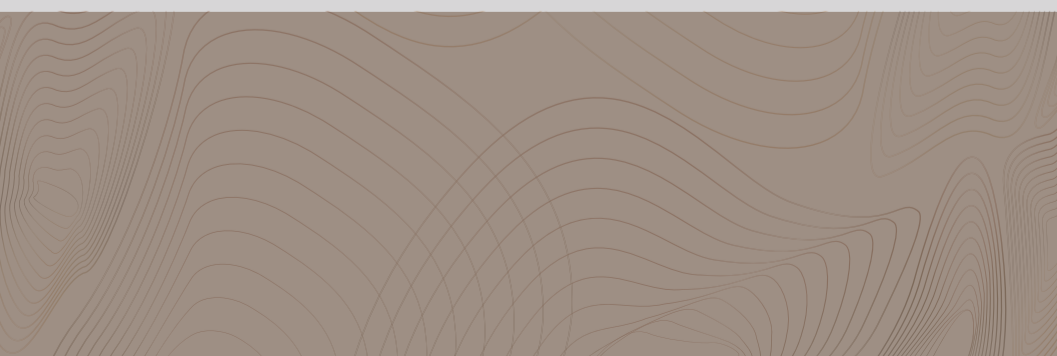
# What makes the baseline information used by the PEF inadequate?

When measuring the impact of a product through the PEF category rules, all companies must use the same baseline datasets. If companies approached their calculations with different data sets, then even if they applied the same PEF-CR methodology, they would get different results, because the datasets are different. To avoid using different datasets, the European Commission asked several organizations to create datasets for the PEF database.

When an alpaca producer makes a PEF for its product in accordance with the category rules of its product group, it shall use data to make two similar products comparable.

So far, we know that the baseline information that will be used to measure alpaca PEF will not come from information from Peru. Considering that Peru produces about 80% of the alpaca fiber marketed in the world, it is critical that the data used to calculate the PEF of alpaca products come from our country. But unfortunately, we do not have these data and, therefore, the data available in studies of other geographical regions, global generalizations or equivalences and extrapolations will be made from other natural fibers such as wool will be used as a source of information.

The sector is concerned that these data are the same as those used to measure the impact of alpaca on the Higg Materials Sustainability Index.





# What impacts does the PEF not contemplate and that negatively affect the score of natural fibers?

Although the PEF makes visible the environmental impact of products in 16 impact categories, it does not consider certain aspects in which natural fibers turn out to have an advantage over synthetic fibers.

Some of these impacts are:

## **MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION**

Contamination by microplastics caused by synthetic materials is not included and therefore does not have any negative scores despite growing scientific evidence of the harmful impact on human and planetary health.

## **TOTAL IMPACT OF FOSSIL FUELS**

The impacts of crude oil formation are not contemplated and are only accounted for from extraction at the wellhead. On the contrary, all impacts related to the cultivation or production of natural fibers are considered (emissions, water consumption, occupation of the territory, etc.). Since textile fibers often show the greatest lifecycle impacts during the fiber creation stage, this PEF limitation increases the inequality between products made from natural fibers and those based on fossil fuels.

## **RENEWABILITY, REUSE, RECYCLABILITY, AND BIODEGRADABILITY**

The PEF methodology does not contemplate in detail the fact that the raw material is of renewable origin, its high potential for reusability and the potential for recyclability and biodegradability at the end of the useful life of natural fibers.

## **DURABILITY**

The PEF does not evaluate the fact that a product is durable so fibers such as alpaca or wool cannot strengthen their score compared to other synthetic fibers that are quickly discarded.

## **SOCIAL IMPACTS**

The PEF neglects the consideration of social aspects, and this hides the value that natural fibers have for many families that depend on them. For many regions in the world, fiber production is the key to their prosperity. The alpaca is a clear example of this. More than 150,000 families in Peru depend on alpaca production, practically as their only way of life. Not valuing the social importance of these fibers threatens to disappear, not only jobs but also cultures, original ways of life and diversity of ancestral worldviews of great cultural, religious, and spiritual value.



# Which are the steps to follow?

## 01. CREATE PRIMARY, RELEVANT, HIGH-QUALITY INFORMATION

The European Union will approve which databases will be used to carry out the PEF measurements. If we do not have the specific information of the alpaca, the tool must work with information of similar fibers (for example, wool) or make extrapolations that can be very harmful.

We have already identified key information gaps and now the sector needs to be involved in this. We can expect the government to support, but the leadership and the main monetary support must come from the industry that is the main stakeholder. We cannot waste time because the process is already advanced and decision-making on it is not balanced. Not all interested parties are included, nor does the available information play in favor of natural fibers and alpaca. It is time to act.



## 02. KEEP US INFORMED

The process is already advanced, and we need to have as much information as possible to be able to prepare and adapt. It is essential that we have up to the minute knowledge about the process of technical definition and, subsequently, about the definition of policies that will affect trade with the European market. This means having people in Europe who are trained in this area and have a mandate to share information with Peruvian industry.

Having first-hand information will allow us to move from reaction to strategic planning and vision. Many of these changes take time to implement and having the information at the last minute can cost us dearly.





# NATURAL FIBRE CONNECT-RESULTS



NATURAL FIBRE  
CONNECT

## THINK NATURAL

A WORLD WITH MORE  
NATURAL FIBRES BY 2030

CONFERENCE | 7-9 SEPTEMBER 2022

The first edition of Natural Fibre Connect (NFC) was successfully carried out and allowed to connect all the actors involved in the alpaca, cashmere, mohair and wool industries; exchange knowledge, points of view and join efforts to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

NFC was held from September 7 to 9, 2022 in virtual format with the aim of generating consensus in the four industries, identifying solutions to common challenges and highlighting the perspective of growers/breeders; and was organized in partnership by the world's leading natural fibre organizations: the International Alpaca Association-IAA (alpaca), Mohair South Africa (Mohair), The Schneider Group/Wool Connect (Wool) and The Sustainable Fibre Alliance, SFA (Cashmere).

During 3 days of live sessions with a total of 18 hours of presentations and discussions, and with the participation of 80 speakers and the remote presence of approximately one thousand guests from 43 countries including breeders, processors, brokers, manufacturers, brands, NGOs and governmental organizations involved in the alpaca, cashmere, mohair and wool industries, More than 40 online talks, 5 panel discussions and included a virtual showroom. NFC Video Summary ([see here](#)).

NFC unveiled current global trends and innovations within the four industries, as well as limitations and obstacles to overcome in the face of new demands from conscious and demanding consumers when purchasing a natural fiber product. For example, an important conclusion has been that sustainability has different dimensions, including environmental, economic, social, and cultural, and that there is no sustainability without traceability.

To implement traceability, it is essential to ensure that data becomes in something accessible to everyone, connecting transparently with the actors of the supply chain of the natural fibers industry, through technology and the development of informative apps.





The natural fibre industries have had to deal with macroeconomic problems and the misguided greenwashing of competitors, while focusing their common goal on achieving a world by 2030 with more natural fibres. And it is not about the garments themselves, but hands make or manufacture those garments, and all the social-human component that supports natural fibers: growers/breeders/herders.

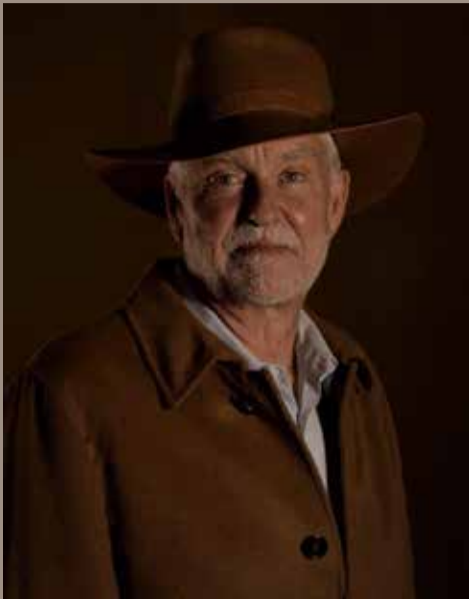
It is vital to understand the perspective of growers/breeders/herders, how is their worldview, their traditions, the culture of raising animals that provide us with natural fibers that feed and clothe the world, finally understand how they are the present and future of this non-extractive industry, and how they live in harmony and communion with the nature that surrounds them.

Therefore, as the effects of climate change and market fluctuations continue to grow, it is a priority to assess the impact on growers/breeders/herders at the beginning of our supply chains: their prosperity is vital to safeguarding the future of this environmentally caring industry and achieving real progress towards our sustainability goals.

And precisely with an eye on the SDGs, we have concluded at the event, that we must have more indicators and tools to evaluate social welfare, the sustainability of a product; better regulatory frameworks to standardize the supply chain, new green seals or certifications that go beyond traditional life cycle analysis (Must include in addition to environmental criteria, social, economic and cultural criteria); better livestock practices with a larger budget and use of funds more efficiently.

We thank the entire organizing team that allowed this pioneering alliance in its field, our sponsors involved and committed to the future of natural fibers, and we hope to meet again in the second edition of the NFC with the world leaders in the production, processing and trade of natural fibers.





## INTERVIEW – MIKE SAFLEY By Herbert Murillo

Michael Safley was born and raised in Oregon. He attended the University of Oregon and served in the U.S. Navy Seabees, doing two tours of duty in Vietnam. Mike was elected president of the fledgling, American, Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association (AOBA) in 1990. Later that year he was invited to visit the International Alpaca Association headquartered in Arequipa. Mike has returned to Peru every year since that first visit.

In 1996 Mike founded Quechua Benefit, a charity that works in the Peruvian highlands with indigenous Alpaca breeders. You can contact Mike at [mike@alpacas.com](mailto:mike@alpacas.com) or by phone 503-703-6020. Learn about Quechua Benefit ([here](#)).

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**Mike, it is very interesting the approach of your recent publications, about the impact that South American camelids have on the conservation of the environment and global warming. What are your claims based on, from the point of view the physiology, evolution, and nature of these animals, as well as their habitat in which they evolved for thousands of years?**

I am currently writing a book entitled, *Alpaca Culture: Pastoralists, Natural Fiber, Water Conservation, and Global Warming*, about exactly these topics. My research of scholarly journal articles (often written by Peruvian authors), books on water conservation, fashion magazine critiques, fast fashion, environmental experts on grasslands, carbon sequestration, photosynthesis, holistic grazing, and regenerative agriculture all point to the conclusion that the alpaca and vicuna, and natural fiber, beginning with the indigenous producers has the smallest carbon footprint. Particularly when the United Nations, Scope, 1,2,3 emissions are taken into consideration. This especially true when alpaca is compared to other textile products such as polyester, cotton, and wool.

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**Being animals that were a fundamental part of the survival of the pre-Hispanic cultures that developed in this part of South America, how do the management practices of the herds that still exist today influence the environmental conservation approach, with special emphasis on the shearing?**

The alpaca pastoralists have managed the grasslands of Peru's altiplano to perfection. Their pastures are not overgrazed or "decertified", in fact they sequester carbon per hectare at the same rate as the forests of the world but without risk of fires and clear cutting releasing their store carbon into the air. Consumers can decide who is doing a better job of protecting their respective habitats and battling global warming by conserving water and encouraging photosynthesis to remove carbon from the atmosphere. It's hard to argue that it is not the alpaca pastoralists of Peru.

The shearing question is a red herring. There are few people in the world that don't understand that sheep, cashmere and mohair goats and alpaca all require being shorn or they will die of heat stress, suffer from skin diseases, and generally have more difficulties birthing.

I have watched the PETA tapes criticizing the shearing practices of alpaca shepherds. Few if any fiber bearing animals ever die from being shorn. This same charge has been made about sheep and goats. But more than anything else, the indigenous pastoralists love their alpaca and would never harm them. PETA simply uses sensationalistic, hyperbole, animal shearing hysteria to raise donations for a charity that will only be happy when the entire world chooses to be Vegan. Fighting with PETA only serves their purpose and creates more fund-raising campaigns.



**An aspect sometimes not considered in the analysis of effects on the planet is the social impact. As the breeding of alpacas and vicunas is directly linked to communities or high Andean inhabitants, what do you think should be the focus our attention that this critical aspect should have?**

The Peruvian textile companies and fashion brands would do well to “humanize” alpacas, show the world their story in human, ecological and global warming terms. I think the entire Alpaca supply chain needs to come together and create an alpaca brand based on story telling. I think it is a mistake for the industry to focus on brand as an individual company’s logo and not the entire alpaca supply chain that creates a value proposition for the world.

Good story telling will create a desire in people to buy alpaca products because they fight global warming, support indigenous communities, and treat the environment with respect. Today’s consumer by a significant percentage wants to be part of this story.

Once the international alpaca brand comes into focus it will create increased demand for what is one of the worlds scarcest natural fibers. Supply and demand will take over, the price of alpaca will rise, and the indigenous producers will reap the benefits of higher prices for their fleeces. As JFK said about economic prosperity, “A rising tide lifts all boats.”

I hope that once my book is finished, I can turn it into a documentary entitled, Alpaca Culture and the fight against Global Warming. The world needs to know this story.

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**It is known the impact that industrial textiles and in particular Fast Fashion has on the environment, especially the disposal of huge amounts of waste. What is the impact that industrial transformation processes and the use and disposal of garments of the fiber from the alpaca and vicuna have, compared to other types of natural, artificial, or synthetic fibers?**

I think fast fashion is one of the most immediate threats to the alpaca’s industry. There is a growing market for cheap disposable garments and new styles that are taking a significant toll on our environment. What’s more, 85% of all textiles go to the dump each year and washing many types of clothing sends thousands of micro bits of plastic into the ocean. The environmental impact of fast fashion accelerates the depletion of non-renewable sources, emission of greenhouse gases and uses massive amounts of water.

There are so many negatives about fast fashion that entire books are devoted to the subject. We can only hope that the United Nations, COP27, The European Union and the governments of developed nations continue to regulate fast fashions practices until they are brought to their knees. But therein lies an opportunity for alpaca to brand itself as a “slow fashion” product with classic design, natural fiber, nonpolluting processing and long product cycle.

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**Finally, we know that the success of any project specially those linked to conservation issues, is directly related to its sustainability. As AIA we are committed to spreading the properties of alpaca, but what do you think should be the commercial approach and through what channels to achieve the goal of positioning these magnificent fibers in the world market?**

Sustainable is a word that means something different to almost everyone. This word creates the opportunity for something to be simultaneously called sustainable or unsustainable. In the fashion and textile world, "sustainability" is a term often used to conflate the issues of global warming, climate change and environmental impact.

The modern use of the of the term sustainable has become an opportunity for brands to "green wash or green wish" their products to the public. The irony of greenwashing schemes and their willing co-conspirators is that some of the world's wealthiest companies promote, in the name of "sustainability", the substitution of the cheapest materials on earth to enhance their bottom lines.

The world's consumers, 66%, according to their annual consumer surveys want to make purchases that fight global warming, promote biodiversity, support indigenous peoples, and preserve their culture. They are becoming aware of green washing's false fashion claims and are ready to support an authentic brand.

The alpaca story needs to be told on social media, on websites, through social influencers, and with books and documentaries that humanize the alpaca and its shepherds to the world.





## NEWS

### VICUÑA SALVATION

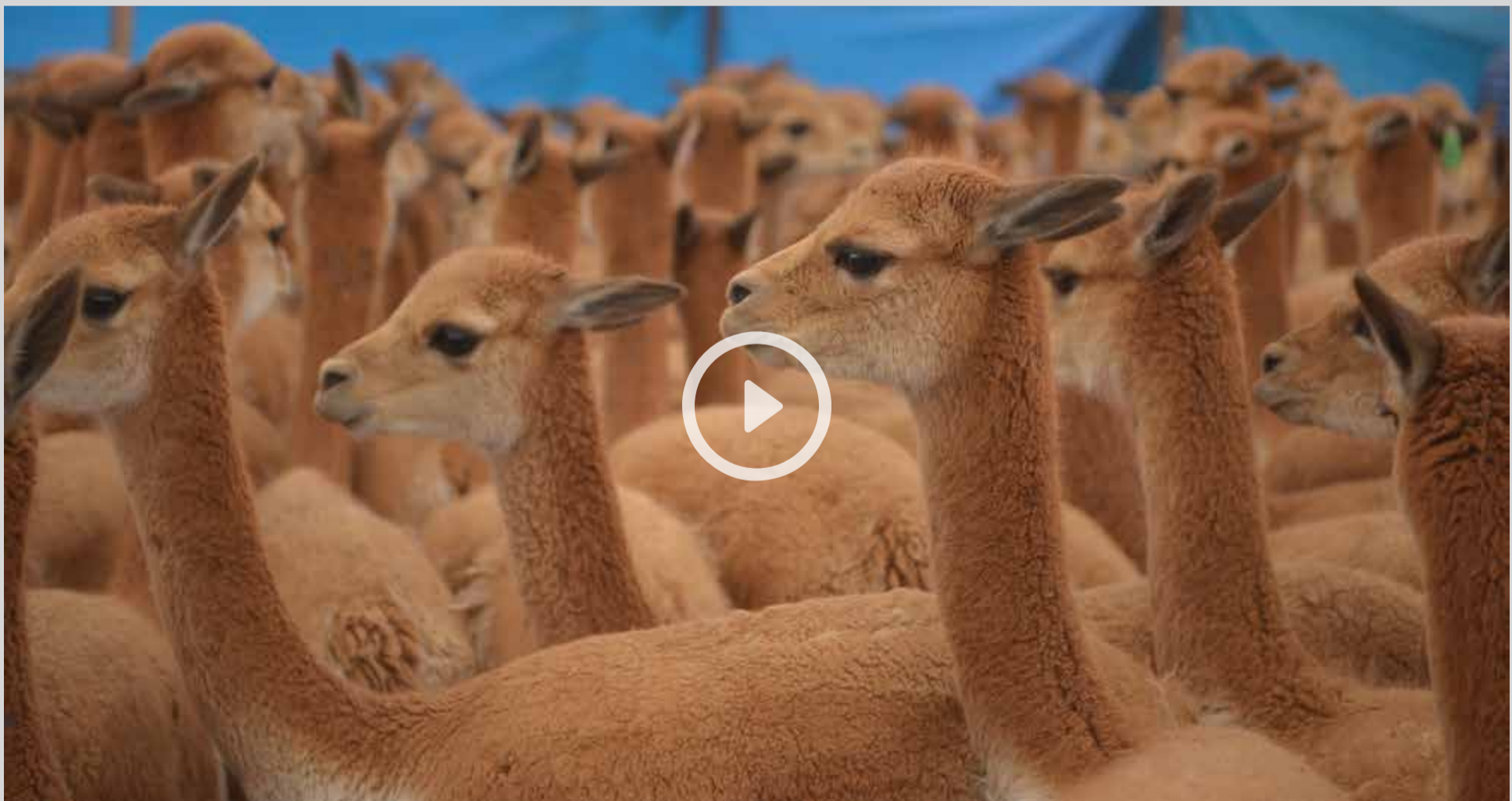
The alpaca is a domesticated specie that derives from the vicuña, and although the alpaca is the most important camelid economically for the Andean population, the vicuña is the wild camelid that produces the finest fiber in the world.

The vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*) inhabits the high Andean flats of Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador, but it is Peru, the country that has the largest population with approximately 208,000 vicuñas. However, the poaching of these animals put them in danger of extinction in the 60s, so it was necessary to enact laws and apply various measures for their recovery and conservation. Currently, the process of obtaining its fiber is carried out through the ancestral technique called chaccu and includes rigorous conservation requirements.

Vicuña Salvation, is a documentary that tells the incredible story of vicuña conservation and the empowerment of indigenous communities living 4,500 meters above sea level in the Peruvian mountains. A Trailer Films production, written and directed by Luis Ara and promoted mainly by Quechua Benefit, an associate member of IAA.

Daniel Arestegui, Manager of the International Alpaca Association, participated in this documentary, highlighting the relationship between the alpaca and the vicuña and its sustainable use. In addition, several representatives of institutions and textile companies linked to the camelid sector in Peru participated, such as PROMPERÚ, Michell & Cía., among others.

The documentary will soon hit major streaming platforms. For more information, please follow Vicuña Salvation's social networks.



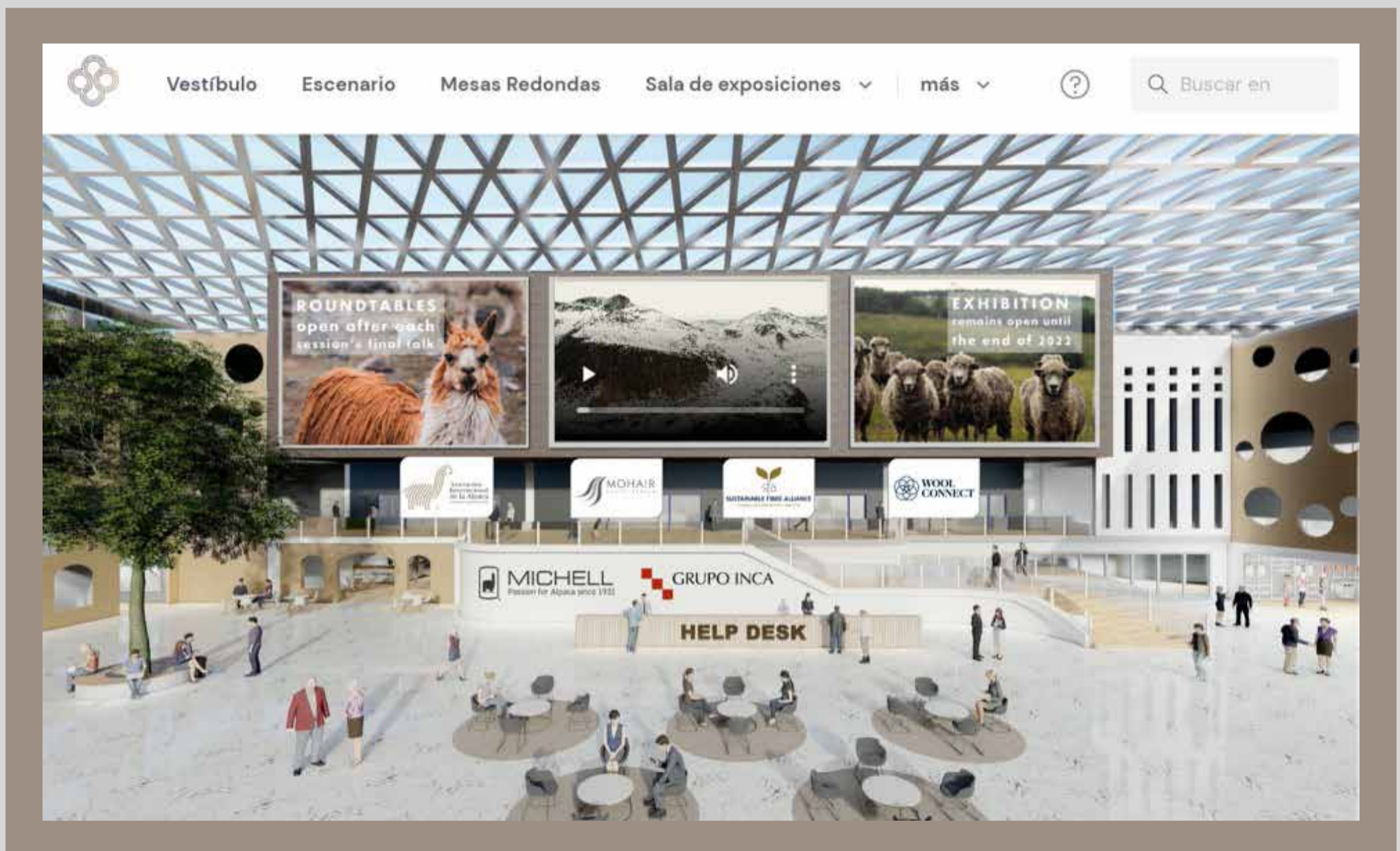
[Video Trailer \(see here\)](#)



## NFC VIRTUAL PLATFORM

The Natural Fibre Connect-NFC virtual platform will remain open until the end of the year, so we invite you to check out the virtual showroom and all recorded talks from the event, which are available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Mongolian. Access to the platform is through your registration email and password, and our Associate Members can still register by applying their discount codes.

It should be noted that the topics addressed in the NFC talks and discussion panels were: The realities of animal welfare, social welfare on the agenda and natural fibers as a driver of rural economies, the challenges and perspective of producers and pastoralists, greenwashing and life cycle analysis of natural fibers, Regenerative livestock for arid regions, traceability in industry, green finance to support producers, times of change that are shaping the industry and Web 3.0 opportunities for the textile industry.



[NFC Platform \(see here\)](#)

[NFC LinkedIn \(see here\)](#)



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