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Asociación
Internacional
de la Alpaca
International Alpaca Association

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AWARENESS, VALUE, AND A SHARED FUTURE

Closing out a year is an opportunity to pause and ask ourselves if we are moving in the right direction. At the IAA, we believe the future of our fiber is defined not only by its exceptional quality but by the decisions we make as a chain: what we prioritize, what we protect, and the development model we choose to build.

This edition of the newsletter invites reflection and action, bringing to the table strategic issues for the present and future of the Peruvian alpaca.

One of these is the so-called "Australian Lesson." The experience of Australian Merino leaves us with a clear warning: having an extraordinary fiber does not guarantee development if a country limits itself to exporting raw materials without consolidating industry, innovation, and added value at the source.

For Peru, and for the alpaca, this is a call to attention and a call to responsibility. We have an obligation to protect our fiber and its value chain; we do not want that history to repeat itself in our country. Only we, as actors in the chain, can defend it and ensure that value and employment are generated within our own territory.

From that same forward-looking perspective, in the following article, we highlight the fundamental role that women play throughout the alpaca value chain. This is not a symbolic statement, but a concrete reality that permeates production processes, care, and the preservation of practices passed down through generations. We explore how this contribution is key to the sustainability of the chain, a perspective I had the honor of sharing this year at Natural Fibre Connect (NFC) in Edinburgh.

In line with this vision, we also share an institutional update: the renewal of our website, which is now more dynamic and aligned with the communication and visibility challenges of the chain. We invite you to visit it. As we look ahead to 2026, our newsletter will continue to evolve, incorporating new content and spaces for exchange to strengthen the dialogue and coordination of our community.

I would like to close with a very special Christmas greeting, thanking each of you for being an active part of the IAA. May these holidays be a time of connection and renewal. For 2026, I wish you a year of unity, awareness, and collective action, so that the alpaca continues to shine in the world, generating development and a future for Peru.

With my best wishes,



Jessica Rodríguez
President
International Alpaca Association



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ALPACA VALUE CHAIN

By Jessica Rodriguez

At over 4,000 meters above sea level, Peruvian women start their workdays long before sunrise. They check on the alpacas, feed them, heal them, and carefully observe their behavior. For them, these are not just animals, but their identity, a source of income, and the legacy they pass down to their children.

For more than 5,000 years, domesticated alpacas have remained the core of an Andean cosmovision where humans and nature relate with respect and reciprocity, and where every shearing is understood as an act of gratitude to Pachamama (Mother Earth).

The Breeder: Guardian of the Territory and of Life

The first female representative in the value chain is the breeder. She coordinates the day's activities, sends her children to school, releases the animals, guides the herds through different corrals to prevent overgrazing, and monitors the health of the herd. Additionally, she records births, illnesses, weights, and fiber colors in a small notebook. The genetic continuity of the herd and the productive sustainability of the high Andean ecosystem are in her hands.

For years, training was primarily directed at male breeders. However, working directly with the communities revealed that those who remained constantly in the territory, cared for the animals, and managed the information were the women. They were, silently, the true administrators of the system. This finding prompted a shift in the institutional approach: today, training prioritizes women as a key strategy to strengthen the entire production chain.

The Master Sorter: A Talent No Machine Can Replace

The second key figure is the fiber master sorter. This work requires exceptional sensitivity: by simply touching the fiber between their fingers, master sorters distinguish microns, softness, strength, color, and luster.

This skill has been passed down from mother to daughter since the 1930s, when girls accompanied their mothers to collection centers.





It is an intangible and invisible, yet decisive, knowledge that cannot be digitized or replaced by technology. Today, this craft faces a great challenge as many young women migrate or choose other professional fields. For this reason, institutions and associations actively train and motivate new master sorters, ensuring the global continuity of this unique skill and preserving an essential tradition for high-quality alpaca fiber.

The Artisan: Creator of Identity

Artisans transform fibers into garments that blend design, technique, and tradition using ancestral methods, including wooden looms, backstrap looms, spinning with a pushka, knitting, crochet, and intricate intarsia techniques. Each textile carries a deep message: it reflects the colors of her community, her family history, the symbology of Pachamama, and patterns passed down through generations.

Today, many artisans are also entrepreneurs, designers, association leaders, and managers of fairs and markets. Their work not only generates income but also positions alpaca in the global market. Behind every garment that reaches Paris, New York, or Tokyo, there is an Andean woman who spun, wove, or designed from her home in the highlands.

A Chain Sustained by Women

Women are present in every link of the alpaca value chain:

- In breeding, managing productive and economic decisions.
- In animal health, applying ancestral knowledge and traditional medicine.
- In sorting, guaranteeing quality from the source.
- In spinning and weaving, preserving millenary techniques.
- In entrepreneurship and trade, connecting the ancestral with the modern market.
- In the transmission of knowledge, training new generations.

When a person wears an alpaca garment, they carry with them the story of a high Andean family, the work of a woman who cared for the animal, the hands that selected the fiber, and the creativity of an artisan who transformed tradition into art.

"Alpaca is not just a fiber; it is a beauty, identity, and dignity promise that the women of the Andes have sustained for thousands of years."



THE AUSTRALIAN LESSON

By Andrés Chaves

For fashion experts, Merino wool, a fiber sourced from this specific sheep breed, is one of the most highly valued materials for creating natural, durable clothing. Australia produces 90% of the world's fine Merino, and once processed, this wool is showcased in the windows of the most exclusive brands on the planet.

It would be reasonable to assume that Australia possesses a thriving textile industry, but that is not the case. Until the 1990s, Australia had a diverse sector of designers and factories. However, globalization and proximity to China shifted the focus toward raw material exports. Today, only the remnants of that industry remain, while farmers, who now export fiber without added value, find themselves increasingly vulnerable to global warming (manifested in voracious and terrifying wildfires)

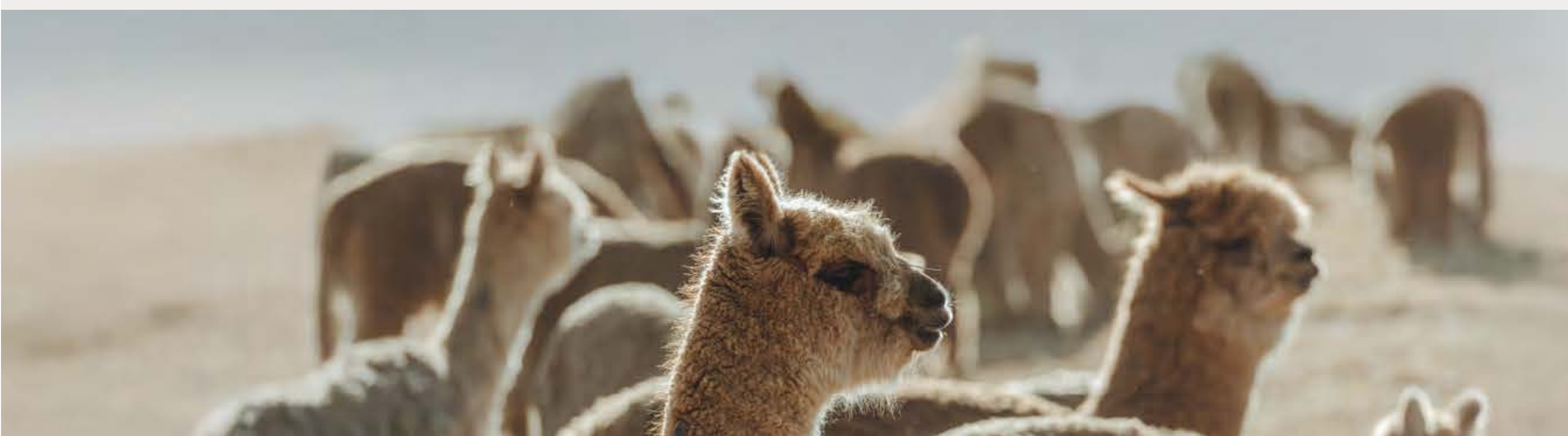
A new movement is attempting to resuscitate local fashion production, as Australians now recognize the incongruity of exporting raw materials only to buy them back in a processed form, allowing the value (and the jobs) to be generated elsewhere.



The Peruvian alpaca industry might be perceived as one inhabited by only a few large companies, but it is actually comprised of a rich ecosystem of designers, young brands, artisans, family workshops, entrepreneurs, and, of course, the tens of thousands of families dedicated to raising this noble animal in remote areas above 4,000 meters above sea level. Similar dynamics occur with all the ingredients currently being rediscovered to make our gastronomy shine.

The story of the Australian Merino is a lesson and a warning about the dangers of settling for commodity exports. Peru is privileged to be home to diverse mineral, animal, and vegetable ingredients, but that is no guarantee of prosperity.

Adding value to our raw materials on Peruvian soil is the best way to protect our industries, create jobs, drive innovation, and preserve our traditions. The alternative is to simply stand by and watch as our natural resources enrich others.



NATURAL FIBRE CONNECT 2025

By Erika Flores

This year, the International Alpaca Association (IAA), in partnership with the Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA), Mohair South Africa, and The Schneider Group, organized the fourth annual edition of Natural Fibre Connect (NFC), an international conference, which took place on September 22nd and 23rd in Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

Over the course of two days, attendees participated in presentations, panel discussions, and workshops addressing essential topics for the future of natural fibers, such as sustainability, circularity, regenerative systems, animal welfare, and policy reform. Additionally, complementary activities, including factory visits and technical excursions, were held from September 24th to 26th.

We highlight the presence of Jessica Rodríguez, President of the IAA, who participated throughout the event. She delivered the keynote presentation "The Role of Women in the Alpaca Fiber Value Chain," recognizing the fundamental contribution of thousands of women in the alpaca sector. She also took part in the panel "Producer and Herder Perspectives," where she shared the vision and challenges of fieldwork.



Furthermore, we emphasize the participation of Juan Pepper, Director of the IAA, who presented the progress of the Alpaca LCA during the workshop session "Natural Fiber LCAs: From Policy to Practice."

NFC brought together specialists, producers, researchers, and organizations from around the world, closing with figures that reflect its global reach:

- Over 165 in-person participants.
- More than 1,000 views on live broadcasts.
- 27 countries and nearly 100 organizations represented.
- 21 sessions with 48 international speakers.
- 12 sponsors, 9 exhibitors, and 9 tours and excursions.



IX WORLD CONGRESS ON SOUTH AMERICAN CAMELIDS

In May of this year, the "II Regional Meeting on South American Camelids: Promotion and Sustainable Development" was held in Antofagasta, Chile. This event brought together government representatives from Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador, who unanimously agreed that the IX World Congress on South American Camelids will be held in Peru next year.

In this regard, Peru's Ministry of Agrarian Development and Irrigation (MIDAGRI), through the General Directorate of Livestock Development, has assumed the presidency of the Organizing Committee, and they have invited the International Alpaca Association, along with other Peruvian institutions such as ASCALPE, to join the committee. We have accepted this role and look forward to contributing to the planning activities for this major international event.

The IX World Congress on South American Camelids will take place from May 12 to 14, 2026, in the city of Arequipa, Peru. The call for research abstracts is now open, which must align with the following thematic areas:

- Genetics and genetic improvement
- Reproduction and reproductive biotechnologies
- Nutrition and feeding strategies
- Management of High-Andean grasslands and water resources
- Animal health and welfare
- Processing and innovative uses of camelid products
- Sustainability of breeding and biodiversity utilization
- Management and sustainable use of wild South American camelids

IX WORLD CONGRESS
ON SOUTH AMERICAN
CAMELIDS

From 12th to 14th
MAY 2026

**HERITAGE OF THE ANDES:
RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**



Location: Convention Center Cerro Juli
Arequipa - Peru

Information:
info@congresomundialcamelidos2026.org

**More information will be available soon
on the event's website.**

<https://congresomundialcamelidos2026.org>



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