

Burberry: collaboration is key to better cashmere industry

Focusing on systemic change and partnering with experts is the key to building a more sustainable cashmere industry, Burberry's responsibility programme director Jocelyn Wilkinson argued at the Drapers Sustainable Fashion event today.

BY EMILY SUTHERLAND

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The luxury brand is a founding partner of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance in Mongolia, and has teamed up with charity Oxfam to support cashmere farmers in Afghanistan. Burberry sources half of all its cashmere from the two countries.

An influx of cashmere blends on the high street has led to overgrazing of farmland in Mongolia has been hit by overgrazing as farmers seek to match demand.

Burberry is working to restore farmlands and promote animal welfare in the country. Almost 4,000 farming families have signed up to improve animal welfare standards and 48 range land managers have been employed to help engage farming families on how to change for the better. School children are also taught about cashmere farming to help encourage the next generation into the industry.

“Farmers need to be empowered, not instructed,” Wilkinson argued. “This isn’t a case of Burberry going in and telling them what to do and going away again, because we know that doesn’t work.”

In Afghanistan, close to 300 co-operatives have been set up to help cashmere farmers share best practice and gain better access to the market. Access to veterinary care has also been improved to help herders take better care of their animals.