

6th Eastern Cape Wool Growers Interregional Congress

This will be the 6th year that the 5 communal regions of the NWGA combine their efforts to hold an annual East Cape Communal Woolgrowers Association (ECCWGA) Congress.

Over the past 20 years, the NWGA has been helping wool farmers in the former homelands of Transkei and Ciskei, acquire all the skills they need for the formal market.

The first step was to assist to organise communities and wool growers associations. Currently there are about 20 – 30 members per shed/WGA with a total membership of ± 27 000 communal wool producers. These farmers own 4 million sheep and produce ± 6 million kg of wool which is 13% of the SA Clip.

Although the NWGA had to do a great job with only 5 production advisors, there are now 10 that is fully trained to assist the wool farmers where possible.

- During the past year, 3 shearing sheds – funded by DRDLR - was built to the value of R1 950 000. Another one, funded by a bank was built in Mnt Fletcher. Good infrastructure is always an asset to a community. Better wool classing, shearing etc with less contamination equals better prices. Contamination is still a major problem in our areas and farmers ~~is~~ ^{are} losing money ^{by} ⁱⁿ ~~to sell~~ contaminated wool.
- Shearing and shearing ^{or} training ^{take} took place every year in our areas that will start shortly again. Last year there were 249 new recruits for blade shearing and 26 intermediate & advanced blade shearers. We are happy to say that 3 from our shearers qualified at the Tarkastad show, ^{And took} to take part at the SA Championships that was held in Bloemfontein the end of April.
- 9 Interregional and 1 Interregional Flock competition took place this year. The judges ^{were} was surprised of the quality of animals that was on show.
- 3037 Genetic improved rams was swapped for the same amount of inferior rams this year. From these, 26 came from the emerging breeders, and 22 from the Veldram club. For us at the NWGA it is unique to start with our own

communal breeders that can have an impact on the Genetic improvement of the communal flock.

Since 2002, almost 45 000 Genetic improved rams were introduced to the communal flock. The effect on the wool production was enormous – increasing from 222,610 kg to 5,744,961 kg the 2016/2017 season. The value of the wool this year sold on the formal market was R299,882,007-00

This income is a result of both a dramatic increase in volume, but certainly also due to higher levels in wool price – a perfect example of wool's ability to create wealth in extensive rural farming areas!

Impact from the Genetic Improved Project

- 6 041 jobs created by wool income based on minimum wage
- 832 shearers trained over the past three years.
- Maintained 30 000 existing jobs, supporting an estimated 180 000 family members
- 126 temporary jobs (shearing infrastructure – building sheds, etc)
- 84 temporary jobs – people that does fencing
- 30 temporary jobs (transporters & shepherds)

WOOL PRODUCTION/District Municipality(kgs and Monetary value)

Wool Production 2016/2017

Amathole	=	415,527 kg
Chris Hani	=	1,727,655 kg
Joe Gqabi	=	465,465 kg
OR Thambo	=	721,856 kg
Alfred Nzo	=	367,409 kg

Unfortunately we have no figures on the value of the wool available per DM at this stage – it is still in the process of assimilation.

We have now reached the end of the 5-year contract with the DRLDR, ^{WE ARE} and is trying since ~~2015~~ to renew it for another period of 5 years. To date we are still waiting for them to give the green light. We urge the Government to assist our farmers, who ~~is~~ ^{ARE} now on track – with more finance to continue with this success story.

Surveys that was done on different stages since we have started with the Genetic Project indicated the social impact of this successful program on the communities.

For example: Children going hungry to bed decreased from 41% - 24%

84% of households now have savings accounts, and only about 48% of parents now borrow money for children to go to school.

Although everything is positive for us, the major threats are

- Stock and wool theft
- Predation & stray dogs
- Bio-security
- Climate - *Change - Severe Drought*

We as farmers have to stand together (with the government's assistance) now to face these challenges and make a success of this as well