

## Speciality fibre processing in Italy

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Statistical data compiled by the Italian Wool Industry Association for foreign trade will be presented. This gives an informative picture of the current situation in Italy. Italy is importing 2/3 of all the wool produced in Australia of less than 19 $\mu$ m diameter. To this can be added superfine wool purchased as combed sliver from other countries.

Imports of cashmere have been increasing steadily over the last 5 years.

Italy is a large consumer and converter of precious speciality fibres, which are converted into high quality yarns and fabric for a market which is looking for the best, in terms of beauty and comfort.

All these precious fibres are now imported from outside Europe and there is therefore a very keen interest to find sources closer to home. Production of speciality fibres in Europe could be organised to take into account the needs of the processors. We would value the opportunity to breed animals producing speciality fibres in suitable European areas, and this could help to stem rural depopulation and improve the use of marginal lands.

The first cashmere to be produced in Italy has recently been processed by Filati Piacenza. Five kilos were spun into a yarn, which will be put on show. The cashmere had a mean fibre diameter of less than 17 $\mu$ m, and was of a quality comparable to good Iranian cashmere.

Each country in Europe must care for its livestock heritage and must use in the best possible way its own fibres. A good example of intelligent management is the British Wool Marketing Board which has made the best of the UK wool clip. In Italy, the Agenzia Lane d'Italia is attempting to do something to improve the collection and marketing of its own wool and is prepared to support any serious initiative to introduce into the national areas, other breeds producing precious fibres.

