

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Shepherds Harvest Festival Joins UN Celebration**

Festival becomes International Year of Natural Fibers Event – *February 15, 2009*

The United Nations declared 2009 the International Year of Natural Fiber (IYNF) and the Shepherds Harvest 2009 Festival is an official IYNF event.

By participating in this world-wide celebration, Shepherds Harvest can connect local wool to the rich cultural heritage of textile designs from all over the globe. This year vendor demonstrations, speakers and authors bring an international richness to this local festival.



### **How did this celebration come about?**

The idea for The International Year of Natural Fibers was born after a meeting of fiber producing and consuming countries in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2006. The IYNF was officially launched on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009 at the headquarters of the FAO in Rome.

### **Why is Wool Important?**

Today wool is the world's leading animal natural fiber. It's fire-retardant and its complex protein structure has exceptional resiliency and elasticity. Two-thirds of the wool harvest is used in the manufacture of garments and about one-third in carpets, upholstery and rugs.

The world's major wool producers include Australia, Argentina, China, India, Iran, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, United Kingdom and Uruguay. Depending on the country and region, wool producers range from small farmers to large-scale commercial grazing operations. While the U.S. raises nearly 6 million sheep and lambs annually and shears about 34 million pounds of wool we provide less than 1 percent of the world's production.

### **How does Shepherds Harvest fit in?**

Shepherds Harvest Festival was initiated to help small sheep farms sell their wool. The festival began 12 years ago after small flock owners, whose focus was on fleece, felt overlooked at breeder gatherings more devoted to raising lamb for meat. More than half of American wool is shorn in the spring and the festival is the primary opportunity for Minnesota and neighboring small flock owners to connect their harvest with interested customers.

According to the USDA, Minnesota raises nearly 300,000 sheep annually. Shepherds Harvest shares the exact same focus as IYNF – to raise the profile of wool fiber, to emphasize its value to the consumer and to sustain the income of farmers.

### **How is Shepherds Harvest Festival Going International?**

The 2009 festival is host to a variety of demonstrations, speakers, musicians and vendors who are highlighting international textile techniques and heritage. A Kazakh Yurt, Peruvian Weaving Demonstration and Classes in Japanese Saori Weaving are just a few of the stimulating presentations available.

A full schedule of events can be found at <http://www.shepherdsharvestfestival.org>. Festival hours are Saturday May 9<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 to 5:00 and Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 to 4:00.