

## **Nepalese Yak Fur Winter Wear**

### **Product Information:**

Domesticated Yaks or *Bos grunniens*, are native to Nepalese Mountains and support many industries for Nepalese hillside farmers and pastoralists. (Dong. S. K., L. Wen, Zhu L, J. P. Lassoie, Z. L. Yan, K. K. Shrestha, 2009). Their milk is used for making butter and cheese and is in high demand in Asia and among tourists (FAO, 2003a). These beasts of burden's waste is also used by locals as fuel and fertilizer (FAO, 2003). Finally, yaks have a thick and diversely textured fur coat that can have many functions (FAO, 2006). The long coarse outer coat is used traditionally for ropes, bags and tents, while the soft inner down is used for clothing and blankets (FAO, 2006). The average small herd size per farmer ranges from 7-15 heads, though larger herds (45+ heads) have shown to have greater profits (Dong. S. K., L. Wen, Zhu L, J. P. Lassoie, Z. L. Yan, K. K. Shrestha, 2009; Jianlin H., Richard C., Hanotte O., 2002). Thriving in the higher altitudes of well above 3000m in Nepal yaks can survive in extremely low temperatures (FAO, 2003). Their diet consists almost entirely of forage, and thus indigenous herders engage in a system of transhumant pastoralism, a system where herds are moved to different heights according to the season (Bauer, 1990). In the winter months when forage is hard to find, pastoralists in Nepal often supply hay and potatoes (Dong. S. K., L. Wen, Zhu L, J. P. Lassoie, Z. L. Yan, K. K. Shrestha, 2009; Jianlin H., Richard C., Hanotte O., 2002).

### **Benefits to Nepal:**

One of the greatest benefits of Yak fur winter wear products is one needs only to extend what is already a vital resource in Nepal. Yaks are a part of Nepalese indigenous culture, in one case study of the village of Langtang showed that 73% of people said pastoralism played a primary, secondary or tertiary contribution to household income (McVeigh, 2004). Due to the multiple complimentary products that result from Yak pastoralism increasing herd sizes increase both availability of Yak and down fur (Bachman, 1985; FAO, 2003). Yaks produce a rich, highly demanded milk, but have small udders and therefore there are many economic benefits to increasing supply (FAO, 2003b). A decrease in marginal costs can be seen as herd size increases from 15 heads to 45, as an effect of economies of scale (Dong. S. K., L. Wen, Zhu L, J. P. Lassoie, Z. L. Yan, K. K. Shrestha, 2009). The coarsest hairs while too thick for the clothing industry, is used in ropes and tent making by Nepalese pastoralists (FAO, 2006).

The production of Yak fur winter wear does not only reap benefits for the pastoralists, but also presents opportunities in the textile industry. By processing and manufacturing a winter wear line, one increases the value of the fur, as well as present job opportunities for women and the physically disabled who are unable to find employment in hard labour (Rost, 2007). A sociocultural benefit is that through designing the aesthetic aspect of the winter wear line, the Nepalese can portray their rich heritage and unique artistic style proudly.

### **Challenges:**

While Yak pastoralism offers many opportunities for Nepalese hillside farmers, currently there remains many challenges and obstacles that must be addressed first. Despite some past studies showing erosion by yaks to not be severe, if coupled with overgrazing there can be some serious implications of land degradation (Bauer, 1990; Watanabe, 1994). Also the initial cost of procuring yaks for herding can be quite expensive and thus out of reach for subsistence farmers (Joshi, 2002). Then one must consider the costs and dangers of keeping herds in regards to sickness and mortality of the animals. Presently

there is concerns of the prevalence of Yaks who are infected with Foot and mouth disease and Brucellosis (Jackson, Nydam, & Altier, 2014). As for healthy Yaks a loss of profits can be traced to improper harvesting of the down hair and lack of suitable markets to sell their goods (FAO, 2006). This is connected to one of the weakest areas of the hillside farmer and pastoralists businesses---lack of infrastructure (Dong. S. K., L. Wen, Zhu L, J. P. Lassoie, Z. L. Yan, K. K. Shrestha, 2009; The World Bank, 2015). Due to the harsh, steep landscape transportation and processing facilities are failing to meet the needs for proper development. Improved roads, bridges and extension services are fundamental to any growth in this area (The World Bank, 2015).

### **Inputs and Improvement Potential:**

However, many innovations and opportunities to target and reduce these liabilities are emerging. With proper inputs and investments there is great potential for increased economic profits without causing environmental damage. Cover and forage crops are good aids in preventing erosion and overgrazing, as well as shifting migration patterns back to higher elevations (Bauer, 1990). Establishing and maintaining a system of rotating between leaving areas undisturbed with cover crops and foraging is key. In one case study rotational grazing displayed an increase in forage production by 40% (Dong. S. K., L. Wen, Zhu L, J. P. Lassoie, Z. L. Yan, K. K. Shrestha, 2009). Increasing crop yields of hay and potatoes also has some promise for protecting soils and feeding livestock. There have been developments concerning seed replacement strategies and using seed varieties that are resistant to cooler temperatures and common diseases (FAO, 2013). Loan disbursement programs could assist in initial costs of Yak purchases, while pooling community herds, and subdividing would specify and reduce individual labour requirements (FAO, 2006).

Education and training of farmers is needed to address health, harvesting and market losses (FAO, 2006). The implementation of agricultural extension officers would be greatly beneficial (Dong. S.

K., L. Wen, Zhu L, J. P. Lassoie, Z. L. Yan, K. K. Shrestha, 2009). For instance informing pastoralists of the importance of proper combing of Yak hair before shearing could increase down hair harvested by 10% (FAO,2006). Other simple procedures regarding simple sanitation techniques can help prevent the spread of diseases too (Jackson et al., 2014).

### **Export Potential:**

Yak fur has great potential in Canadian winter wear markets. Canada is known for having harsh winters and have a consistent need for quality winter apparel. The Canadian apparel industry presents opportunities for great profits as it depends largely on imports. Apparel imports have increased from 7,751 in 2010 to 10, 131 in 2014 (in millions of CDN\$) (Government of Canada, 2015). Import penetration has also increased by 10% in the last four years (Government of Canada, 2015). Due to the Market Access initiative of 2002, exporters from Least Developed Countries (which Nepal qualifies for) are able to import into the Canadian market without paying heavy duties for most products (including finished wool products) (Trade Facilitation Office Canada, 2015). To stand out further from current winter wear lines, Nepalese manufacturers should branch out and emphasis on things such as Fair Trade certification, exceptionally high quality and the humane ways of collecting the Yak fur. These aspects are very attractive to Canadians and opponents to tradition animal fur companies who oppose the maltreatment and/or killing of animals.

Below is a list of currently operating Nepalese companies that produce and/or export either Yak wool or unspecified wool clothing. Also listed are some other organizations that aim to support and develop Nepalese business and trade. Finally there are noted some Canadian companies that could sell Nepalese Yak winter wear.

### **Current Nepalese Wool Producers and/or Exporters:**

- 1) **S.K Handicrafts Export:** Nepalese manufacturer and exporter of highest quality clothing products including Yak wool.

**Website:** [www.skhandicraftnepal.com](http://www.skhandicraftnepal.com)

**Email:** [info@skhandicraftnepal.com](mailto:info@skhandicraftnepal.com)

**Phone:** 0977-1-4255372

**Moble:** 0977-1-9851077930

- 2) **Unio Exports:** manufacturers of handmade woolen products from sheep and yaks.

**Website:** [www.unionepal.com](http://www.unionepal.com)

**Email:** [info@unionepal.com](mailto:info@unionepal.com), [unioganesh@wlink.com.np](mailto:unioganesh@wlink.com.np)

**Phone:** +977-1-4700288, 4701249

**Mobile:**+977-9841385232 (Mr. Ganesh Devkota)

**Mobile:** +977-9849001361 (Mrs.Laxmi Devkota)

- 3) **Novela Silky Wool:** specialty silky wool manufacturer, exporter and wholesale suppliers of scarves, muffler, shawls.

**Email:** [novsilky@wlink.com.np](mailto:novsilky@wlink.com.np)

**Phone:** +977-1-5537296

- 4) **K International Trading:** manufacture wide range of woolen products, known for winter accessories.

**Email:** [jjoshi24@yahoo.com](mailto:jjoshi24@yahoo.com)

**Phone:** 5521458/5526038

**Mobile:** +977-9841245197

**5) Himalayan Wool Company Pvt. Ltd:** produces and supplies Wool, Woolen Garments, Accessories and Winter Wears to its customers.

**Email:** [himalayan@hwoolc.wlink.com.np](mailto:himalayan@hwoolc.wlink.com.np)

**Phone:** +977-1-5535156

**Mobile:** +977-9851055120

**Other Useful Contacts in Nepal:**

**1) Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry**

**About:** umbrella organization of Nepalese private sector aims to promote business and industry while protecting the rights and interests of business and industrial communities in Nepal. It provides informative, advisory, consultative, promotional and representative services to businesses.

**Website:** <http://www.fncci.org>

**E-mail:** [fncci@mos.com.np](mailto:fncci@mos.com.np)

**Telephone:** (00977-1) 4262061 / 4262218 / 4266889

**Fax:** (00977-1) 4261022 / 4262007

**2) STYLE Buyers' Guide:**

**About:** The most comprehensive directory of the Canadian apparel industry. With over 3,000 listings, the Guide is the definitive source for information on manufacturers, wholesalers and importers of clothing plus industry suppliers, listings of independent sales representatives and other related businesses.

785 Plymouth Avenue, Suite 301

Montreal, Québec, Canada H4P 1B3

**Phone:** (514) 739-7766

**Fax:** (514) 342-0060

### **3) TRADE FACILITATION OFFICE CANADA**

**About:** Provides information and assistance to developing countries selling into the Canadian market.

Ste. 300, 56 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P 5A9

**Phone:** (613) 233-3925

**Fax:** (613) 233-7860

**Internet:** [www.tfoc.ca](http://www.tfoc.ca)

### **Potential Importers:**

The possibilities for clothing chains to import the winter wear line are endless, though an emphasis on chains advertising to the outdoorsy, the bohemian and/or environmentally conscious buyers are recommended.

#### **1) Canadian Tire**

**Address:** Corporate Home Office

2180 Yonge Street

P.O. Box 770, Station K

Toronto, ON M4P 2V8

**Phone:** 416-480-3000

#### **1) Columbia**

**About:** An American sportswear store that has stores in Canada.

Columbia Sportswear Headquarters 14375 NW Science Park Sr. Portland, OR 97229

**Phone:** 1-503-985-4000

2) **Le Chateau:** Customer Service / eCommerce

**Address:** 105 Marcel-Laurin Boulevard

Saint-Laurent, QC, H4N 2M3, Canada

**Phone:** 1-888-532-4283

3) **Ten Thousand Villages**

**About:** A seller of Fairtrade items produced in developing countries with the aim of improving artisan and producer livelihoods.

**Address:** 65 Heritage Dr, New Hamburg, ON N3A 2J3

**Phone:** (519) 662-1879

**Link for artisan inquiries:** <http://www.tenthousandvillages.ca/customers/artisan-inquiries>

4) **The Hudson Bay**

8925 Torbram Rd, Brampton ON, L6T 4G1

**Phone:** 905-792-4400

**Website:** www.hbc.com

5) **Zara**

**Address:** 1200, McGill College Av. - Suite 1550

H3B 4G7 MONTREAL (QUEBEC)

**Phone:** 1 514 8681516

**Fax:** 1 514 8681522

**Conclusion:**



In conclusion Yak wool winter wear products have great potential to excel in markets worldwide (and Canada especially). Through the right investments into current systems this success could benefit both Nepalese pastoralists and textile entrepreneurs.

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