

## SPECIFICATION

### COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006 on protected geographical indications and protected designations of origin

#### “NATIVE SHETLAND WOOL”

EC No:

PDO (  ) PGI (  )

#### 1 RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE

Name: Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
EU Food Policy Team, Food Policy Unit

Food and Farming Group (FFG)

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#### 2. APPLICANT GROUP

Name: **Shetland Organic Community Interest Company**

Address: North Hamarsland  
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Shetland  
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Composition: Producers/processors (  ) Other (  )

### 3. TYPE OF PRODUCT

Class 3.6. Wool

### 4. SPECIFICATION

#### 4.1 Name:

Native Shetland Wool

#### 4.2 Description:

Native Shetland Wool must come from pure bred Shetland Sheep maintained on organic units on the islands of Shetland to organic standards. The weight of the fleeces varies from 1 to 2 kg. The colour of the fleeces varies from white to a range of natural colours from black through brown to grey.

The sheep are maintained on hills within the defined geographical area and are clipped between July and August. Clipping can be done by mechanical shearing, hand clipped or by 'rooing' – plucking with fingers.

Process stages – carried out in accordance with the Global Organic Textile Standard.

- scouring – washing the wool is an essential first step in producing a high quality product. The wool is taken through either a short or long wash cycle at carefully regulated temperatures between 20° to 25°.
- picking and separation – the fibres of the wool are then picked and separated to divide the fine fibre from the coarse and to get rid of any remaining vegetable matter such as hay and seeds.
- carding – the carder is the heart of the fibre processing mill. It takes a random mass of fibre and transforms it into a continuous web, either to form a 'batt' for felt making, or draw together to form a 'roving'.
- spinning – there are two parts to a spinning system: the drawing and twisting of rovings to produce yarns of differing weights and plies. Yarns are wound onto cones, from which they can be balled or hanked.
- felt making – the felter produces felt sheets or 'batts' from loose fibres. The lid of the machine floats to allow different thicknesses of fibres to be used, thus producing sheets of felt (batts) by using pressure and vibration on wet fibres to entangle them.

The products covered includes yarns which are balled or hanked, and felt sheets or 'batts'

The wool has unique wool characteristics. It is typified by its softness, strength and springiness and insulating qualities. The 'staple' profile exhibits long 'guard hairs' of several inches long and very fine lower hairs. It has unique 'handle', which is the combined effects of its softness, strength and springiness. This springiness is created by the distinct Shetland crimp, folded ridge shape, (which is not as dense, for example, as that for merino wool).

Description	Average Staple Length	Average Micron Count (diameter of wool fibre)	Handle	Colour	Weight
Shetland White	5-10cm	29.9	soft & silky	white	1-2 kgs
Shetland Moorit	5-10cm	29.9	soft & silky	brown	1-2 kgs
Shetland Fawn	5-10cm	29.9	soft & silky	fawn	1-2 kgs
Shetland Grey	5-10cm	29.9	soft & silky	grey	1-2 kgs
Shetland Black	5-10cm	29.9	soft & silky	black	1-2 kgs

It has unique 'handle', which is the combined effects of its softness, strength and springiness. This springiness is created by the distinct Shetland crimp, folded ridge shape, (which is not as dense, for example, as that for merino wool).

The basic natural colours in Shetland wool are white, moorit (red-brown), fawn, dark grey and Shetland black (dark brown). Shetland sheep often have distinctive natural body markings. This can give many shades of natural colour within one fleece. Shetland wool is among the softest available. It can be spun and plied into various thickness of yarn, for weaving and knitting. This application defines wool produced on the Shetland Isles from the native Shetland breed which is reflected in the name seeking protection. The applicants recognise that organic wool from the Shetland breed is produced outside the designated area.

#### **4.3 Geographical area:**

The islands of Shetland.

#### **4.4 Proof of origin:**

Shetland Native Wool must come from pure bred Shetland Sheep maintained on organic units and to organic standards on the islands of Shetland. Processed wool must be certified under the Global Organic Textile Standard.

Producers may sell the fleece of their sheep raised on their organic land as organic provided that the sheep have been:

- kept to full organic standards for at least 12 months before shearing;
- allowed a period of three months (or three times the legal withdrawal period, whichever is the greater) since the last treatment of the animals with an external veterinary treatment; and
- had organic wool added to their trading schedule.

Proof that the product is manufactured in the designated area can be demonstrated by reference to the records maintained by the producers and by reference to the traceability systems that are in place. The nominated inspection body will conduct annual checks on each producer to ensure that they are complying with the specification.

Records are kept by the producers of the wool and the purchasers of the processed product. The processed product can therefore be traced back to the flock of sheep from which the wool was obtained. A system of inspections to ensure conformity to the specification exists at each stage from obtaining the wool through to completion of the processing stage. Responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with the Scottish Organic Producers Association for the production stage (on-farm/obtaining the wool) and with the Soil Association for the processing stage.

Producer organic certification bodies must be ISO65, EN45011 or International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) accredited.

#### **4.5 Method of production:**

Native Shetland Wool must come from pure bred Shetland sheep raised to organic standards in the Shetland Isles. The processes leading up to the production of the yarn must also be carried out on the islands.

##### **Obtaining the wool**

The sheep are maintained on hills within the defined geographical area and are clipped between July and August. Clipping can be done by mechanical shearing, hand clipped or by 'rooing' – plucking with fingers

All these methods are suitable under the organic standards, provided that adequate care is taken in the welfare of the sheep and that proper procedures are in place to ensure that organic and conventional fleeces are kept separate and labeled correctly.

##### **Process stages**

Traditionally much of the following stages would have been carried out by hand but with the availability of specialized machinery it is now largely mechanized.

- scouring – washing the wool is an essential first step in producing a high quality product. The wool is taken through either a short or long wash cycle at carefully regulated temperatures between 20 to 25°.
- picking and separation – the fibres of the wool are then picked and separated to divide the fine fibre from the coarse and to get rid of any remaining vegetable matter such as hay and seeds.
- carding – the carder is the heart of the fibre processing mill. It takes a random mass of fibre and transforms it into a continuous web, either to form a 'batt' for felt making, or draw together to form a 'roving'.
- spinning – there are two parts to a spinning system: the drawing and twisting of rovings to produce yarns of differing weights and plies. Yarns are wound onto cones, from which they can be balled or hanked.
- felt making – the felter produces felt sheets or 'batts' from loose fibres. The lid of the machine floats to allow different thicknesses of fibres to be

used, thus producing sheets of felt (batts) by using pressure and vibration on wet fibres to entangle them.

Once the yarn has been produced it may then be sold on or off the islands for further processing by commercial processors or for use at home.

#### **4.6 Link:**

Shetland sheep have been valued for their very fine wool for a long time. They are the foundation of an important textile industry on the Shetland islands. The wool is comparable in fineness to that of the Merino's and its worth has long been recognised.

The quality and unique characteristics of Native Shetland Wool come from the natural development of the native breed to meet geographic conditions prevailing in the Shetland Islands.

Native organic Shetland sheep are only to be found on organic units in Shetland. Shetland's climate is very harsh and the soil type, in general, very poor. In this context Shetland sheep have evolved to cope with a special set of circumstances over at least 5000 years. This particular climate and environment has resulted in a breed of sheep, which live on unimproved hills and islands. They forage on the heather moorland of the interior, the maritime pastures of the coastal fringe and the many small isles around the coast.

Fleece, bone and sheepskins were used as raw material for making many objects needed for survival. Bone debris and small tools found on sites from the Iron Age to the 13th century confirm that sheep were farmed continuously in Shetland. Settlers from Norway brought their own breed of sheep in the 9th century, to provide milk, meat and offal for food. Isolated together in Shetland, all the sheep evolved into a recognised island breed, the Shetland Sheep, renowned as the source of Shetland Wool. In 1790 the unusual qualities of Shetland wool were "discovered" by the rest of Scotland when samples were taken back to Edinburgh and received with acclaim. The Society of British Wool was formed at this time to improve the standards of sheep breeding and wool production.

The traditional method for removing the fleece was by "rooing" by plucking with the fingers, close to the skin of the sheep. While rooing the sheep's feet are tied or held together, and starting at the shoulder, the wool is pulled off with the fingers until one side of the animal is finished. The sheep is then turned over and the process repeated.

However, since the 1930's hand clipping using shears has superseded this labour-intensive process. Eventually, as sheep numbers in Shetland grew, mechanical shearing became necessary to the point today when this is the predominant method of removing the fleece.

Today the many natural colours of Shetland fleece and yarns conform to current market demand for ecological yarns without the use of chemical dyes. Shetland wool currently has a very stable position in many export markets because of its unique qualities. The unique native sheep's wool reveals a staple combining long guardhairs (for running off the very high rainfall) and a very fine inner hair, which insulated the animals against the high wind chill. Very few yarns produced from 100% wool fibres contain the distinctive characteristics that create this soft handle

in such a lightweight yarn. The special crimp in the raw fibres of the wool, create a wonderful springiness filling the yarns with lots of life.

This special fibre has been sought after in many walks of life. The fibre has great insulation qualities and has been used on many famous Polar and Himalayan expeditions for warmth retaining qualities.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century blending Shetland wool with other materials became increasingly common to meet the demands of a globalising wool industry. This had the effect of reducing the high status previously enjoyed by Shetland wool and confusion about its integrity and provenance. Prior to the inception of the EU PDO scheme no mechanism existed by which Shetland crofters and farmers could exert either influence or control over their wool product.

#### **4.7. Inspection body:**

Name: Scottish Food Quality Certification Ltd

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Edinburgh

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Fax: 0131 335 6601

E-mail: [info@sfqc.co.uk](mailto:info@sfqc.co.uk)

#### **4.8. Labelling:**

In addition to the EU symbol for protected designations of origin, any other symbol or logo, including those derived from a private certification scheme, for which the product qualifies may also be used on the labelling of 'Native Shetland Wool', provided consumers are not misled.

While the name 'Native Shetland Wool' shall be protected in accordance with the terms of the Union rules in force, the producer group does not consider that use of terms such as 'Shetland wool' and 'Shetland organic wool' designating product of the breed, but not originating from the geographical area, conflict with the terms of the registration of 'Native Shetland Wool' PDO.