

# South Africa Halts Exports of Raw Wool to China

by Bambina Wise

Posted THURSDAY AUGUST 19, 2010

From [WWD ISSUE 08/19/2010](#)

**JOHANNESBURG** — An outbreak of Rift Valley Fever among South African livestock has forced the country to halt exports of raw wool and mohair to China.

South Africa is the world's second-largest supplier of apparel wool and the leading supplier of mohair, which comes from the fleece of the Angora goat. The country exports about 4 million kilograms of mohair wool a year, roughly 70 percent of the world's supply.

China is the country's biggest customer. Last year, raw wool exports to China amounted to 933 million rand, or about \$129 million at current exchange. But China has said it will not accept any wool or mohair shipments without clearance certificates certifying that they didn't come from areas where the disease has infected the sheep and goats.

South African authorities say the new Terrestrial Animal Health Code clearly states that hides, skins, wool and fiber do not require these certificates, but China remains adamant the certificates accompany the shipments. China is the only country that requires this certification. Wool and mohair exports have continued to other countries, including the U.K., Germany, India and Taiwan.

A spokeswoman for Cape Wools, the executive arm of the Wool Industry Forum of South Africa, said the loss of China as an export market could have serious repercussions on the price of wool and worldwide supply. She added that a technical delegation from the South African Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries left for China this week to discuss possible alternatives.

The department had no choice but to suspend exports from Aug. 18, the spokeswoman said, because it became "ethically impossible" to guarantee the wool came from areas free of the disease. It could take up to 12 months for China to review and subsequently reverse its decision, she said. In the meantime, Cape Wools said the 2010-2011 wool selling season, which begins Wednesday, will continue as scheduled, and producers were urged not to withdraw their wool.

The Rift Valley Fever outbreak began in February in the Free State, Eastern and Northern Cape provinces before spreading to the Western Cape. At the time, the Department of Agriculture believed the epidemic could be contained because the South African climate was believed to be too dry to allow the virus to spread. However, since then, more than 1,000 livestock have perished and there have been a few cases of human deaths resulting from the infection.