

H&M and wool supplier embark on regenerative farming and biodiversity restoration project

Retail giant H&M Group has partnered with BKB Ltd, a major supplier of Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) wool, to implement the Biodiversity Restoration and Regenerative Land Management project.



Source: Supplied

H&M Group sources the vast majority of its wool for its products from RWS-certified farms in South Africa. The joint Biodiversity Restoration and Regenerative Land Management project aims to not only build on the existing standards for responsible wool sourcing, but to go beyond the scope of social standards and animal welfare.

The retail group and BKB are developing scalable models of how to work with farmers to deliver positive land management with conservation, restoration, and regenerative outcomes. The work planned serves as not only a means of implementing regeneration and restoration on the farms but also as a means of fine-tuning a methodology that can be applied beyond the project footprint and benefit other farmers and biomes in addition to the project footprint.



Source: Supplied

According to H&M, a biodiversity footprint assessment has shown that H&M Group has a large impact on biodiversity through the wool sourced from South Africa since the land used for grazing is considered to have high conservation value. The new project incorporates both H&M's need for a scalable solution to decrease impact, and the farmers' need to increase ecosystem health and resilience to climate change.

“H&M Group is committed to contribute to the global goals on reaching positive impact on nature while decreasing its own impact on nature and biodiversity. As part of our goal to source all materials more sustainably by 2030, H&M Group recognises the need to support the transition to regenerative practices and the restoration of critical ecosystems in connection with its sourcing practices,” says Caroline Nelson, country manager, H&M South Africa.

Driving thicket restoration

The project will be implemented in the Albany Thicket Biome in South Africa due to its endemism and sensitivity. The area has a high conservation value and is a priority for biodiversity conservation in the Eastern Cape.

The project provides an opportunity to unlock thicket restoration activities guided and implemented by specialists rarely accessible to most farmers. The botanical reserves planned for the project will assist in the preservation and future research of highly rare and endemic species.



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"BKB recognises the role of educating and facilitating on-farm projects such as the project with the H&M Group, to bridge the gap between not only knowledge and practice but also between both ends of the supply chain," says Lindsay Humphreys, sustainability manager, BKB Ltd.

"BKB has thus committed to and has embarked on a process to bring about the regenerative change, assist in and monitor such change, and recount the healing of the land in a transparent, scientifically proven, and replicable manner at scale within our farm group," Humphreys adds.

Acknowledging South Africa's high conservation value and the connection to raw material sourcing, the country is an important area for H&M to focus on in this regard. The H&M Group doesn't own any farms and is reliant on partners like BKB, who have local knowledge, influence and networks on a farm level to roll out such projects.

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