

## **LABELLING CASE STUDY – ITALY**

### **ITALIAN FUR TRADE FEDERATION (AIP)**

The AIP pioneered the new voluntary labelling scheme, which took 18 months to develop and introduce. UNI (Italian National Standards Institute) drafted the standard and a special commission created a standard for the Italian fur trade, which was officially published as UNI 11007 in September 2002. It was launched just before MIFUR, the International Fur and Leather Exhibition in March 2003 with sample labels, posters, information booklet and a comprehensive information campaign for members. The standard not only includes the scientific Latin name of the species together with its Italian and English translation but also care instructions for the customer, something which the AIP considered essential, not only as a practical tool, but also as a signal that the fur trade is part of the fashion system and uses the same symbols as the textile industry.

Alessandra Dagnino, AIP Managing Director, was involved in much of the work and explained why this labelling initiative was so important. "The fur trade needed to be on the same level as its other fashion and retail counterparts and not have this aura of mystery about it. We became increasingly aware of the need for more consumer information in our trade and we wanted to provide a system of transparency and information to the consumer. Our furriers know exactly what kind of fur they use in each garment, it is not difficult, therefore, to identify this on a label and provide this information to the customer.

"Many of the large wholesalers are producing the label themselves because they want to have a different size or colour to match the style of the furrier. This does not matter so long as the information required by the UNI standard is shown exactly as outlined. For the smaller furriers, AIP provides the labels and they are then attached to the garment, in addition to the label showing the furrier's own name.

"The biggest difficulty was not a technical one. It was to make the furriers and members realise how important it was to introduce a voluntary labelling scheme. We had to persuade them that this was something very good for their image as modern day traders. We had two big challenges. The first, to get the furriers to want to use these labels and, the second, to make consumers aware of it so that they would ask for the label, encouraging the furriers to want to use it. In the end, we have been successful.

"Fur garments are a part of the fashion system. Furriers are as innovative, as transparent, as customer caring as any sector in the fashion trade. Playing by the same rules as our counterparts is important in standardizing information for the consumer. This labelling scheme is an important marketing tool in showing that the fur trade is a professional, responsible sector of the fashion industry. If a furrier says a coat is mink and it has his name on it, then it is

fraudulent if this is not the case. The furrier has a responsibility to deliver exactly what he says to the customer.

"The consumer is used to seeing labels, whether on food or clothes, describing the contents. We continue in our work to make the public more aware of this initiative as we believe that in this way, we both promote the fur trade as a modern day industry and also encourage the consumer to 'look for the label'."