

# SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TANNING INDUSTRY

**Introduction** The issue of sustainability has gained considerable attention among leather industry customers, consumers and the community at large and the industry has been addressing the subject for some time. Each national tanning industry has been developing its own strategy and implementing its own activities, based on the different target they want to reach. The following represent the key common elements relevant to the whole industry.

First and foremost it must be stressed that the leather industry is based on processing and recycling a by-product of the meat, dairy and wool industries – over 99% of global leather production is made from the hides or skins of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. Therefore the sustainability of the leather industry depends on the raising of animals for food and for wool.

Other important aspects for the leather producing industry are environmental sustainability, ethical & social sustainability and economic sustainability

- **Environmental sustainability:**

- Full compliance to environmental regulation (water, air emission, solid waste)
- Commitment to energy efficiency
- Definition of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and Environmental Footprint of leather (incl. participation to international projects)
- Commitment to work towards best practice in processing – to anticipate ever increasing environmental controls and carbon reduction targets and in order to exercise due diligence

- **Ethical & social sustainability:**

- Full compliance to product safety regulation (mainly on chemical side, e.g. Reach for EU)
- Full compliance to health & safety and employment regulation (no child labour, respect of workers' rights...)
- Commitment to animal welfare principles/practices (see separate ICT statement on animal welfare)

- **Economic sustainability:**

- Commitment to fair trade practices
- Traceability of raw hides and skins (common position proposed: the origin of the raw hide/skin is that of the slaughtering facilities; consequently, no info should be generally requested on the upstream part of the supplying chain)
- Commitment to transparency on the origin of leather production (background: customs regulations, UNI 11239, prEN 16484 CEN/TC 289)
- Commitment to observe and promote the correct labelling of leather and leather products, according to the agreed ICT definitions and international standards and laws.

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