

A Manifesto Leather on the occasion of COP28

People, lives and livelihoods – the role of leather

On the occasion of the 28th edition of COP, the undersigned once again call for greater understanding and integration of natural materials, and in particular leather, in addressing the challenges of man-made climate change. We welcome the new policy and regulations in France and the Netherlands and proposed legislation in the European Union and United Kingdom, and the growing recognition that the action must be taken to reduce the impact of fashion and textiles. To achieve this goal, there will be ever greater emphasis and legal requirements for repairability, recovery and circularity in design in fashion and textiles.

These are all areas where natural fibres such as leather, excel. It is quite normal for products made from leather, wool, silk, etc. to be kept by consumers for long periods of time and passed on to subsequent owners. Products made from these materials are long-lived, eminently repairable and can be repurposed or readily composted at end of life. Recent research by Wiedemann *et al.*¹ found that, 'the climate change impacts of all natural fibres were negative if the number of wears was increased by 50%: that is, greenhouse gas emissions would be avoided entirely primarily because emissions associated with the manufacture of a new petro-PET garment were averted'. Garments made from long-lived, natural materials can have an undeniably positive action in reducing the climate impact of fashion and textiles.

Leather offers an opportunity to make the best use of the resources available and to do so without diminishing them or causing harm to the environment. There are currently huge volumes of a natural, readily available versatile hides and skins going unused which could be transformed into sustainable leather, replacing fossil fuel-derived synthetic alternatives, with the additional emissions and impacts those entail. In the process, there would be the opportunity to put shoes on over 2.5 billion pairs of feet. That's 33% of the world's population that we could provide shoes for.

We also welcome, within the COP28 themes, a focus on people, lives, and livelihoods. Leather manufacture can create opportunities for employment, wealth generation and security in deprived regions, both directly and in associated industries. There is also a growing body of evidence showing that when the full life cycle is considered, these materials can be positive contributors to the climate and environment. It is essential then that appropriate metrics are used to assess the impact of these materials, assessing not just the narrow, attributional impact of their production but also the consequences of their use.

Natural materials, like leather, offer a viable alternative to the use of fossil fuel-derived synthetics for fashion and other applications. An alternative that meets the demands of emerging policy for circularity in the fashion and textile sector. Greater use of natural materials would create jobs, reduce waste and could be a direct driver of more sustainable agricultural practice. However, this will require a better understanding of the impacts of materials like leather, based on current science and sound data.

Therefore, we, the undersigned organisations, once again call on the COP forum to...

...Recognise the cyclical, climate efficient nature of natural fibres and their potential for a positive contribution to reducing the climate impacts of consumer products. In particular, recognition of the

¹ Stephen G. Wiedemann *et al*, Resources, Conservation and Recycling (2023), Volume 198,

separate contributions of long-lived and short-lived, and fossil-derived and biogenic greenhouse gases.

... Wherever feasible to encourage the use of natural fibres like leather and reduce unnecessary reliance on fossil-fuel-based materials.

...Support LCA methodologies that accurately account for the environmental impact of all materials, including end of life properties and the consequences of use and substitution.

...Promote 'slow fashion', durable products, and items that can be used many times, repaired and refurbished, and last for years.

Signatories to the Leather Manifesto

- Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute (ALLPI)
- Asociación Española del Curtido (ACEXPIEL – Spanish Tanners' Association)
- Associação Portuguesa dos Industriais de Curtumes (APIC – Portugal Tanners' Association)
- Australian Hide Skin and Leather Exporters' Association Inc. (AHSLEA)
- Centre for the Brazilian Tanning Industry (CICB)
- Centro Tecnológico das Indústrias do Couro (CTIC - Leather Center in Portugal)
- Chamber of the Argentine Tanning Industry (CICA)
- China Leather Industry Association (CLIA)
- Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community (COTANCE)
- International Council of Hides, Skins and Leather Traders Association (ICHSLTA)
- International Council of Tanners (ICT)
- International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies (IULTCS)
- Fédération Française des Cuirs et Peaux (FFCP - French Hides & Skins Association)
- Fédération Française Tannerie Megisserie (FFTM - French Tanners Association)
- Leather and Hide Council of America (LHCA)
- Leather Cluster Barcelona (LCB)
- Leather Naturally (LN)
- Leather UK (LUK)
- Leather Working Group (LWG)
- One 4 Leather (O4L)
- Society of Leather Technologists and Chemists (SLTC)
- Sustainable Leather Foundation (SLF)
- Swedish Tanners Association
- Turkish Leather Industrialists Association (TDSD)
- UNIC Conceria Italiana (Italian Tanneries Association)
- Verband der Deutschen Lederindustrie e.V. (VDL – German Leather Federation)
- Wirtschaftsverband Häute/Leder (WHL – German Hide and Leather Association)
- Zimbabwe Leather Development Council (ZLDC)