



Newsleather

Stay curious, informed and connected

Edition 2, 2024

Welcome

This is the second edition of our scientific newsletter, dedicated to providing the latest updates on research, regulatory developments, technology, and standard methods in the leather industry.

In this issue, we have activity reports from the Environmental, Sustainability, and Training Commissions.

Starting with the January Newsleather we will have valuable interviews with scientists, tanners, and regulatory specialists. This will be an opportunity to learn personal insights, experiences, career inspiration and to broaden our knowledge base.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. We look forward to your feedback and contributions in future editions.

Please share your comments and suggestions to secretary@iultcs.org.

Thank you and warm regards,

Dr. Luis A. Zugno, editor



IULTCS Environmental Commission (IUE) Virtual Meeting Summary

On November 19, 2024, the IUE held a productive virtual meeting with the participation of 27 delegates from 13 countries. The primary objective of the IUE Commission is to address environmental challenges and explore technological solutions within the tanning industry, supported by a series of documents now available on the IULTCS website.

The IUE is now concentrating on updating these documents to address the evolving challenges faced by the sector. The commission has decided to begin with a review of two crucial documents: IUE2 (Recommendations for Tannery Solid By-Product Management) and IUE3 (Document on Total Dissolved Solids in Tannery Effluent). Both topics are significant to the tanneries worldwide.

The meeting commenced with a warm welcome from the IULTCS President Dr. Castell, who underscored the urgent environmental issues confronting the industry. Mentioning that while the IULTCS does not provide direct solutions, it aims to highlight best practices that can be adopted throughout the sector.

The IUE Chairman encouraged participants to share their insights for a comprehensive update of the documents in line with the UN 2030 sustainability and circularity goals by March 2025. The meeting also illuminated the challenges faced by small-scale tanneries in India, particularly regarding compliance with the stringent total dissolved solids (TDS) standards and solid waste management. The participants noted the lack of adequate sewage treatment facilities in many regions, which often necessitates costly zero liquid discharge systems to address TDS issues.

Advancements in China concerning the treatment of wet blue shavings were shared, and the need for participants to exchange their experiences to establish industry benchmarks was emphasized.

The significance of IUE documents was reiterated, as they serve not only as guidelines for the tanning industry but also as tools for communicating the industry's commitment to sustainability and circularity to external stakeholders and governments. Additionally, discussions explored the environmental impacts of chlorides and sulfates, focusing on techniques to mitigate their discharge in the tannery effluent.

The IUE Chairman requested that country delegates consider proposing modifications to the documents and submit their feedback by December 2024.

We emphasize the importance of participation from as many countries as possible in this initiative. Through collaborative efforts, we can develop documents that truly reflect the sector's needs. We encourage stakeholders to identify and recommend experts who can actively contribute to the commission's work.

The next IUE meeting is scheduled for mid-February 2025.



Sustainability - Kim Sena

IULTCS Sustainability Commission (IUS) Report

On October 29, 2024, the Higg MSI (Higg Materials Sustainability Index by Worldly) published an update that included the results of the new Leather Naturally and Leather Working Group joint life cycle assessment (LCA) submission. The study was carried out by the consultancy company Spin360. The study aimed at being the most comprehensive environmental impact assessment for cow leather, adding value in establishing a global benchmark on leather production. Due to its geographical, technological and technical representativeness, the submitted LCA replaced the previous results available for leather in the platform.

Scope Numbers:

- 92 leather articles
- 48 tanneries
- 20 countries

The results were expressed in 5 impact categories:

1. Global Warming
2. Eutrophication
3. Water Scarcity
4. Resource Depletion, fossil fuels
5. Chemistry

Following the Higg MSI approval of the presented study, the new data has now superseded the old information, revealing that leather now has a significantly reduced environmental impact compared to the previous data.

On Table 1 we have the comparison between the previous and updated results showing the significant reduction in all the impact categories.

 INTERNATIONAL UNION OF LEATHER TECHNOLOGISTS AND CHEMISTS SOCIETIES			
Parameter	Previous Default Cow Leather	Updated Default Cow Leather	Difference %
Global Warming	36.8	14.6	-60.3%
Eutrophication	74.3	27.2	-63.4%
Water Scarcity	7.0	2.8	-60.0%
Abiotic Depletion, fossil fuels	15.2	8.6	-43.4%
Chemistry	43.5	14.3	-67.1%

Table 1: Comparison between the five old and new impact categories

Note: The above results are expressed in Higg Points after a normalization undertaken on the LCA midpoints. The Higg Points are non-dimensional.

The Higg MSI is used by designers and procurement teams to make better decisions and source more sustainable fibers.

Despite clear instructions from Higg MSI to compare only similar materials (e.g., virgin polyester vs. recycled polyester or different leather types), it is often misused to compare different materials. Therefore, updating the environmental impact data for leather at the Higg MSI was a crucial step in ensuring the leather results more accurately reflect the industry average.

The study also underscored opportunities to further improve the data quality for leather and other materials, while more importantly showcasing the myriads of possibilities in the optimization of leather's supply chain.

This study exemplifies the power of collaboration among key organizations in the sector. By promoting similar initiatives, the industry can provide greater value to society. Sharing best practices and relentlessly pursuing the reduction of environmental impacts should remain top priorities. Collaboration is the most effective path to achieving these goals.



Training - Ivan Kral

IULTCS Training Commission (IUT) Report

The objective of the IUT is to establish a framework for global leather education/training facilities. Also to bring together training providers for leather education. Properly trained and educated professionals are the key assets of every organization and company. This is especially crucial in today's landscape, with the numerous challenges related to quality, productivity, environmental concerns, and new regulations.

The industry requires a new generation of leather technicians and chemists, as well as ongoing professional development and lifelong learning for all technicians and managers across all organizations

The recent closure of the Institute for Creative Leather Technologies (ICLT) has sparked a discussion about the future of leather education.

Industry leaders recognize the critical importance of education and training. In response, the informal group SOLES (Supporters of Leather Education and Science) is working on a proposition to determine the necessary steps to preserve and protect the integrity of formal leather education and training.

Over the past few months, the group has engaged in intensive discussions with the primary objective of identifying the industry's needs, the types of training required, and how industry professionals can collaborate to ensure the continuity of training for the leather sector

There are varying educational needs, such as higher education degrees and courses with on-site laboratories for research and application tanneries. Additionally, professional development and lifelong learning require modular short-term courses and seminars, including online and blended formats

Globally, several training providers and institutes offer education and courses both in person and through remote online learning. The UNIDO Leather Panel maintains a list of these education and training providers. It is important to keep this list updated, and we encourage that any changes be communicated with the IUT or the Leather Panel. The list of training institutions is available at:

<https://leatherpanel.org/organizations-categories/leather-professional-education-institutions>

Well-educated and trained personnel are vital for the future success of every company and organization. In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving industry, having skilled professionals who are equipped with the latest knowledge and expertise is crucial. This is why it is essential for the industry to actively engage in the activities of the IUT Commission.

Through collaborative efforts, the IUT Commission can develop comprehensive training programs that address the specific needs of the sector, ensuring that professionals are well-prepared to meet current and future challenges.

Moreover, continuous professional development and lifelong learning are key components in maintaining a competent and adaptable workforce in the leather industry.

November 28, 2024