

# SUSTAINABLE LEATHER FORUM

Paris, September 16 - 2019

## EDITORIAL

In recent years, the commitment to sustainable development of companies working in the tanning, footwear, leather goods and glove making industries have been the subject of criticism. Journalists, associations and social media have produced reports attacking the quality of products or companies, and have carried out media campaigns to alert public opinion to the problems they have identified.

The impact of these communications is greater as they are part of a general trend in society which has intensified in the last five years, in favour of more sustainable development in consumer goods. Indeed, to the question «Would you be more loyal to a responsible and ethical brand?» 59% of American consumers said “yes”, as did 85% of Chinese consumers! \*

Nobody denies that sustainable development is important for companies in the fashion industry and that there are poor practices generated by fast fashion that need to be corrected, notably resulting from the transfer of production to countries with cheaper labour and weaker environmental standards. However, although some of the criticism is justified, it is unfortunate that the focus is only on the problems. If we are not careful, our sector could see itself go from being showcased on the world’s most prestigious catwalks to being pilloried.

With regards to the challenges, we note a significant growth in awareness from market players, who have made great efforts and invested substantial sums to rework their production methods or their purchasing procedures. These efforts are starting to bear fruit.

In this context, French companies in particular have reached a certain maturity, as a result of progressive regulations governing labour laws for example, or the strict application of European regulations such as REACH. More recently, the French legal framework was enriched with consumer information rights and the duty of care of companies. Beyond this normative framework, we are witnessing a turning point from certain companies and their stakeholders, notably their staff and professional organisations such as the Conseil National du Cuir. These actors have decided to tackle the subject and put in place an approach in favour of sustainable development.

Today, these companies are ready to talk about the difficulties they have faced with these approaches, share their enthusiasm in implementing them and talk about the positive results they have obtained.

This is one of the major objectives of this first Sustainable Leather Forum, organised by the Conseil National du Cuir in Paris: to allow French and international participants to learn about these initiatives and see how much progress has already been made. This information will be shared in the form of concise individual presentations but also during round tables, one of which is dedicated to the upstream professions, namely trading in raw hides and tanning, the second focusing on the footwear markets and the third centred on the luxury sector and leather goods.

Expert speakers will reiterate the challenges: new demands from consumers, working relations and conditions, loyalty in business, the environment, communities and local development, and more.

Other subjects more specifically relevant to the companies in our sector will also be addressed, from the conception of finished products to their commercialisation, including sourcing quality leathers, the development of eco-designed materials, traceability, harmlessness of products, ergonomics of work stations, responsible management of imports, preserving expertise, respecting intellectual property rights, and more.

Specialists will outline methods for developing and advancing towards a Corporate Social Responsibility policy.

This Forum will also be a moment for discussion thanks to a series of convivial interludes that will allow participants to talk to each other and the speakers. We hope these meetings will be the opportunity for everyone to take away ideas, projects and a more positive and constructive vision of the future of our industry.

In the name of the organisation committee which has brought together all sectors of the French leather industry, I wish you an excellent and fruitful Sustainable Leather Forum.

Yves MORIN  
President of the Organizing Committee

\* Havas Survey « Because it matters - 2014 »

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