

Sustainable solutions for the leather industry

### **LANXESS puts the focus on sustainable leather management**

**Leverkusen** – Sustainable development is a key issue for the future of industry and society. It is also one of the prime corporate objectives of the LANXESS specialty chemicals group. This is reflected in the new holistic initiative “Sustainable Leather Management” that has now been launched by the company’s Leather business unit. “This initiative will lay the foundation on which we build our unique technology platform for sustainable solutions”, explains Dr. Dietrich Tegtmeier, Vice President Product Development and Application in LANXESS’ Leather business unit.

Leather is a natural product that has been known and valued since ancient times. Over the ages, the demands made on leather have continually increased – not just with regard to its properties and production efficiency, but now particularly with regard to industrial safety, environmental and consumer protection and sustainability.

Sustainability is more than just a fashion trend. It is vital if sufficient quantities of high-quality leather are to continue to be available at affordable prices in the future without damaging the environment or people’s health. “Sustainability in the leather sector means more efficient production, processing and recycling. We are also committed to handling both the raw material and the waste produced even more responsibly and to reducing emissions from the end products, to name just some of our main objectives,” explains Tegtmeier.

The basic principle of sustainability is that renewable raw materials must not be used up more quickly than they can be produced. “According to our calculations, there is, for example, no way we could maintain current leather production levels using vegetable tanning materials,” says Tegtmeier. “That is why most leather is produced with synthetic tanning and retanning materials.” Likewise, the industry

**LANXESS AG**

Contact: Ilona Bolz  
Market Communications  
Trade and Technical Press  
51369 Leverkusen  
Germany

Phone: +49 214 30-61684  
Fax: +49 214 30-44865  
Ilona.bolz@lanxess.com

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must not produce more waste and emissions than can be degraded by the environment within the same period of time. In order to achieve these goals, LANXESS develops and markets a range of premium products and system solutions that are specially tailored to sustainable leather production.

LANXESS' development objectives in this area include:

- **Products:** First, optimized retanning materials that contain little or no salt and no free formaldehyde or phenol. Renewable raw materials are to be used wherever possible. Second, a new tanning system based on toxicologically sound organic chemicals for sustainable wet white production, which is on par to the best chrome tanning procedures.
- **Production processes:** A sustainable production process for leather with minimal wastewater impact (COD – chemical oxygen demand). To this end, special recipes are being developed on the basis of, for example, efficient beamhouse work or chrome tannage with maximum exhaustion.
- **Leather goods:** Processes designed to reduce the weight of leather and increase its service life and a leather recycling process.

The new X range from the Leather business unit, which is available with immediate effect, comprises all products which are specially geared to sustainable leather production. "We already have a highly respectable product portfolio for the various fields of application," says Tegtmeier. LANXESS intends to enhance this portfolio with further developments.

Summing up, Tegtmeier says: "With our 'Sustainable Leather Management' program we want to lay down a benchmark for sustainable, eco-compatible products and processes in the leather industry. It is not just yet another logo. Our aim is to create measurable advantages in the form of reduced emissions, the elimination of health risks and a smaller carbon footprint (PCF – product carbon footprint) to conserve energy and protect the climate."

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Germany

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Fax: +49 214 30-44865

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Detailed information on LANXESS' products for the leather sector can be found on the Internet at [www.lanxessleather.com](http://www.lanxessleather.com).

LANXESS is a leading specialty chemicals company with sales of EUR 5.06 billion in 2009 and currently around 14,700 employees in 24 countries. The company is represented at 45 production sites worldwide. The core business of LANXESS is the development, manufacturing and marketing of plastics, rubber, intermediates and specialty chemicals.

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Germany

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**Information for editors:**

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You can find further information concerning LANXESS chemistry in our WebMagazine at <http://webmagazine.lanxess.com>.