

Asian Dialogues on Sustainability in the Textile and Garment Industry

Online Seminar Series - Technical Seminars: A Deeper Dive

Technical Seminar #20:

On the complex traceability of leather supply chain

27 March 2024

Brazil is the world's top two leather-producing and exporting country, also a region where sustainable practices, initiatives, and certifications have been developed over a decade.

The new European Union Deforestation-Free Regulation (EUDR) has been acting last year, though the main focus is on other commodities and leather is never the primary reason for cattle farming, the legislation does bring some impact to leather production and raises more attention again on the traceability in the leather supply chain.

Summary

In this online seminar, the audience will hear industry experts bringing up discussions on:

- How to understand the complicated landscape of the upper stream of leather production? What are the challenges and what efforts have been made by producers?
- Why is it not a good long-term solution that brands divest from high-risk countries and regions of deforestation like Brazil?
- What can manufacturers do to build collaboration with tier-up and tier-down partners? What is the key element to build that collaboration?

The online seminar comprised a lengthy panel discussion, followed by a Q&A.

The two panelists with decades of experiences in leather production shared their insights on how to understand the current situation, and develop strategies and actions to cope with the challenges:



Kim Sena

Sustainability Director, JBS Couros

Also, as member of Leather Naturally's Management Board, Kim has extensive experiences in process optimization, life cycle assessments (LCAs) across leather and animal proteins, developing JBS360 Leather ID and Kind Leather.



Andy Pleatman

Founder of Asiatan

Andy has 50 years experiences in the shoe and leather business. He is in charge of vision at Asiatan/TecTuff which is a leather business with factories in China and Vietnam.

Kim Sena from JBS Couros helps us to grasp a broader picture of traceability challenges and practices by showcasing:

- Traceability is not just about where materials come and go. It's also about tracking the animal situation in the first place. Different levels of traceability are developed for the time being. And today how to connect those different levels of traceability is the key to effectively anti-deforestation with cattle farming.
- Collaboration is very much needed not just among stakeholders in the leather industry but also between the food industry and the fashion industry. Mutually recognized protocols are needed.
- The challenges of traceability vary in different countries and regions. Local context is the key to take into account when developing strategies and approaches to traceability.

As someone with 50 years of experience in the shoe and leather business, Andy Pleatman from Asiatan shares his vision on traceability by showcasing the approaches and practices of:

- As a tannery, Andy invests his time and energy in visiting slaughterhouses and farms regularly to build a trustful long-term relationship. As a return, Asiatan has clear data to track the animals and hides.
- Traceability is not just about anti-deforestation but also a good tool to track carbon footprints and ethical practices.
- Tanneries have leverages and responsibilities to play a pivotal role in adopting sustainable and ethical practices.

Both panelists mentioned the importance of having collaboration among industry stakeholders as well as support from governments and civil organizations when addressing issues of deforestation.

In conclusion, the panelists agreed that the leather industry has an important role to play in driving position changes. Though the length of the leather supply chain and the complicated processing steps add layers upon layers of complexity to the traceability in leather production, collaboration is probably the key to addressing the issue and meeting the requirement of environmental production and due diligence.

To learn more, watch the [recording of the Seminar](#). For online seminars on similar topics, check out the [Asian Dialogues Series](#).

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