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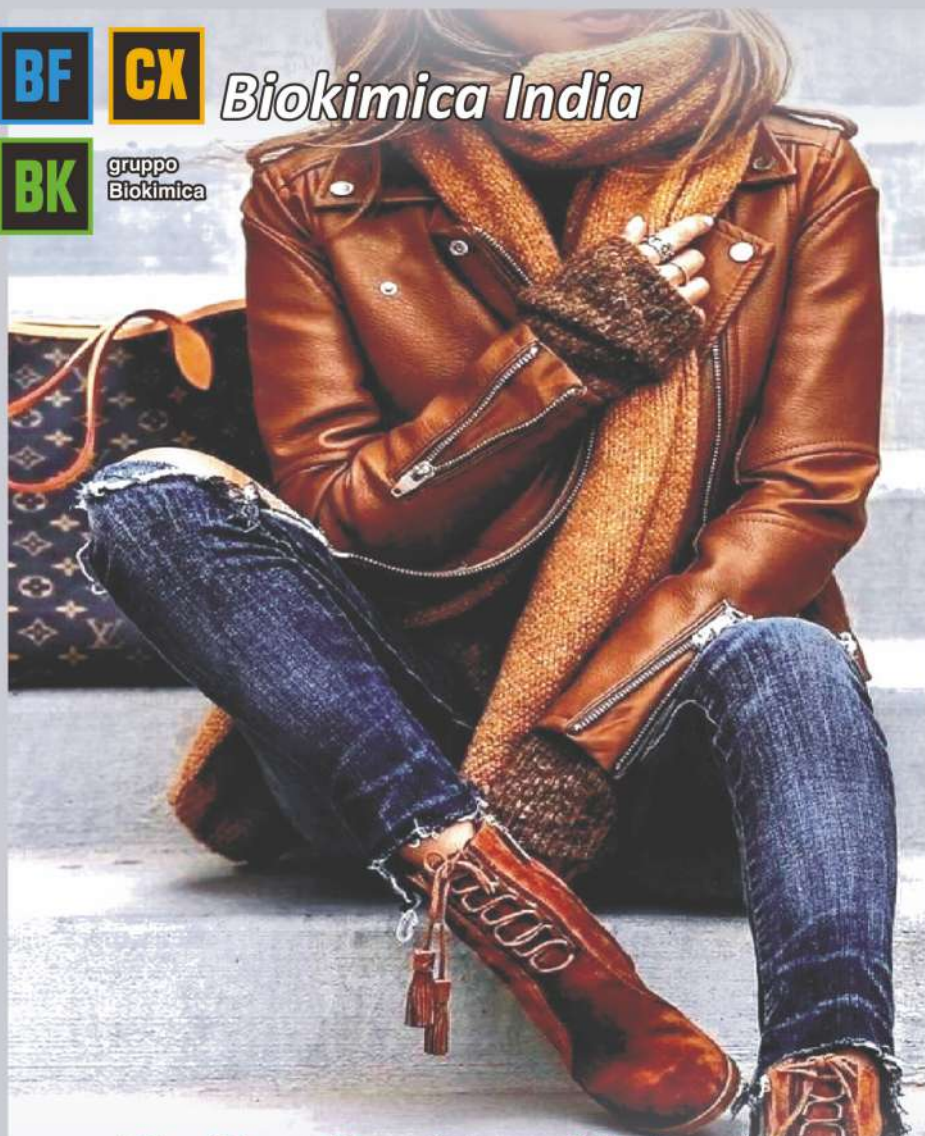




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The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Export Promotion Mission (EPM) - a flagship initiative announced in the Union Budget 2025–26 to strengthen India's export competitiveness, particularly for MSMEs, first-time exporters, and labour-intensive sectors.

The Mission will provide a comprehensive, flexible, and digitally driven framework for export promotion, with a total outlay of Rs.25,060 crore for FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31. EPM marks a strategic shift from multiple fragmented schemes to a single, outcome-based, and adaptive mechanism that can respond swiftly to global trade challenges and evolving exporter needs.

EPM is anchored in a collaborative framework involving the Department of Commerce, Ministry of MSME, Ministry of Finance, and other key stakeholders including Financial Institutions, Export Promotion Councils, Commodity Boards, industry associations, and state governments.

The Mission will operate through two integrated sub-schemes:

NIRYAT PROTSAHAN – focuses on improving access to affordable trade finance for MSMEs through a range of instruments such as interest subvention, export factoring, collateral guarantees, credit cards for e-commerce exporters, and credit enhancement support for diversification into new markets.

NIRYAT DISHA – focuses on non-financial enablers that enhance market readiness and competitiveness, including export quality and compliance support, assistance for international branding, packaging, and participation in trade fairs, export warehousing and logistics, inland transport reimbursements, and trade intelligence and capacity-building initiatives.

EPM consolidates key export support schemes such as the Interest Equalisation Scheme (IES) and Market Access Initiative (MAI), aligning them with contemporary trade needs.

The Mission is designed to directly address structural challenges that constrain Indian exports. Under EPM, priority support will be extended to sectors impacted by recent global tariff escalations, such as **textiles, leather, gems & jewellery, engineering goods, and marine products**. The interventions will help sustain export orders, protect jobs, and support diversification into new geographies.

EPM represents a forward-looking effort to make India's export framework more inclusive, technology-enabled, and globally competitive, aligning with the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

PRADA signs MoU with LIDCOM & LIDKAR

The Italian global luxury house, Prada, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with two government organisations, LIDCOM (Sant Rohidas Leather Industries and Charmakar Development Corporation Ltd), Maharashtra, and LIDKAR (Dr Babu Jagjivan Ram Leather Industries Development Corporation Ltd), Karnataka, on 11th December, 2025, in Mumbai.

The agreement sets out the framework, implementation and guidance of the 'PRADA Made in India - Inspired by Kolhapuri Chappals' project, which will celebrate Indian craftsmanship through a limited edition.

Six months ago, **Prada was criticised for showing sandals on a Milan catwalk that resembled 12th-century Indian footwear known as Kolhapuri chappals**. The photos went viral, prompting outrage from Indian artisans and politicians. Prada, which later admitted that its design drew from ancient Indian styles, began talks with artisan groups about collaborating collection of sandals.

Lorenzo Bertelli, head of the social responsibility division of the Prada Group, said that this partnership is a new milestone in cultural exchange. He reaffirmed Prada's commitment to giving Indian artisans rightful recognition in the modern world.

The footwear will be made in India with the involvement of skilled artisans from Maharashtra and Karnataka, using traditional manufacturing techniques combined with Prada's contemporary designs and premium materials. This collection aims to establish a fresh dialogue between India's rich heritage and modern luxury fashion.

Traditional Kolhapuri chappals are produced in eight districts of Karnataka and Maharashtra, including Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara,

Solapur in Maharashtra and Belagavi, Bagalkot, Dharwad, Bijapur in Karnataka.

In 2019, Kolhapuri chappals received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, highlighting their authenticity and cultural significance.

The exclusive footwear will be available at Prada's 40 retail outlets worldwide and on its official website by February 2026.

Tamil Nadu C M visits Shoe Factory Site

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru M K Stalin, recently visited the High Glory Footwear Factory site, at the SIPCOT in Ulundurpet, Kallakurichi Dt, Tamil Nadu. This visit was part of an official 'Pou Chen Vision and Infrastructural Walk through', and to ensure the signed MoU is successfully converting into jobs and a functional facility.

Thiru M K Stalin reviewed the model of a footwear manufacturing unit being set up by High Glory Footwear India Pvt Ltd. Shri Ujdai Singh Mehta and Shri Samy Vaikundaman, Directors of Nike India were present.

Pou Chen is one of the world's largest branded footwear manufacturers, producing over 300 million pairs annually, for global brands, like Nike etc. Despite the prevailing uncertainties the footwear trade, due to the global tariff pressures, Pou Chen remains committed to Tamil Nadu, said the Chief Minister.

Pou Chen has signed an MoU with the Government of Tamil Nadu to invest Rs 2,302 crore in Kallakurichi creating 20,000 jobs a major boost to local employment. The foundation stone was laid by the Chief Minister in January 2024.



Back to School Column

Dr N K Chandra Babu

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Chrome Management – Concepts and practice

Earlier, the advantages of chrome tanning over other tanning systems have been discussed in detail. How this versatile tanning method had gained popularity over vegetable tanning which was in commercial practice time immemorial was also well described. However, due to pollution related problems, this popular tanning system has come under tremendous pressure world over in the last 3 decades. From pollution point of view, chrome tanning suffers from many drawbacks. Poor exhaustion characteristics of chromium due to its chemical inertness are one of the main problems. Only less than 65% chromium used in tanning is taken up by the pelt resulting in discharge of considerable amount in the effluent. Added to that the high concentration of salt used in mandated pickling prior to chrome tanning to prevent acid swelling is also discharged almost quantitatively in chrome tanning spent liquors and waste liquors from subsequent processes/operations leading to salt pollution.

Moreover, with increasing accent on life cycle analysis and cradle to grave concepts, green groups are increasingly pitching on metal-free and full organic tanning systems involving safer materials to facilitate easier disposal of leather products after usage. Many alternative tanning materials and methods have been screened but none of them matches chrome tanning in terms of its versatility for production of varieties of finished leathers with high degree of hydrothermal

resistance and stability. The ability to produce soft leathers with good dyeing characteristics which is also considered important advantage of chrome tanning is not matched by any tanning method. Many researchers are of the opinion that chrome tanning is difficult to be completely replaced in the near future. The best approach recommended is to manage chrome with appropriate management strategies to overcome the limitations/problems associated with the tanning method.

While talking about chrome management, it is necessary to take into consideration pickling process, which is considered a prerequisite to make the pelt suitable for tanning. The need for pickling prior to tanning was explained in detail under the column on Chrome tanning. Pickling process contributes in the form of chlorides to TDS considerably and this is not amenable for treatment by conventionally employed end-of-pipe treatments. Mandated Zero liquid discharge treatment methods/practices being currently followed in Tamil Nadu tanning industry involving the use of Reverse osmosis result in huge volumes of rejects rich in total dissolved solids (TDS) mainly contributed by sodium chloride and to a small extent sulphate. Energy/cost intensive evaporation techniques employing Multiple-effect evaporators (MEE) are employed to isolate salt from the reject streams.

The RO reject salt is accumulated in ETPS/CETPS, and the tanners are grappling with the problem to dispose of this menacing pile of solid waste. RO technologies only convert salt from liquid to solid form, and do not provide a comprehensive solution for tackling TDS problem. In-process control measures to minimize/eliminate discharge of TDS would only provide long lasting solutions to the

problems. Two international collaborative projects, (TNO-CLRI co-operation program funded by Govt. of Netherlands and Australian council of International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) funded CSIRO-CLRI collaborative project) aimed at development/adaptation and demonstration/implementation of chrome liquor recycling methods in Indian tanneries, which have the potential to eliminate discharge of both chrome and TDS from pickling and chrome tanning. This author was involved as a project lead for High exhaust chrome tanning section under TNO-CLRI program and as the Project coordinator for ACIAR project from CLRI. The details of the technologies involved would be discussed in detail in this article.

Comprehensive Chrome management practices/strategies for mitigating pollution should aim at mitigating pollution due to both pickling and chrome tanning as these processes are intricately connected to one another as explained earlier. The discussion on chrome recovery and reuse option, which is mandated by Pollution Control Authorities currently in India, is consciously avoided in this article. The reason for this is that this addresses the chromium pollution alone but does not help in elimination of discharge of saline streams in the form of high volume of supernatant generated in the process.

Though reuse of the supernatant rich in sodium chloride and sulfates of sodium and magnesium in pickling is advocated, water balance does not allow reuse of supernatant quantitatively. Currently, the supernatant is currently discharged into effluent adding additional burden on RO and MEE systems. Added to that, the presence of magnesium may pose problems if the MEE salt is used in curing if the level exceeds certain concentration levels.

Hence, the long range solutions should include the possibility of salt-less pickling and pickle-less and high exhaust chrome tanning options coupled to suitable recycling procedures to completely eliminate discharge of chrome and salts in the composite tannery waste streams. Such an approach assumes greater significance not only to eliminate the pollution load due to pickle-chrome tanning processes, but also to help in increasing the efficiency of biological treatment of composite waste liquor on the whole. The negative influence of chrome and sulphate bearing streams on the efficiency of biological treatment of tannery effluents has already been proven.

Let us discuss the available in-process options for the mitigation of pollution due to pickling and chrome tanning are discussed in this article.

Salt-less pickling

The concept of using non-swelling acid in pickling is text book information, but this has not been commercially exploited due to the high cost involved. There are many commercial products available based on naphthalene sulfonic acids (naphthalene currently being phased out) and sulfonated aromatic dicarboxylic acids. The latter class of compounds are quite interesting since they would also help in improving the exhaustion of chrome and hence the increase in the cost can to some extent be justified.

Pickle-less chrome tanning

Pickle-less chrome tanning is the concept recently introduced not only to do away with the use of salt in tanning but also to increase the exhaustion of chrome and considerably reduce the salt

generated in basification on account of very low pH associated with the conventional pickling prior to chrome tanning. It is theoretically estimated that the reactivity of chrome can be enhanced five-folds by increasing starting pH from 3.0 to 5.5. In order to be able to start chrome tanning at elevated pH, one has to make sure that there is no problem with either penetration or distribution of chrome in the fibre matrix. Many technological options available currently involve use of masking agents to reduce initial reactivity of chromium at such high pH conditions on one hand and increasing the precipitation pH of chrome tanning complexes by moderating their hydrolytic characteristics on the other. There have been attempts to prepare modified chrome tanning salts using masking ligands that can be used at high pH conditions. A recent study has aimed at the preparation of anionic chromium complexes for use in pickle-less chrome tanning.

Other options attempted include treatment of delimed pelt with appropriate additives of suitable molecular weight prior to tanning, which have the capability to stabilize pelt against swelling such that chrome tanning can be carried out at pH around 4.0 without the use of sodium chloride for suppressing acid swelling. However, this technology requires a good control over process parameters such as float volume and bath pH for success.

The wet blue leathers produced in pickle-less chrome tanning often dry out faster due to absence of required concentration of salts. Probable presence of high basicity of chrome especially close to the grain layer if chrome is not properly masked can also contribute to wet blue leathers drying out faster. This necessitates the use of safer humectants and suitable fatliquor formulations in tanning which helps

in retaining the moisture for longer duration. Another complaint is that the fungal resistance is relatively poorer with the leathers produced, and this can be managed with increased offer of effective biocides in processing.

Closed pickle-tan Recycle and Reuse methodologies

It was mentioned that the closed loop recycle methods under two Internationally funded collaborative projects, which can help in completely doing away with discharge of both pickling and chrome tanning spent liquors into effluent. The technical details pertaining to these technologies are described in detail as follows.

TNO-CLRI Cooperation program for strengthening Environmental preparedness of Indian Leather Sector

Under this program carried out in the nineties of last millennium and funded by Government of Netherlands, efforts were made to standardize closed pickle tan loop systems involving the less chrome and high exhaust tanning methods. Two such tanning methods have been standardized and field tested and demonstrated in many tanneries in Kanpur, Jalandhar and Kolkata clusters. Subsequently, these tanning systems were demonstrated in two Bangladesh tanneries as well.

One method involves pickling to pH of 3.5-4.0 followed by a pre-treatment with 1% ethanolamine prior to tanning with 5-5.5% basic chromium sulphate. The other method is based on the use of combination of Alutan-chrome. Alutan is a CLRI developed product, which contains aluminium in the well stabilized form and in addition to a syntan component, which carries functional groups for stabilizing

Direct Chrome liquor recycling (DCLR) demonstrated under ACIAR funded CSIRO-CLRI collaborative project for Salinity Reduction on Indian and Australian Tanneries

Extensive studies have been made earlier on the use of spent chrome liquor as a pickling or tanning bath and reported in the literature. Direct recycling of spent chrome tan liquor in pickling is likely to cause surface fixation of chromium due to high concentration and high pH.

Hence experiments were carried out under the ACIAR project and it has been proven that direct recycling of spent chrome liquor after pre-acidification to a pH around 2.0 can eliminate the chance for surface fixation. Such a tanning system is followed by almost all the wet blue tanneries in Australia except a fur tanning unit.

The method followed by the fur tanning unit to take care of pollution from pickling and chrome tanning separately will be discussed little later. The main motivation for the Australian tanneries to adopt this option is that many of them are situated in Industrial complexes and the CETPs do not accept effluent containing chromium.

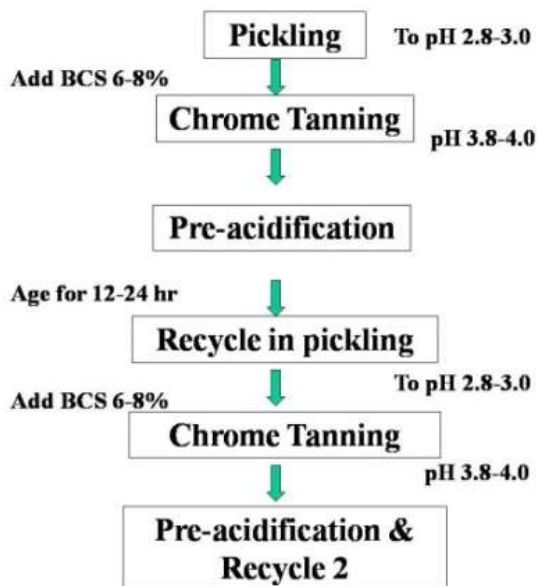
Moreover, the tanners have to pay a hefty fee for saline waste streams, which is calculated on salt concentration. In fact, all the tanneries follow total chrome liquor recycling to take care of the gradual build-up of spent liquor volume with each recycle due to mainly the additional hydraulic load arising out of basification process. Hence the overall scheme involves a chrome recovery system to deal with accumulated excess spent liquor obtained after about 10 recycles.

In the case of fur tanning unit, pickle liquor is quantitatively collected and reused again in pickling of next lot and similarly spent chrome liquor from one batch is used as chrome bath for the subsequent lot after adjustment of pH and salt concentration.

This is primarily done to prevent chrome staining of fur if chrome liquor is reused as pickle liquor. The tannery carries out picking and chrome tanning in paddles as is the normal practice in the processing of fur leathers. The picture taken by the author during the pickle liquor recycling in the fur tanning unit is given below.



The scheme for followed in DCLR as standardized for demonstration / implementation is given in the following figure.



According to this technology, pickling is followed by chrome tanning in the same drum and the spent chrome liquor is collected, filtered to remove organic debris. The spent chrome liquor is then acidified to a pH of around 2-2.5 and reused for pickling for the next batch after adding the remaining amount of salt that is needed for the pickling process to maintain the required concentration. This technology enables continuous closed loop system thereby avoiding the discharge of wastewaters containing TDS and chromium from pickling and chrome tanning. This successfully addresses the issue of salt in pickling and chromium in chrome tanning along with reduction in water and salt input.

In order to further protect the pelt initially against both acid shock and high astringency of tan liquor, certain interventions are followed in Australian tanneries. One is that the spent liquors after acidification with acid are cooled well using mechanical chilling systems and other intervention is that there is a system incorporated to feed the cooled chrome liquor while the drum is in motion.

Direct recycling of the spent liquor generated in the conventional chrome tanning is being followed by almost all Australian tanneries for cattle hides as stated earlier. This method with suitable modification had been demonstrated in many tanneries in India under the project and later the efforts were continued under LTM mission funded by Govt. of India but the adoption has been very limited due to the regulatory insistence on chrome recovery and reuse option.



Commercial scale plant for Direct Chrome Liquor Recycling (DCLR) established in operation in operation in an Erode Wet Blue tannery with Funding from Leather Technology Mission funded by Govt of India

The three closed loop tanning technologies discussed in this article, have not found commercial acceptance and adoption for various reasons, some of which have been indicated earlier. In addition, two technologies developed under TNO-CLRI cooperation program carried out more than 35 years ago might have been well ahead of time. Over reliance and regulatory insistence on chrome recovery and reuse system and end-of-pipe treatments initially and Zero

Liquid Discharge system based on RO-MEE system later in Tamil Nadu has weaned the tanners away from in-process control measures for pollution reduction in general.

However, at this critical juncture, when many CETPs in Tamil Nadu are contemplating or already started charging the tanners based on pollution parameters in general and TDS in particular, this author was motivated to write this article to rekindle interests of the technologists and tanners to revisit some of these technologies which were developed with lot of efforts and funding from International agencies.

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- **221 participants welcomed 19,420 visitors of whom 8390 were from trade and industry during the fair.**
- **Business worth Rs.18,500 crore is expected to generate at this edition.**

The event was not only a business but also an inspiration for entrepreneurs.

The 17th edition of Meet at Agra- the International Leather, Footwear Components & Technology Fair, organised by the Agra Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Chamber (AFMEC), on 7-9 November, 2025, at the Agra Trade Centre, Agra, concluded with enthusiasm, achievements and new possibilities. This three-day event gave a new direction to the footwear industry of India and achieved historic success in bringing together businessmen from India and abroad on one platform and laid the foundation for potential business opportunities worth approximately ₹18,500 crore, marking the beginning of a new golden era for the Indian footwear sector.

The Fair was inaugurated jointly by Shri Nand Gopal Gupta “Nandi”, Hon’ble Cabinet Minister, Industrial Development, Export Promotion NRI & Investment Promotion, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Rajendra Kumar Jalan, Chairman, Council for Leather Exports and Shri Rakesh Garg, Chairman, Uttar Pradesh Small Industries Corporation Ltd.

The other dignitaries present on the occasion include:

Shri Puran Dawar, Chairman - Development Council for Footwear and Leather Industry (DCFLI), Regional Chairman – North, CLE & Convenor – AFMEC







Shri Gopal Gupta, President – AFMEC Shri Deepak Manchanda, General Secretary, IFCOMA Shri Rajesh Sehgal, Vice President AFMEC Shri Rajiv Wasan, Vice President AFMEC Shri Pradip Wasan, General Secretary AFMEC Shri Daljeet Singh, Founder President AFMEC & Shri R K Shukla, Deputy Director - CLE.

Shri Gopal Gupta, welcoming the dignitaries and the gathering, has said, that Meet at Agra would provide a new direction to the footwear industry. This fair has taken the leather and footwear industry to newer heights and has become an identity. Through this fair, not only the production units increased in Agra, but it has also helped in innovation. Now our new designs are also coming out which are world class.

In his address, **Shri Puran Dawar, has said**, that the footwear industry is one of the largest employment generators. He added that AFMEC through collective efforts, has given this industry a new direction and strengthened tradition.

He said that restrictions imposed in the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ) should be removed, as the government advocacy in this matter is weak. He also requested that the government should take initiative to upgrade Testing Lab and Design Studio facility.

In his address **Shri Rajendra Kumar Jalan, has said**, that the footwear industry is lagging behind due to a weak supply chain ecosystem. However, **“Meet at Agra”** has played a positive role in this direction, particularly benefiting Agra, Noida and Kanpur regions.

He informed that the footwear policy recently implemented in the state is being considered better than Tamil Nadu. The policy provided land grants and five-year return on capital investment. Furthermore, the footwear industry has been included in the environmentally friendly **“White Category”**, due to which, now no NOC will be required for this.

In his address, the Chief Guest, **Shri Nand Gopal Gupta “Nandi”, Hon’ble Cabinet Minister, Industrial Development, Export**

Promotion NRI & Investment Promotion, Government of Uttar Pradesh, said, that state government is working seriously to implement a “Single Window Act” for industries. Under this, all investor problems will be resolved on a single platform. Software is also being developed for this system and its results will be out soon. He stated that all officials have been given clear instructions to provide full support to any investor until they establish an industry. The government will also effectively advocate for industries in the TTZ area. He urged the entrepreneurs to offer suggestions regarding deficiencies in the supply chain ecosystem so that they can be rectified. Continuous dialogue is ongoing with the Central government regarding industry reforms and the state government is also taking concrete steps in this direction

The Minister presented **Exports Excellence Award** in Leather Footwear Sector. Following are the proud awardees :

- 1. Shri Chetan Gupta, Director. - Gupta H C Overseas (I) Pvt. Ltd.**
- 2. Shri Gautam Mehra, M.D. – Leiner Shoes Pvt. Ltd.**
- 3. Shri Ajit Nath Kalsi, Partner – Metro & Metro**

The following are the recipients of Special Excellence Awards

- 1. Lifetime Achievement Award – Shri Jaswinder Singh Khera, Proprietor, JAS Exports**
- 2. Women Entrepreneur Award (Footwear) – Mrs. Mala Khera**
- 3. Women Entrepreneur Award (Component) – Mrs. Renuka Dang**
- 4. Excellence in Components sector – Shri Gautam Manchanda, Partner, Versatile Operations**

As part of the fair activities, a Financial Session was organised. The following dignitaries participated in the session Shri Vivek Sharma, Managing Director, FDDI, Shri Gopal Gupta, President AFMEC, Shri

Puran Dawar, Chairman - Development Council for Footwear and Leather Industry (DCFLI), Regional Chairman – North, CLE & Convenor - AFMEC, Shri Rajesh Sehgal, Vice President, AFMEC, Shri Rajiv Wasan, Vice President, AFMEC, Shri Pradip Wasan, General Secretary, Capt. A S Rana, Former President AFMEC, Shri R K Shukla, Deputy Director and representatives from various financial institutions, students from many colleges.

The Chief Guest, **Shri Vivek Sharma, Managing Director, FDDI**, said, at the semina, that India is one of the world's fastest-growing economies today. At this time, young people should focus on job creation rather than job seeking. The country needs young people who become job creators, not job seekers. He further said that FDDI is not just an educational institution but a 'school of entrepreneurship' which inspires students to become a part of the industry. He also shared the details of the different types of course available in FDDI which would enhance the future of the students.

This was followed by many interesting and informative presentations made by different speakers. Shri Shravan Kumar Mishra from Regional office EPFO delivered an impactful presentation highlighting its ongoing reforms, digital advancements, and employer-employee services aimed at strengthening India's social security frame work. He also made a detailed presentation on the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY) to promote employment generation, enhance employability and strengthen social security across all sectors with special emphasis on manufacturing and other labor intensive industries,

Shri S Siddharth Rishab, ICICI Bank, Shri Rohan Dharnik, ECGC Ltd., Shri Amit Gover, Punjab National Bank, Shri Prabhakar Pandey, Shri Puneet Sharma, State Bank of India and Shri Anuj Kumar, India Factoring and Financial Solutions Private Ltd were the others who made detailed presentations on their relevant topics.

This three-day event gave a new direction to the footwear industry of India and achieved historic success in bringing together

businessmen from India and abroad on one platform. The event laid the foundation for potential business opportunities worth approximately ₹18,500 crore, marking the beginning of a new golden era for the Indian footwear sector.

Shri Rajiv Wasan, Vice-President AFMEC, said Meet at Agra has proven to be a milestone for the footwear components industry. It has introduced participants to new technologies and prepared the industry for global competition. This event has become not just a confluence of business but also of knowledge.

Shri Pradeep Wasan, General Secretary AFMEC said on this occasion that according to global reports, the size of the world footwear industry has reached around US\$ 390 billion in 2025, and it is expected to cross US\$ 550 billion by 2030. India is currently the third largest footwear producing country in the world and is rapidly emerging as an export hub with an annual growth rate of over 10%. Events like 'Meet at Agra' are important trade platforms driving this growth, transforming the 'Make in India' and 'Vocal for Local' campaigns into real industrial success.

Six exhibitors were honored with awards on the last day of the fair for their excellent performance in Leather, Innovative Products and Machinery. Shri Gopal Gupta, and Shri Puran Dawar presented the awards.

Innovative Product	Vegan Vista
Best Stall	K L J
Maximum Footfall	J T Soles
Special Mention	Shre Oom Industries
Best Looking Stall	Vikas Organic
Modern Technique & Robotics	Sashi Enterprises

The next edition of Meet at Agra will take place on October 3, 4 and 5, 2026.



15th Shoetech-Kanpur witnessed overwhelming response from the industry

The 15th edition of Shoetech Kanpur-Buyer-Seller Meet cum Exhibition, organised by the Indian Footwear Components Manufacturers Association (IFCOMA), was held at the KLC Complex, Banthar, Unnao, U.P on 17 & 18 December, 2025.

The two-day event was inaugurated by the Chief Guest, Janab Mukhtarul Amin, Chairman, Superhouse Group & LSSC, and Shri Rajendra Kumar Jalan, Chairman, Council for Leather Exports.

In his inaugural address, Former Chairman of CLE, Mukhtarul Amin, said that the footwear sector has a significant and important contribution to the rapid growth of the leather industry. Many excellent designs are now being made in India. These designs are being liked and demanded worldwide. Until a few years ago, 95 percent of sports shoes were imported from abroad, but now only 15 percent are imported. He further stated that the target is to achieve a leather business worth five lakh crore rupees in five years.

Over 65 participants had put up nearly 100 stalls, presenting the latest trends and innovative designs in their products, especially products made from recycled materials and vegetable yarns and bio-based polyurethane system (PU) were an added attraction.

As per the reports, 2212 professional visitors from across the country and also from countries like Sri Lanka, Dubai and Singapore expressed their immense satisfaction with the event. The exhibitors were thrilled with the level of engagement, inquiries, and business opportunities generated during the two-day exhibition. Many highlighted that the interaction with industry professionals, designers, and buyers was highly productive, and the response exceeded their expectations.



Shri Sanjay Gupta, President of IFCOMA, said that the ShoeTech event was a great success. The participation of entrepreneurs from several cities and the strengthening of business relationships were commendable. This event will also play a crucial role in helping small businesses grow.

He explained that the main objective of the event was to bring together vendors and manufacturers of materials used in leather products under one roof, so that entrepreneurs could directly contact producers and strike better deals according to their needs.

He said that several concrete business agreements were signed during the two days of the event this year, which indicates the success of ShoeTech Kanpur and the possibilities of organizing it on a larger scale in the future.

ShoeTech has proven that the fair is not just an exhibition for the leather industry, but a strong platform that gives a new direction to the business.



On this occasion, KLCRC Design Studio and Skill development Centre was inaugurated by Ms Deepali Agrawal, Deputy Managing Director, India Exim Bank.

ShoeTech Kanpur concluded with positive outcome and demand orders worth Rs. 480 crore.

IATF 2025 Consolidates Its Role as the Gulf's Biggest International B2B Platform for Fashion Trade Sourcing

"IATF 2025 is more than a trade fair; it is the region's ultimate sourcing destination, bringing together the world's finest exhibitors under one roof," said Bhavna Nihalani, Founder & Show Director of IATF. The 20th edition of the International Apparel & Textile Fair unfolded across Halls 6 & 7 at the Dubai World Trade Centre from November 17-19, reaffirming its position as the GULF's Biggest International B2B Fashion Trade Sourcing Fair and a cornerstone of the region's sourcing calendar.

The inauguration ceremony was held in **the presence of H.E. Butti Saeed Al Ghandi, Vice Chairman of the Dubai World Trade Centre, and Mr. Mahir Julfar - Executive Vice President of the Dubai World Trade Center** whose esteemed presence underscored Dubai's growing prominence as a global hub for fashion trade, connecting continents, industries, and ideas through innovation and commerce.

Across the fair, **participation was recorded from leading markets including France, Australia, UK, Turkey, USA, Spain, Japan, Russia, Portugal and Italy. The event hosted 400+ exhibitors and 5,722+ buyers from the GCC and other European Regions,** marking one of its strongest editions to date. Notably, China and India accounted for the largest international delegations, underlining IATF's expanding influence across Asia and beyond.

Featuring exhibitors from **30+ countries - among them Poland, Taiwan, South Africa, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Thailand, South Korea, IATF 2025** offered a global panorama of textile and fashion innovation. National pavilions from **HEPC (India), GIZET (Ethiopia), China and Kyrgyzstan** showcased regional excellence, reinforcing the fair's global significance.



For the first time, the **debut of Moda Sole and Accessories** transformed the fair into a complete sourcing ecosystem, **featuring 70+ dedicated booths** showcasing footwear, handbags, laces, trims, and premium accessories. Buyers and exhibitors alike praised the pavilion for its trend-forward innovation and carefully curated

product selection, making it clear that IATF offers an experience **no digital platform or fragmented sourcing trip can replicate.**

IATF 2025 brought forward a renewed focus on sustainability, circular design, and ethical production. Exhibitors demonstrated how creative innovation can coexist with responsible sourcing, aligning with the global fashion industry's push toward traceability and conscious design.

The **Hosted Buyers Program** further amplified IATF's role **facilitating over 1000+ meetings between exhibitors and key regional buyers.** This year, the program hosted buyers, representing leading retail groups, sourcing offices, and distributors across the GCC, India, and European Regions. The curated matchmaking initiative enabled meaningful business connections and fostered long-term sourcing relationships.

"The 20th edition of IATF reinforces its position as the Gulf's largest and most influential international B2B fashion trade fair. This event has evolved into a complete sourcing ecosystem, offering buyers a seamless pathway to discover fashion, textiles, and accessories across the full product chain. With IATF, regional and international buyers no longer need to look elsewhere - everything they require for strategic sourcing is gathered one roof, making it the definitive destination for global fashion trade," said Bhavna Nihalani, reflecting on the fair's transformative impact.

With participation expanding across continents and increasing brand confidence, IATF 2025 once again proved why Dubai remains the creative epicenter for global fashion trade, bridging continents, industries, and ideas through commerce and creativity.

The next edition of IATF will be held from 18 to 20 May, 2026 at the same venue

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54th Futurmoda ended successfully

The 54th edition of Futurmoda, the International Fair of Leather, Components, for Footwear and Leather goods, held on 15 & 16 October, 2025, at the IFA Exhibition Center in Elche, Alicante, Spain, concluded with positive outcome.

The two-day event presented the latest developments in sustainable materials and fabrics, technological components and technical solutions for footwear and leather goods production.

Over 300 exhibitors from Spain, Italy, Portugal, France, Germany and China welcomed 4236 professional visitors. The event also featured a rich schedule of side activities, including the Expert Forum, which focused on highly relevant topics such as artificial intelligence, the circular economy, and emerging market trends. The area Futurmoda Green Planet is once again positioned as benchmark in sustainable materials, circular economy and traceability

The president of Futurmoda, José Antonio Ibarra, expressed great satisfaction with the results achieved: “The public responded enthusiastically, restoring optimism in a complex moment for the sector. Surpassing 4,300 visitors is a clear sign of trust and renewed interest.”

Futurmoda ended successfully with an intense day of commercial activity, conferences and professional meetings, which had strengthened its position as international business and trends platform for manufacturers, designers and brands in the sector.

The next edition of Futurmoda will take place on March 4 and 5, 2026, again at Fira Alacant–IFA.



The new Portuguese Shoes campaign has already reached one million people.

The new Portuguese Shoes campaign reinforces Portugal's positioning as a creative, conscious, and committed country.

"The time to rewrite history." With this premise, the Portuguese footwear industry launched its new international campaign as part of the BiShoes4All project. Featuring Isabel Abreu, the campaign raises awareness and care as the new pillars of the future – a clear appeal for responsibility, authenticity, and an urgent paradigm shift in the sector. To date, on the Portuguese Shoes YouTube channel alone, more than one million people have already interacted with the campaign.

In a world where 24 billion pairs of shoes are produced annually, and 90% of that production takes place in China, the question arises: is this reasonable? Is it sustainable?

Portugal believes there is another way. With a strong aesthetic, emotional, and ethical charge, the new APICCAPS campaign doesn't just sell footwear – it proposes a new vision. A new attitude. To produce less, but better. To return to the essentials. To value what lasts.

"Every year, 24 billion pairs of shoes are produced, 88% of which are made in Asia. This is neither reasonable nor sustainable. We believe it is possible to produce high-quality footwear in Europe at fair prices." - Paulo Gonçalves, Communications Director of APICCAPS.

Portugal presents itself to the world as a small producer of excellence, combining tradition and innovation with increasingly sustainable industrial practices and a history of investment in modernizing its value chain. At a time when the planet calls for restraint and awareness, Portuguese footwear responds with integrity and innovation.

The industry has always been made of people. Of time. Of land. Of the future. And that is what we want to continue to embody.

The new Portuguese Shoes campaign, already circulating internationally, reinforces Portugal's positioning as a creative, conscious and committed country. Because change begins where the first step is taken.



39th India International Leather Fair

1 - 3 February 2026

Chennai Trade Centre, Mount Poonamalle Road, (I.D.P.L. Complex),
Nandambakkam, Chennai.



59th Year of Publication

IILF 2026 FAIR DISTRIBUTION ISSUE

Indian Leather January 2026 issue which will be completing **59** Years of its glorious publication, will be brought out as a **Special Number** to coincide with the IILF 2026 and other connected events of the Leather Week. Indian Leather is available both in print and e version

IILF has over the years has evolved as one of the most specialised events of the leather and allied industry, offers an excellent platform to demonstrate India's export and investment potential in the leather and allied sector.

The importance of this issue and its reach need not be stressed as this will be distributed to the distinguished visitors from the trade and industry at the Leather Fair.

We welcome short write-up on your recent products, company profile, your participation details and your valued advt support for inclusion in this issue which

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Where are we on Sustainability?

- Vasan Suri

**A Passionate Leather Lover & Professional
Hi-Tech Consultancy**

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As we are nearing the end of the year 2025, let us do a fact check as to where we have reached towards sustainable production and goals. Though, the year started with lot of expectations, it proved to be a tough year to sail through.

Kolkata region got a big setback as their CETP did not function properly and all the LWG tanneries lost their grading and certification. Death of workers at a tannery in Ranipet after inhaling poisonous gas from the effluent tanks have put a question mark.

Shutting down of one of the CETP in Ranipet put the pressure of work on the other side. The overall slow market helped to manage the situation. Tanneries are working together to get over these challenges by creating a audit team amongst themselves to support each other. A welcome change in the South. Many tanneries in the Unnao Region is suffering due to the non functioning of CETP and in the process of upgrading.

Every year, we have big seminars and big talks on stage about sustainability and top wigs of the Industry and International environmental enthusiastic people and from certificate bodies submit their ppt and papers and nothing really happens after that. From my perspective, Seminars and meetings should not encourage these ppt presentations and should be a spontaneous exchange of knowledge and vision from their own personal experience and their own concern for the Industry and Sustainability. Mere ppt presentations requires a few hours of presentation or you ask your team to do that and just reading it after presenting in the screen is not really connecting.

As I have always maintained Sustainability in real terms can be achieved only when we start educating from the bottom level of the pyramid.

Five Star Hotel Seminars and meetings are just to satisfy certain people and the money spent could be used for the education of the masses. When the last level worker in a tannery starts understanding the meaning and purpose of sustainability, it will get transformed into every segment of the tannery and we all will see the difference. This effort will quickly catch up with the Leather Products Industry as well, as their education level is better than the Tannery workers.

Sustainability by environment, Sustainability by economy & social conditions & Sustainability by reduction of waste and waste recycling

1. Sustainability in environment -

- a) Reduction of input of water.
- b) Avoid using any hazardous chemicals
- c) Better usage of chemicals to reduce sludge components in the effluent treatment plant.
- d) Reduction of input will definitely reduce the output.
- e) Reduction of process time.
- f) Utilisation of Natural Light and Solar Energy rather than Electricity.
- g) Reduction of Fossil fuel by better organisation of transport of men and material.
- g) Water based finishing systems against solvent based system. This will reduce air pollution.
- h) Dependence on Natural tanning methods and avoiding synthetic chemicals. This means less damage to the earth.

2. Sustainability by economy & social conditions.

- a) Save, Save & Save will be the mantra/slogan at every stage.

b) Saving at every area to be explained very clearly to make the whole exercise towards sustainability economical and yet efficient and effective.

c) Less input of water meaning reduction in chemical usage and limit the number of chemicals in the process to help lesser load on inventory and cash flow.

d) Move on from lengthy process to crispy process to economize the electricity cost, maintenance cost and wear and tear of the machine.

e) Education and upgradation of workers is very much required for a sustainable future.

f) Improving the social conditions of the workers and staffs of a tannery to make their life and family sustainable.

g) Best utilisation of the machines to get optimum results in the production.

h) Block Chain Management is required to avoid breakdown and last minute surprises.

i) Why, What & Which of every process including the end use to be well explained to all segments of the tannery to make a collective growth as a team and not individual centric.

j) Collection of Data at every stage on a daily basis to make everyone aware of their performance and the growth towards sustainability in process and production need to be shared and kept well informed.

3. Sustainability by reduction of waste and waste recycling

a) Starting from the collection of raw materials - the waste recycling need to be well defined and put in to practice.

b) Reduction of Salt or quick movement of Raw Material from slaughter house to the tannery is an important step.

c) Desalting and reusing of the salt is to be recorded and planned.

d) Unhairing by enzymes without Sodium Sulphide Flakes will have to be made mandatory.

e) Green Fleshing could help in saving the flesh going in to the dumps later. These Green flesh could be put in to multiple use.

f) Raw trimmings disposal and record on day to day basis is a must.

g) Mix of conventional tanning with rapid tanning methods could help in saving water, chemicals and wastages.

I would like to stop here. All these are good to speak from the podium and adding a ppt. Presentation will invite temporary appreciation and applause. And next day, all are busy preparing for that speech and seminars.

How much of these speeches go to the bottom line of the pyramid and how much data can be derived to prove that we have moved or moving on the sustainable path.

Make everyone a part of the process and you will see the progress. The Data thus collected on a day to day basis with some incentives to achieve such results will go a long way in accomplishing our vision about sustainability.

Let the speakers speak from their heart as to what do they understand and envisage by sustainability rather than a prepared paper presentation. And show by records as to what they have achieved in real terms at their tanneries and leading as an example.

Let sessions and meetings about sustainable practices and sustainability conducted at every tannery by other tanneries who have achieved good results, shared with Data to motivate everyone.

Real sustainability is about growing together and not about one or two units.

I wanted to be blunt as the Industry is under lot of pressure and it is high time we all come up with the results to satisfy the Environmental agencies, Government, Honourable Courts and above all our own team of people.



COTANCE announces three strategic pledges for 2026

COTANCE, the Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community, has announced three strategic pledges for 2026, to ensure that leather is recognised as a **natural, circular and responsibly** produced material that creates jobs and value from livestock residues, while positioning the European leather industry as innovative, competitive and attractive..

- **Pledge 1 - Reposition Leather in the EU Green Industrial Deal Agenda**

We will actively promote the recognition of leather - a *bio-based, circular, biodegradable* material - in at least two EU legislative files related to the bioeconomy and circular economy by 2026

- **Pledge 2 - Secure Fair EUDR Treatment for Leather & Advance Global Traceability**

We will continue advocating *for the exclusion of bovine hides, skins and leather from the scope of the EUDR as they do not drive deforestation, while advancing global leather traceability through the Leather Traceability Cluster.*

In 2026, we will advance global traceability through the Leather Traceability Cluster and secure CEN recognition of the EN 18199 traceability standard.

- **Pledge 3 - Boost R&D, Innovation & Skills**

We will strengthen European leather's green and digital transition by mobilising new research, technologies, and skills - and by supporting at least three EU-funded projects per year, including long-term funding for the LEATECH Erasmus Mundus Master in Innovative Leather Technology.

COTANCE remains committed to a vibrant, collaborative future for Europe's leather value chain - one built on science, innovation, and responsible production.



COTANCE AND INDUSTRIALL EUROPE ADOPT 2026–2030 SOCIAL DIALOGUE WORK PROGRAMME FOR A FUTURE-READY EUROPEAN LEATHER INDUSTRY

COTANCE and industriAll Europe, together with the European Commission, convened in Brussels for the Plenary Meeting of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee “Tanning & Leather” to assess the challenges of 2025 and formally adopt the **EU Leather Social Dialogue Work Programme 2026–2030** and the **Action Plan for 2026**.

The meeting took place at a critical moment for Europe’s industrial base.

As highlighted by industriAll Europe, *only one out of 18 key EU industrial sectors remains competitive* - signalling an urgent need for investment, strategic coordination and a rebalancing of EU industrial policy. The leather sector, a core pillar of the EU Textiles Ecosystem, is no exception.

“We must address the structural challenges that threaten our competitiveness. The European leather industry remains a sizeable, strategic sector - 1,500 companies, 30,000 direct jobs, and a unique role in the circular bioeconomy. But we must be recognised, consulted, and supported accordingly,” - said COTANCE Secretary General, Gustavo González-Quijano.

Key Policy Discussions with the European Commission

The meeting featured exchanges with DG GROW & DG EMPL on EU legislation, including:

- **Textile Labelling Regulation** (proposal expected Q2/Q3 2026), including EU-wide leather and fur authenticity rules;

- **Ecodesign & Digital Product Passport** for textile apparel - with indirect but significant implications for leather durability, recyclability and transparency;
- **EU Bioeconomy Strategy & Circular Economy Act** and the treatment of by-products, LCAs, public procurement and waste management;
- **EUDR**: the importance of the European Commission carrying out an impact assessment for leather in the EUDR.

The Social Partners jointly underlined the need for traceability systems that are achievable, fair, and aligned across the value chain, as well as for EU policies to better reflect the realities, strengths, and contributions of natural materials that already support Europe's green transition.



2026-2030 Social Dialogue Work Programme: A Strong Roadmap

The newly adopted roadmap builds on three pillars - **People, Planet and Prosperity** - and sets out a shared commitment to:

- strengthen the sector's skills, working conditions, and social sustainability;

- advance leather's environmental performance, traceability, and science-based policymaking that reflects its intrinsic values and exceptional performance;
- reinforce industrial resilience, innovation, and global competitiveness.

The Social Partners stressed the need for stronger scientific evidence and social policy, enhanced cross-sector cooperation, and full involvement of the leather industry in EU policy processes - particularly in areas where leather's unique characteristics require tailored approaches.

Judith Kirton-Darling, industriAll Europe's general secretary says: ***"At a time when Europe is losing industrial ground, protecting good jobs must be a political priority. The leather sector sustains thousands of skilled workers and is rooted in circularity. This work programme shows that the social partners are ready to drive a just transition, but we need coherent EU action, a level playing field, and investments in skills and quality jobs to make it happen. Through strong social dialogue and our long-standing cooperation with COTANCE, we will continue defending these jobs and shaping an industrial future where workers are respected, protected, and central to Europe's competitiveness."***

"EU policies cannot succeed if they overlook industries. Leather must be visible, consulted, and integrated into the EU's strategic vision. We are committed to doing our part - but we need a level playing field, coherent policies, and decisions grounded in science, not assumptions," - stated Gustavo González-Quijano.

Despite turbulent times, **COTANCE reaffirmed its strong commitment to the Social Dialogue**, to ensuring a just, green and digital transition, and to working closely with industriAll Europe and the European Commission throughout 2026 and beyond.



Inescop presents AIGEN4FASHION at the Footwearise 2025 International Footwear Congress

INESCOP is a Centre for Technology and Innovation, Spain, founded in 1971 as a private and non-profit making association. With more than 45 years of experience, the Institute works to provide technology services, transfer knowledge and conduct research on general relevant topics for the footwear sector.

This important footwear forum landed at the Ciudad de la Luz in Alicante, attracting hundreds of participants and companies from around the world, who were able to discover the AI-powered footwear sketching tool being developed by Inescop within the framework of the AIGEN4FASHION project.

The principal investigator of the AIGEN4FASHION project at Inescop, Dr. Juan José Hinojo Pérez, presented the advances developed within the framework of this research funded by Ivace+i at the **Footwearise 2025** congress. An event promoted by the international footwear innovation platform Footwearology, which brought together footwear manufacturers and experts from the Valencian Community and all over the world under the motto '**Fusing Fit, Feel and Fabrication**'.



Hinojo showcased the **technology developed in the project at a booth** where participants could learn how the tool works and the **benefits it offers for shoe sketching and design**. In addition, the Inescop researcher gave a presentation entitled **"Empowering Designers with AI: Smart Sketches for the Future of Footwear,"** focusing on the opportunities that generative AI opens up to accelerate not only creative processes but also technical design for manufacturing, thus reducing time to market for companies. Inescop's work on **AIKEN4FASHION** centers on generating **shoe sketches integrated into the user interface of CAD systems for technical shoe design**. These sketches, besides being visually appealing, include the innovative feature of **structurally adapting to digital lasts**, thus merging artistic vision with technical feasibility. *"The smart sketching solution leverages customized data and a specialized AI model to generate sketches aligned with shoe types, design characteristics, and manufacturing constraints,"* Juan José Hinojo emphasized in his presentation.



A design system that reduces design bottlenecks and minimizes errors, **enabling a more sustainable and efficient workflow between creative and technical designers**. The project's lead researcher highlighted at Footwearise the advantages of incorporating this technical capability into ICAD Evolve,

Inescop's proprietary CAD platform, thus facilitating direct integration into industrial environments to offer a practical, scalable, and inclusive design tool capable of adapting to the needs of the footwear industry.



Leading Footwear Congress: The Inescop

representative at Footwearise 2025 also participated in a debate with other experts on the **benefits and challenges of Generative Artificial Intelligence** in the footwear production chain. **Footwearise is a footwear innovation congress** that, after several editions held in Barcelona and Portland, has arrived at Ciudad de la Luz in Alicante to offer solutions to the challenges facing the footwear industry in a province that is strategic for the industry in our region.

Please visit our website:
www.indianleathermagazine.com



The SYL Project Successfully Concludes Its Mission to Make the Vegetable-Tanned Yak Leather Industry in Mongolia More Sustainable

The Sustainable Yak Leather (SYL) project consortium met on 4 and 5 November in Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) to hold its final project meeting and closing conference, officially marking the end of a fruitful four-year period of international collaboration within Mongolia's vegetable-tanned yak leather sector. Funded by the European Commission's SWITCH-Asia Grants Programme, the **SYL project** has contributed to transforming the sector through the **introduction of cleaner production processes**, technical training for tanneries, and the strengthening of the **vegetable-tanned yak leather cluster in Mongolia**.



Main Achievements

1. Reducing Environmental Impact

SYL has promoted the adoption of vegetable-tanning technologies and more sustainable processes within the yak leather cluster, **reducing the use of polluting chemicals and improving effluent and waste management**. These actions aimed to significantly reduce

the environmental footprint of the participating tanneries, in line with the project's initial objectives.

2. Improving Resource Efficiency

The project has fostered a **more efficient management of yak hides** from their source, improving traceability and reducing losses along the value chain. In addition, **specialised technical training** has been provided on optimising tanning processes and maintaining leather quality.

3. Embracing the Circular Economy and Accessing International Markets

One of the project's most significant achievements has been **the preparation of the Mongolian vegetable tanned yak leather sector to join sustainable international value chains**. In this regard:

- Specific training was provided to Mongolian tanneries on the **requirements and procedures for joining the Leather Working Group (LWG)** and other international certifications in sustainability, traceability and environmental responsibility.
- These actions have strengthened **the capacity of local companies to align with European market standards**, facilitating access to brands and clients that demand responsibly produced leather.
- A **“Guide for the Export of Vegetable-Tanned Yak Leather Products to Europe”** was developed, providing guidance on regulations, sustainability requirements, labelling and market opportunities.
- The project has also encouraged the creation of **higher added-value products, with improved quality, design and traceability**, reinforcing Mongolia's position as an emerging producer of sustainable yak leather.

Presentation of Results and Closing Conference

During the **final meeting**, the project partners - European Profiles S.A. (Coordinator), Vakakis and Associates, **Inescop**, the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI), the Hellenic Association of Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters (ELSEVIE), the Mongolian Association of Leather Industry (MALI) and Brand Gutal

LLC - **presented the main outcomes** and validated the success indicators achieved.

The closing conference brought together representatives from public institutions, tanners, industrial associations and international experts, **consolidating SYL's role as a catalyst for change** towards a more responsible, profitable and environmentally conscious yak leather production model.

During the conference, **Inescop, represented by Esperanza Almodóvar**, delivered a speech entitled *"Future Trends and Expected Status of the Global Leather Industry"*, which explored **current and emerging trends shaping the future of the global tanning sector**. The presentation highlighted that growth in the global leather market will continue to be driven by the fashion, automotive, furniture and luxury sectors. However, this growth will be influenced by environmental challenges, new regulations, competition from **alternative materials, and the adoption of environmental and social criteria** as purchasing factors.

After the event, the project managers were invited to the Parliament Palace in the Mongolian capital, where they held a meeting with Javkhlan Bayarsaikhan, the advisor to the President of Mongolia in charge of coordinating civil society projects and policies.

Future Impact and Legacy

The SYL project leaves a legacy that will enable Mongolia's vegetable-tanned yak leather cluster to continue advancing towards sustainability. The key long-term benefits include:

- **Enhanced technical capacities within the cluster** and its stakeholders to continue implementing cleaner and more efficient processes.
- The availability of **training materials and guides** that can serve as reference tools for future initiatives.
- Greater **access to European markets** thanks to compliance with quality, traceability and sustainability standards, allowing Mongolian companies to seize new export opportunities.
- **A replicable model for other leather or natural material sectors**, supporting the transition towards a circular economy.



APICCAPS promotes professional footwear in international markets.

The Portuguese footwear industry is strengthening its presence in international markets for professional and technical footwear, driven by APICCAPS' strategy and the expected growth in European investment in defense. The sector has set a goal of doubling exports of technical footwear to €100 million by 2030, a target that may even be revised upwards.

"It's an opportunity for our sector," emphasizes Luís Onofre, president of APICCAPS. According to him, Portugal "has a long tradition of supplying the main European security and military forces," so the budget increase foreseen in NATO countries "could open new business opportunities for the Portuguese industry."

The sector's dynamism is largely due to the FAIST mobilizing project, which brings together 45 partners and aims to develop advanced technology for the production of technical footwear.

According to Florbela Silva, coordinator of FAIST, "reindustrialization and high-productivity processes are allowing companies to produce faster, at competitive prices, and with the capacity to enter major international distribution chains." She assures that the project is "repositioning the Portuguese industry on an international level."

Reinaldo Teixeira, president of the Footwear Technology Center, reinforces this vision: "We have the knowledge, the installed capacity, and we are prepared to expand our offering, even in the military segment. Portugal today has all the conditions to establish itself as a benchmark in the development of technical footwear."

Portuguese companies respond to growing demand.

The evolution of the sector is widely recognized by companies. For Albano Fernandes, CEO of AMF, "professional footwear in Portugal

has evolved extraordinarily in the last 20 years." The increased demands of customers and regulators have driven constant innovation in materials, certification, and technology. "Today there is a growing demand for products of this nature," he states.

Teófilo Leite, president of the ICC, also highlights that "the national production of professional footwear is at the level of the best in the world." He recalls, however, that it is a highly regulated segment, with no room for improvisation. "Rigour and patience are fundamental, even before designing good models, choosing materials, investing in technology or building a brand."

Exports could exceed forecasts.

Given the installed capacity, technological investment and growing international demand, Luís Onofre admits that the goal of doubling exports of technical footwear to €100 million by 2030 could be surpassed.

APICCAPS thus reinforces its key role in promoting Portuguese professional footwear in international markets, promoting the presence of companies at international events and developing communication actions in strategic markets, especially European ones, in order to consolidate Portugal as one of the most advanced centers in the world in the production of high value-added technical footwear.

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10 - 13 JAN 2026 | RIVA DEL GARDA - ITALY

In an unstable context, the Riva del Garda trade fairs evolve to provide certainty

Every organisation evolves to more effectively adapt to its environment, overcome challenges and strengthen its position. This same principle guides Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, which from **10 to 13 January 2026** will once again host **Expo Riva Schuh and Gardabags**.

The upcoming edition – which, as customary, opens the **Autumn/Winter 2026–27 season** – builds on the proven strengths of its offering, while further evolving its services (including several new ones) to provide certainty and support to international manufacturers and buyers.

In a world marked by profound geopolitical instability and constant shifts in production and consumption markets, Expo Riva Schuh and Gardabags reaffirm their role as a space of genuine globalisation and an essential point of reference for the international footwear and leather goods industry.

EVOLUTION IN NUMBERS

The leading trade fairs dedicated to the production of **footwear, bags and leather goods, luggage and travel accessories** are recording figures for the winter edition that testify to their strength and appeal.

More than **1,000 brands and exhibitors will be present, representing 40 countries**. The event's geographical distribution reflects its **global vocation**: **40%** of exhibitors are from **Europe**, while the remaining **60%** come from **non-European** countries.

Looking more closely at country representation, China confirms its leading role with 33% of exhibitors, followed by Italy (16%), India (10%) and Turkey (9%).

Among the key new developments is the participation of **Colombia as a new exhibiting country at Expo Riva Schuh**, while for the first time, **Gardabags will welcome a group of Argentine companies**, further enriching the fair's international profile.

Gardabags will feature **over 80 companies** at the January edition, evenly distributed across its three strategic areas: **Brands, Sourcing4Bridge and Sourcing**. A well-balanced and diverse showcase designed to meet the needs of every type of buyer, delivering on its promise to address market demand across different business models. Among the exhibiting brands are prestigious names such as Pelletteria Charlotte, Marina Galanti, Luana Ferracuti, Armata di Mare, Y-dry, Nannini, Caleidos, American Traveller and Lancetti.

Expo Riva Schuh, meanwhile, boasts a strong presence of well-established, internationally **recognised brands**, including Fly London, Tamaris, XTI, Valleverde, Marco Tozzi, S.Oliver, Mjus, Bronx, Inblu, Jomos, Laura Vita, Refresh, Levi's Kids Footwear, Kangaroos, Lotto, Lee, Wrangler and O'Neill, offering visitors a comprehensive overview of collections for the upcoming season.

On the visitor side, the **Hosted Buyer program** once again confirms its effectiveness, with **120 hosted buyers: 15 focused exclusively on footwear, 30 on bags, and 75 interested in both sectors**. These professionals come from **26 different countries**.

EVOLUTION OF EVENTS

The program for the next edition features a total of **16 events**. A rich and varied schedule encompassing innovation, trends and networking.

The **Innovation Village**, located in Area A2, will host **10 start-ups from 7 countries**: Romania, the United States, Italy (with three projects), France (with two initiatives), the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and China. The startups will present their innovative ideas to the audience during three pitching sessions and compete in the **Startup Competition**, with the winner announced on the afternoon of Monday, 12 January.

The projects – selected by Retail Hub and the Scientific Committee composed of Enrico Cietta, Matteo Pasca and Alberto Mattiello – are: **Irisphera** (winner of the previous edition), **Chainlane**, **Lab-go**, **Metreecs**, **Musthad**, **Onefit.ai**, **Secret view**, **Smartzeroing**, **Solaya**, **TotallyInStore**.

To explore their proposals in more detail,

The **Highlights Area**, created in **collaboration with Arsutoria**, will host five events dedicated to **consumer trends**.

In Hall B4, the three sessions dedicated to footwear and sneakers will take place at 2pm on Saturday (men's and women's footwear), Sunday (sneakers) and Monday (men's and women's footwear). In Hall A2, the two sessions dedicated to men's and women's bags are scheduled for 10am on Sunday and Monday.

The samples showcased during these events will represent the four key trends of the season:

- *"Opulent Grace"* explores the return of Baroque influences. Velvets, brocades and metals become luminous, tactile surfaces, with gold and black balanced in a design language that blends theatricality with contemporary restraint.
- *"Heritage Remix"* looks to the past as living material, combining woven fabrics, tartan and handcrafted leathers with unexpected geometries and metallic details.
- *"Denim Renaissance"* marks the definitive rise of denim as a field for creative and inclusive experimentation, where washes, embroidery and patchwork transform it into a symbol of freedom.
- *"Wild Allure"* interprets the instinctive power of nature through animal textures, hair-on leathers and irregular surfaces that express a raw yet urban appeal.

The **Expo Riva Nights** format will once again offer the opportunity to combine business and networking in a relaxed and entertaining atmosphere at the PalaVela, within the Riva del Garda Conference Centre. An event made possible thanks to the support and collaboration of key partners: Ningbo Jade, CLP, G&F, L&C and Guogen.

The evolution of the fair is also reflected in its digital counterpart. Through the **official event app**, visitors can access the full program of events, the exhibitor and product catalogue, the interactive map, manage their appointment agenda with exhibitors, and obtain information on transfer and shuttle services. Featured exhibitors include Gardabags companies (highlighted in pink), as well as exhibitors presenting **children's products** only (highlighted in yellow).

EVOLUTION AS INNOVATION

In Hall A2, the **new Showcase Area** will be introduced – designed as a space in which to present **selected samples** of bags, leather goods and travel accessories **from the collections of Gardabags exhibitors**, all unified by a single colour theme inspired by the warm tones of the winter season. The Showcase Area has been created to highlight Gardabags product offerings, strengthening and supporting the storytelling of the fair's three key sectors.

Among the new features is **the launch of the Garda Trentino Lounge**, a new hospitality space for media, partners and guests located in Hall D, developed in partnership with Garda Dolomiti Azienda per il Turismo. The area has been conceived as a sensory and immersive experience, evoking the outdoor lifestyle of the Upper Garda region.

This new space reinforces one of the fair's core objectives: the inseparable bond between the event and its host territory. Visitors will thus be able to truly experience the excellence of the Garda landscape and hospitality, transforming professional meetings into a complete, multisensory experience.

Additional new features designed to enhance the trade fair experience include a new food area dedicated to **pizza** in Hall A3, and a stand distributing promotional **gadgets** in Hall C3.

Paraphrasing the renowned historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee, Expo Riva Schuh and Gardabags are “a movement and not a condition; a voyage and not a harbour.” They nurture their evolutionary spirit by delivering events with a truly global reach – events capable of hosting a community of professionals, helping them to continually strengthen networking and business opportunities.

Leather Auxiliaries – A Review PART – III

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(Contd. from November issue)

26. About UL ²⁶

As the global safety science leader, UL helps companies to demonstrate safety, enhance sustainability, strengthen security, deliver quality, manage risk and achieve regulatory compliance.

UL, LLC is a global safety certification company headquartered in Northbrook, Illinois.

It maintains offices in 46 countries. Established in 1894 as the Underwriters' Electrical Bureau (a bureau of the National Board of Fire Underwriters), it was known throughout the 20th century as Underwriters Laboratories and participated in the safety analysis of many of that century's new technologies.

UL is one of several companies approved to perform safety testing by the U.S. federal agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA maintains a list of approved testing laboratories, which are known as Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratories.

27. Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP)



Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP) is an independent, objective, non-profit team of global social compliance experts dedicated to promoting safe, lawful, humane and ethical manufacturing around the world through certification and education. It is Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia,

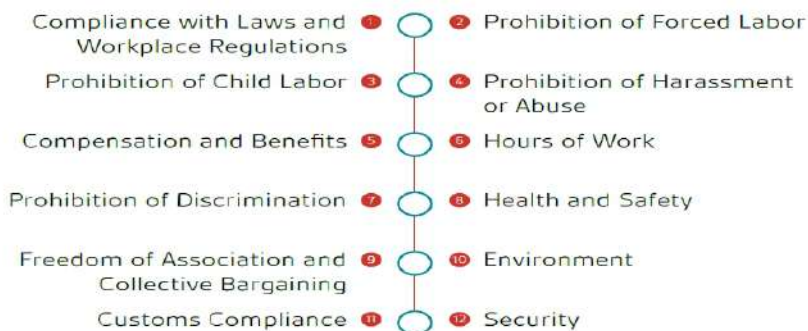
USA with offices in Hong Kong and Bangladesh and representatives in India and Southeast Asia.

WRAP was formed out of the desire to create an independent and objective body to help apparel and footwear factories around the world verify that they are operating in compliance with local laws and internationally-accepted standards of ethical workplace practices.

American Apparel Manufacturers Association (now the American Apparel and Footwear Association) moved to coordinate an industry response to the issues like excessive working hours, unsafe conditions, and the denial of several legally-mandated benefits to workers. Today, WRAP has grown to become a global leader in social compliance and a trusted independent supply chain partner for dozens of companies around the world. Its comprehensive facility-based model has made it the world's largest independent social compliance certification program for the apparel/footwear & sewn product sectors.

WRAP 12 Principles: The WRAP Principles are based on generally accepted international workplace standards, local laws and workplace regulations, and include the spirit or language of relevant conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The Principles encompass human resources management, health and safety, environmental practices, and legal compliance including import/export and customs compliance and security standards.

27.1 WRAP 12 Principles Figure – 27 A



Reference : 27. & Figure – 27 A .BSI group India Pvt. Ltd. is an approved WRAP Monitor visit at <http://www.wrapcompliance.org/documents/MonitorSelect.php>

Going Forward

Leather Chemicals and Auxiliary Manufacturers play a great role in the development, growth and sustainability of Leather Industry. It is an ongoing activity.

Besides Leather Chemicals & Auxiliaries, this industry has portfolios like Textile & Paper Auxiliaries, Performance Coatings, Polymers, Shoe Finish & Aftercare etc for catering the needs of allied industry.

Quality Assurance and Customer Support, having Center of Excellence and Application & Fashion Centres, Product stewardship, Products Launch, Sustainable Sourcing, Consumer Product Safety, Solutions & Services are key support areas for successful business activity.

Responsible Manufacturing, Clean Technologies Concept, Practising Green Chemistry & Sustainable Chemistry & Best Available Techniques, Getting Certifications to Standards, Having associations in Industry Organisations & Business Associations are gaining momentum for survival and growth and sustainability.

Innovations, Solutions to challenges faced by the Leather Industry and Extrapolating novel technology from allied industry would definitely help Leather Industry for successfully facing the competition from Synthetics and other non-leathers products. The Leather Chemicals and Auxiliary Manufacturers would do a major contribution in this regard.

Leading players in Leather Auxiliaries industry have adopted various strategies to achieve additional market share. Key strategies adopted by these players include product launch, joint venture, acquisition, partnership, expansion, and investment.

Leather Auxiliaries and Chemical manufacturers of both National & Global, have been accredited to Relevant certification and audit bodies active in the leather industry. Global players also show their ESG Commitments (A set of environmental, social and governance factors). Chemical Management System (ZDHC) is actively implemented for offering safe products.

Innovative and ECO Products Launch, CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY, LEATHER SOLUTIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE TANNERIES, Solutions tailored to each tanner process and related activities are becoming focus areas of Leather Auxiliaries and Chemical Manufacturers for offering Total Solutions to Leather Industry.

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(End)

Strategy and Leather Industry Part – I

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1. Introduction

The leather industry is a significant contributor to the global economy, with the export of leather shoes, footwear and goods being a major driver of growth.

Despite the economic benefits of exporting leather products, businesses face a range of challenges that can impede their success in this area. In this article, we will explore the challenges that leather product exporters face and how they can overcome them.

Challenges in Exporting Leather Products - High Competition, Quality Standards, Environmental Regulations, Tariffs and Trade Barriers, Shipping and Logistics, Intellectual Property Protection and Cultural and Language Barriers.

Overcoming the Challenges - Quality Control, Compliance with Environmental Regulations, Market Research. Strategic Partnerships, Efficient Supply Chain Management, Intellectual Property Protection and Multilingual Marketing and Sales. ¹

2. Strategy

Strategy is a general plan to achieve one or more long-term or overall goals under conditions of uncertainty.

Strategy is important because the resources available to achieve goals are usually limited. Strategy generally involves setting goals and priorities, determining actions to achieve the goals, and mobilizing resources to execute the actions. A strategy describes how the ends (goals) will be achieved by the means (resources).

Strategy can be intended or can emerge as a pattern of activity as the organization adapts to its environment or competes.^[4] It involves activities such as strategic planning and strategic thinking.

2.1 Strategy - Definition Table – 2 A

2.1 Strategy - Definition Table – 2 A

- **Strategy as plan – a directed course of action to achieve an intended set of goals; similar to the strategic planning concept;**
- **Strategy as pattern – a consistent pattern of past behavior, with a strategy realized over time rather than planned or intended. Where the realized pattern was different from the intent, he referred to the strategy as emergent;**

2.1 Strategy - Definition Table – 2 A

- **Strategy as position** – locating brands, products, or companies within the market, based on the conceptual framework of consumers or other stakeholders; a strategy determined primarily by factors outside the firm;
 - **Strategy as play** – a specific manoeuvre intended to outwit a competitor; and
- **Strategy as perspective** – executing strategy based on a "theory of the business" or natural extension of the mindset or ideological perspective of the organization.

Complexity theorists define strategy as the unfolding of the internal and external aspects of the organization that results in actions in a socio-economic context.

Source : 2. & Table – 2 A .Strategy, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

3. Strategy basics

Strategy basics involve setting goals, identifying how to achieve those goals, and aligning resources to execute the plan. In essence, it is about making informed choices about how to achieve desired outcomes. A good strategy requires a clear vision, a focused approach, and effective communication.

3.1 Key Elements of Strategy Table – 3 A

- **Goals:** Define the desired outcomes or objectives.
- **Choice:** Selecting the specific approach or path to achieve the goals.
- **Approach:** Outlining the specific actions and tactics to implement the chosen strategy.
 - **Resource Allocation:** Determining how resources (time, money, personnel) will be used to support the strategy.
 - **Execution:** Putting the plan into action and monitoring progress.
 - **Evaluation and Adjustment:** Continuously assessing the effectiveness of the strategy and making necessary adjustments.

3.2 Strategic Planning Process: Table – 3B

3.2 Strategic Planning Process: Table – 3B

1. **Define Vision and Mission:** Establish the organization's long-term aspirations and its core purpose.

3.2 Strategic Planning Process: Table – 3B

2. **Conduct Situational Analysis:** Assess both the internal and external environment, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis).
3. **Set Strategic Goals:** Establish measurable objectives that align with the vision and mission.
4. **Develop Strategies:** Create plans for achieving the strategic goals, considering various options and potential challenges.
5. **Implement and Execute:** Put the strategies into action, allocate resources, and track progress.
6. **Review and Refine:** Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments based on results.

3.3 Levels of Strategy: Table – 3 C

3.3 Levels of Strategy: Table – 3 C

- **Corporate Strategy:** Determines the overall direction of the organization, including which businesses to be in and how to allocate resources across different units.
- **Business Unit Strategy:** Focuses on how to compete in specific markets or industries.
- **Functional Strategy:** Deals with the specific strategies within functional areas like marketing, finance, or operations.
- **Operational Strategy:** Concerned with the day-to-day operations and the efficient execution of the overall strategy.

3.4 Key Considerations: Table – 3 D

3.4 Key Considerations: Table – 3 D

- **Choice:** Strategy requires making choices and focusing on a few key areas rather than trying to do everything.
- **Alignment:** Strategy should align the efforts of the entire organization towards common goals.
- **Communication:** Effective communication is essential for ensuring that everyone understands the strategy and how it supports their work.

3.4 Key Considerations: Table – 3 D

- **Flexibility:** Strategies need to be adaptable and responsive to changing circumstances.
- **Data and Analytics:** Utilizing data and analytics to track performance, identify trends, and make informed decisions.

Source : 3 & Tables – 3A & 3B & 3C & 3D SG-3-Strategy basics
<https://www.google.com/search>

4.Strategy basics

Strategy is one of the most powerful tools for change-leadership. Yet it is heavily misunderstood, underutilized, and abused.

4.1 A brief list of words that are often confused with strategy Table-4A

4.1 A brief list of words that are often confused with strategy Table – 4 A

- **Vision** is the long-term future state an organization hopes to achieve. It is a statement of the organization's aspirations and what it hopes to achieve in the long term. The vision is often more focused on the future and provides a sense of direction for the organization's activities.
- The **mission** of an organization is its overall purpose or reason for existence. It is a statement of the organization's values and the impact it hopes to have on the world. The mission is often more focused on the present and provides the framework for the organization's activities and operations.
- **Goals** are specific, measurable targets that an organization aims to achieve in order to fulfil its mission and vision. They are the intermediate steps (usually for 1-5 years)
- **Objectives** are specific, measurable targets that an organization sets in order to achieve its goals (usually for 1-4 quarters). Many companies use OKRs (objectives and key results) with clear metrics that can tell how the objective is doing. Different teams may have different objectives that support one overall goal.

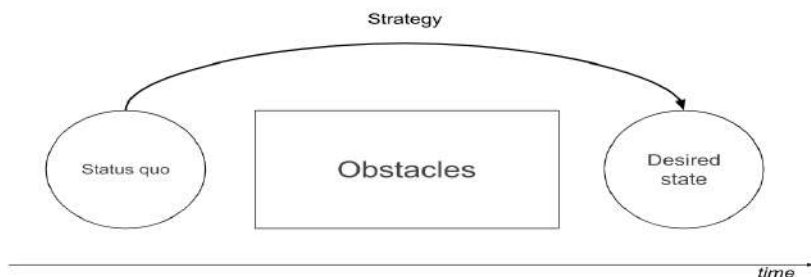
4.1.1 A brief list of words that are often confused with strategy Table – 4 B

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- Roadmap outlines the steps an organization will take to achieve its goals and objectives
- Plan is a more concrete version of the roadmap with the time and resources
- Milestones are key events or achievements that mark significant progress towards the completion of goals or objectives
- Policies are fixed guidelines that direct smaller decisions on a day-to-day basis and establish a process
- Tactics are concrete actions to fix a problem or achieve a short-term objective (more on this later)

At a very high level, strategy is a tool of alignment and change leadership. Usually there are some large and long-term problems without a straightforward path forward due to obstacles.

4.2 Strategy – Status Quo to Desired State Figure – 4 C



- For a strategy to deliver its full potential, it must meet a certain shape and criteria.
- Strategy is a big gun for big problems.
- It takes a lot of time, research, collaboration thinking and deliberate effort to create an effective strategy. In fact, most things flying in the name of “strategy” don’t pass the mark and inevitably fail.

4.3 Three key elements of a good strategy: Table 4 D

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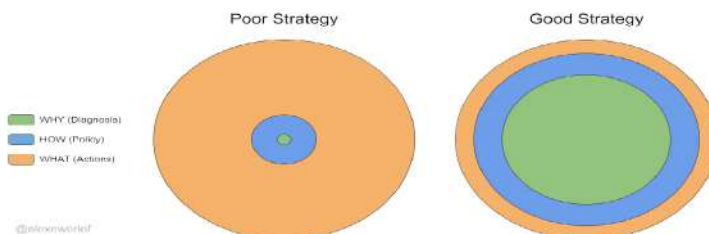
1. Diagnosis is the result of researching the problem space and identifying the key issues to solve as well as their reasoning. It answers WHY a strategy should exist? What are the symptoms and root causes? How are those root causes validated? And why are those root causes important now? This part is often missing from a bad strategy or at best is limited to an account of the status quo. A good diagnosis requires a detective hat and objective research. It is hard work, but it pays back multifold. To utilize the collective “parallel processing” power of the organization, we first need to be on the same page about WHY.

2. Guiding policy is the high-level approach to solving the identified and validated problems. The policy makes choices and gives focus to the solution and aligns the organization. It liberates the organization from going back to the drawing board for every single tactical minutia. Bad strategy fails to connect the policy (HOW) to the diagnosis (WHY).

3. Coherent actions lay a roadmap for implementing the solution in compliance with the guiding policy to tackle the diagnosis. It lists WHAT steps should be taken by WHO and WHEN. The keyword here is “coherent” as in: different teams and individuals take actions that fit together so we can all push in the same direction.

In reality, those three elements don't get the same amount of attention. Bad strategy is heavy on actions (tactical) while starving the diagnosis.

Good Strategy and Poor Strategy Figure – 4 E



The fact that the bulls eye looks like an easier hit target in the right image isn't a coincidence

Source : 4 & Tables – 4 A & 4 B & 4 D and Figures – 4 C & 4 E. Strategy basics, Alex Ewerlöf Notes

(to be Contd.)

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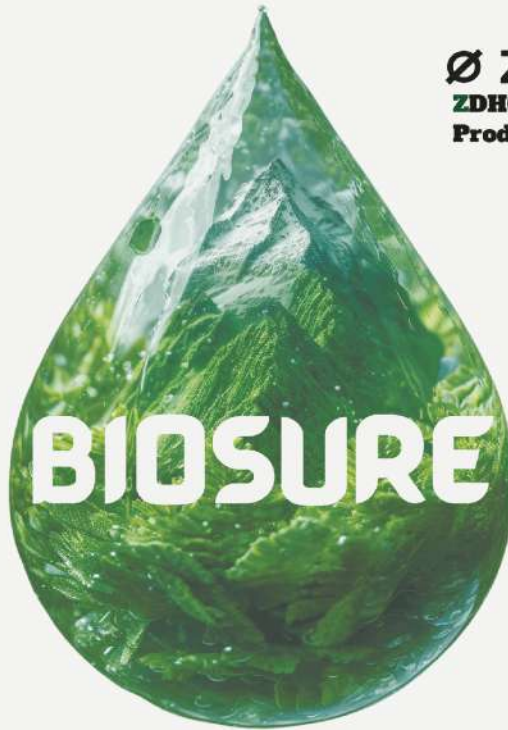


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