

Product Release

Leather: Efficient solutions, naturally innovative

- LANXESS launches new organic tanning technology
- Innovative contribution to Sustainable Leather Management by LANXESS

Mumbai, September 15, 2011 – Leather is a natural product that has been known and valued since ancient times. With increasing urbanization, improving lifestyles, fast changing fashion trends, leather has only become an indispensable item for shoes, bags, belts and other accessories that we use in our daily lives. Over the years, the demands made on leather have continually increased – not just with regard to its properties and production efficiency, but now particularly with regard to industrial safety, environmental conservation, consumer protection and most importantly sustainability.

From the evolution of leather tanning, it is clear that sustainability is key to the survival of leather industry. The environmental footprint has to be reduced throughout the life cycle of leather. LANXESS has launched the “Sustainable Leather Management” (SLM) initiative – a unique technology platform for premium products and system solutions that are specifically tailored to environment-friendly leather production. SLM is not just a collection of individual process parameters; it is a holistic concept that tackles the challenges of sustainable development systematically along the entire value added chain. It is interesting to note that today the production of 1 square meter of leather through best available technology, requires 10 times less water than manufacture of jeans that we all wear.

Interestingly, LANXESS offers a broad range of products for all stages of leather manufacture from the wet end to finishing. These include inorganic and synthetic/organic tanning materials, preservatives and tanning auxiliaries, fatliquoring agents and dyestuffs, and finishing products such as polyurethane dispersions, acrylates and auxiliaries. These include premium products made through energy-saving and resource-conserving production processes that minimize waste and the use of critical substances in leather manufacture.

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Transforming the hairy skin of an animal into a product into something one can feel comfortable with, is a complex chemical process. Tanning involves inter-linking the protein fibers in the hide or skin with the help of tanning materials and tanning auxiliaries. This breaks down the vulnerable, perishable skin into a water resistant and supple material that retains its shape when made into articles, yet conforms to the individual shape of the users like foot for making shoes.

Over the years, the tanning procedures have undergone several stages of evolution, which involved several toxic substances. Modern chemistry has transformed the smelly tanning process of the previous era to a more sophisticated, safe and clean one.

Today, chrome tannage is by far the most commonly used tanning method as it has several advantages from both an application and economic point of view. It is used for the production of shoes, furniture upholstery and clothing leather, as it is suitable for nearly all types of leather. Even from an environmental viewpoint it is a favorable and safe tannage if operated correctly according to modern standards. However, for some applications and articles, metal free leather characteristics are technically required. For certain applications like dashboards and door panels in automotive use, organic tanning systems like wet white tanning yield better results.

Recently, LANXESS has launched a new type of robust organic tanning process for high-quality leather which has outstanding environmental properties. X-Tan from LANXESS is an organic tanning system that combines top quality with economic and ecological advantages. It offers numerous advantages with regard to sustainability. At no stage during the tanning process are any substances formed that could be harmful to health or the environment. The leather, shavings and wastewater contain no reactive tanning materials and adsorbable organic halogen compounds (AOX) or aldehydes. And because no pickling is required, the salt load of the wastewater is much lower. Thus X-Tan makes an important contribution to protecting water as a natural resource.

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At the same time, this completely new technology makes it possible to obtain whiter leathers than ever before. Compared with the current market standard, X-Tan also has noticeably better dyeability – after the tanning process the leather is almost white. As a result of the excellent dye uptake, brilliant colors can be obtained. Further more, the leather has good physical properties: X-Tan offers effective protection against shrinkage at high temperatures and particularly good tear resistance.

The new X-Tan technology has been designed to extend and enhance the company's product portfolio for sustainable leather production in line with the SLM initiative.

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About LANXESS

LANXESS is a leading specialty chemicals company with sales of EUR 7.1 billion in 2010 and currently around 15,500 employees in 30 countries. The company is at present represented at 46 production sites worldwide. The core business of LANXESS is the development, manufacturing and marketing of plastics, rubber, intermediates and specialty chemicals.

Forward-Looking Statements.

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Information for editors:

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