

Next STeP: OEKO-TEX® expands Sustainable Textile Production to include leather products

The benefits of leather are clear to see

In addition to their captivating visual appearance, leather products are characterised by their extraordinary longevity, their unique patina and their impression of high quality. Consumers are thus happy to fall back on leather, a natural product – from lambskins for babies to furniture or vehicle fittings to clothing and accessories. However, for consumers it is also increasingly important that these leather articles are tested for harmful substances and that they are produced in a sustainable way.

When it comes to environmentally friendly production, the leather industry is still in its infancy. With the Sustainable Textile and Leather Production Certification (in short, STeP), which will be launched from 01 April 2019, OEKO-TEX® is taking a giant step towards environmental protection and sustainability, also in leather processing. Until now, certification according to STeP by OEKO-TEX® was only available to producers within the textile supply chain. At the same time, the new OEKO-TEX® regulations will come into force definitively from 01 April 2019 following a three-month transition period.

The environmental impacts of leather production are enormous: for example, the heavy metal chromium is used as standard to tan the leather; however, the leather can only absorb and bind around 60 percent of the chromium used during the tanning process. The rest is discharged into water. STeP helps manufacturers to design production processes that are more environmentally friendly and sustainable, and to communicate these services to others in a transparent way. In the context of active consumer protection, brands and retail companies can draw on products from certified facilities.

“The demand for articles that have been tested for harmful substances and which have been manufactured in a sustainable and socially fair way is increasing - also with regard to leather articles. Consumers quickly learn that their buying decisions have an influence on their families and our environment. Brands, retailers and manufacturers must be equipped for this awakening and with STeP we can offer them an ideal tool to do so,” commented Georg Dieners, OEKO-TEX® General Secretary. Certification according to STeP by OEKO-TEX® is possible for production facilities at all stages of processing: from the beamhouse to the tannery to finishing and making up. The modular analysis of all relevant areas of a company such as chemicals management, environmental performance, environmental management, operational safety, social responsibility and quality management enables STeP to conduct a comprehensive and reliable analysis of the sustainability of the facilities and where there is still potential for improvement. The aim of STeP certification is the long-term implementation of environmental production processes and socially acceptable working conditions. In doing so, comprehensive internal quality management is unavoidable. In addition,

unannounced external audits are also regularly carried out at the local production facilities to check compliance with the required criteria.

About OEKO-TEX®

With 25 years of experience, OEKO-TEX® leads the world in empowering and enabling consumers and companies to protect our planet by making responsible decisions. OEKO-TEX® provides standardised solutions which optimise customers' manufacturing processes and help deliver high quality, more sustainable products. All of the products within the OEKO-TEX® portfolio are used to strengthen our customers' systems, processes or products and, ultimately, they help create more sustainable companies. To date, 10,000 manufacturers, brands, and retailers in almost 100 countries are working with OEKO-TEX® to ensure that their products are tested for potentially harmful substances and millions of consumers around the world look for OEKO-TEX® labels before making buying decisions. OEKO-TEX® certified products and suppliers can be located in the OEKO-TEX® Online Buying Guide at www.oeko-tex.com/products. Connect with OEKO-TEX® on Facebook, on LinkedIn, and on Twitter.