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Report from APLF Leather & Materials+

29 March 2017



The 33rd edition of APLF is underway, now rebranded as APLF Leather & Materials+ to meet growing needs within the fashion industry where the sports casual, or athleisure, trend is booming among millennials in many Asian countries.

At the opening press conference, APLF director Michael Duck started by emphasising how the footwear sector was weak during the fair last year, and after hitting historical highs in 2014, leather priced itself out of the market, losing market share in shoe manufacturing to cheaper oil-based synthetics. Prices for low-grade leather hit rock bottom last year and manufacturers snapped up cheap splits for sole leather.

Other speakers included Steve Sothmann, president of the USHSLA, who gave a relatively positive overview of raw materials from the US. The herd growth of 2016 was continuing due to positive feed conditions and abating drought. The herd size is up 2% from the beginning of 2016 and slaughter is up 5%, noting that US manufacturers are getting more yield from each animal, so the processing is becoming more efficient. But the major issues that still exist are Decree No. 159, a new regulation in China that oversees imports into China concerning all non-edible animal by-products, including hides and skins. And the other "big blow" being the US's extraction from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), which would severely affect its trade relationship with Japan, the biggest export market for US beef.

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