

Brands discuss sustainability at Hong Kong panel

Hong Kong
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The Leather and Sustainability in Retail Hong Kong conference on March 30 concluded with a discussion panel consisting of several industry experts in the field of environmental sustainability including leading brands and retailers.

The 100 delegates attending the afternoon conference hosted during the APLF fair last week were able to put questions to a panel featuring representatives from the ZDHC Foundation, Louis Vuitton, Adidas, Deichmann, Smit & zoon and Primark.

The panel consisted of a diverse background of businesses and organisations, but the one thing they had in common was a desire to see continuing improvements on environmental and ethical manufacture and sourcing from the leather supply chain.

Representing LVMH, Hugues Pichon, Project Director responded to a question from ILM about how the Group controls the sourcing of its raw materials. "As well as having control of some of our own tanneries we also work very closely with our other leather suppliers to ensure that all our hides and skins are sourced responsibly within the luxury segment. We have good and longstanding relationships with our supplier tanneries", he said.

In response to another question, Pichon said that the company had joined the Leather Working Group around two years ago and that today around 40% of its supplier tanneries were currently LWG rated. He said that the Group had "no official target" but that it would like to see that figure increase to around 80% by 2018.

On the subject of LWG rated tanneries, Austin Davidsen representing Adidas stated that the company had been engaged with the LWG since 2006 and today virtually all its leather suppliers (99%) were LWG rated.

Ireland headquartered High Street fashion clothing retailer Primark stated its commitment to a more transparent leather supply chain. Charles Dickinson, representing the retail chain on the panel, said that the company had been working closely with the ZDHC Foundation, particularly in the textiles industry, to meet its objectives towards a Manufacturing Restricted Substance List (MRSL) goals from its suppliers (estimated to be around 700 in total). Dickinson said that around only 1% of the company's range consisted of leather made products but he said that they had noticed a growth in demand for leather footwear at its 290 stores. "Sustainability is not a badge. It is a way of doing business", he told delegates saying that the company regularly visits tier-1, 2 and 3 suppliers to check they meet its environmental and ethical criteria and they take samples from water treatment facilities to monitor the use of chemicals used in manufacture so that they comply with ZDHC MRSL limits.



Panel members: (Left to right) Frank Michel, Executive Director, ZDHC Foundation Hugues Pichon, Project Director, Louis Vuitton Austin Davidsen, Senior Manager, Footwear Materials – Leather, Adidas Dorothea Flockert, Global Project Manager CSR, Deichmann Hans van Haarst, CEO, Smit & zoon Charles Dickinson, Environmental Sustainability Controller – Ethical Trade, Primark

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