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# Signs of optimism from APLF Leather & Materials+ and Fashion Access

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A reference for the leather sector and usually seen as a barometer for the global performance of this industry, the APLF Leather and Materials+ trade fair closed with a sense of moderate optimism about the future

The latest edition of the APLF Leather & Materials+ and Fashion Access took place from the 29th of March to the 31st of March at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. With a new revamped format for the components fair, put in place to cater the new sports casual and athleisure trends, APLF aims to position itself as a **business platform where contracts are effectively discussed and signed** during the event. Two complementary trade fairs in one place, and the opportunity to engage with all the different actors of the leather supply chain. That seems to be the way going forward for **APLF Leather and Materials+** and **Fashion Access**. In the 2018 edition the organizers expect to also add **Cashmere World**, having an even **broader** spectrum of action.

According to the organisers APLF Limited and UBM Asia Limited: "the different sectors present at the fair described the days as **busy and vibrant**, in a clear change from the last two years". UBM added that this "seems to be consistent with the trend seen in other trade fairs organized by UBM in the region".

The organisers recalled the improvement from last year: "This time last year leather was still recovering from the hangover of record high prices reached in September 2014 and demand had suffered as designers and manufacturers turned to cheaper oil-based synthetic materials to replace leather and thus protect their profit margins (...) One year later **leather appears to be coming back into favor** with both designers and manufacturers as the crude oil price has risen by around 37% to 55 US dollars a barrel from the 40 US dollars a barrel ruling at the time of last year's APLF. In fact, renowned commentators on the leather industry are for the first time in more than three years seeing some "green shoots" in terms of leather demand from footwear manufacturers".

After a busy edition of the fair, with total attendance in the area of **26 914**, **moderated optimism** seems to be on most people's mind, and some believe "2017 will be the turning point for leather footwear", as innovative ways of using the leather are being developed.

The organizers underlined the positive balance of the APLF Leather & Materials+ and Fashion Access, and confirmed the dates for the next edition: **14th to 16th of March 2018** with Cashmere World 2018 joining forces. This will result in a format of 3 fairs in 1 for the 2018 edition.

As for the numbers, a total of **856 companies exhibited** their products during the 3 days of the **APLF Leather & Materials+**. China, with a total of 158 companies, and Italy, with 151 companies, were the two countries with the most representative presence. India (70), Pakistan (53), Hong Kong (51) and Turkey (50) followed. All other countries had less than 50 companies exhibiting.

**51.3%** of all companies present at the APLF Leather & Materials+ belonged to the **Finished Leather** sub sector. Bonded, Synthetic, Advanced Functional Materials, Woven & Natural Materials followed with 8.8% of the companies. Semi-Finished and Crust Leather with 8.5% of the companies was the third sector most represented. 856 companies, including 222 first-time exhibitors from 26 countries and regions, and 24 group pavilions from 19 countries and regions (including Bangladesh, Brazil, Germany, Japan, United States, Spain, UK and Uganda, amongst others) were distributed along the 25.000 sqm space.

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**Fashion Access** with a comprehensive range of fashion products including bags (51%), small leather goods and accessories (21%), footwear (15%) and garments (10%), amongst others, counted with 262 exhibitors from 22 countries and regions, and 10 group pavilions. China was the country most represented, with 105 exhibitors, followed at a distance by Hong Kong (57) and India (33).

For more information about APLF Leather & Materials+ and Fashion Access please refer to the website [www.aplf.com](http://www.aplf.com).

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