The best leather on show in Shanghai in September

May 31, 2012 (Hong Kong)

The All China Leather Exhibition (ACLE) has become the significant event for the global leather market in China. Annually under one roof international and domestic companies show their newest leather products to buyers predominantly from China.

Not surprising, therefore, that more foreign exhibitors from across the globe also have hooked their place in the 15th edition of ACLE to be held in Shanghai from 4-6 September 2012.

For this year, the focus country is Turkey, through the support of the Aegean Exporters' Association. Expect more Turkish tanneries at the fair with the Turkish pavilion space increased by 25%.

A total of 18 other international pavilions are confirmed: Australia, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Pakistan, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand and USA. Brazil has expanded its pavilion space by 10%.

Also gratifying to note is that other long-time exhibitors are increasing the size of their booths. This year, space booking is up by 33%. Altogether ACLE will occupy 7 halls (Halls E1 - E7), of which 2.5 halls (28,000 sqm) are for international exhibitors, and 4.5 halls (52,500 sqm) for domestic parts, products and machinery.

One exhibitor to watch out for is Heller-Leder from Germany who will be showing their beautiful olive-tanned leather which won the Best New Leather award at the Materials, Manufacturing & Technology fair in Hong Kong last March.

There will be 22 new exhibitors at this year's fair. Two countries - Uruguay and Nicaragua - will be represented for the first time.

The increased participation of international tanneries and leather companies is in recognition of China's relevance as a major market for leather. Despite continued economic difficulties in some parts of the world, and indeed within China itself, it remains very much the only major economy storming ahead and generating new demand for leather.

Rising living standards in emerging markets in Asia bring with them demands for leather of higher quality, broader range, and better price. Chinese consumers in particular, demand more sophisticated designs in their leather products, be it garments, upholstery, or footwear.

There is a cause for concern, however, with the shortfall in the supply of hides and skins that has resulted in higher-pegged prices affecting all levels of the supply chain, from tanners and manufacturers of leather goods to retailers.

This has led to the growing use and acceptance of lower quality leather or synthetics made to look like leather in garments, footwear and car upholstery. Some vehicle manufacturers, for example, use a decent quality leather on the outer parts of the seat, but something much inferior – even synthetics – in the less visible parts.

Although this practice might help meet consumers’ demand for lower-priced yet fashionable items, this changes the perception of leather as a luxury product. This is another issue that needs to be addressed and, hopefully, exhibitions like ACLE will help elevate leather standards in the markets.

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