

Leather Naturally calls for industry unity to fight for leather

Hong Kong

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Leather Naturally, the initiative to promote a positive and truthful image of the global leather manufacturing industry, met for a breakfast meeting during the APLF in Hong Kong on March 15 to outline its recent work and to listen to new ideas around the future steps the initiative should take.

Egbert Dikkers, Chairman of the Leather Naturally (LN) steering committee, outlined recent activity of the initiative to an audience of around 100+ industry stakeholders mostly representing tanners, raw materials traders and meatpackers, and chemical suppliers.

“There is a lot of ‘fake news’ and negative press about the leather industry and we have been working to confront some of the misinformed reports in the media, social media and online such as that animals are killed for their skins or the misuse of the term ‘leather’ by non-leather materials trying to imitate the real thing,” said Dikkers.

LN has recently added ten new members and, although it does not have a legal structure, it has been gathering industry support from those companies and organisations that are aware that the whole leather supply chain is under attack, and there is currently no single global organisation that is addressing any negative press or looking to reach out to the consumer to change the public perception about leather. Left unchallenged, the industry is in danger of losing further market share to other materials or a negative public view.

Following a short presentation from Egbert Dikkers, the audience was invited to put forward its views and suggestions as to how Leather Naturally should take its next steps. One message that was loud and clear from the meeting is that everyone that earns a living from the leather supply chain has a stake in LN and its eventual success or failure. It was requested during the meeting that any internal industry politics or agendas be put aside for the greater good of the industry and its future.

During the open discussion there was a number of positive and thought-provoking suggestions put forward including the following:

- A media and social media campaign to reach out to the consumer, in particular those aged under 30.
- The establishment of a “woolmark” type campaign for leather.
- The implementation of “media contacts” located globally to put forward an accurate position from the industry.
- Ongoing work to protect the word ‘leather’ and its misuse by other materials.

- Focus on the positive aspects of leather: natural, high performance, sustainable, longevity and craftsmanship
- Focus on reaching out to designers and specifiers, highlighting leathers benefits opposed to plastics and other synthetic materials.
- Promotion of the natural and health benefits of leather

Leather Naturally has produced a fact sheet about leather and posters were displayed throughout the APLF this year. It is also working on a “sustainability” white-paper and drafting a campaign, on a limited budget, to reach out to the consumer as well as stylists, designers and materials buyers about the natural and sustainable characteristics of leather as well as many of its high-tech and high-performance applications.

A short video was also presented during the meeting highlighting the fact that the vast majority of leather made today is produced by responsible leather makers. Click [here](#) to view the video.

Any company or organisation connected to the leather supply chain globally is free to join the Leather Naturally initiative and stakeholders are asked for a US\$2000 annual fee to become part of the initiative.

In general, the meeting was very positive and the momentum behind Leather Naturally continues to grow, yet, it still requires a lot more action and industry engagement to be a truly effective campaign to improve the image of the material. The leather supply chain needs push back against the negative and untruthful reporting that is taking place on a daily basis, especially online from a number of anti-meat and leather campaign groups and NGOs.

Further information about Leather Naturally can be found at www.leathernaturally.org



Egbert Dikkers, Chairman of the Leather Naturally steering committee

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- **[Animal welfare expert to speak at Hong Kong Sustainability Conference](#)**
- **[APLF Leather fair off to a flyer](#)**
- **[Adidas to present at Hong Kong Sustainability Conference](#)**