

'Green' leather is in this season

Fashionista's after the latest in leather bags could soon have a 'greener' selection to choose from. Scientists in India have modified the tanning process making it far more eco-friendly, reports Anne Pichon in *Chemistry & Industry* magazine.

Tanning is a complex chemical process used to transform perishable raw hides and skins into durable leather. Unfortunately, as a result, high levels of pollution are released into the water. Raghava Rao and his team at the Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI) in Adyar have modified the process to make it into an eco-friendly, cost-efficient method.

The researchers found that simply reversing the order of the tanning and post-tanning steps can drastically improve the process. By also promoting non-chemical-based pre-tanning methods, they have reduced the amount chemicals released by 82% and made an energy saving of nearly 40% (*Journal of Chemical Technology and Biotechnology*, doi: 10.1002/jctb.1727).

According to Rao, "The significance is tremendous in the context of environmental challenges being faced by the leather industry". Most importantly, no loss of the leather quality was observed when compared with conventional tanning methods.

Source: Society of Chemical Industry

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