

LANXESS at the All China Leather Exhibition 2018 – Follow-Up by Mr. Luis López-Remón, Senior Vice President of LANXESS' Leather Business Unit

Being back from the fair – what was your personal impression?

Even if ACLE is still THE international leather fair for the industry with exhibitors from around 40 countries, the percentage of foreign visitors seems to be declining.

I noticed that the fair is no longer as crowded as it was before, but it is still very important for us.

China produces most of the leather in the world and is a leading country in footwear and automotive – two focus segments for us. With our production setup and technical application lab in Changzhou we stay close to our customers to meet their demands on time, complemented by our global setup and expertise.

Looking around the fair – what was the main motto?

A lot of companies are focusing on sustainability, waterborne solutions, and green chemistry – and so do we. With our “Sustainable Leather Management” initiative we have a holistic approach and are bringing economic interests, ecological soundness, and consumer benefit into line.

What are the challenges for the leather industry?

I see various focal points.

The image of leather – especially the throwaway society does not value leather. They do not consider it a truly sustainable, comfortable, and beautiful “must-have.” Substitution of leather by textile especially for sport/leisure shoes, but also in automotive, is ongoing.

The regulatory burdens are increasing, putting tremendous pressure on chemicals and processes.

The geopolitical situation around the world is tense and slows down production and consumption.

All in all the market is declining and everybody is fighting for business.

What about LANXESS' leather solutions?

We are observing the market challenges and requirements very intensely to be among the first offering solutions to our customers. To give you one example:

The new Chinese legislation for vehicle interior air quality (VIAQ) led us to analyze the odor of automotive leather more fully and to develop new chemical solutions for our customers. During the fair we held a seminar to explain the problem of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) and odor in car interiors. We explained how we support tanners and OEMs with our technical expertise and solutions to overcome these challenges and meet the requirements. The event was well attended, which shows me that we are on the right track.