

AN EYE OPENER - WORLD LEATHER CONGRESS, MILAN

-V.S. Ravindran, CEO, Caprittarius

It was an interesting moment for me to visit the **Lineapelle, the Milan fair** during September 15. On the invitation from **World Leather Congress** I attended the Congress prior to the fair. The Congress program gave an opportunity to discuss some of the pressing worries in today's business. The outcome showed that, if we work together we can successfully promote the trade, share best practices, meet the challenges and opportunities in today's world. This Congress opened up great opportunities for the tanners, exporters, R&D personnel, academicians, institutions and other experts in this field.

Although the industry is as old as the mankind, i.e., million years, the fact that government and bureaucrats in the field of protectionism take an active world is contrasting and shows our industry is modern and lively. Certainly we should not allow the industry to diminish. The tanning community was born before many other professionals like **Louis pasture**, where entire family belonged to the tanning community. Because of the fermentation technology invented by him we are now applying it widely in the biotechnology industry. Sustainability is the challenge for all, but it is necessary that everyone practice it on the uniform code. But we need to clarify the boundaries. Hence the Congress proposes "**manifesto of sustainability**" to **International Council of Tanners (ICT)**, which precisely lists the commitments to be taken by every industry in the continent.

Leather and leather industry plays an prominent role in world economy with US \$ 300 billion/year, 500,000 employees, production running at 18 billion sq. mts. with 10 top leather producing countries Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Italy, South Korea, Mexico, Turkey, USA which represents 75% of leather produced in the world. Several topics have been interestingly discussed in the World Congress

and few of our Indian journals as well as only one tanner represented from India, Mr. Munikannan, from M/s. Good leathers and journalist and sub-editor, Mr. Dinakaran of Indian leather keenly watching the statistical details given by various representatives from countries across the globe.

The President of ICT Mr. R. Mastrotto, Mr. G. Russo, President, UNIC, Mr. S. Mercogliano, UNIC, Mr. C. Corazza (UE Commission - DG Grow), Regione Lombardia, Italian Ministry of Economic Development (MISE), Italian Ministry for Environment jointly inaugurated the Congress and the main tanning industry and association members of ICT, Brazil, China, African Countries, Germany, Italy, Portugal and many participated and presented their country reports before the luncheon session.

Trends and future challenges was the main focus of World Leather Congress and the presentations were related to this, especially global availability of raw hides and red meat consumption, presented by Mr. Richard Brown, GIRA, Trade trends and policies by Mr. Kaison Chang, FAO and the note worthy was the presentation by Mario Serrini, Ital progetti, Gianni Maitan Gemata about the Process innovation and technology for the environment.

A thought provoking speech by **Amalia Fuschini, IBM, Fashion Industry leader in IBM** raised many eye brows on how digital media communication in tanning sector can be improved which includes:

- Be the first to speed up your social visibility.
- Create multi-channel experience.
- Engaging final customers and influences by story telling.

She concluded her presentation saying that most of the tanning sector is just web participant and only few are dynamic participants. Social communication and web strategy is missing in tanning sectors which has to be sensibly improved.

Dr. Campbell Page, from TFL almost stormed the audience presenting innovative thoughts for development of chemicals in tanning industry by comparative statistical process detail of chemicals today and tomorrow. Tomorrow seems to be bright for the tanners if they start implementing the regulations of **EU, REACH and Manufacturing Restricted Substance List (MRSL)** which will boost the innovation and replace chemicals with the alternatives. Being a representative from **Caprienzymes**, a brisk looming biotech company, I feel happy that a **Dr. Campbell** suggested the **use of Enzymes** wherever possible which is really a motivation to me.

When we all observed the “**chromium in leather**” presentation **Dr. Angelo Moretto, Associate Professor of Occupational health of University of Milan** it was shocking to note, Chromium VI and III elicit Allergic Contact Dermatitis (ACD), about 20% of general population is sensitized to at least one agent. World Congress and International Council of Tanners thinking to eliminate chrome tanning systems by finding alternative substitutes to prepare for the **Cleaner and Eco-friendly tanning**.

International market for leather was discussed by **Marco Fortis, Edison Foundation** with clear statistical Information from top ten world export countries in several areas.

All of us were mind boggled and we started deciding there itself on how to focus on the trends and future challenges lying in front of us and we hope, World Leather Congress was certainly an eye opener and paved the way for greater opportunities.

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