



What happened to the buzz?

You could argue that the machinery industry has become middle-aged. It's possibly a reflection of maturity, of learning to distinguish what will stay the course, stand the test of time.

While still investing in new technology and engineering refinement, showing off your machinery is not that simple. It could also be argued that tough economic circumstances have added a touch of realism in the boardroom.

The lack of buzz and excitement can probably be traced back to the ups-and-downs of the exhibition companies that have served the worldwide leather industry, too. It took some years for the realisation to seep through the sector that shipping machinery from one country to another, from one continent to another, was a very expensive exercise — unless the demonstration machine had already been pre-sold to a company within reasonable proximity. Surely it is much simpler, went the argument, to invite a customer to your own factory where you could personally demonstrate the claimed superiority of your machine, your innovation and technology and service.

But that isn't the full answer, either, as to why the hum of machinery is largely absent on the exhibition circuit. To the changes that have affected the world in the past decade must be added the burgeoning use of the Internet and the worldwide web.

Possibly a more important reason for the changing fortunes of the machinery sector has been the change within the industry itself. Globalisation has impacted on traditional leather manufacturing. There has been a demand for greater consistency of finished product, greater productivity and these demands have been met by newer, larger, more specialised tanneries which have taken advantage of the inline production systems developed by some of the major machinery builders.

The buzz is still there — it's just the volume that has been turned down or retuned

Notwithstanding these changes in marketing and technology, there is still a need to meet-and-greet customers, and potential customers, in the exhibition hall, both in the real world and in the world of virtual reality. The latter can provide continuous

presentation every day of the year, while the former will still provide the opportunity to get-up-close-and-touch.

The biggest presentation opportunity remains Tanning-Tech, the machinery specific exhibition in Bologna that began in the mid-1990s when it coincided with Lineapelle in Bologna, having previously been a stand-alone show in Milan. By 1996, Italy was the source of some 70% of world production in tannery machinery. By 2003, the exhibition had to accommodate 260 exhibitors from 25 countries. Italian machinery production in 2002 was valued at €830.24 million of which €580.8 million was exported.

By 2007, while still accounting for two-thirds of world machinery output for tanneries, markets and volumes have changed. Companies have amalgamated into more economically viable units while many have ceased to exist. Markets have changed. While new technologies abounded in the 1990s and the first years of the current millennium, there is no doubt that the speed of technological innovation has slowed.

Overall turnover of the 350 small- and medium-sized Italian companies in the broad leather-related sector was €498.8 million in 2007, and the export of machines for tanneries was €103.69 million. The main export markets were listed then as China, India, Brazil, Turkey and Argentina — a reflection of the way the world of leather has changed. [Back in 2002, it was worth listing the top 20 countries!]

Tanning-Tech 2011 illustrated the changes perfectly

Admittedly, it would have been so much better if the world economic backdrop had been calmer but Tanning-Tech 2011 gathered the industry at a time of uncertainty: the euro was and is under pressure, there are fears for the national economies of more countries than just Greece, global growth is limping...even China is feeling the squeeze, although it still appears to enjoy GDP growth of some 8%.

There were those courageous manufacturers making it clear that they were definitely investing in the future and innovation, developing yet more new systems, devices and controls. Others were quite blunt in stating that they were finding business difficult.



Machines in the Tannery: Innovators & Research



Feltre, designers and manufacturers of special transfer systems in the wet process demonstrated these by means of videos on their information stand.

Tanning-Tech 2011 was scheduled to be a modest exhibition, as it had been announced that machinery would only be shown in strength every second year (2012 should be all singing and dancing again, with hopefully the right amount of buzz and hum). Exhibitors were meant to limit their presence to information stands but some manufacturers were putting their physical machines through their paces with full-blown demonstrations.

In detail, a reduced Hall 35 housed 61 machinery and services companies' stands, of which 14 displayed actual machines. One chemical products company is included in this list. It is worth noting that companies based outside Italy have continued to support the fair but the 'foreign' contingent of eleven companies came from Germany (six), France (two), with one each from Spain, China and the UK. [Back in 2003, 26 countries were represented.]

Despite Italy's problems, however, Tanning-Tech remains the venue to be seen at if one is in the leather industry. The following pages highlight some of innovations that could be appreciated in Bologna.



The new Cartigliano automatic staking machine model 4HC3400 (above) was exhibited. This 3400 mm wide machine is equipped with four heads and two beater jaws. Amongst new features, either throughfeed or return feed is possible. Controls are PLC and touch screen. Settings of running programs are displayed and programs can be saved. More about Cartigliano can be found on page 23 of this machinery feature.



Equitan demonstrated the application of the advanced staking machine spares together with a range of accessories. Information about a lime splitter extractor part of the program was also available.



The latest version of the Alpapak splitting machine (above) can be programmed and controlled by PLC and touch screen. Amongst many new features are continuous automatic washing and cleaning of working components, an optional spreader device and an integral limed material extractor.



Olcina, the well known inventor of the cangilone drum system, provided information and details about their products (see also page 28)



A view of Selin's second generation spray limiter.



Above is an example of a recently developed ergonomical toggling frame by Emmezeta. Also being introduced by the company is a Humidity System which controls the drying process in the toggle dryer by means of an instrument capable of reading the internal humidity of the leather and to calculate the percentage of water present. The range of the system is from 0% to 95% humidity. Reaction is instantaneous; four readings can be obtained within one second.



Guliani Technologie, suppliers and manufacturers of leather testing apparatus, introduced a new type Bally flexometer at the show.



On the Turner stand at Tanning-Tech, its brand new automatic throughfeed CNC controlled trimming machine was demonstrated. Water jet cutting is employed. The picture above shows the monitor which is used by the operator to precisely program all trimming parameters. Each section to be trimmed shows the percentage of skin area lost and total trimming loss is calculated and displayed by the program (see also page 30). Adjustments can be made before the machine is signalled to commence trimming.



The latest version of a Pajusco stainless steel drum.



Wega showed a roller type electronic measuring machine equipped with PC programming and control with the help of a newly developed touch screen monitor. Hide grades can also be selected and shown on screen. The output side of the machine where the monitor is located is seen.



The major part of the Gemata stand was dedicated to a rollcoater finishing line comprising rollcoater Megastar suitable for finishing defective leathers followed by Topstar designed for colour and topcoat application for automotive and upholstery leathers, ending with the Multidryer using a single pass. Finishing of crust for automotive leather was demonstrated.

Also shown were the Foamix/Micromix generator and the Lintasplit splitting machine.



Rear view of the new Aletti machine showing the delivery belt conveyor of this new throughfeed buffer.

Aletti has now introduced the buffing machine as exhibited using a large diameter buffing cylinder instead of the buffing belt generally used on its machines. A new retaining bar has also been developed for this model to ensure reliability and higher output capacity and more details of Aletti's approach to investment and innovation is detailed on page 27 of this machinery feature.

This special feature also highlights the background and approach to innovation, investment and research by eight key companies in the industry. 🌐

Stainless steel drum manufacturer Dose is moving into the polypropylene drum field (below).



Inside view of the Dose polypropylene drum.