



*The Starsplit machine, developed and introduced to the market by tannery equipment builder Gemata in 2017, could enhance the lime-splitting process.*

*IMAGE: GEMATA*

## Generating consistent leather splits for footwear

*Tanning technology provider Gemata has said the Starsplit splitting machine it developed and introduced to the market in 2017 can bring about a revolution in the lime-splitting process. This could be very good news for tanners but equally so for the large number of footwear brands interested in using leather splits in the shoes they are preparing for the coming seasons.*

The main innovation of the Gemata Starsplit machine is a new automatic feeding system that allows the splitting machine to be used by non-specialised operators in the tannery, easing labour management issues at a time when finding and keeping talented tannery team members is a big challenge. There has always been a challenge in lime-splitting hides accurately and consistently; keeping heavy, wet, slippery material in just the right position is far from easy, and it is here that the feeding system can be of help.

Under the new set-up, according to Gemata's deputy general manager, Mauro Pellizzari, tannery workers can place raw material onto a belt that will automatically feed it into the machine, stretching the hides and transferring them

at a constant speed, without halts (caused, for example, by a hide going between the rollers on the conveyor), which Gemata argues is crucial for a better end result. This automatic leather feeding system is designed to make the Starsplit machine more versatile, more productive and safer, it says, adding: "It is now possible to feed one hide after another into the system, without the need for specialised personnel."

### A quick transition

The technology company worked hard on the design of this feeding system, attaching it to the back of the splitting machine so as not to take up unnecessarily permanent space in front. At the push of a button, a hydraulically



powered rotation arm arcs the feeding platform in a high loop over the body of the machine and moves it into place, allowing a switch from 'standby' to 'operational' quickly and easily. With the innovations Gemata has introduced, it also says splitting operations can now be safer. "The infeed belt keeps operators away from the danger zone," Mauro Pellizzari explains.

### Questions of quality

Mr Pellizzari points out that increased quality is another benefit from the changes the company has made. The insertion of the hide into the splitting machine at constant speed and without braking eliminates variations in the thickness of the splits the machine produces and therefore increases quality. "Uniform thickness is obtained thanks to the tension generated by the infeed belt," he explains, "which stretches the fibres along the entire length of the blade, thus ensuring a clean and even cut through the whole of the surface."

Feeding hides automatically into the splitting process also generates a finer grain and a thicker split compared with manual feeding, he says. And, so far, with use of the Starsplit at customers' premises, there has been an average saving of between 3 and 4 kilos of shavings on limed hides weighing 50 kilos. In other words, starting with a hide that weighs 50 kilos in the lime, one obtains a wet



*Split leather predominates in the upper of this stylish athletic shoe from Le Marche-based designer Luca Guerrini.*

IMAGE: MICAM

blue split that is 3 or 4 kilos heavier, providing extra usable material that would previously have been shaved off.

### Economic gain

Using the feeder, Gemata insists, ensures an economic gain for the tannery on two fronts: a heavier split that, since it is sold by weight, leads to a higher sales value, and, second, a lower volume and weight of shavings as waste, thus decreasing disposal costs. Greater availability of good-quality splits will be welcome news, too, for footwear brands that are choosing to include this attractive, natural and affordable material in their forthcoming collections. ●



*The Starsplit machine with the hydraulic arm in the feeding position.*

IMAGE: GEMATA