



The purpose of this document is to assist in understanding the leather production landscape, outlining processes necessary to convert hides and skins into leather.
CREDIT: WTP

Work under way on traceability standard

A United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) project aims to establish new traceability standards to help tackle the problem of clothing and footwear adding to the broader burden of waste. One of the standards will focus specifically on leather traceability.

Each year, it is estimated that more than 1.7 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions are attributed to the garment and footwear industry, with an accumulation of more than 90 million tonnes of waste. At the same time, only 13% of apparel is recycled. Many stakeholders now recognise the importance of transparency when sourcing material and making finished products, and an increasing number of global fashion brands now declare their tier-one suppliers, at least.

The objective of this project is to strengthen sustainable consumption and production patterns, through the development and implementation of an international framework initiative and a transparency and traceability tool. The outputs will help governments and industry partners to take risk-informed decisions and operate along a set of internationally agreed practices, thereby increasing transparency to the final consumer.

Work began in 2019 with multi-stakeholder dialogue. Early in 2020 a core project team was set up and development of

the scope, policy documents and foundation reports are now well under way. By the middle of 2020, the project had been joined by more than 160 multi-stakeholder experts (in four sub-groups of work) from major brands, trade associations, NGOs, academia, think-tanks, standard and certification bodies and policy-makers, who have provided extensive input and views on the project via virtual meetings and physical project meetings (Paris Blockchain Policy Forum, London UN/CEFACT Forum, OECD Due Diligence Forum). One of the sub-groups is devoted to examine a leather traceability standard.

The project focus is on textile and leather within the garment and footwear sector, with the leather scope relative to livestock and exotic leathers. Work is developing well within the leather value chain and it is anticipated that a draft standard for traceability will be ready soon. Piloting, including a potential block chain pilot for the leather value chain, will take place in 2021 with capacity building and adoption continuing into 2022.

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graph TD; A[Project Steering Committee] --> B[Review progress, gaps and challenges against project expected results (EC, UNECE, ITC).]; A --> C[UNECE Secretariat]; C --> D[Manages the project; Ensures achievement of project outputs; Set-up project team.]; C --> E[UNECE - UN/CEFACT Project Group of Experts]; E --> F[Form the multi-stakeholder project platform; discusses, provides input into, and validates project outputs.]; E --> G[UNECE - UN/CEFACT Working Party]; G --> H[Adopts the policies, standards and guidelines developed by the project, following the Open Development Process (ODP).]; E --> I[Project Team]; C --> I; I --> J[Project Leader/Manager  
Project Co-Leader  
Project Consultants  
Policy/Standard/Capacity  
Building/Pilots/Communication];
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Project Steering Committee

Review progress, gaps and challenges against project expected results (EC, UNECE, ITC).

UNECE Secretariat

Manages the project; Ensures achievement of project outputs; Set-up project team.

UNECE - UN/CEFACT Project Group of Experts

Form the multi-stakeholder project platform; discusses, provides input into, and validates project outputs.

UNECE - UN/CEFACT Working Party

Adopts the policies, standards and guidelines developed by the project, following the Open Development Process (ODP).

Project Team

Project Leader/Manager
Project Co-Leader
Project Consultants
Policy/Standard/Capacity
Building/Pilots/Communication

Training and continuous improvement programme in collaboration with strategic partners.

The standard will not be prescriptive in terms of the technology adopted by individual organisations, but it will create a framework and a set of parameters to adopt in terms of what information and records should be maintained to provide traceability of material as it moves through the value chain. 

