

International Multi-Stakeholder meeting discusses sustainable leather

Switzerland

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ILM was invited to participate at the Multi-Stakeholder meeting organised by Switzerland-based international association of leather bracelet manufacturers, AQC, on June 21. Participants included tanneries, luxury brands, watch strap manufacturers and leather chemical suppliers.

The half-day event held at the Beau Rivage Hotel in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, started with a welcome address by Angelika Duckenfield, President, AQC, who introduced the meeting by explaining how leather was still considered a risk material, as outlined by the Drive Sustainability initiative, and its relevance to the watch sector. Indeed, leather bracelets are the only accessory worn directly in contact with human skin for 365 days a year. She said the AQC, will focus its work on two "pillars": the chemicals used in the tanning process and traceability/animal welfare. As a collective trademark, the 'AQC Label' seeks to guarantee "the highest level of quality and safety of leather bracelets" for luxury watches.

The AQC's Multi Stakeholder Meeting was attended by nearly 90 participants, who represented watch bracelet manufacturers, leather chemical suppliers such as Stahl, watch brands such as Patek Philippe, Omega and Swatch, and twelve tanneries from France, Italy and Singapore. It featured expert presentations, including from the ZDHC Roadmap to Zero Programme and the Italian Tanners Association (UNIC), as well as two discussion panels moderated by Aurélien Debeyer, General Manager, AQC.

The first panel was comprised of watch brands representatives from Swatch, Richemont and Tiffany, who praised the importance of the work to be carried out by the Swiss association and agreed on the need for the sector's stakeholders to work more closely together and share information on sustainability. The second panel was comprised by suppliers; Gimmel Leather, Tanneries Haas and Stahl, who explained that, at their level, there was also a need for more open communication in the leather supply chain. "We, tanners, need to improve the communication between us, not just towards the customers", said Max Gimmel from Gimmel Leather. "We've always been asked to prove that what we do is ecologically correct. Events like this are an opportunity for us to also build a better communication with brands", he added.

The AQC (Association pour l'Assurance Qualité des Fabricants des Bracelets Cuir) was officially established in 2014 by five bracelet manufacturers; Brasport, Camille Fournet, Hirsch Interstrap and Multicuir. Created to "provide a platform to facilitate the traceability and compliance of materials used in the manufacture of leather bracelets", its members represent nearly 80% of the premium worldwide production in the sector.

Further information on the event and on the AQC's compliance and traceability roadmap can be found in the upcoming July-August 2018 edition of International Leather Maker (ILM).



Aurélien Debeyer,

General Manager, AQC

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