

# Leather Value Chain Glossary

The below glossary has been compiled with reference to the ISO Leather – Vocabulary<sup>1</sup>, along with other documents and reports that have been prepared as part of the UNECE Project to advance transparency and traceability of sustainable value chains in the garment and footwear sector. Terms and definitions are listed here to ensure harmonisation and standardisation for the industry stakeholders within the project

Key:

Glossary terms taken from ISO Leather – Vocabulary<sup>1</sup> are shown in *Italics* (this is not the full vocabulary)

Glossary terms from the UNECE / ITC / UNCEFACT / UNIDO are shown in **blue**

Term	Description
<b>abattoir</b> <b>(slaughterhouse)</b>	<place> where animals are sent for slaughter at end of life
<b>agent trader</b>	<organisation> buys and sells material at different stages of production and may conduct a small operation on the material that does not chemically alter it
<i>aniline leather</i>	<material> leather whose natural <i>grain</i> is clearly visible either without a surface coating or with a non-pigmented surface coating NB1: The thickness of non-pigmented surface coating is usually less than or equal to 0.01 mm
<i>basification</i>	<process> mild alkali treatment to ensure completion of <i>tanning</i> e.g. treating the mineral tanned stock with a view to forming a large aggregate of metallic compounds and enabling reactive groups of <i>skins</i> to complex with tanning material.
<i>Bate</i>	<material> enzymes mixed with an inert carrier used to selectively remove unwanted constituents of <i>hides</i> and <i>skins</i> .
<i>Acid bate</i>	bate that has optimum activity in the pH range of 3 to 5
<i>alkaline bate</i>	bate that has optimum activity in the pH range of 8 to 8.5
<i>bating</i>	the process of removing unwanted interfibrillary proteins by treating the <i>hides</i> and <i>skins</i> with bates to obtain soft and pliable leather with a smooth grain surface
<i>beam</i>	<equipment> convex wooden slab sloping downward from about waist height over which a hide is placed for unhairing, trimming off excess flesh and ragged edges and <i>scudding</i> by hand knife
<b>box calf</b>	<material> full chrome tanned calf leather, black or coloured, smooth or boarded, with proteinic finishing
<b>brand agent</b>	<organisation> buys and sells finished leather on behalf of brands without any transformation of material
<i>buffing</i>	<process> abrasive mechanical treatment to the <i>grain</i> or flesh surface of the leather
<b>cavallino</b>	<material> specific Italian term for leather, usually derived from calf skins, with trimmed and short hair so that it looks glossy and silky, likened to the horse hair
<i>chamois</i>	<material> leather made from the <i>flesh split</i> of sheepskin or lamb skin from which the <i>grain</i> has been removed by frizzing, and tanned by processes involving the oxidation of marine oils in the skin, using solely such oils (full-oil chamois) or first an aldehyde and then such oils (combination chamois)
<i>chrome-free leather</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> converted to leather by a tanning agent free of chromium salts, where the total content of chromium in the tanned leather is less than or equal to 0.1% (mass of chromium/total dry weight of leather)
<i>chrome-tanned leather</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> converted to leather either by treatment solely with chromium salts or with chromium salts together with a small amount of some other

	tanning agent, used merely to assist the chromium tanning process, and not in sufficient amount to alter the essential chromium tanner character of the leather
<b>CITES</b>	<organisation> Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival
<i>coated and coated split leather</i>	<material> leather and <i>split leather</i> where the surface coating, applied to the outer side, does not exceed one third of the total thickness of the product but is in excess of 0.15 mm
<i>corrected grain leather</i>	<material> leather in which the <i>grain</i> has been partially removed by <i>buffing</i> or any similar mechanical treatment, and enhanced by a <i>finishing</i> treatment
<b>crust</b>	<material> leather in a partially finished state, i.e. tanned, retanned, <i>fatliquored</i> , which has then been dried for storage or sale until the end <i>finishing</i> requirement is known
<i>dyed crust leather</i>	<material> leather tanned, dyed, fatliquored and dried, before <i>finishing</i>
<b>pearl crust leather</b>	<material> undyed leather that has been tanned, retanned, fatliquored and dried, before <i>finishing</i>
<i>curing</i>	<process> temporary preservation of <i>raw hides</i> and <i>skins</i>
<i>degreasing</i>	<process> removing natural fat from the <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> by emulsification in an aqueous media and/or using a solvent media
<i>degree of tannage</i>	<chemical characteristic> amount of fixed organic matter in 100g of collagen
<i>deliming</i>	<process> removing the alkalinity of limed <i>pelt</i>
<i>double face</i>	<material> double-sided leather made from lamb or sheep <i>skins</i> or other animals with wool, dressed, tanned, softened and dyed for desired properties.
<i>drum</i>	<equipment> cylindrical vessel with baffles inside and capable of rotation about its own axis, used for mechanical agitation in leather processing
<i>dry drumming</i>	<process> dry tumbling for leather with or without additives in a revolving <i>drum</i> to soften the structure and improve the <i>nap</i>
<i>dry salting</i>	<process> <i>curing</i> by which the <i>hides</i> and <i>skins</i> are treated with common salt and dried
<i>dyed crust leather</i>	<material> leather tanned, dyed, fatliquored and dried, before <i>finishing</i>
<b>effluent / wastewater</b>	<material> liquid waste discharged from a tannery following production processes that can be treated to remove contaminants and discharged direct to rivers or seas, or left untreated and sent to an <i>Effluent Treatment Plant (or Wastewater Treatment Plant)</i>
<b>effluent / wastewater treatment plant</b>	<place> where industrial liquid waste from tanneries is sent to be cleaned of harmful chemicals before discharge into the environment or being sent back to the tanner for reuse
<b>common effluent treatment plant (CETP)</b>	<place> a treatment plant that is run by a private organisation or a group of organisations and where the effluent from many industries can be treated or just tannery effluent NB1: they also can be identified as a Central Treatment Plant (CTP)
<b>municipal effluent treatment plant (METP)</b>	<place> a treatment plant that is government run and could involve a mix of industrial and domestic effluent to be cleaned before discharge back into the environment NB1: they also can be identified as a Municipal Treatment Plant (MTP)
<i>E.I. leather (East India leather)</i>	<material> <i>vegetable-tanned leather</i> with characteristic light beige or pale golden yellow colour manufactured by a process specific to a geographical location
<b>exotic leather</b>	<material> made from the <i>skins</i> of animals that are not generally reared for dairy and meat production or animals that are considered rare, e.g. lizard, snake, ostrich

<i>fatliquor</i>	<material> natural or synthetic oil-based formulation that can be an emulsion, solution or dispersion used to lubricate leather fibres
<i>fatliquoring</i>	<process> application of <i>fatliquors</i> for lubricating and softening leathers
<i>finishing</i>	<process> chemical and/or mechanical operations carried out on crust leathers to impart the desired properties for the intended final use of the leather
<b>fleshing</b>	<process> removal of residual tissue, fat or remnants from <i>hides</i> or <i>skins</i> using mechanical or manual knives
<i>full grain leather</i>	<material> leather having kept its entire <i>grain</i> , with none of the surface removed by any corrective mechanical treatment
<i>glazing</i>	<process> operation of producing a bright, glossy or glasslike <i>finish</i> on the <i>grain</i> surface of leather
<i>grain</i>	<material> outer side of the leather once the hair or wool and epidermis have been removed, characterised by follicles from hair or wool, feather follicles or scales, specific to each animal species
<i>hide</i>	<material> raw <i>skin</i> or a mature or fully-grown animal of the larger kind, e.g. cattle and buffalo
<i>hide powder</i>	<material> powder from well-washed, dried, delimed <i>pelt</i> disintegrated using a grinding mill
<i>hide substance</i>	<material> amount of collagenous substance in 100g of dry leather
<b>industrial farm system</b>	<process> combines the characteristics of a birthing farm, rearing farm and finishing farm ( <i>feedlot</i> ), and is commonly used for large volume meat production
<b>birthing farm (cow/calf farm)</b>	<place> where calves are born and stay with their mothers until they are weaned
<b>rearing farm (raising farm)</b>	<place> where young animals are sent to continue to grow to a pre-determined age/weight
<b>finishing farm (feedlot)</b>	<place> where cattle spend the last 4 months of life (approximately), prior to slaughter, to ensure optimum weight and health for meat production
<i>laminated leather</i>	<material> leather where a foil (polymeric film) layer, not exceeding one third of the total thickness, is applied by a transfer coating process NB1: other methods of applying a foil are plating, embossing and ironing
<i>leather</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> with its original fibrous structure more or less intact, tanned to be imputrescible (not liable to decomposition), where the hair or wool may or may not have been removed, whether or not the <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> has been split into layers or segmented either before or after <i>tanning</i> and where any surface coating or surface layer, however applied, is not thicker than 0.15 mm NB1: If the tanned <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> is disintegrated mechanically and/or chemically into fibrous particles, small pieces or powders, and is then, with or without the combination of a binding agent, made into sheets or other forms, such sheets or forms are not leather NB2: If the <i>grain</i> layer has been completely removed, the term leather is not to be used without further qualification, e.g. <i>split leather</i> , <i>suede leather</i> NB3: The material shall be of animal origin
<i>liming</i>	<process> treating <i>raw hides</i> and <i>skins</i> with lime liquor with a view to plumping and/or unhairing
<i>loose grain</i>	<physical characteristic> <i>grain</i> whose attachment to corium has been eroded, giving rise to pronounced wrinkles when leather is bent, grain inside
<i>masking agent</i>	<material> weak acids and their salts added during mineral <i>tanning</i> to prevent precipitation of tanning salts
<i>metal-free leather</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> converted to leather, where the total content of all tanning metals (Cr, Al, Ti, Zr, Fe) in the leather is less than or equal to 0.1% (mass of all metal/total dry weight of leather)
<b>milling</b>	<process> softening of the leather by rotation in a dry drum

<i>nap</i>	<material> vertical and fine fibres cut short enough to produce a velvety two-tone effect when a two-way stroke is applied by hand
<i>nappa</i>	<material> soft <i>full grain leather</i> through dyed and lightly finished
<i>nappalan</i>	<material> wool-on-sheepskin, finished by coating on the reverse side
<i>nappalan finish</i>	<physical characteristic> <i>finishing</i> on the flesh side of <i>hides</i> and <i>skins</i>
<i>neutralization</i>	<process> raising the pH of a mineral-tanned leather towards neutral from an acidic zone by treatment with a solution of salt of a weak alkali or buffer mixture
<i>nubuck</i>	<material> leather snuffed (buffed) to give a velvety effect, where the original <i>grain</i> pattern is still visible
<i>organic-tanned leather</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> converted to leather by natural or synthetic organic tanning agents, where the total content of tanning metals (Cr, Al, Ti, Zr, Fe) is less than or equal to 0.3% (mass of all metals/total dry weight of leather)
<i>parchment</i>	<material> dry, translucent or opaque untanned <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> material
<i>patent leather</i>	<material> leather with generally a mirror-like effect, obtained by application of a layer of pigmented or non-pigmented varnishes, or synthetic resins, whose thickness does not exceed one third of the total thickness of the product NB1: the term patent <i>split leather</i> also exists NB2: varnishes and lacquers are usually based on linseed oil, nitrocellulose, polyurethane and/or other synthetic resins
<i>pelt</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> prepared for tanning by removal of the hair of the wool, epidermis and flesh NB1: the term pelt can also be used for the skin of an animal with fur or hair still on it
<b>pickled pelt</b>	<material> pelt treated with acid and brine, to be preserved or to be prepared for tanning
<i>pickling</i>	<process> treating the <i>pelts</i> , <i>hides</i> or <i>skins</i> with acid and salt to lower the pH
<i>pigmented leather</i>	<material> leather whose natural <i>grain</i> or surface is completely concealed with a <i>finish</i> containing pigments NB1: the term pigmented split leather also exists
<i>pull-up leather</i>	<material> leather that, by design, lightens in colour when stretched
<i>raw hide</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> which has only been treated to preserve it
<b>sammying (samming)</b>	<process> reducing the moisture content of <i>pelts</i> or leathers by squeezing between the rollers in a machine
<i>scudding</i>	<process> removing scud from unhaired <i>hides</i> and <i>skins</i> by scraping or chemical treatment
<i>semi-aniline leather</i>	<material> leather that has been coated with a <i>finish</i> containing a small amount of pigment, so that the natural <i>grain</i> is clearly visible
<i>semi-chrome leather</i>	<material> leather that has been tanned first with vegetable tanning and then retanned with chromium salts
<i>setting</i>	<process> reducing the wrinkles / growth marks and smoothing the <i>grain</i> by pressing between two rollers
<i>shaving</i>	<process> mechanical operation carried out to make the thickness of the leather uniform
<i>shearling</i>	<material> tanned and dressed <i>skin</i> of a sheep still bearing the original wool that has been cut to approximately even length
<i>shrunk grain leather</i>	<material> leather specifically tanned so as to shrink the <i>grain</i> layer, with a grain surface of prominent but uneven folds and valleys
<i>side</i>	<material> half of a whole <i>hide</i> , obtained by dividing it along the line of the backbone
<i>skin</i>	<material> outer covering of smaller types of animals, e.g. sheep and goats, or of the immature animals of the larger species, e.g. calves

<i>skiver</i>	<material> tanned outer or <i>grain split</i> , typically of a sheepskin or lambskin, but sometimes applied to goatskin or calfskin
<i>snuffing</i>	<process> lightly <i>buffing</i> the <i>grain</i> surface of leather, usually by a machine with an abrasive covered cylinder
<i>soaking</i>	<process> rehydration of <i>raw hides</i> and <i>skins</i> to the original moisture and washing out the curing salt, dirt, dung and adhering blood
<i>spew (spue)</i>	<material> white surface deposition emanating from the leather
<i>split leather</i>	<material> layer from a <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> made from a <i>flesh split</i> or a <i>middle split</i> , without any <i>grain</i> structure, tanned to be imputrescible NB1: a split is a layer of hide or skin obtained by dividing it horizontally (splitting) to obtain at least two separate layers; the top layer is call <i>grain split</i> and the bottom layer is called <i>flesh split</i> ; for heavy hides a <i>middle split</i> can also be obtained NB2: if the name of the animal whence it originates, or the part of the animal whence it comes, is included in the description, the term “split leather” will be used as a noun, e.g. pig split leather
<i>grain split</i>	<material> upper or top layer of a <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> with grain surface, separated from the <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> by splitting horizontally in a machine
<i>flesh split</i>	<material> inner or under layer of a <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> with grain surface, separated from the <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> by splitting horizontally in a machine
<i>middle split</i>	<material> middle layer of a <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> with grain surface, separated from the <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> by splitting horizontally in a machine
<b>staking</b>	<process> softening of leather through a pummelling action using a rotary or vibratory staking machine
<b>sub-contractor</b>	<organisation> provides a transformation process on behalf of a <i>tannery</i> without owning the material
<i>substance</i>	<physical characteristic> thickness of leather
<i>suede (velour)</i>	<material> leather or <i>split leather</i> whose wearing surface has been mechanically finished to produce a velvet-like <i>nap</i>
<i>T/NT ratio</i>	<chemical characteristic> ratio of tannins to non-tannins in a vegetable <i>tanning</i> material
<b>tannery</b>	<place> a place where the process of leather manufacture occurs NB1: tanneries may perform the whole transformation process from <i>raw hide</i> to <i>finished leather</i> or may perform a part process
<i>tanning</i>	<process> treatment of <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> with extracts of natural products (e.g. bark, leaves, seeds) or chemical agents (e.g. chromium, aluminium, organic compounds) to stabilize against heat, enzymatic attack and thermo-mechanical stress
<b>traceability</b>	<system> “The ability to trace the history, application or location of an entity by means of recorded identifications” (ISO standard 8402)
<i>vegetable-tanned leather</i>	<material> <i>hide</i> or <i>skin</i> converted to leather by vegetable tanning agents, where the total content of tanning metals (Cr, Al, Ti, Zr, Fe) is less than or equal to 0.3% (mass of all metals/total dry weight of leather)
<i>wet-blue</i>	<material> leather in a wet condition after chrome tanning NB1: Wet-blue is an intermediate stage of manufacturing
<i>wet salting</i>	<process> <i>curing</i> of <i>hides</i> and <i>skins</i> by treating with salt and then draining so that the product remains wet
<i>wet-white</i>	<material> leather in a wet condition after tanning with substances, e.g. zirconium salts, aluminium salts, modified aldehydes, glutaraldehydes and syntans, that confer a whitish colour NB1: Wet-white is an intermediate stage of manufacturing

<sup>1</sup>International Organisation for Standardization, ISO 15115:2019 Leather – Vocabulary. [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)