

7 APRIL 2020

THE FRENCH LEATHER INDUSTRY IS MOBILISING TO FIGHT THE HEALTH CRISIS

Since 16 March, many leather companies (from both the industrial and distribution sectors) are at a standstill because of the health measures in place in France. The upstream players in the industry*, and notably the leather and raw hide dealers represented by the Syndicat Général des Cuirs et Peaux, are still very active in the field and are continuing to collect hides. In direct contact with abattoirs, their commitment is essential for ensuring a constant food supply for the French people.

Because of the measures put in place to protect employees, the other industrial sectors of the leather industry are having to rethink their organisation in order to restart their activities. In particular, these companies must implement social distancing procedures, supply enough protective personal equipment such as masks and gloves, as well as hand sanitizer, and obtain the unanimous agreement of unions. These negotiations are underway.

At the time of writing, France has allocated all supplies of FFP2 masks (the most protective ones) to health professionals. Masks for companies are currently being manufactured and demand remains very high.

In these times of shortages, and in order to support companies in their efforts to provide PPE, **the Conseil National du Cuir has decided to take charge of the supply of masks and hand sanitizer for the entire French Leather Industry.** It has placed a first order for 200,000 masks (washable 10 times at 60°C) and 7,000 litres of hand sanitizer. A budget of 1.4 million euros has been approved to allow industrial companies to resume their activities and for retailers to be equipped when the crisis is over. If the needs of the industry require it, the CNC's order can rise to 500,000 masks and double the quantity of hand sanitizer.

The Conseil National du Cuir is using two French suppliers, members of the leather sector: CHAMATEX (a textiles company) and ATC Tannery Chemicals (a chemical products company). The first orders are scheduled to be delivered at the end of April. As the finished goods distribution industry (footwear, leather goods, gloves) is at a complete standstill by government decision, industrial companies will be the first to benefit. The next step will be for each company to decide on a plan for resuming their activity and acquiring the necessary equipment.

Frank Boehly, President of the Conseil National du Cuir : « *The primary concern of all businesses is to ensure the safety of their employees. Then, once this has been ensured, production can resume, but a major unknown factor remains the future behaviour of consumers. We must think about ways to ensure the continuity of companies so that the economy does not falter and companies don't collapse. In the meantime, I would like to commend the activities of those in our sector who have shown their commitment to and solidarity with the French people. It is in these moments that we have to set the example and be responsible!*»

*Organised into a confederation, the Conseil National du Cuir brings together 20 federations and professional unions, ranging from the farming of livestock through to finished products, and leads the entire French leather industry.

The members of the industry include:

- Professional production organisations: Confédération Nationale de l'Élevage (National Livestock Confederation), Fédération Nationale de l'Industrie et des Commerces en Gros des Viandes (National Federation of Meat Producers and Wholesalers), Confédération Française de la Boucherie-Charcuterie (French Confederation of Butchers and Cooked Meat producers), Syndicat des Industries Françaises des Coproduits Animaux (Union of French Industries of Animal By-products), Syndicat Général des Cuirs et Peaux (French Hides Association).
- Professional processing organisations: Fédération de la Tannerie-Mégisserie (French Federation of Tanners), Syndicat de l'Industrie Chimique Organique de Synthèse et de Biochimie (Union of the Synthetic Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry Industry).
- Professional manufacturing organisations: Fédération Française de la Chaussure (French Footwear Association), Fédération Française de la Maroquinerie, Articles de Voyage, Chasse-Sellerie, Gainerie, Bracelets Cuir (French Leathergoods Association), Fédération Française de la Ganterie (French Glove-making Federation), Syndicat National des Acteurs du Marché de la Prévention et de la Protection (National Syndicat of Preventative and Protective Workwear Manufacturers), Chambre Syndicale des Bottiers de France (Union of French Bootmakers), Fédération des Syndicats de Négociants en Cuirs et Crépins de France et Professionnels connexes (Federation of Leather Traders in France and associated professions), Syndicat des Réparateurs Industriels de la Chaussure (Union of Shoe Repairers), Chambre Syndicale Nationale des Podo – Orthésistes (National Union of Podo-Orthotists).
- Professional retailing organisations: Union Française des Distributeurs Grossistes et Importateurs de Chaussures (French Union of Shoe Wholesalers and Importers), Fédération des Enseignes de la Chaussure (Federation of Footwear Retail Chains), Fédération Nationale des détaillants en Chaussures (National Federation of Shoe Retailers), Fédération Nationale des Détaillants en Maroquinerie et Voyage (National Federation of Shoe Retailers) et Union Sport&Cycle (Sports and Cycling Union).

All these bodies are represented within the confederation: The Conseil National du Cuir (CNC, French Leather Council).

LE CONSEIL NATIONAL DU CUIR

The confederation brings together 19 federations and professional unions of the French leather industry, ranging from the farming of livestock through to the finished products.

THE FRENCH LEATHER INDUSTRY

- 9 400 businesses
- 25 billion euro turnover
- 130,000 people employed in the leather, tanning, footwear, leathergoods and glovemaking and leather goods retail industries.
- One of the world leaders for finished calf leather and exotic leather
- 3rd biggest exporter in the world of leathers and raw hides
- 13th largest exporter of finished leathers
- World No.3 for exports of leathergoods