

Contact – Lectra Headquarters / Press Dept.: Nathalie Fournier-Christol
Email: n.fournier-christol@lectra.com
Tel.: +33 (0)1 53 64 42 37 – Fax: +33 (0)1 53 64 43 40

Lectra shares a glimpse into the future of the automotive leather industry

Technology, expertise and partnership will be essential for success

Paris, April 21, 2015 – Lectra, the world leader in integrated technology solutions dedicated to industries using soft materials—fabrics, leather, technical textiles and composite materials—recently hosted its first conference on the future of the automotive leather industry.

Lectra organized this thought leadership event to explore the megatrends impacting the automotive leather industry as well as the technologies, methods and expertise available to help automotive leather professionals flourish. Thirty participants from the world's leading tanneries, automotive manufacturers and tier-1 supply companies gathered at Lectra's Bordeaux-Cestas campus to hear industry experts' insights on interior design trends, market growth perspectives, leather supply dynamics, and the evolution of chemical treatments for leather.



The unique, organic nature of leather has hindered widespread adoption of automation in the automotive leather industry but, as all of the presenters emphasized, innovation and technology will be vital to keep pace with the industry's rapid changes.

IHS automotive forecasts showed that sales growth in the premium car segment—where leather is most widely used—is outpacing that of the automotive market as a whole. Leather's universal appeal, across all car segments, makes it a key component in future styling trends. "Our new challenge is matching quality leather with the creation of effects, like perforation, that require precise cutting," said Stéphanie Petit, Project Designer at Renault.

However, as David Peters, head of DLP Advisors, explained, global hide production is not increasing quickly enough to sustain that demand. Changes in eating habits and processing techniques are causing a downward shift in hide supply and quality, and an increase in the cost of raw materials.

"Improving hide availability via more robust supply chains, ensuring consistent quality and repeatability, and designing smaller parts in order to obtain higher hide yield are just some of the ways to deal with the predicted leather shortage," stated David Peters.

Workshops led by Lectra experts demonstrated the range of technology available to help leather professionals achieve this by monitoring leather consumption and hide quality; maximizing hide yield; anticipating costs and control margins; and maintaining competitiveness and profitability over the long term.

Gabriela Fuentes, Engineering Manager, Steering Wheels Department at Key Safety Systems Mexico, appreciated the breadth of subjects covered. "The information presented gave us a complete picture of the market's evolution, from the reasons for demand changes and the effects on leather supply to the chemicals used. Seeing the connections between all these trends was very interesting and beneficial."

“The time is right for change in the leather industry; the technology is mature enough. But, when change is so profound, the right partnerships are key. I am confident that together, we—car makers, suppliers, tanners and Lectra—will make this change happen,” concluded Céline Choussy Bedouet, Marketing Director for Automotive and Furniture, Lectra.

About Lectra

Lectra is the world leader in integrated technology solutions that automate, streamline and accelerate product design, development and manufacturing processes for industries using soft materials. Lectra develops the most advanced specialized software and cutting systems and provides associated services to a broad array of markets including fashion (apparel, accessories, footwear), automotive (car seats and interiors, airbags), furniture, as well as a wide variety of other market sectors, such as aeronautical and marine industries, wind power and personal protective equipment. Lectra serves 23,000 customers in more than 100 countries with 1,500 employees and \$281 million in 2014 revenues. The company is listed on Euronext.

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