



ICT



GLCC STATEMENT ON GENETICALLY ENGINEERED COLLAGEN

The global leather industry has been following with interest the gradual development of laboratory-grown materials, based on the genetic engineering of yeast cells to produce collagen, which may, one day, be stabilised to form a material that can be utilised in the fabrication of consumer products such as footwear, garments and furniture.

Currently, global leather production is limited by the supply of animal hides and skins, which come as by-products of the meat and dairy industries and of other miscellaneous niche sources (hunting, fishing, and nascent farming of reptiles). The leather industry takes the view that there is room in the market for all types of materials, but insists that those materials should be accurately labelled and described, and that any marketing claims must be true, justifiable and comply with fair commercial practices.

In this context, the global leather industry is clear that material generated in a laboratory, or other artificial setting, based on the genetic engineering of cells from any source, and subsequently stabilised, does not meet the widely accepted definition of leather, which is generally accepted to be:

A general term for animal hide or skin with its original fibrous structure more or less intact, tanned to be imputrescible. The hair or wool may or may not have been removed. Leather is also made from a hide or skin which has been split into layers or segmented either before or after tanning. However, if the tanned skin is disintegrated mechanically and/or chemically into fibrous particles, small pieces or powders and then, with or without the combination of a binding agent, is made into sheets or other forms, such sheets or forms are not leather. If the leather has a surface coating, however applied, or a glued-on finish, such surface layers must not be thicker than 0.15 mm.

Laboratory grown materials should avoid the denomination of “leather” and always be described as what they are – genetically engineered collagen that has been stabilised.

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