



ICT



04 May 2015

Mr. Jose Manuel Martínez Gutiérrez
Executive Director and Group CEO
Esprit Holdings Limited
Esprit-Allee
40882 Ratingen
Germany

Dear Mr. Martínez,

On behalf of the global leather manufacturing industry, the Global Leather Coordinating Committee* (GLCC) disputes many of the claims that have recently been made by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in the press regarding global leather production and the associated PETA-approved VEGAN label your company has adopted. While the GLCC respects the right of Esprit to manufacture, market and sell a variety of products, including leather-free clothing articles and footwear, your endorsement of claims made by PETA with regard to leather manufacturing are baseless, without merit, and should not be associated with a well-respected international brand. We urge you to distance your company and its associated products from the inaccurate and worrying claims of this narrow interest group as they relate to leather.

PETA regularly, and wrongfully, claims the global leather industry slaughters animals solely for the purpose of leather production and that this involves universal cruelty to the animals. These claims are based on a wanton disregard of the truth. Animal hides and skins are a natural and inevitable byproduct of meat and dairy consumption. They represent, on average, less than 10% of the overall value of individual meat or dairy-producing animals. As long as meat and dairy products continue to be consumed as part of a nutritionally balanced diet, these byproducts will continue to be created in a humane manner.

There is no more sustainable outcome for hides and skins than their transformation into useful and durable leather articles made by a responsible leather manufacturing industry. Without a viable leather industry to recycle these byproducts for their most useful purpose, the resulting effect would be inefficient allocation of scarce natural resources. By advocating against leather utilisation, Esprit is taking a step backwards in the movement towards a more sustainable business model.

One of PETA's stated goals is to end all human consumption of all animal proteins. However, in a world where meat or dairy products continue to be consumed, there is a moral obligation by consumers to utilise all parts of the animal. Irrespective of whether one supports, or does not

support, the eating of meat, it is everyone's duty to ensure the responsible disposal or use of the byproducts of the industry.

Furthermore, leather is a sustainable material based on natural, renewable resources. It has been produced by humans for the purposes of clothing, shelter and footwear for thousands of years. Alternative materials, such as the polyurethanes used to produce plastics for synthetic footwear components, are fossil-fuel based derivatives produced from oil. Any claims regarding the "sustainability" of petroleum-based synthetic alternatives must also bear the accompanying burden of fossil-fuel extraction, refinement, transportation, and associated environmental costs.

Finally, the industry has established widely adopted processes and technologies for the production of leather under safe and sustainable conditions. Chemicals used in the tanning process are the same legitimately approved substances which are used in many other synthetic and textile products. The vast majority of global leather tanners have implemented these technologies using the right products and operating under safe condition for their workers.

Of course, there are a small number of leather tanners in unregulated markets still operating below a minimum acceptable level of production standard. The leather industry is not alone in facing this problem. However, together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and other international development organisations, the industry is doing its utmost to change this unfortunate reality. PETA does not recognise any of this work, instead choosing to sensationalise and aggrandise isolated examples of objectionable and obscene behaviour by individuals operating outside of the mainstream of the industry.

The global leather industry encourages Esprit to reconsider the endorsement of PETA's extremist positions and work towards a sustainable business model focused on natural and renewable resources.

Sincerely,

Nick Winters

International Council of Hides, Skins and Leather Traders Association
www.ichslta.com

Paul Pearson

International Council of Tanners
www.leathercouncil.org

Elton Hurlow

International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies
www.iultcs.org

*The GLCC is a coalition of the three leading international leather industry professional organisations formed to work on projects of common interest for the industry. The Committee represents the entire leather manufacturing value chain, from hides and skins producers and processors, to leather tanners, suppliers of chemicals, machinery, and services, researchers and scientists. Its mission is to maintain and enhance the position of leather as a valued sustainable component material for the benefit of consumers.