

The Editor  
The Daily Telegraph  
Telegraph Media Group,  
111 Buckingham Palace Road,  
London, SW1W 0DT

26<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Sir

The article by Ed Wiseman, 'Leather has no place in modern cars – is it time for manufacturers to go vegan?' (23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2018), displayed a quite staggering level of misinformation and ignorance.

The leather industry is a modern, sustainable and safe industry, which takes a waste product from meat production, and turns it into a beautiful and functional material. Modern tanneries around the world are subject to stringent environmental, and health and safety regulations, which the author chooses to disregard in favour of the tired trope of having visited tanneries in Marrakech; these tanneries are in no way representative of the modern tanning industry, as even a superficial degree of research would have determined. Similarly, the notion that tanneries have a '*long history of killing their workers (and everything in the area around the surrounding area)*...', is hysterical and conspicuously unsubstantiated nonsense.

Leather remains a relevant material and global leather consumption has risen by nearly 50% since the 1990's. Footwear accounts for under 50% of global leather use, and while the automotive sector is the next largest and most dynamic destination, accounting for nearly 20% of leather use, leather is used in huge range of products, including furniture, clothing, leather goods, saddlery, etc. In contrast to the claim that leather is not innovative or progressive, the use of leather in the auto sector is, in part, due to ability of leather manufacturers to engineer the finished product to meet performance specifications of the automotive sector, and others such as the aviation sector, where leather consistently outperforms other materials for durability.

Leather production is also sustainable which, unlike the manufacture of plastics from fossil fuels, uses a renewable by-product as a raw material, and applies heavily-regulated chemistries to produce a material that is versatile, durable and beautiful. Contrary to the implication in the article, the chromium III salts used in tanning are not harmful to human health or the environment. Done well, leather manufacture is safe and environmentally sound.

The Scottish Leather Group, based in Glasgow, are an exemplar in the manufacture of automotive leather, supplying many prestigious manufacturers. Their integrated environmental treatment processes, including a state of the art gasification plant and advanced, tertiary effluent treatment, are fine examples of how, rather than killing its workers and rendering the land barren, the leather sector is working to minimise its impact on the environment, while providing the only viable and sustainable solution to the disposal of over 7 million tonnes of waste per year from the meat industry. The Scottish Leather Group are not alone in their endeavours, with tanneries around the UK and the rest of the world, working to reduce their impacts on the environment.

However, like all industries, there are well known examples of unacceptable practice in the sector, but these are primarily regional and political issues, that are not specific to leather manufacture. The article includes a picture from a tannery in Kanpur, without noting that the leather sector is only one of many industries responsible for the pollution of the Ganges. The majority of the global leather industry deplores the poor practice by some leather manufacturers in places like Kanpur, and it is simply wrong to use it as the benchmark by which to judge the rest of the industry.

**UK Leather Federation**

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Leather is a material for the modern world and one which consumers, in particular, car buyers, continue to seek out, as evidenced by the surge in automotive leather production in recent years. For your readers who are interested in the facts about leather production, I would recommend the Nothing to Hide (<http://www.nothing-to-hide.org/>) and Leather Naturally (<http://leathernaturally.org/>) websites.

Yours faithfully

*(by email)*

Kerry Senior, Director, UK Leather Federation

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