



CONFEDERATION DES ASSOCIATIONS NATIONALES DE TANNEURS
ET MEGISSIERS DE LA COMMUNAUTE EUROPEENNE

CONFEDERATION OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF
TANNERS AND DRESSERS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

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COTANCE Open letter to Stella McCartney

Re: Ending the use of leather? Are you sure?

Brussels, 10 November 2021

Dear Mrs McCartney,

You are promoting a pledge to end the use of leather in the fashion industry in the context of COP 26, maybe even as a response to our sector's Leather Manifesto*. We understand that there are people, like you, who for philosophical reasons do not want to consume or use animal products, at least some of them. We respect that but promoting this credo at global scale makes no sense and runs counter the logic of a circular economy. Are you aware of the consequences of your pledge for climate change?

Accademia has unmistakably established that demand for leather has such a marginal influence on livestock breeding and slaughter rate that it can be dismissed as a driver. Hides and skins of animals slaughtered for the production of food for human consumption are unavoidable leftovers. There is no cow, sheep or goat that is slaughtered for its skin! As long as people on this planet will be eating meat, there will be hides and skins. So, either you use them, or you lose them.

We estimate that today some 40% of global availability of hides & skins, unfortunately never make it into the leather industry. This is not only a terrible wastage of resources and of wealth creation potential, particularly in poor economies, but also a significant source of GHG and of plastic pollution generated because of the production and use of short-lived substitutes.

The people ought to know that if the leather industry would not recycle the 8 million tonnes of hides and skins that it recovers every year, their decomposition would become a sanitary risk and release some 5 million tonnes of GHG. This amount corresponds to the annual emissions of about 1.087.400 average cars. People should know this and look at the leather they wear without a sense of guilt. And this figure doesn't include the carbon emissions that the production of other materials would necessarily generate. This would be the consequence of ending the use of leather. So, promoting its end only leads to generating pollution. For a waste-buster like you this is not a nice bottom line...

Livestock must be part of the solution for reaching the COP 26 objectives, and leather is part of the equation. Of course, tanning must be performed according to the state-of-the-art. And we censure tanners who do not respect essential social & environmental standards. Such standards exist and have been made freely available, among others, by COTANCE, IULTCS and UNIDO.

We have seen pictures of you with HRH Prince Charles walking through your "Future of Fashion" exhibition in Glasgow. You should know that he passionately defended leather's role in the circular economy at the reception offered by the British Embassy after the G20 meeting in Rome. And we are very honoured by this royal compliment!

We would like to invite you to discuss these topics further at your best convenience, but please stop slandering a humble but legitimate industry that renders a clean-up service to Society, produces durable beauty from a residue and that strives for social & environmental excellence.

Yours sincerely,

Manuel Rios
President

* <https://euroleather.com/news/latest/970-cop26-leather-manifesto>