



A platform of people worldwide who make the footwear, leather and allied industry work.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

Footprint July focuses on a cleaner, stronger leather economy.

As we turn the pages of July, the leather and footwear industry continues to navigate a complex yet promising landscape. This edition of our newsletter draws inspiration from two globally significant observances—World Environment Day (June 5) and Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Day (June 27)—both of which carry deep relevance to our sector.

On the environmental front, the global call for restoration and resilience reminds us that the leather industry must continue advancing towards cleaner, more circular practices. From tanneries adopting eco-compliant methods to startups exploring regenerative sourcing, sustainability is no longer a choice—it's a necessity.

Equally important is the MSME sector, which forms the backbone of our leather economy. From community-level hide processors to boutique leather goods makers, small businesses have the potential to transform into powerful export contributors. In this issue, we spotlight promising MSME models within the leather value chain—proof that innovation, when rooted in craft and supported by policy, can unlock growth.

We also present a snapshot of the latest export performance, key regulatory decisions, and sectoral updates to keep our readers informed and engaged.

As always, we hope this edition provides not just information, but inspiration—to build a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient leather and footwear industry in Bangladesh.

Thank you for your ongoing Support.

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IULTCS Announces Vice-President and 2025 Merit Award Winner

Each year on **June 5**, the world comes together to observe **World Environment Day**, the United Nations' largest platform for environmental outreach. In 2025, the theme — "Land Restoration, Desertification, and Drought Resilience" — draws urgent attention to one of the planet's greatest environmental challenges: the degradation of land. Over 40% of the world's land is now degraded, affecting the livelihoods of 3.2 billion people, according to the UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification). But what does this have to do with the leather and footwear industry? A lot more than we might think.

The leather value chain is deeply tied to land systems. From livestock farming and hide procurement to waste disposal from tanneries, the sector impacts soil health, water retention, vegetation cover, and even climate resilience. In regions where leather production is concentrated — including South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America — this link between industry and land is becoming more evident, and more alarming.

Common Perceptions: Leather Harms the Planet

The leather industry has long been perceived as a driver of environmental damage — and not without reason. Several aspects of the traditional leather value chain contribute to land degradation, water pollution, and chemical waste, especially when poorly regulated.



Image source :PETA

Here are the most common concerns:

📄 **Deforestation and overgrazing** for livestock are blamed for soil erosion and desertification — especially in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

📄 **Excessive water use:** Chrome tanning processes can consume 50,000–60,000 liters of water per ton of hide.

📄 **Toxic sludge and effluent discharge** contaminate soil, rivers, and aquifers — affecting both land and drought resilience.

📄 **Solid waste and untreated trimmings** end up in landfills, releasing methane and leaching into soil.

📄 **Air pollution and odors** from poorly managed tanneries impact both health and nearby farmland productivity.

📄 **Unsustainable sourcing** without traceability increases risks of ecological damage and land misuse.

In Bangladesh's Savar Tannery Estate alone, over 25,000 cubic meters of wastewater and 100 tons of solid sludge are generated daily. Improper handling of these materials might severely impact the Dhaleshwari River and surrounding land.

♻️ **Leather as a Regenerative Opportunity- A different story.**

Despite the valid concerns, the leather sector also holds unique regenerative potential — especially if we look at it through the lens of innovation, circularity, and sustainable sourcing.



Source :UNCCD, UNEP, FAO, Savory Institute, UNIDO, LWG, Council for LE (India) & Newspaper

1. Regenerative Livestock Practices

When leather is sourced from regenerative farms, it supports land healing rather than degradation. Regenerative grazing mimics natural herd movement, improving soil fertility, increasing organic matter, and boosting water absorption, all key to drought resilience. Regenerative grazing can increase soil carbon by up to 3–5 tons per hectare annually and improve rainfall infiltration over 30%. Brands like Timberland and Savory Institute partner with farms where cattle grazing is used to restore grasslands and increase carbon retention in soil.

2. Preventing Landfill and Organic Waste Pressure

Every unused hide is organic waste — and when dumped, it emits methane, leaches into soil, and stresses landfill ecosystems, especially during high-volume events like Eid-ul-Adha in South Asia. By processing these hides into leather rather than letting them rot:

- Landfill pressure is reduced
- Organic pollutants are managed
- Valuable land is preserved from contamination

In 2023, over 100,000 hides were wasted in Bangladesh post-Eid due to poor preservation and low market value, creating enormous unmanaged biological waste which could be managed through a strong focus on leather sector.

3. Stopping Soil Pollution By reducing the demand for synthetics

Compared to PU (polyurethane) or PVC-based synthetic leathers, genuine leather — when responsibly produced — is longer-lasting, biodegradable, and requires less fossil fuel input. Avoiding plastics means avoiding microplastic pollution of soil. A durable leather shoe may replace 5–6 pairs of synthetic ones over a decade.

4. Reducing Water Stress to Enhance Drought Resilience

In drought-prone zones, water use matters. Traditional tanning uses large volumes of freshwater — but newer technologies can:

- Reduce water use by up to 50–70%
- Enable rainwater harvesting for process water
- Recycle treated effluent for non-potable reuse

In India's drought-hit Tamil Nadu region, tanneries using water-recycling plants saved up to 18 million liters of groundwater annually.

5. Turning Brownfields into Greenfields: Land Reclamation Projects

With proper cleanup, former tannery brownfields can be rehabilitated using phytoremediation and reforestation. Land once seen as dead can be brought back to life — especially in zones like Hazaribagh or parts of Kanpur and Cairo. UNIDO-led pilot projects in Ethiopia and Morocco showed land recovery in 2–5 years after tannery pollution clean-up.

6. Industry as a Partner in National Land Goals

Bangladesh is a signatory to the UNCCD & has pledged to restore 500,000 hectares of degraded land by 2030. The leather sector can be a valuable partner by Funding & Supporting community-based composting of pre-tanning waste as well as Participating in land-neutral production certification.

* Conclusion: A New Footprint for Leather

The leather industry can either contribute to land degradation — or become a driver of land restoration. The choice lies in how we source, how we tan, and how we design for durability.



Source :UNCCD, UNEP, FAO, Savory Institute, UNIDO, LWG, Council for LE (India) & Newspaper

Latest Export Data: Footwear Drives Export Growth in June export

Leather & Footwear Export Insight — FY 2024–25 (July '24–June '25)



Overall Performance

Total Exports: \$1,667.66 million, +15% growth compared to the previous fiscal year.

Monthly Export (June '25): \$115.56 million ▼15% vs June last year.

Footwear Sub-Sector Continues to Lead Leather Footwear (HS 6403)
YTD Export: \$672.07 million, ▲24%

June 2025 Export: \$51.90 million, ▼17.8% YoY

Other (Non-Leather) Footwear (HS 64)
YTD Export: \$522.59 million, ▲25%

June 2025 Export: \$28.31 million, ▼24.2% YoY

Total footwear exports (leather + non-leather): ~\$1.19 billion, dominating the sector and driving overall growth.

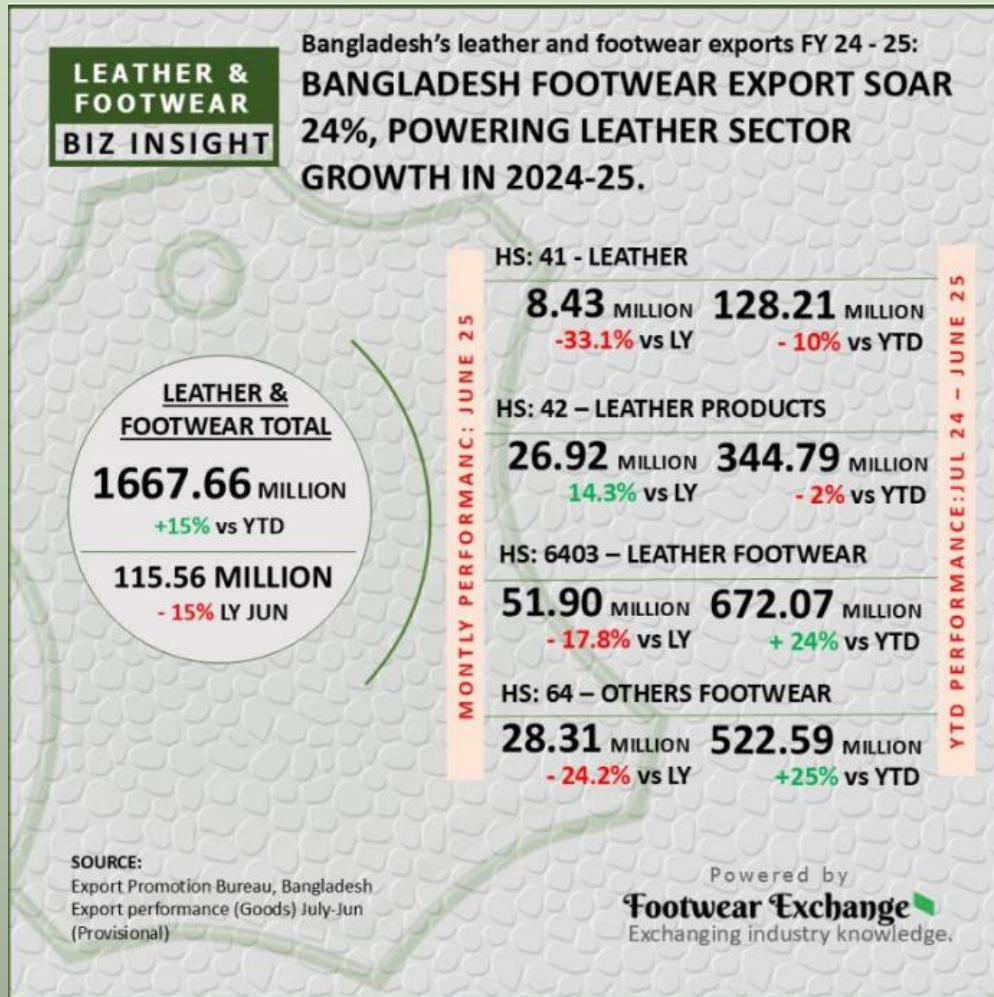
Leather & Leather Products Under Pressure Raw/Processed Leather (HS 41)

YTD Export: \$128.21 million, ▼10%

June 2025 Export: \$8.43 million, ▼33.1% YoY

Leather Products (HS 42)
YTD Export: \$344.79 million, ▼2%

June 2025 Export: \$26.92 million, ▲14.3% YoY



Key Takeaway: Despite declines in leather and finished leather product exports, Bangladesh's footwear sub-sector surged by 24–25% in FY 2024–25, accounting for the lion's share of the \$1.67 billion total leather and footwear exports. The strong performance in both leather and synthetic footwear helped lift the sector's overall growth to 15% YoY.

Source: Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh Export performance for Leather & Footwear 2024-25 July-June (provisional)



Global footwear giant Bata has announced the appointment of Panos Mytaros as its next CEO, effective September 2025, succeeding Sandeep Kataria. Mytaros, former CEO of Danish brand ECCO, brings over 30 years of industry experience. His leadership in brand building and global operations is expected to drive Bata's continued growth.



Apex Footwear Ltd. has signed an MoU with the Bangladesh Astronomical Association to become the Title Sponsor of the Apex Astro Olympiad 2025. The agreement was formalized on June 23, 2025. This partnership highlights Apex's commitment to promoting science education and nurturing young talent in astronomy across Bangladesh.



Footwear Exchange is set to launch Issue 6 (April–June) of its quarterly magazine **Leather and Footwear HIVE Q2**. The publication continues to serve as a dedicated platform for industry professionals, covering developments across the leather and footwear sector. This upcoming release marks another step in strengthening knowledge sharing and sectoral collaboration.



Abdullah Hil Rakib, former Senior Vice President of BGMEA and Managing Director of Team Group, passed away in a boating accident in Canada. A prominent figure in Bangladesh's textile and apparel industry, he played a vital role in expanding the sector into new global markets including Japan, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile during his tenure as BGMEA Director (2013–2017).



Bata Bangladesh is engaging students, teachers & communities to eliminate single-use plastics and adopt sustainable practices through its Bata Children Programme. With support from Green Savers, employee volunteers are driving change via Eco Awareness Clubs, waste segregation systems & community outreach. A student quiz on plastic pollution highlighted the growing enthusiasm for environmental responsibility among the youth.



The Leather Working Group (LWG) has opened public consultation for the core environmental sections of its upcoming LWG Leather Production Standard, set to replace Protocol 7 in 2026. The consultation runs from June 26 to August 26, 2025. Other components, including social responsibility and due diligence, will follow later. LWG encourages all stakeholders to provide feedback to support the development of the new standards and tools.

Worlds Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Day is on June 27, so the spotlight falls on an overlooked opportunity: small-scale leather businesses with global potential. While traditional leather exports have long focused on shoes and bags, a new generation of niche, value-added leather products is capturing markets in Europe, the Middle East, East Asia, and North America.

Here's how Bangladeshi MSMEs can lead the charge in these high-growth sectors:

1. Leather Jewelry and Fashion Accessories

Delicate leather earrings, bangles, chokers, and pins are increasingly popular in Europe and North America — especially among Gen Z and Millennials seeking natural, cruelty-aware alternatives to plastic jewelry.

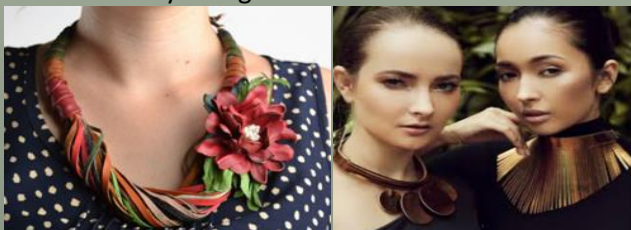
Global Demand Snapshot:

- Leather jewelry is part of the \$38 billion global fashion accessories market.
- Demand rising in Germany, Italy, USA, and Japan, particularly in minimalist and “boho” style circles.

How Bangladesh Can Tap In:

- Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Old Town have access to leather offcuts perfect for jewelry-making.
- Low-tech production and hand assembly mean easy home-based startup potential.

Brands can emphasize “waste-to-value” and “natural material” storytelling.



2. Leather Pet Accessories

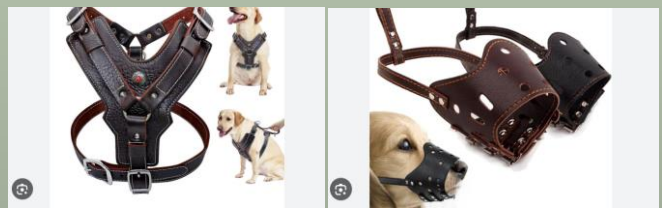
From Italy to South Korea, the global pet industry is exploding — and so is demand for natural, safe, stylish products like leather collars, leashes, and chew-safe toys.

Market Insight:

- Global pet care market exceeds \$250 billion; premium pet accessories are a fast-growing niche.
- Customers are seeking handmade, customizable pet gear with eco-friendly branding.

Why This is a Smart Opportunity for Bangladesh:

Bangladesh's leather and footwear factories generate large volumes of scrap and offcuts, which MSMEs can transform into affordable pet accessories like collars, leashes, and toys. This not only reduces industrial waste but offers a cost-effective, eco-friendly, and pet-safe alternative to synthetic materials. With growing global demand and the ease of small-scale production and shipping, this niche offers strong potential for export-oriented small businesses.



3. Leather Stationery & Desk Accessories

Hand-bound leather journals, pen holders, laptop mats, and card cases cater to a global gifting and home-office market that values quality, personalization, and artisanal touch.

Source: ITC, UNIDO, World Bank MSME Reports and newspapers

Global Market Trends:

- High demand in Japan, France, UAE, and South Korea, where handcrafted leather stationery is considered a luxury item.
- The corporate gifting market worldwide is valued over \$240 billion annually — and is increasingly eco-conscious.

MSME Opportunity in Bangladesh:

- Regions like Jashore and Dhaka already have small printing and binding units.
- Adding a leather finishing layer can increase per-unit value by 3–5 times.
- Customization for events, luxury hotels, and e-commerce gifting bundles can add revenue streams.



4. Tech-Integrated Leather Goods

AirPods cases, cable wraps, phone sleeves, and laptop organizers made from leather are booming in gadget-loving markets like the US, UK, UAE, and Singapore.

Opportunities for entrepreneurs:

- Requires very small tools or machines. Basic punching, cutting, stitching can be done at home.
- Needs low investment, but offers high-value output, as leather gives a premium finish compared to synthetic.
- Perfect for single entrepreneurs or online-based businesses.
- As tech becomes a lifestyle, consumers are willing to pay premium for natural, high-durability accessories.



5. Leather Home & Lifestyle Decor

Interior designers and sustainable lifestyle brands across Europe, Scandinavia, and the Middle East are seeking handmade leather home accents — coasters, trays, storage bins, lampshades, etc.

What the Market Says:

- Global home decor market is projected to exceed \$800 billion by 2028.
- “Warm luxury” and “earth-toned minimalism” are trending — both perfectly aligned with leather as a natural material.

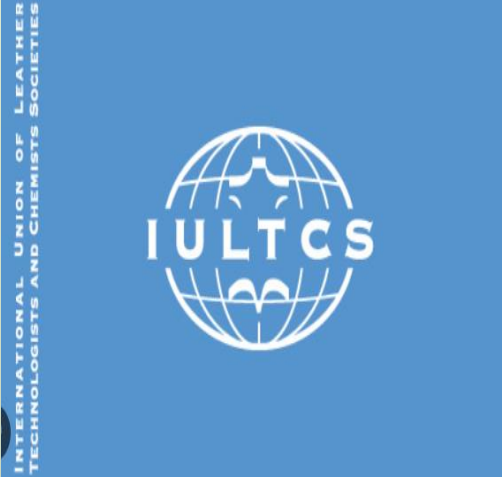
Bangladeshi MSME Scope:

Linking with fair-trade buyers like Ambiente (Germany) or Maison & Objet (France), European importers, or B2B gift channels can generate consistent order.



To turn leather-based MSMEs into global success stories, Bangladesh needs to ensure shared tool access, e-commerce and packaging support, design training, and direct links to international platforms. Most importantly, the government should enable combined bonded warehouses to help small producers export more efficiently and expand into global lifestyle markets.

Source: ITC, UNIDO, World Bank MSME Reports and newspapers



Dr. Giancarlo Lovato (Italy)

Dr. Patricia Casey (Argentina)

About IULTCS

The International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies, a world-wide organization of professional societies, was originally organized in London in 1897. There are currently 19 Member Societies and 6 Associate Members representing some 3000 individual members.

According to the IULTCS statutes the aims of the Union are to foster cooperation between member societies, to hold congresses to further the advancement of leather science and technology, to form commissions for special studies and to establish international methods of samples and testing leather and materials associated with leather manufacture.

The IULTCS organizations has held 37 congresses in twenty different countries on five continents, with the most recent being held in Chengdu, China in 2023.

The International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies (IULTCS) has revealed two significant updates for its global community.

IULTCS Announces Vice-President Election and Merit Award for 2025:

Dr. Giancarlo Lovato of Italy has been elected as the new Vice-President of IULTCS. Nominated by the Italian Association of Leather Chemists and Technologists (AICC), Dr. Lovato brings a wealth of scientific expertise and leadership experience to the role. His notable contributions include serving as Secretary of AICC, chairing the III IULTCS Euro Congress in Vicenza 2022, and currently leading the IULTCS International Union Network (IUN) Commission. With a strong record of publications and patents, Dr. Lovato is well-positioned to advance the field of leather science.

In addition, the prestigious IULTCS Merit Award for 2025 will be presented to Dr. Patricia Casey of Argentina. Dr. Casey is widely respected for her leadership in the leather industry and education across Latin America. Her distinguished service includes terms as President of IULTCS and President of the Argentine Association of Leather Technologists and Chemists (AAQTIC). The award ceremony is scheduled during the IULTCS Congress Gala Dinner on September 10, 2025.

Dr. Luis A. Zugno, Executive Secretary of IULTCS, extended warm congratulations to both Dr. Lovato and Dr. Casey, highlighting their dedication to advancing global leather science and technology.

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