

Footwear Exchange



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

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the
footprint

monthly newsletter by Footwear Exchange



EDITOR'S NOTE

Footprint October Edition: Crafting a Sustainable and Luxurious Future

Dear Readers,

October invites us to reflect on sustainability, innovation, and global recognition in Bangladesh's leather and footwear sector. In this edition, Footprint explores the intersections of tradition, modernity, and responsibility—showcasing how our industry continues to evolve while embracing the principles of a sustainable and high-quality future.

This month, we celebrate World Sustainability Day (October 6) and World Luxury Day (October 8)—two occasions that highlight both responsibility and excellence. From recycling initiatives and eco-conscious manufacturing practices to the artistry behind premium leather products, these observances remind us that the choices we make today shape the environmental, economic, and cultural legacy of the sector

On the commercial front, Bangladesh's leather and footwear exports continue to show promising growth. Recent trade data indicates steady increases in key markets, signaling our expanding footprint in the global arena. This month, we also cover updates on Latest key news of Leather and Footwear Sector.

Here's to exploring new opportunities, honoring achievements, and crafting a future where growth and sustainability walk hand in hand.

Let's continue exchanging ideas and embracing opportunities for growth.

Thank you for walking this journey with us.

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Luxury in Leather: Top 7 Iconic Bags for World Luxury Day

Every year, World Sustainability Day—observed on the last Wednesday of October—reminds us that a truly sustainable future depends on how well we manage the materials we already have. For the leather sector, this message resonates deeply. Behind every finished leather product lies a complex story of resource use, craftsmanship, and, most importantly, waste transformation.

The Hidden Challenge of Leather Waste

Leather is one of the oldest and most durable materials known to humankind. Yet, its production generates a significant amount of waste. From raw hides and trimmings to shavings and buffing dust, every stage of the tanning and finishing process produces by-products. Globally, it's estimated that 20–30% of a hide's original mass can end up as solid waste if not properly utilized. Traditionally, much of this waste was sent to landfills, creating environmental and health challenges. The tanning process involves various chemicals—particularly in chrome tanning—that can make disposal complicated. However, the industry is changing rapidly, driven by innovation and a shared commitment to sustainability.

Turning By-products into New Possibilities

In recent years, circular economy models have taken root across the leather value chain. Instead of treating waste as a problem, tanners and researchers are reimagining it as a resource. Here's how leather waste is being transformed:

Collagen recovery: Leather shavings and trimmings, rich in collagen, are now used to produce gelatin, bio-fertilizers, and even cosmetics.

Composite materials: Ground leather fibers are blended with natural rubber, polyurethane, or other polymers to make reconstituted or bonded leather, reducing the need for virgin hides.

Energy recovery: Some tanneries have installed anaerobic digesters and biogas plants, converting organic residues into energy to power their own operations.

Construction applications: Research is ongoing into using tanned leather waste in brick or tile manufacturing, where its thermal and binding properties enhance strength and insulation.

These innovations are not just technical solutions—they represent a philosophical shift toward responsible production.

A New Chapter of Sustainable Leather



Key Data on Leather Waste & Recycling

- The global leather industry produces around 4 billion pounds (≈ 1.8 million tons) of scrap leather waste every year. Much of this ends up in landfills or is incinerated.
- Production scrap is large: in footwear manufacturing, 20–30% of the leather used may be discarded during cutting/trimming processes.
- In tanneries, a high volume of waste is generated. For example:
 - “The processing of 1 Mg (metric ton) of raw hides produces only about 200 kg of useful product, the rest being waste material.”
- The global recycled leather market is projected to grow from about USD 1.1 billion in 2025 to USD 1.7 billion by 2035, driven by environmental awareness and demand for eco-friendly materials.

Leather Waste Recycling in Global Platform

Cromwell Group (UK):

Cromwell recycles 3 to 5 tons of leather fibers per day. These fibers are waste from shavings and trimmings from hide thinning (“shaving”) operations in tanneries. By turning those fibers into bonded leather products, they reduce landfill waste significantly.

Source: Source: Asia Foundation, ITS and Newspapers

ELFA Leather:

- ELFA uses off-cuts, shavings, and trimmings (which are usually waste) to produce “composition leather” (a type of bonded leather) with a process that emphasizes environmental performance:
- They reduce natural gas use by 50-70% via thermal oxidisers that burn off-gases and feed energy back into the system.
- From one tonne of raw hide, only about 255 kg of finished, tanned leather results; the rest (~745 kg) becomes various wastes (trimmings, shavings, offcuts, etc.).
- ELFA’s approach seeks to reclaim a portion of those waste material

kEconock (India):

Indie luxury brand Econock uses scrap leather (oddly shaped and irregular remnants) as its core material. Their designs are also optimized to use what would otherwise be waste. For example, in their “Nora Tote Bag,” the base is made from waste leather, and the rest of the design is cut in ways that minimize leftover offcuts

Leather Waste & Recycling in Bangladesh

Gelatin and Industrial Protein from Tannery Waste

- Some factories in Savar collect chrome shaving dust and wet blue leather scraps.
- These are processed into gelatin and protein powders used in pharmaceuticals, food, and other industries.
- This reduces hazardous waste while creating new revenue streams.

Adhesives from Hide Trimmings

- Local enterprises produce *shirish atha* (animal hide glue) from hide scraps.
- It is widely used in bookbinding, furniture, and even shoe production.
- This practice converts waste into a useful industrial product.

Utilizing Rawhide By-products

- Horns, head skins, tails, and fat from raw hides are reused in different ways, such as brushes, capsule caps, and small leather goods.
- This reduces wastage and supports small-scale enterprises.

Solid Waste / Landfill Projects:

- The government has begun a “safe landfill” project in Savar, funded by the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund, to better contain and manage solid waste from the leather sector so that soil and river pollution (especially the Dhaleshwari) is reduced.

Recycling & Innovation:

- Particle Boards, Biodiesel, Biogas: The Institute of Leather Engineering & Technology (ILET) at University of Dhaka, in partnership with The Asia Foundation, is piloting particle boards from leather shaving dust (shavings = one form of solid waste). This is a direct example of turning what would be waste into usable materials.
- a research paper explored using leather lime fleshing waste (which is rich in fats and proteins) as a substrate for biodiesel production. This helps address two problems: disposing of the waste, and generating renewable energy.

World Sustainability Day highlights the need to turn waste into worth. Globally and in Bangladesh, the leather industry is moving toward circular practices—recycling tannery waste into new materials and energy. With continued focus on innovation and responsible management, leather can truly become a model of sustainable industry.



Source: Asia Foundation, ITS and Newspapers

Leather & Leather Products Pull Ahead as Footwear Slows Down in September.

Bangladesh’s leather sector continues to prove its resilience — but the story for September reveals a mixed performance across categories. According to data from the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), the leather and footwear industry posted a 9% year-on-year growth for FY25-26 (Jul–Sep), reaching US\$449.8 million in export earnings compared to US\$413.3 million a year earlier..

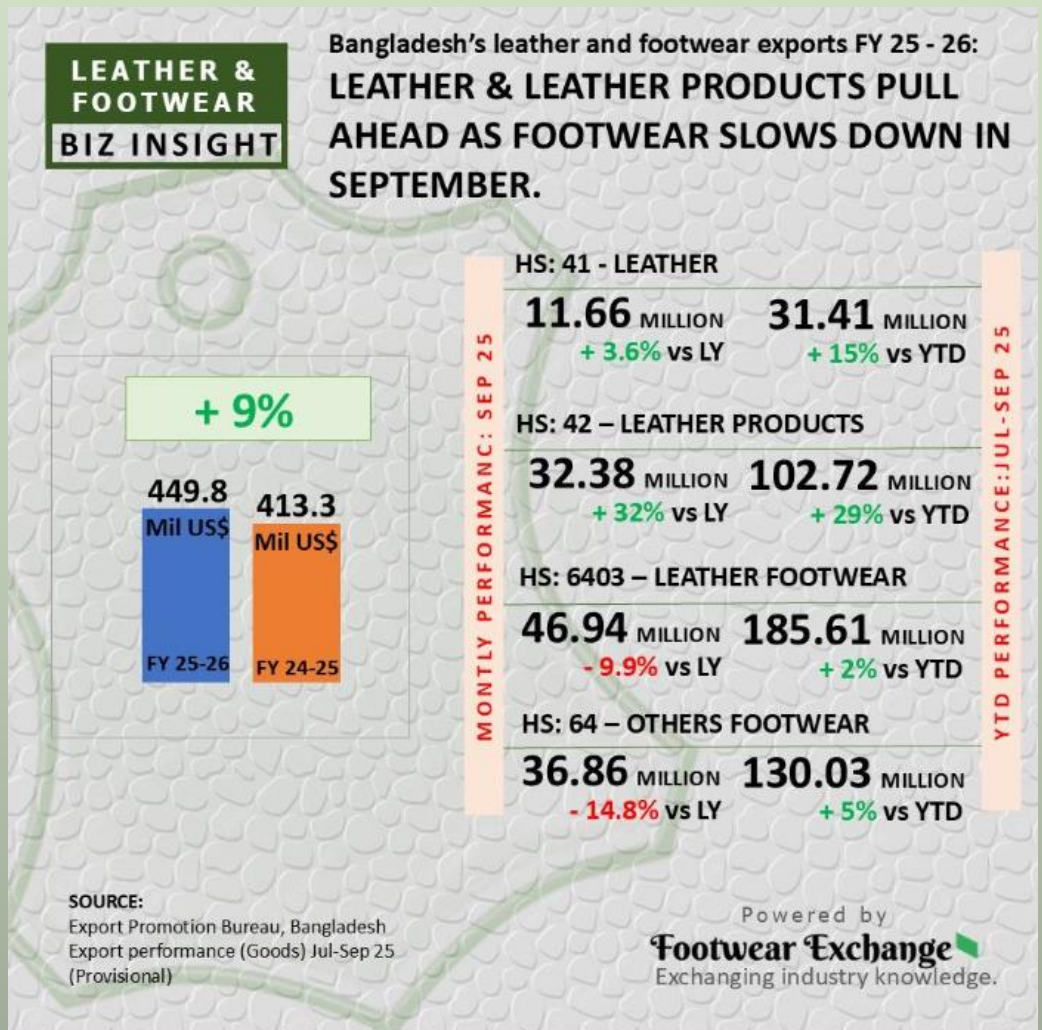
However, the momentum is uneven.

◆ Leather (HS 41) exports grew 15% YoY, reflecting sustained global demand and better raw material management.

◆ Leather Products (HS 42) led the charge with a striking +32% monthly and +29% YTD growth — driven by diversification into finished goods and value-added segments.

◆ In contrast, Leather Footwear (HS 6403) recorded a modest +2% YTD growth, but -9.9% in September alone — signaling softer order flows.

◆ Other Footwear (HS 64) followed a similar trend, up +5% YTD, yet down -14.8% YoY for the month.



The overall picture suggests a pivot in momentum — where leather and its derivative products are steering export recovery, while footwear manufacturers continue to grapple with volatile demand and delayed replenishment cycles.

Source:
Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh
Export performance for Leather & Footwear 2025-26 July-Sep (provisional)

The stiffness of a shoe's midsole—the layer between the insole and outsole—has a direct effect on the forces transmitted to the Achilles tendon during movement. Understanding this relationship is crucial for runners, athletes, and anyone prone to tendon injuries.

How Midsole Stiffness Affects the Achilles

Stiffer Midsoles:

- Limit how much the shoe bends during push-off.
- The calf muscles have to work harder to extend the foot, which increases the load on the Achilles tendon.
- Sprinters or jumpers often benefit from stiffer shoes because they improve energy return, but overuse can lead to tendon strain if training intensity is too high.

Softer Midsoles:

- Compress more easily, absorbing impact and reducing peak forces on the tendon.
- Can be more comfortable for long-distance running, but may increase strain elsewhere in the foot and lower leg.

Real-World Examples:

Elite Marathon Runners: Many use shoes with moderately soft midsoles to reduce cumulative Achilles stress over long distances.

Sprinters or Track Athletes: Often wear shoes with stiff midsoles or embedded plates to maximize push-off efficiency, but these athletes need careful Achilles conditioning to prevent injuries.

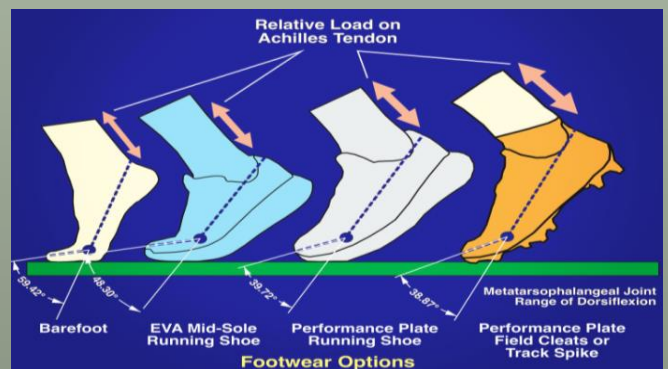
Injury Recovery: Athletes recovering from Achilles tendinopathy are advised to gradually transition to stiffer shoes, allowing the tendon to adapt to higher forces over time.



Practical Tips for sports: As we age, our muscles and joints become more sensitive, making footwear choices increasingly important. Shoes that are too soft or too stiff can amplify stress on the lower leg, particularly the Achilles tendon and calf. Modern performance shoes with stiff midsole plates may improve energy return but can also increase tendon load and torque, raising injury risk. Practical solutions include selecting shoes with a slight heel lift, greater forefoot flexibility, or moderate midsole stiffness to reduce strain, improve foot mobility, and support overall durability. Thoughtful footwear choices can significantly influence daily comfort, performance, and long-term joint and tendon health.

- Gradually increase training intensity when switching to stiffer shoes.
- Include calf strengthening exercises to support the Achilles tendon.
- For runners prone to Achilles injuries, consider midsoles with moderate stiffness and good cushioning.
- Track performance changes and tendon comfort; discomfort can indicate excessive loading.

Midsole stiffness directly influences how much force the Achilles tendon experiences during movement. Proper shoe selection, combined with progressive training and tendon conditioning, can improve performance while minimizing injury risk.



Source: Derek M Hansen, Sprint coach and internet



Bata celebrated Founder's Day 2025 with the theme "Improving Lives Together" through the Bata Children's Program in partnership with Save the Children Bangladesh. On September 21, marginalized youth pitched their projects at the Gala Day after receiving mentoring from Bata employees and partner experts. The most promising ideas earned the Yes Card to progress nationally, reflecting Bata's commitment to honoring its heritage while building a brighter future.



Apex celebrated Founder's Day on 26th September, marking the 83rd birthday of Syed Manzur Elahi and honoring the life and enduring vision of its founder. To mark this special occasion, the company offered exclusive promotional offers across its product range. The celebration reflects Apex's commitment to upholding the values that Syed Manzur Elahi instilled, allowing customers to join in commemorating his remarkable legacy.



Decathlon and FloSolar solutions Ltd. have partnered to promote renewable energy in Bangladesh. Under a new MoU, 100 MW of renewable power will be delivered in two phases, with FloSolar supporting Decathlon's suppliers through Corporate Power Purchase Agreements. The event, attended by the French Embassy's Head of Economics and company leaders, highlighted a commitment to sustainability, clean energy adoption, and protecting our planet.



iDEA TREE will host an upcoming webinar, "Green Industry Transformation: Pathways to Energy Efficiency and Net Zero," online on 11 October 2025 from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM (BST). The session will feature Dr. S. M. Nasif Shams, Director of the Institute of Energy at the University of Dhaka, and ABM Faqrul Alam, Group Sustainability Lead at Urmi Group. The webinar aims to bridge industry experience and academic expertise, toward a greener, more sustainable future while promoting energy efficiency and net-zero initiatives.



Bay Footwear proudly sponsored the Bangladesh Women's National Tchoukball Team in their recent international participation. The team's journey reflects values of teamwork, passion, perseverance, and women's empowerment. Through this sponsorship, Bay reinforces its commitment to empowering youth, uplifting women through sports, and showcasing Bangladesh on the global stage.



The World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI) has partnered with Intertek to support its members with global product compliance. Through Intertek's Global Market Access (GMA) portal, WFSGI members can access real-time regulatory insights across key markets including the EU, UK, US, China, Australia, and New Zealand. This partnership ensures brands can navigate global regulations quickly and confidently, keeping pace in the fast-moving world of sport.

Luxury in Leather: Top 7 Iconic Bags for World Luxury Day

World Luxury Day, celebrated on 8 October, honors craftsmanship, artistry, and entrepreneurship across the luxury sector. High-end leather goods are at the heart of this celebration, combining timeless design, quality materials, and exceptional workmanship. Here's a look at seven of the world's most luxurious leather bags that epitomize elegance and excellence



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