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More Sustainable Leather Chemistry – Subproject 2

IT Tools and Governance for Traceability

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This paper documents the specific objectives and indicative planning (working packages) of the subproject as drafted at workshop #1 in October 2020, afterwards reviewed by the participants and then agreed by the group at workshop #2 in December 2020.

1. Specific Objectives of Subproject 2: IT Tools and Governance for Traceability

The following list of "Specific Objectives of Subproject 2" is the merged outcome of the group works by the participants from workshop #1 in October.

1. Identify all relevant actors. Identify incentives and impediments by actors to use IT Tools and Governance for Traceability (consider different IT-Levels and interplay with systems already in use).

2. Identify processes along the leather supply chains in which chemicals are applied; consider both inputs and outputs of chemicals. Start from preservation at slaughterhouse. Focus on the business-to-business supply chain until placing the final product on the market[1].

3. Determine how these processes can be translated into an IT reporting system to be employed by all actors along the supply chains. Customized graphic user interfaces dependent on the user's role and different service interfaces to connect to other IT systems need to be considered. High usability is necessary, e.g. user-friendliness enabled by phone-use where considered appropriate.

4. Have an early pilot test of such a system using an available system (also involve a tannery).

5. Initiate, i.e. create impetus, for an international sector wide dialogue to define common rules for the application of such a system; taking into account interlinkages with other initiatives and interoperability with existing approaches.

[1] To cover use and care during use are most likely not feasible during the project term.

2. Indicative Planning (Draft Work Packages)

During workshop #1 the h_da team presented five Research Questions (RQ) aimed to guide the subproject processes towards achieving the specific objectives. In a brainstorming session (facilitated by specific impulses), the workshop participants provided many ideas on how to approach the RQs. In addition, the team collected feedback on the RQs with IT focus from IT specialists. The team from h_da has elaborated all inputs into four draft work packages (WP) for the subproject's activities (until the end of 2022). Each WP comprises (a) research question(s), (b) specific methods and activities and (c) results, whereas there are some overlaps between WPs.

The success of this project depends on the willingness of actors from the field to share their experience and knowledge and to provide specific inputs to the processes as requested by the h_da team.

Working Package 1

(a) What information must be passed on along the leather supply chains?

(b) Methods/Activities

Identify all relevant actors and processes along supply chain

Understand what are the specific needs, abilities and limitations of the users (data requestors and suppliers – e.g. full material declaration as an argument)

Conduct qualitative survey of relevant actors (ensure representativeness), collect and review requirements in the group: what information is vital - what information is already present - where are gaps - where are restrictions in sharing?

Consider/ go into exchange with existing initiatives (e.g. UNECE)

(c) Results

- ⇨ List of (prioritized) data requirements and of data items deemed confidential
- ⇨ Discussion paper on incentives and impediments, e.g. brand/OEM needs vs supplier confidentiality claims (draft first half of 2021)

Working Package 2

(a) Which structures and processes (e.g. organisational and inter-organisational measures, links between existing systems, technical standards) have to be established to allow for traceability?

(b) Methods/Activities

Consider/go into exchange with other initiatives

Screen what relevant structures and processes exist (including, but not limited to: organisational management questions [exchange within a company], audit standards/ auditing bodies, communication platforms, decision-making instances) and their significance in terms of traceability

Understand what are the specific needs, abilities and limitations of the users of the system (e.g. how to facilitate a business (change) process, how can management and staff be convinced to build awareness for more traceability and corresponding actions; what personal changes will occur i.e.: new roles/positions)

Analyse how/to what extend gaps can be closed (thinking e.g. of Change Management)

Identify incentives for higher acceptance and adherence

Understand physical traceability mechanisms (stamps, RFID, DNA) and review possibilities

(c) Results

- ⇨ List of key organisational drivers for traceability
- ⇨ Understanding of appropriate auditing structure to allow for proper monitoring
- ⇨ "Incentive and impediment"-Paper with strategies to overcome impediments (e.g. re change management)
- ⇨ Summarize findings in a paper as basis for generic training material

Working package 3

(a) Which framework conditions (governance) support / guarantee traceability along the leather supply chains?

(b) Methods/Activities

Consider/ go into exchange with other industrial working groups

Identify incentives for higher acceptance and adherence, including rewards (e.g. grant tokens or money to allow inspection on traceability data)

Screen what common standards exist (audits/auditing bodies) and where adoption to traceability of chemicals is manageable with similar governance vehicles

Assess need/ benefit of multi-stakeholder steering group (for the monitoring of system's success and further development)

(c) Results

- ⇨ "Incentive and impediment"-Paper with strategies to overcome impediments (e.g. re reporting obligations/governance)
- ⇨ Governance Framework: Conception of overall governance structure; recommendations for actors to design bilateral contractual obligations
- ⇨ Auditing standards for a successful implementation of chemical traceability

Working Package 4

(a) Which technologies (hardware / software) are available (or required) to enable traceability along the leather supply chain?

What are the requirements for IT tools, which information must be collected and presented in which way?

(b) Methods/Activities

Desk research and interviews with industrial working groups/ IT-solution providers on current status on IT-Tools available.

Identify the minimum IT-requirements for all the users along the leather supply chain

Identify where/ to which extend personnel trainings and education could be needed (depending on the tool to be employed)

Investigate, how users can communicate chemicals used in leather without having access to IT-Tools

Clarify how sensitive data is controlled, secured, stored

Assess options for IT modelling of physical product (i.e. individual product, batch-wise etc.)

Start a feasibility-study/ Pilot

Assess how an IT-Tool with traceability feature relates to audits and manages (customized) access rights

(c) Results

Analyse outcomes from the pilot-study; integrate lessons learned to further considerations/ steps

- ⇨ Matching Data Models: selected project tool and UNECE Data model
- ⇨ Overview on IT-requirements (perhaps part of "incentive and impediment" paper)
- ⇨ Factsheet with approaches for targeted support and trainings
- ⇨ Perspectives for updated tool functionalities based on lessons learned from pilot