



A panel discussion offered valuable insights into the industry's efforts to align with the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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AQC – advancing a responsible leather bracelet supply chain

The Association pour l'Assurance Qualité des Fabricants de Bracelets Cuir (AQC), an international Swiss-based association founded in 2014, represents approximately 80% of the global production of leather bracelets for luxury watches. Its founding members – Brasport, Camille Fournet, Interstrap, Hirsch, and Multicuir – aim to ensure the highest levels of safety and responsibility within the leather bracelet supply chain. The association promotes transparency and collaboration among all stakeholders to achieve this goal.

At the end of last year, AQC convened key representatives from the leather and watch industries, alongside international organisations, for its annual Multistakeholder Meeting in Geneva. The event facilitated in-depth discussions on critical topics, including environmental, social, and governance (ESG) commitments, chemical compliance, traceability, credibility, certifications, and Life Cycle Assessment (LCA).

AQC has been advancing LCA+, an initiative aimed at evaluating both the negative and positive impacts of leather bracelet production. This approach aligns with the industry's growing responsibility to quantify its overall footprint in the production of watch straps. Discussions also covered topics such as biodegradability, end-of-life considerations, and circular economy principles, highlighting the industry's efforts towards sustainability.

Industry collaboration and scientific contributions

AQC invited leading organisations in the leather sector to share expertise and recent developments. Representatives from COTANCE, UNIC, LWG, ICEC, SLF, the FILK Institute, and Authenticae provided insights into industry-wide strategies for meeting the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

One of the most pressing challenges remains chemical compliance. Experts from CheMi (EU Platform for Chemicals Using Manufacturing Industries), ZDHC (Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals), and AQC presented findings on key regulatory issues, including PFAS and bisphenols, which are subjects of ongoing scientific research and regulatory scrutiny.

AQC maintains a neutral stance on industry standards,

advocating for harmonisation to prevent duplication and inefficiencies. The meeting also included representatives from alligator farming who presented insights into responsible sourcing, including updates from the International Crocodilian Farmers Association (ICFA) and the Standard for Responsible Crocodilian Production (SRCP/LVMH). These initiatives aim to ensure ethical and sustainable farming practices.

Science-based sustainability and regulatory developments

Scientific contributions played a significant role in the discussions. Alligator Intelligence (AI) presented research on the ecological benefits of American alligator populations in Louisiana wetlands, demonstrating the species' role in climate change mitigation. The sustainable management of these ecosystems has contributed to the species' successful conservation, with 97% of exotic leathers used by AQC members sourced from American alligators.

Representatives from the Watch and Jewellery Initiative 2030 (WJI 2030) and the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry FH discussed sustainability within the watch industry, the evolving value proposition of responsible sourcing, and regulatory developments in chemical compliance.

International organisations contributed additional perspectives, with the United Nations Global Compact providing insights into corporate sustainability frameworks and UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation) outlining methodologies for assessing the overall footprint of leather products.

Key takeaways and future initiatives

The meeting concluded with a session focused on field research and industry collaboration, leveraging the expertise of stakeholders across the supply chain. Key areas identified for future projects include "responsible alligator skin use" and the development of "the lowest impact leather bracelet". AQC has committed to launching new multistakeholder initiatives in response to these discussions.

The high level of engagement and participation reinforced the association's expanding influence within the leather and watch industries. The next AQC Multistakeholder Meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2025, in Geneva.

Over the past 10 years, AQC has conducted 77 industry events, including Multistakeholder Meetings, Watch Brands Working Groups, Tanners Working Groups, Laboratory Working Groups, LCA+ Working Groups, customised training sessions, and PODs (webinars).

Leveraging this expertise, AQC provides a comprehensive suite of chemical compliance services, encompassing regulatory support, biocompatibility monitoring, substance compliance guidance, and Quick Test Chrome (VI), a rapid in-house testing solution that detects chromium VI in just three hours.

As the industry landscape grows increasingly complex, transparency, science-based decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving remain central to AQC's mission. The association continues to expand participation opportunities, fostering cooperation across the entire supply chain to drive sustainability and innovation in the leather bracelet industry.