

# Report on the Fifteenth meeting of ISO/TC 120 Leather, its Subcommittees and Working Groups

## 1. General

1.1 The Fifteenth meeting of ISO/TC 120 'Leather' along with ISO/TC 120/WG1 'Terminology', ISO/TC 120/SC1 'Raw hides and skins including pickled pelts', ISO/TC 120/SC2 'Tanned Leather' and ISO/TC 120/SC2/WG1 'Study on evolving test data for different types of leather at SAC corresponding to 23°C/50% RH and 27°C/65% RH' were held during 7 - 9 October 2009 at Hotel Courtyard Marriott, Chennai. These meetings were organized by the Bureau of Indian Standards in close co-operation with the Council for Leather Exports and the Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI) and were attended by delegates from Italy, Kenya, Portugal, Spain, Tanzania, Turkey and India. Ms. Marie-Noelle Bourquin, the Technical Group Manager, ISO Central Secretariat, Geneva, also attended the meetings.

1.2 Dr. Zackria Sait, Managing Director, Presidency Kid Leather Limited and Executive Director, Council for Leather Exports, chaired the meetings of ISO/TC 120, Shri. O. K. Kaul, Chief Executive Director, Tata International Ltd., chaired the ISO/TC 120/SC1, ISO/TC 120/SC 2 and ISO/TC 120/SC2/WG1 meetings. Dr. C. Muralidharan (India), Scientist, CLRI chaired the meeting of ISO/TC 120/WG1. Shri. E. Devendar, Scientist F & Head, Chemicals Department, BIS and Secretary of the committees conducted the meetings.

1.3 The Indian Delegation to the committees comprised of the following experts:

- a) Dr. C. Muralidharan, CLRI - Leader of Indian delegation,
- b) Shri. Niaz Ahmed, Presidency Kid Leather Limited - Member,
- c) Prof. Dr. S. Sadulla, Indian Shoe Federation – Member,
- d) Dr. B. N. Das, CLRI – Member,
- e) Dr. R. Rajaraman, CLRI – Member,
- f) Dr. Ganesh Jeevan, CLRI – Member,
- g) Prof. Dr. S. K. Majumdar, Indian Statistical Institute – Member.
- h) Dr. S. K. Das, Bata India Limited – Member,
- i) Shri. B. Ramalingam, Tata International Ltd – Member.

## 2. Background information on importance of meeting

2.1 At the Thirteenth meeting of ISO/TC 120 Meeting held at Milan during 14-15 March 2005, it was decided that ISO/TC 120 shall utilize the CEN documents on Glove leather, Upper leather, Lining leather, Sole leather and Upholstery leathers as basis for documenting International Standards. All these documents were unfavorable to Indian Trade interests since they were not recognizing the Standard Atmospheric Conditions (SAC) meant for Tropical/Subtropical countries to be maintaining while conducting physical tests, namely 27°C/65% RH, and all the specified values in these documents were at either at 20°C/65% RH or 23°C/50% RH, both the conditions being relevant for Cold and Temperate countries. In case this was initiated as decided during these meetings, the ISO standards thus formulated would have posed as Technical Barrier to Indian leather and leather product trade.

2.2 Prior to this, the following developments had taken place:

- ISO/TC 120 had brought out ISO 14931:2004 Leather – Guide to the selection of leather for apparel (excluding furs) with the Technical barrier as stated above.
- International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies, IULTCS, the International Body recognized by ISO for the formulation of ISO Standards on Test Methods on Leather, had revised ISO 2419 'Leather – Conditioning of test pieces for physical tests' in 2002 deleting the SAC meant for Tropical/Subtropical countries. ISO 2419 in its present form prescribes only 20°C/65% RH and 23°C/50% RH as the SAC.

NOTE: Till 1984, ISO/TC 120 was engaged in formulation of standards on test methods on leather also. However, since 1984 IULTCS has been entrusted with the task of developing ISO standards on test methods on Leather and the scope of ISO/TC 120 was restricted to developing ISO standards on leather and leather products. Under this arrangement, it becomes necessary for ISO/TC 120 to refer the test methods developed by IULTCS.

2.3 All the above developments were not only potential Technical barriers to trade for India and other countries in the Tropical/Subtropical zone, but were not in line with the Global Relevance Policy of ISO. Hence the Secretariat had taken the following actions:

- took up with the ISO Central Secretariat for the reintroduction of 27°C/65% RH in ISO 2419,
- conducted a limited survey amongst the Tropical/Subtropical countries on the implementation of latest version of ISO 2419. This survey provided information that at least 9 countries were not implementing ISO 2419 in view of the deletion of 27°C/65% RH.
- based on the above survey, attempts were made to garner support from countries located in the Tropical/Subtropical zone for introduction of 27°C/65% RH in the documents that would be evolved by ISO/TC 120. Australia, Barbados, Kenya, Korea, Pakistan, Qatar, Rwanda and Turkey offered support to India on the issue of incorporation of 27°C/65% RH in the documents of ISO/TC 120.

2.4 Based on the above, the Secretariat introduced 27°C/65% RH in all the documents generated by ISO/TC 120, namely the documents on Glove leather, Upper leather, Lining leather, Sole leather and Upholstery leathers, keeping in view the ISO Policy on Global Relevance. This move was objected by Member Bodies of Germany, Italy and Switzerland.

2.5 At the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ISO/TC 120 held at Istanbul, Turkey, the Indian Delegation projected the issue of SAC effectively by explaining the adverse impact that would be resulting in the entire Standards Formulation exercise in India, which is based entirely on data developed at 27°C/65% RH, the impact on the Indian Industry, particularly the BIS Certification activity which have been built on SAC as 27°C/65% RH, the energy loss and Green House Gases that would be generated if the entire industry in the Tropical and Subtropical zone switch over to 20°C/65% RH or 23°C/50% RH. The Indian viewpoint was well supported by Kenya Member body which resulted in the following important decisions being arrived at during the meeting:

- a) To write to the IUP Commission of IULTCS on the concerns of Tropical and Sub-Tropical countries on the issue related to Standard Atmospheric Conditions and propose that the SAC of 27°C/65%RH be reintroduced in ISO 2419.
- b) Setting up of a Working Group for the Study on evolving test data for different types of leather at SAC corresponding to 23°C/50% RH and 27°C/65% RH and submission of report within 12 months. The composition of the Working Group comprised of experts from Germany, India, Italy, Kenya, Switzerland and Turkey with Shri. O. K. Kaul as the Convenor. The data thus evolved would be utilised for the projects at hand with ISO/TC 120/SC 2 after discussing the same during the next meeting.
- c) To establish a high degree of liaison between IULTCS and ISO/TC 120 by nominating the Standards Body of India, Australia, Kenya, South Africa and Turkey for receiving documents of IULTCS and attending the IUC, IUP and IUF commission meetings of the IULTCS.

2.6 Intense efforts were made to explain the implication of removal of SAC of 27°C/65% RH from ISO 2419 to ISO Member Bodies located in the Tropical/Subtropical zone and seek the support of these countries for the re-introduction of the same in all the IULTCS Standards whenever they were due for Systematic Review. These efforts were richly rewarded since support was received from Australia, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Kenya, Korea (KATS), Libya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey and a few IULTCS standards received substantial support for revision to include SAC of 27°C/65% RH. As a result, just prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ISO/TC 120, CEN 289 and IULTCS had resolved to revise ISO 2419 for inclusion of 27°C/65% RH as an additional set of SAC.

2.7 Just 4 days before the commencement of the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ISO/TC 120, Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom had sent dissenting comments on almost all the projects in the Agenda of the meetings thereby creating a situation where it may not be possible for progress even on projects which had received substantial support from the members of the Committee. The Chairman of CEN 289 Leather was also nominated by Spain, Italy and Portugal to attend the meetings as their delegate to ensure that the comments of Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom are further strengthened.

### **3. Important Decisions arrived at during the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ISO/TC 120, its Subcommittees and Working Groups**

3.1 In the light of the above it was imperative that Chairman of the respective Committees weigh the issues and comments in a larger perspective and ensure that the meetings are conducted smoothly. It was also necessary for the Indian Delegation to take care of Indian interests and the interests of Developing countries and countries located in the Tropical and Subtropical zone. For the progress of the projects on Glove leather, Leather for Footwear, Upholstery leathers and Leather for Apparels on which India has substantial trade interests it was necessary that the SAC of 27°C/65% RH is recognized and included in the ISO Standards on Leather. India had been consistently of the opinion that the project on Leather Vocabulary which defines all the terms that are used in the leather industry should include terms that are used in Indian Leather Trade in addition to the terms covered in other Glossaries developed in Europe. This stand was taken to ensure that terms that are used in the Indian trade get International recognition and thereby enhance trade. There was also a need for the Indian Delegation to ensure that all the projects on Raw hides and skins progress smoothly since these had been included in the Program of Work in view of Indian Trade interests.

3.2 Even though the comments from Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom had come very late and thus not providing sufficient time for the members of the committee to reflect, Dr. Zackria Sait and Shri. O. K. Kaul agreed to consider the same during the meetings as a goodwill gesture. They ensured that these comments were discussed in detail along with the views of all the delegates present during the meeting. Both the Chairmen explained the rationale behind the various projects and the importance of ISO Standards being Globally Relevant without any Technical Barriers. Dr. Sait reminded the delegates that only by such a measure would it be possible to ensure wider acceptance of the ISO Standards which is the objective of ISO. Dr. Muralidharan, Leader of the Indian Delegation ensured that Indian interests on the various agenda items are taken care off adequately. Kenya, Tanzania and Turkey supported India on most of the issues.

**3.3 On the issue of SAC:** During the meetings, the Test Data on Garment leather and Upholstery leather as tested at the laboratories of Germany, India, Italy, Kenya, Switzerland and Turkey for the requirements of Tear Strength and Water Vapour Permeability at SAC corresponding to 23°C/50% RH and 27°C/65% RH was examined. Based on detailed examination and discussions, it was decided that in the case of Water Vapour Permeability, the effect of SAC is significant and hence there is a need to prescribe two sets of values, one at 23°C/50% RH and the other at 27°C/65% RH. Keeping this in view, TC 120 resolved to include the requirement of Water Vapour Permeability at 27°C/65% RH in the projects on Glove leather, Leather for Footwear, Upholstery leathers and Leather for Apparels. Since ISO 2419 is being taken up for revision to include 27°C/65% RH as an additional set of SAC, the issue of SAC for other parameters would get resolved and need not be separately addressed by ISO/TC 120.

**3.4 On the issue of Leather Vocabulary:** Despite considerable pressure to drop the project or to utilise the Glossaries developed by Europe, TC 120 resolved to continue with the project and reconstituted the Working Group on Terminology. Dr. C. Muralidharan was nominated as the Convenor of the Working Group and the Working Group was requested to submit a fresh Draft International Standard within 15 months.

**3.5 On the projects on Raw Hides and Skins:** Keeping in view the trade importance of Pickled Sheep Pelts, Preservation of Hides, Packaging of Wet Blue Leather, Grading of Wet blue Goat and Sheep Skins on the basis of defects, Area Measurement of Wet Blue Leather, Indian Delegation volunteered to provide the Working Documents for further discussion.

3.6 The Committee extended the term of Shri. O. K. Kaul as Chairman of ISO/TC 120/SC2 Tanned Leather for a further period of 3 years.

#### **4. Date and Venue for the Next Meeting**

4.1 The Committee tentatively decided to hold its next meeting at Milan, Italy during October 2011.

#### **5. Conclusion**

5.1 The meeting is considered as a major achievement for India in view of the success achieved on the issue of SAC and ensuring that all the projects of ISO/TC 120 would include the incorporation of

27°C/65%RH as the SAC. This ensures that the ISO Standards on Leather would not have Technical Barriers in the form of SAC.

5.2 It is highly desirable that scientists from CLRI actively take part in the meetings of CEN 289 Leather which evolve ISO/IULTCS Standards on Test Methods on Leather which would have to be referred in all ISO Standards developed by ISO/TC 120. The issue of SAC is a clear example on how test methods become Technical Barriers to trade. Getting over the Technical barrier of SAC in the ISO Standards on Leather had taken more than 5 years.

5.3 Based on the experience gained during the meeting, it is concluded that there is a strong need for the active involvement of the Indian Leather industry in matters related to Standards development at ISO/TC 120 and IULTCS. There is an urgent need for the Indian Leather industry to strengthen the National Standards on Leather and Leather Products and be alert to any potential Technical barriers being introduced in International Standards on Leather.

## **Photographs**



**Shri. Alinda Chandra, ADG, delivering the Inaugural Address**



**Indian Delegation**



**Group Photo of Delegates**



**Drafting Committee at Work**



**A Section of the Delegates**