

New process may transform leather industry

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The Central Leather Research Institute in Adyar, India, says a new chemical process may revolutionize the world's leather-tanning industry.

"Reverse" leather tanning -- which essentially works backward from the point where conventional tanning ends -- saves time, money and energy while drastically slashing water use and pollution, say researchers at the CLRI.

From pre-tanning to finishing, conventional leather tanning requires about 15 steps, which produce large amounts of wastewater and pollutants.

The new approach flips the process and eliminates some of the steps, resulting in multiple and substantial production efficiencies, the researchers say.

In addition to costing less and being "greener" than conventional tanning, the reverse process is easy to adopt and could help the global industry overcome emerging environmental and economic concerns, the researchers conclude.

The process is detailed in the Feb. 15 issue of the American Chemical Society's journal *Environmental Science & Technology*.

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