



## ACLE in Shanghai

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Shortly before the Shanghai New International Expo Centre opened its doors for the 22nd edition of ACLE, one delegate told Leather International that he suspected this year's shop-floor might be decidedly quieter due to "market conditions".

Elsewhere, a Pakistani tanner, who has exhibited his wares for Shanghai for some time, said forlornly that he was attending this year's show only as a visitor, unable to afford a stall due to poor economic conditions.

While one might therefore be forgiven in thinking that this year's ACLE kicked off under a pall of gloom, it's far from self-evident. The 92,000 square metres of exhibition halls – which includes 16 group pavilions from 12 countries – are as lively as ever.

Over at the press briefing, the mood might best be categorised as one of cautious optimism. Kicking things off, Michael Duck, APLF director, described 2019 as having been "one of the most challenging for the leather sector since the launch of ACLE in 1998". Duck, attributed a series of factors – including low demand, low prices and an oversupply of hides due to growing red meat consumption – as contributing to the parlous point the market finds itself at.

Duck, along with his fellow panellist Chen Zhan Guang, secretary general of the China Leather Industry Association, also spoke of the impact the US-China trade war, which continues to undermine business confidence.

However, both men are confident that a resolution to the impasse will come about sooner or later. "This dispute will be solved at some stage – the sooner the better. Then the curve of economic growth will start going up," said Duck.

"I think the trade war does more harm to the general economy than the Chinese leather industry," added Chen.

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