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**Sustainable Leather Foundation  
Standard for Water Use**

**Reference:** FSE7.1

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**Peer Reviewed by:** R Arbeid

**Accredited by:** XXX

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## **WATER USE STANDARD AND BENCHMARKS**

**Summary:** The SLF water use standard and benchmark provides the context, calculation of water accounting, and the global benchmark, provides the facility under audit the methodology to record and report their water use to an interested party ensuring the reporting of total water use, and water per unit area, such that the environmental impact and comparisons of the facilities can be compared to previous years and absolute use.



## 1. Scope

The International Standard and Benchmarks for water use specify the method and definition of water use for facilities in the leather value chain. The facilities in the value chain include all facilities from the farm to the end of life of the leather.

The Standard and Benchmark on water use includes all direct uses of water in the facilities. The water use in question is only related to the Scope of the SLF audit (or mapped certification) that is being audited. The Scope of the water use Standard or Benchmark does not include indirect water use that is related to the preparation of inputs - that are then used on the site (included within the Scope of the audit).

## 2. Normative references

The following referenced documents are useful in the understanding of this document and are provided for further guidance. In the case of dispute these references form the core of the evidence in support of the Standard and Benchmarks used here:

BS EN ISO 14046: 2014 Environmental management — Water footprint — Principles, requirements and guidelines<sup>1</sup>

Buljan, J. and Král, I. (2015) The framework for sustainable leather manufacture. [A United Nations Industrial Development Organisation \(UNIDO\) working paper](#). UNIDO, Vienna, Austria. p. 1-204<sup>2</sup>.

## 3. Terms and definitions

**Zero Liquid Discharge** – a facility takes water in and uses it, but the wastewater is treated and re-used within the facility for further processing – that is no water is discharged (through run-off, pipe release, or transportation). Loss of water through evaporation does not count as water discharge, but water associated with material wastes is.

**Water treatment** – a facility collects water that is adulterated by the facility process and removes impurities to a level accepted by local, national, or international water quality indicators.

**Water quality indicators** – the levels of pollutants in the water before and after processing. The levels of pollutants are compared against international benchmarks. If an international benchmark that is currently used by the global industry is deemed to be non-independent by the SLF governing body, then the SLF will endeavour to set these benchmarks.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iso.org/standard/43263.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://leatherpanel.org/content/framework-sustainable-leather-manufacture-second-edition>



**Renewable water sources** – sources of water that come from the collection of water from precipitation or from air moisture (including drying machinery), and from the treatment of the facility process water. Ground sources are not classified as renewable.

#### 4. Principle

The principle of the water use in the facility is to ascertain what the company is doing to identify, characterise, plan, and implement measures that will reduce the environmental impact of water use. The Standard identifies the definitions of water use, characterises typical understanding and working practices in the global leather value chain.

The Water Use Benchmark helps the tannery identify, using the Calculation outlined in this document, and then compares the amount against the Water Benchmark for facilities of similar throughputs.

#### 5. Procedure

Collection of water usage figures by verifiable documentary evidence. Types of documentary evidence accepted:

- a. Water bills (electronic or paper copies) on a letterhead or digital equivalent which identifies the water supply company.
- b. Water collected on-site
- c. Water taken from aquifers or water sources (e.g., river water)
- d. Records of metered readings that identify the self-generation quantity of renewable water.

The documents listed above should identify, the following:

- a. Quantity of water
- b. How those amounts are converted to ML (if it has not already done so)
- c. The dates of water used or acquired

#### 6. Calculation of water use

Parameter	Use (ML)
Supplied and metered water (municipal or other provider)	
Metered blue water (river, lake, reservoir, desalination)	
Metered ground extraction	
Tankered water (transported water)	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	
Less renewable green water (precipitation, recovery)	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	
Total annual amount of leather produced	
<b>Facility energy consumption per square meter of leather produced (L/m<sup>2</sup>):</b>	



## 7. Diagnostic parameters

The data that has been acquired in Clause 5 and calculated and tabulated in Clause 6 are audited and reported on the web page dashboard and digital device application of the Sustainable Leather Foundation. The calculated amount given in Clause 6 is compared to producing and non-producing facilities. Annex B indicates the current global water consumption levels for leather value chain facilities (separated by yearly throughput of leather – raw materials, leather sheets, or leather parts).

The comparison of L/m<sup>2</sup> for producing and non-producing facilities are plotted on water range (and yearly indicator comparisons) curves as shown in Annex C. The water range comparisons (total water use per unit area) are also published for the facility on the webpage dashboard and digital device application. The total water (in ML) is also reported (as an indicator of environmental impact).

A total water-use per unit area level below the maximum acceptable water use (in L/m<sup>2</sup>, marked in red as shown in Annex C) is deemed a pass and will be marked off as an water use module element completion – that will be reflected on the SLF platforms.

## 8. Water Report

The Test Report for Water Use is the latest digital or printed report that shows the Water Use calculated (see Clause 6). The test report should include:

1. A reference to this Sustainable Leather Foundation Standard (i.e., FSE7.2: 2021).
2. The water use calculated in ML by totalling all direct water inputs in the facility and of the waste treatment plant.
3. Renewable water as a percentage of total is reported.
4. Performance in terms of benchmarks against facilities of similar type using Annex B and the correct water rating range and transposed onto the water range diagram shown in Annex C.
5. The Water Report (total use, use per unit area) and how the use per unit area levels compare to the SLF benchmark should appear on the webpage dashboard and the digital device application content.
6. Whether the SLF module element can be earned or not.

## Annex A

Unit	Conversion
1 Gigalitre (GL)	1.0 x 10 <sup>9</sup> L
1 Megalitre (ML)	1.0 x 10 <sup>6</sup> L
1 Kilolitre (kL)	1.0 x 10 <sup>3</sup> L
1 L	1 dm <sup>3</sup>
1000 L	1 m <sup>3</sup>

## Annex B

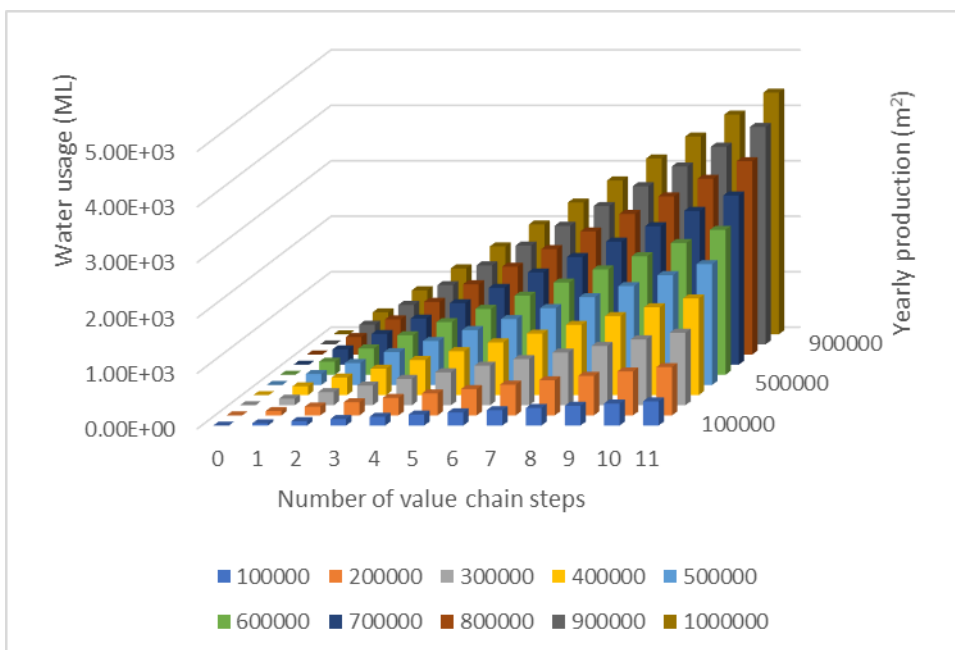
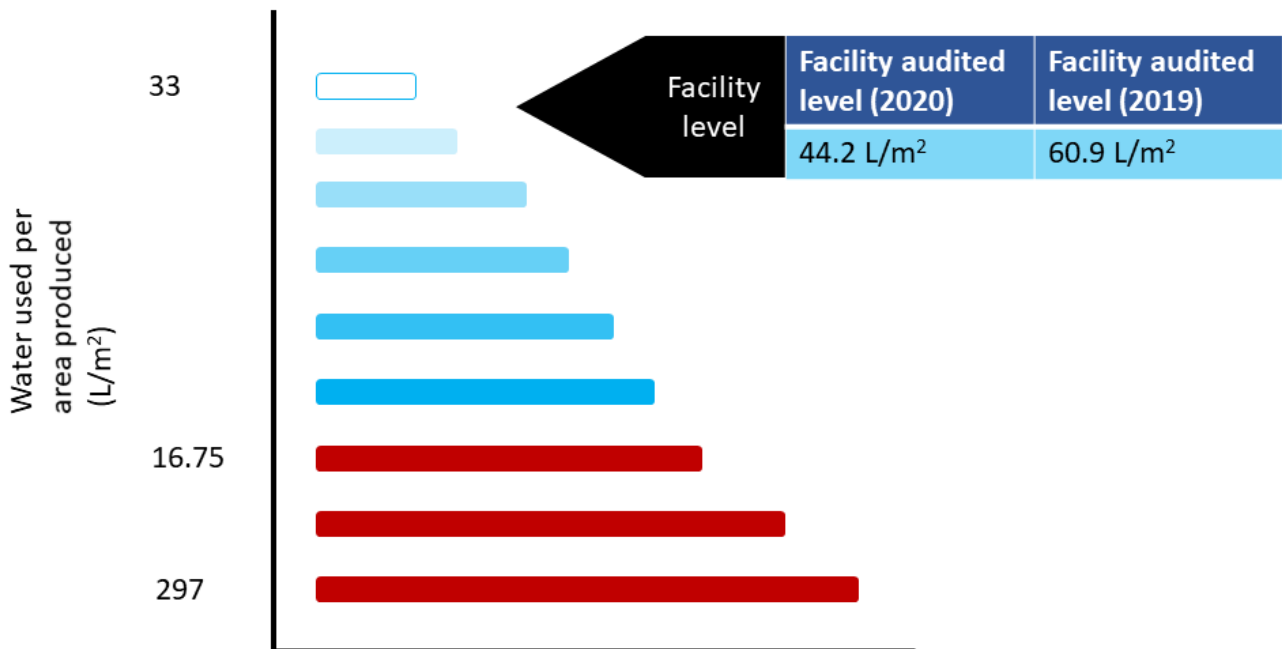
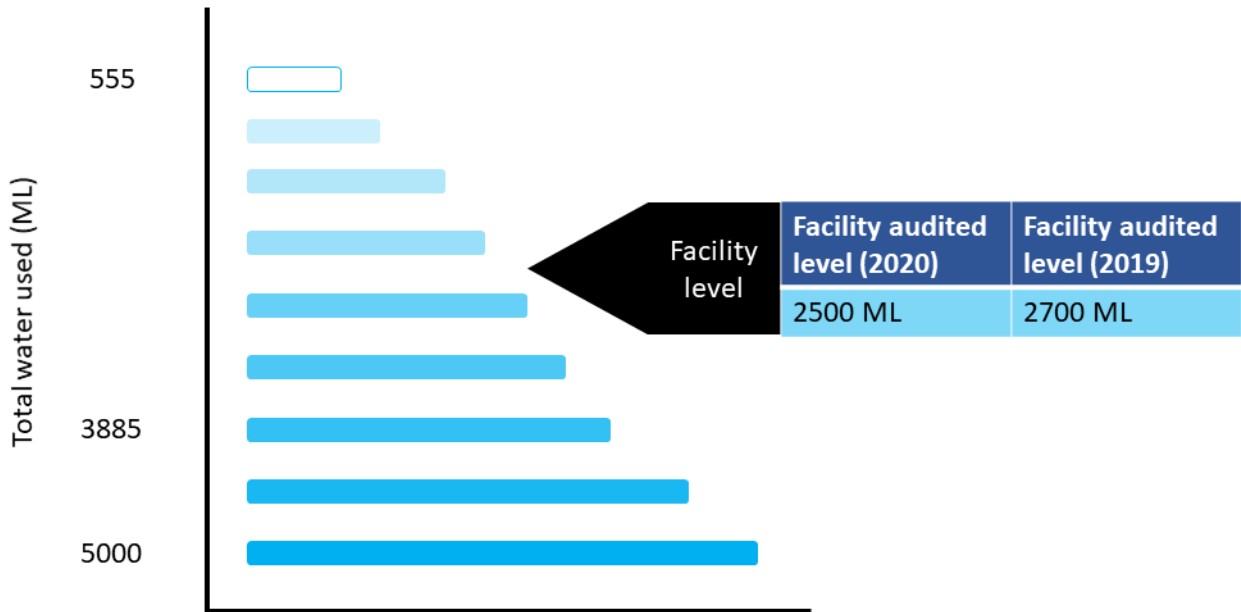


Figure 1. The standard curve for global leather water-use patterns - as defined on the 13 November 2020 (ML/sq m) differentiated by monthly throughput (sq. m)



Annex C



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