



**Sustainable Leather Foundation
Standard for Environmental Input – Land Use**

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FSE5 ENVIRONMENTAL INPUT – LAND USE STANDARD AND BENCHMARK

Summary: The SLF environmental input – land use standard provides the context, definitions, and methodology around land use in the leather industry. This document gives the facility under audit the principles and general expectations, but it is not exhaustive and recognises that there will be differences within regions for national and local laws.

Where there are matters of interpretation in relation to the standard, applicable laws or organisational norms, the auditor will assess in favour of the employees in that facility.



1. Scope

1.1 The *SLF Environmental Input – Land Use Standard and Benchmark* specifies the definitions and structure of a land use procedure by establishing the requirements and policies of specific environmental metrics for a particular facility. The key areas include record keeping of land use boundaries and history, calculation of green versus hard areas within facility bounds, historical record of deforestation, and company policy for water retention and drainage.

1.2 An Environmental Input – Land Use procedure is an integral part of minimising environmental impact to the surrounding land and its community while protecting and conserving natural resources for future generations.

1.3 The *SLF Environmental Input – Land Use Standard and Benchmark* is intended to ensure that SLF certified facilities are aware of and actively utilising the necessary procedures/mechanisms required to record and manage environmental inputs related to land use.

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 used here:

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Division for Sustainable Development: Consumption and Production Patterns: Land Use Change¹

European Commission – Proposal for Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products²

OECD – Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct³

3. Terms and definitions

3.1 **Land Use Change:** The arrangements, activities, and inputs that people undertake in a specific land cover type to produce, change, or maintain it. This establishes a direct link between land cover and the actions of people in their environment.

3.2 **Boundary:** Facility property lines

3.3 **Green Area:** Land that is partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation (e.g., a school playground would be considered a partly covered area)

¹ <https://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/consumption/cpp1224m12.htm>

² https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/proposal-regulation-deforestation-free-products_en

³ <http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/OECD-Due-Diligence-Guidance-for-Responsible-Business-Conduct.pdf>



3.4 Hard Area: Any land where the surface of the ground is covered in bitumised material, concrete, concrete slabs, grasscrete, bricks, etc. (e.g., roads, footpaths, parking lots, building foundations, etc.)

3.5 Deforestation: The process in which humans remove or thin forests for lumber or to use the land (for crops, grazing, extraction, or development) where the trees stood previously.

3.6 Sunset Date: The date from which no deforestation shall have taken place. SLF aligns with the European Union’s Due Diligence legislation (EU) 995/2010 sunset date of 31 December 2020.

3.7 Water Retention / Drainage: The amount of water that stays or leaves the land within the facility’s boundaries.

4. Principle

4.1 The principle of the *SLF Environmental Input – Land Use Standard and Benchmark* is based upon the need for responsible organisations to protect the surrounding land in which they do business and respond to changing environmental conditions. The establishment of an Environmental Input – Land Use procedure/mechanism is intended to provide a comprehensive approach to land use by:

- 4.1.1 Conserving the surrounding natural resources for the betterment of the environment, community, and its people
- 4.1.2 Protecting existing or needed land use as percent arable and permanent crop land is directly linked to a country’s available resources and economic prosperity
- 4.1.3 Preventing unsustainable land use via erosion and desertification, damage to ecosystems and extensive irreversible landscape changes

4.2 The Environmental Input – Land Use procedure is focused on the preservation of surrounding land to the facility’s boundaries. To institutionalise these mechanisms, facilities must build and implement recording documentation and calculation to be completed and reviewed. The historical accuracy of the land is an important aspect of land use, as its history indicates how the land has changed over time. This information can be shared with regional authorities to understand local needs and how the organisation can best support the community in their efforts to reduce negative impact due to inappropriate land use.

4.3 The Environmental Input – Land Use mechanism will be most effective with alignment directly related to the conformities, obligations, and requirements of the organisation’s legal, regional and customer requirements for its facility, service, product, and operations. The *SLF Environmental Input – Land Use Standard and Benchmark* provides an outline for the method of creating recording and calculation land use, however it is up to the organisation to apply a risk-based approach, seeking confirmation of its environmental obligations and requirements prior to audit and certification.

5. Procedure

5.1 The facility will provide data and documentation that demonstrates an effective management system to meet the requirements of the *SLF Environmental Input – Land Use Standard and Benchmark* as follows:

- 5.1.1 Record of facility land use (boundaries and land history)
- 5.1.2 Calculation of green versus hard area ratios within the mapped facility boundaries



- 5.1.3 Confirmation of no recent deforestation on company land (Reference 3.6 Sunset Date definition)
- 5.1.4 Completed procedural document, complying with applicable legal requirements, concerning water retention / drainage from the land

5.2 The measurement of land use may differ throughout the leather industry based regional requirements, standards, and size of facility. Please reference the following SLF Standards and Benchmarks and Sections of the Explanatory Notes & Templates for specifics on environmental performance metrics. These documents are located in the “Technical Library” within the Partner Only Resources area of the website and are designed to support either in preparation for audit or for improvement measures:

<https://sustainableleatherfoundation.com/partner-only-resources/technical-library>

- 5.2.1 FSG4.1 Traceability, Procurement and Sales
- 5.2.2 Explanatory Notes and Templates
 - a. Template 2 – Environmental Aspects and Impacts Register (Deforestation as Aspect)
 - b. Template 10 – Supply Chain Map

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