

Leather Working Group Certification for Indian Tanneries and Leather Buyers

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LWG audits tanneries and leather traders on environmental performance, from chrome handling to effluent, and rates manufacturers Gold, Silver, Bronze or Audited. It is a brand requirement, not a border one, and it covers the tannery, not the bag or shoe factory. This guide shows importers how to check a rating and read what it leaves out, and gives Indian tanneries and leather goods makers the steps through LWG Assurance Services.

The Short Version

- LWG rates tanneries on the environment, not working conditions. Pair it with a social audit.
- A shoe or bag maker is usually not LWG rated itself. Ask for the tannery behind the leather and check it in the LWG directory.
- Manufacturer certificates last two years, trader certificates 12 months, and first-time tanneries with only 12 months of data get a 12-month certificate.
- In June 2025 LWG suspended certification for tanneries connected to the Bantala CETP in Kolkata, and no inspection date was confirmed by January 2026.
- Audits are booked only through LWG Assurance Services, which assigns the auditor. A tannery cannot choose one.

In June 2025 the Leather Working Group suspended the certification of every tannery connected to one effluent treatment plant in Kolkata. The tanneries hadn't failed an audit themselves. LWG became aware of operational issues at the Central Effluent Treatment Plant in Bantala, couldn't arrange a site visit, and suspended the leather manufacturers that discharge to it until it gets independent evidence the plant works ([LWG statement](#)). By its January 2026 update the visit still had no date.



That one case tells you most of what LWG is. It's an environmental rating for tanneries, it reaches as far as the shared plant that treats their water, and a brand buying bags from Kolkata in 2026 needs to know about it. Below I cover what an importer should check, then the steps an Indian tannery or leather goods maker takes to get rated. This guide is part of our [certifications hub](#).

1. What LWG Rates and What It Doesn't

LWG audits leather manufacturers (tanneries), leather traders, commissioning manufacturers and subcontractors, each against its own standard ([LWG](#)). The Leather Manufacturer Standard (version P7, revision P7.2.2) has 17 sections, including material traceability in and out, restricted substances and chromium VI management, chemical management, effluent treatment and energy and water use ([LWG](#)).

Manufacturers get a medal based on their overall score (LWG AS) -

Rating	Score
Gold	85 to 100%
Silver	75 to 84%
Bronze	65 to 75%
Audited	50 to 64%

For Gold, every section must score above 85%. One weak section pulls the whole rating down, which is why Gold actually means something.

What LWG doesn't cover matters as much. It isn't a social audit, so wages, hours and worker safety need a social audit alongside it. It doesn't certify the finished bag or shoe. It doesn't apply to fur, which is excluded outright. And it says nothing about the animal's origin beyond the traceability sections, which matter more now with the EU deforestation regulation covering cattle leather.

2. Why Buyers Ask for It in India

India's leather belt (Kanpur and Agra in the north, Kolkata in the east, Ranipet, Vellore and Ambur in Tamil Nadu) has carried a reputation problem for decades. When we mined forum discussions, we found Western craft buyers who avoid Indian chrome-tanned leather on principle because of tannery pollution and worker safety, while others push back on the blanket view (our forum signal FS-CAT-042, with posts from 2024 and 2026 on r/Leathercraft).

That's unfair to the many tanneries that run well, and LWG is the main way a good one proves it. A buyer doesn't have to take the reputation on trust

either way. Ask for the rating and check it. Our [Tamil Nadu leather belt](#) and [Kanpur leather cluster](#) pages cover where the tanneries are.

There's no border rule in the UK, EU, US, Australia, New Zealand or the UAE that requires LWG. It's a brand and retailer requirement. Chemical limits in leather (chromium VI in the EU, for example) are law, and our [restricted substances guide](#) covers those.

3. What an Importer Should Check

Here's the order I'd follow –

1. **Ask who tanned the leather.** Most bag and shoe makers buy finished leather. The maker may hold a commissioning manufacturer or subcontractor certificate, or nothing, and that's normal. The tannery is what you check.
2. **Look the tannery up** in LWG's [certified supplier directory](#). You can filter by country, rating, leather type, animal type and tannage, or search by name or URN. On 17 October 2026 it listed 2,159 suppliers worldwide. The listing doesn't show the expiry date, so ask for the certificate too.
3. **Read the certificate.** Check the site name and address, the rating, the expiry date and the leather types covered.
4. **Ask about the CETP.** Many Indian tanneries treat water at a shared common effluent plant rather than their own. Ask which one, and check LWG's statements for any action on it. Bantala is the live example.
5. **Ask for traceability.** Which hides went into your order, and from where. The tannery's LWG audit covers how well it tracks incoming material.

A red flag is a Gold logo on a supplier's catalogue with no tannery name behind it. That doesn't mean the claim is false. It means you haven't been shown what it refers to.



4. When to Ask in the Order

At enquiry, ask for the tannery name and rating. At sampling, ask for the certificate and the leather article your sample was cut from. At the purchase order, write in "leather from an LWG-rated tannery, rating Silver or above" (or whatever your brand policy says) and the tannery's name. At shipment, ask for a declaration linking the shipment's leather to that tannery. If the maker changes tannery mid-programme, you want to know before, not after.

5. How an Indian Tannery Gets LWG Certified

This half is for the tannery. LWG's own path is short on paper ([LWG](#)), and the work sits in steps 2 and 3.

Step 1 – Take the Tannery of the Future survey. It's free and mirrors the Leather Manufacturer Standard, so it shows you where you'd lose points. An

afternoon or two with your ETP and chemicals team.

Step 2 – Fix what the survey shows. This is the long part, often months.

Typical work in Indian tanneries –

- metering effluent (LWG extends the 10 m³ metering requirement to all ETPs)
- chromium VI testing and a written plan to prevent it
- a chemical inventory with safety data sheets and restricted substance checks
- energy and water records by month
- an incoming hide register that ties lots to suppliers and an outgoing register that ties them to customers

Step 3 – Collect your data period. You need records for 24 months to get a 24-month certificate. From 1 April 2023, first-time tanneries (and those re-auditing after a lapse) can present 12 months of data for a 12-month certificate ([LWG](#)). If you have 24 months, you must present them.

Step 4 – Apply through LWG Assurance Services. All audits are booked through LWG AS, and it assigns the auditor. You can't request one ([LWG AS FAQs](#)). The audit invoice comes once your application is accepted, at least a month before the audit date, and travel costs are invoiced separately and must be paid before the audit. Check the current audit fee with LWG AS.

Step 5 – The audit. On-site, against all 17 sections, by an LWG-trained auditor. LWG AS said it had two auditors in India when we read its FAQs, so book early, especially before the February fair season around the [India International Leather Fair](#).

Step 6 – Report, rating and certificate. LWG AS evaluates the audit and issues the certificate. You appear in the directory. Use the report as your plan for the next cycle.

Step 7 – Renew. Manufacturer certificates last two years. Start collecting data for the next audit straight away.

If You Make Bags or Shoes, Not Leather

You don't need LWG yourself to sell to most brands, as long as your tannery is rated. Some brands want the maker covered too. The Commissioning Manufacturer Standard covers firms that commission leather from other tanneries, and the Subcontractor Standard (valid 24 months) covers firms that do wet processing for others. A subcontractor only gets a medal if it produces at least 5% of its own leather, otherwise it gets a valid score only. A trader who buys and sells leather gets a 12-month Trader certificate (LWG AS).

Where Indian Audits Usually Lose Points

- Effluent data that's incomplete or depends on a CETP the tannery can't get records from.
- Chromium VI tests not done at the frequency the standard asks.
- No link between incoming hide lots and finished leather batches.
- Chemical lists that don't match what's actually in the store.

What to send the buyer – the certificate, the rating, the expiry date and, if your water goes to a CETP, its name. Buyers who've read the Bantala statement will ask.

If you're a brand trying to get several Indian makers and their tanneries lined up behind one programme, SourcingSync can handle that supplier work on the ground.

6. A Worked Example With Leather Bags From Kolkata

This example is an illustration built from the rules above, not a real firm.



An Australian bag brand is quoting a maker in Kolkata in late 2026. The maker says its leather is "LWG Gold".

The buyer asks for the tannery name and gets one in the Bantala leather complex. In the LWG directory the tannery appears with a Gold rating. Then the buyer reads LWG's statement and sees that tanneries connected to the Bantala CETP have been suspended since June 2025, with no inspection date confirmed in January 2026.

So the buyer asks the maker two things. Is this tannery connected to the Bantala CETP, and has its certification been reinstated? If it's suspended, the maker can source from a rated tannery elsewhere (Chennai or Kanpur, say) for this order. Nobody acted in bad faith here, and the Gold rating may

well return. The buyer just needs the current status in writing before it puts LWG on a swing tag.

FAQ

Is LWG a legal requirement anywhere? ^

Not in our markets. It's a buyer requirement. Chemical limits in leather are law, LWG isn't.

Does LWG cover worker conditions? v

How long is an LWG certificate valid? v

Can a tannery pick its own auditor? v

Is there an LWG mark on the finished product? v

7. Next Steps

- Indian leather goods: leather bags, leather footwear and the leather industry.
- Workers alongside the environment: social audits.
- Chemical limits for leather: restricted substances.
- Cattle leather and deforestation rules: EUDR due diligence.

Ask for the tannery, then the rating, then the CETP. In that order it takes about ten minutes.