



The 2016 UITIC Congress in Chennai was one of the biggest events in the history of the Indian Council for Leather Exports.
CREDIT: UITIC

The nineteenth UITIC Congress took place in India in the early part of 2016. The message it delivered to the industry is one of hope for a positive future for footwear manufacturers, especially if they “think big” and keep investing in innovation.

Bright future for “connected” shoe companies

The nineteenth International Union of Shoe Industry Technicians (UITIC) Congress in Chennai in February was one of the biggest events in the history of India's Council for Leather Exports (CLE), according to regional CLE chairman for south-east India, Aqeel Ahmed. Demand for places saw 568 delegates registered to attend. Of these, 180 were visitors from overseas, representing 28 different countries in all. The event was co-organised by UITIC and by CLE.

UITIC president (and chief executive of Lyon-based testing and research institute CTC), Yves Morin, said in the build-up

that he was looking forward to discussions at the conference about the footwear factory of the future, the event's main theme. He said: “The world is changing faster than ever and the factories of tomorrow will be very different from what we have in place today.” He added that only “connected companies” will be successful in the footwear industry of the future.

Global production must grow

In his opening address, Mr Morin said it's clear to him that the global footwear industry still has “a very promising future”.

He pointed out that global production reached 24 billion pairs in 2014, representing growth of 8% year on year. In the context of a world population of 7.3 billion people, this works out at an average consumption of 3.3 pairs of shoes, sandals and boots per person per year.

Mr Morin then invited the delegates to imagine if this average of 3.3 pairs moves closer to the US average of 7.7 pairs per person. "The population will continue to grow," he said, "and we are going to have to grow global production. Changes are coming that will modify the entire supply chain, but we still have a promising future." He warned, though, that it will be essential for footwear manufacturers to "think big" if they want to attract skilled workers into modern footwear factories.

Discussions about the local market

Presentations at the congress divided neatly into four sessions covering: manufacturing based on the needs of consumers; intelligent factories and smart supply chains; sustainability and regulatory trends and, finally, attractive footwear factories and new ways of management. Speakers from all parts of the world took part.

Discussions over the course of the congress about the state of the industry in host country India repeated frequently the message about a bright future. CLE chairman, Rafeeqe Ahmed, told the congress his country's footwear industry has "huge market potential" and he echoed recent predictions from other senior CLE representatives that the market there could double in size.

Confidence for the future

Owner of one of the country's biggest footwear manufacturers, Farida Group, Mr Ahmed said that per capita consumption across India at the moment is two pairs per person, giving a domestic market size of around 2.2 billion pairs and an annual value of about \$5 billion. But he said per capita consumption will increase to more than three pairs per person by 2020, taking the market size to more than 4 billion pairs.



UITIC president, Yves Morin, said that only "connected companies" will succeed in the footwear industry of the future.

CREDIT: WTP

As the event came to a close Yves Morin said at the closing ceremony that he was leaving Chennai convinced that India has "footwear spirit, great management and great leaders", which he said gave him confidence in the future of the Indian footwear industry.

UITIC has announced that its twentieth congress will take place in spring 2018 with Portugal as the host country. 🇵🇹



Closing ceremony of the Congress. Delegates heard a positive message about the future of the shoe industry.

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