

Quality will always sell

ILM interview with Emin Atik, Marketing Manager of the Saudi Arabia based semi-processed leather processor, Irfan Muhammed Said Atik Tanning Factory, to find out more about the local market and the unique raw materials that are found in the Middle Eastern Kingdom. Martin Ricker reports.

The company Irfan Muhammed Said Atik Tanning Factory was established in Saudi Arabia in 2002 by its founder, Irfan Atik. The original raw materials trading business began in Saudi Arabia from 1985 up to 2002 as a subsidiary company of Turkish company Atik Deri Ltd based in Istanbul. Since 2002, the Atik Tanning Factory tannery operations and offices were established, and they have been located in the South Industrial Area of the famous Saudi city of Makkah.

The tannery in Makkah has the capacity to process 400,000 pieces a month but the current market production is closer to 200,000 pieces a month. However, the current Marketing Manager and son of the founder, Emin Atik, told ILM that the business is growing, and he estimates that in another two to three years he aims to get the tannery working at full capacity. "80% of our current production is sheepskins and the remaining balance of 20% is local goatskins. We only produce raw to pickle or wet-blue from four types of sheepskins, two of them Saudi local animals and two types that are imported as live animals from other parts of the Middle East and Sudan. The goatskins are all locally sourced", he explained.

The particular types of sheep which Atik process are known as Harri (hair sheep), Sawakni (hair sheep), Najdi (hair sheep) and Arabic (woollen sheepskin).

Special properties of Saudi skins

"Saudi local sheepskins have a very strong fibre structure with a fine grain as it is essentially a hairsheep, so they are more like



Emin Atik, Marketing Manager.

goatskin because of hair, and a sheepskin because of grain", says Emin Atik. These physical properties make these raw materials suitable for all type of shoe uppers, linings, suede, garment, gloving and for small leather goods leathers. One particular type produced by the Atik Tannery has white hair which makes the skins ideal for light coloured leathers and another type has brown or black hair which makes them more suited for black and dark coloured leathers.



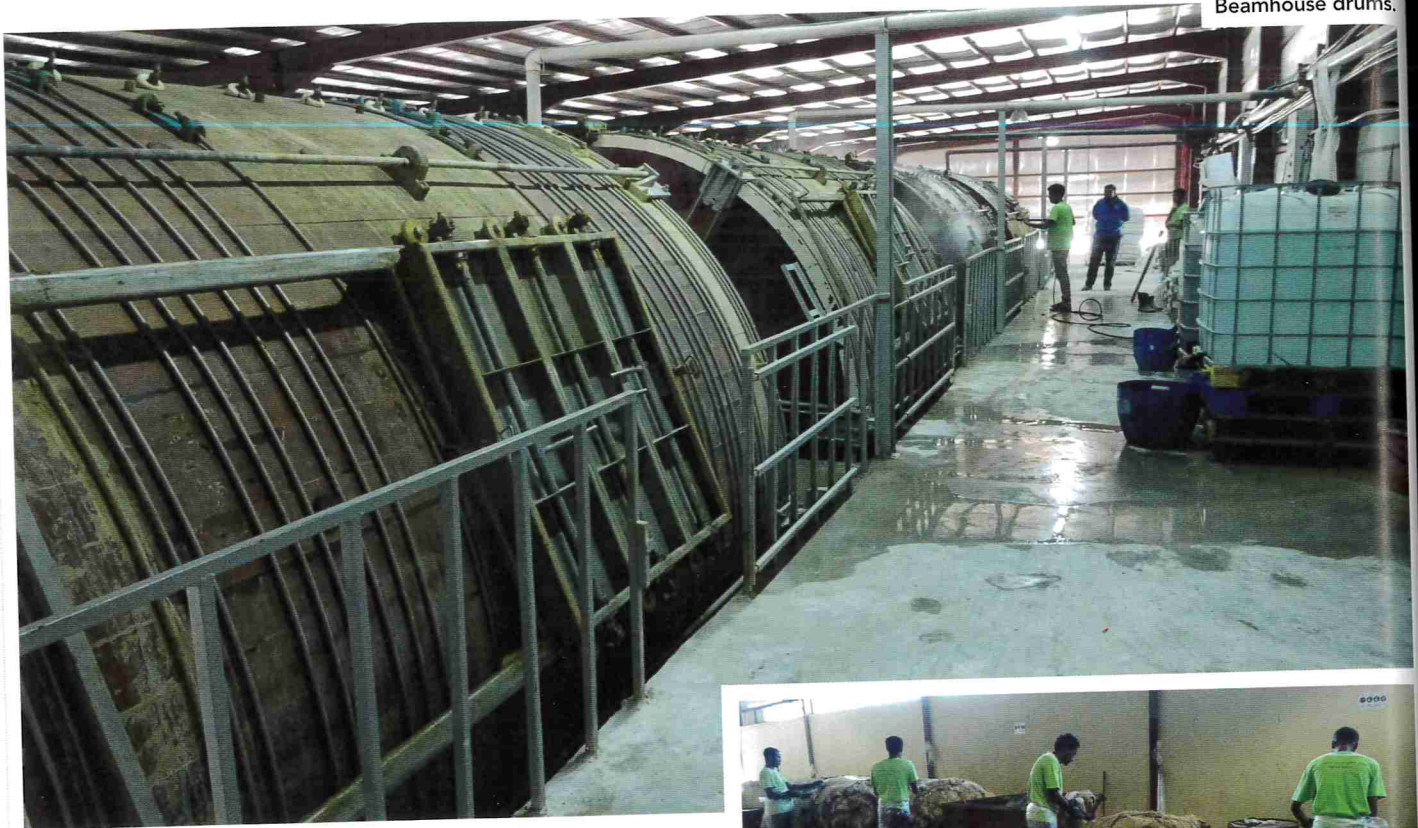
Atik process local skins which have unique characteristics.



Company founder, Irfan Atik.

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Irfan Muhammed Said Atik Tanning Factory



Beamhouse drums.

Meeting international standards

Currently, the tannery has only local operating permits, however they are working on achieving an LWG rating in 2020 as well as ISO 9001/14001 certifications. In 2017, Atik relocated its tannery to a new location in Makkah with new tannery machinery installed to modern and international standards. Currently, the Company is in the process of upgrading its effluent treatment plant and there are plans in the future to introduce higher levels of automation in the process and introduce greater transparency and traceability into its supply lines.

There are 52 people employed at the tannery and its main export markets are India, China, Italy, Pakistan and Indonesia. In the first quarter of 2019, the Company is concentrating on developing the Vietnamese market.

ILM asked Emin Atik why tanners should consider sourcing pickled or wet-blue from Saudi Arabia: "There are many reasons, firstly, we do not use any forbidden chemicals in our process, and we care about the environment. Secondly, we maintain our skin grading methodology consistently twelve months of the year in the same way. This means our customers have a reliable quality standard and our prices are always reasonable", he explained.

"To compete in the global market today you have to build trust



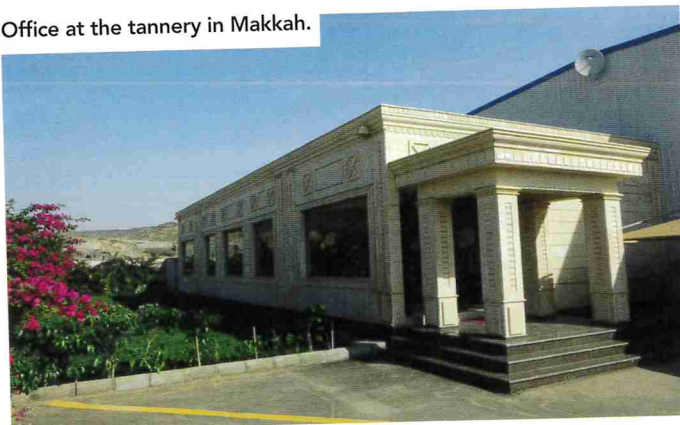
Grading and trimming skins.

with the customer before building the business. We work our stock with an on-time delivery with post-sales support for our customers after they have placed shipments", he added.

Market conditions

Emin Atik told ILM that in 2018 they increased their tanning capacity compared with 2017 when they relocated to the new tannery site. Despite the current market conditions, they hope to increase volumes further in 2019 as they have recently found some new customers. "Quality will always sell. We may find that the market dips, but it will never go away completely. Our vision is to be the best tannery in Saudi Arabia." ■

Office at the tannery in Makkah.



Wet-blue skins produced by Atik Tannery.