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# Alal: Argentina's Number Two

by Luis Fara, Alal Group

Alal Group is a family-owned company that has been in the leather business for ninety-two years. In fact, the tannery has an established tradition and reputation with customers and suppliers that have been working with the company in a close relationship for many years. Alal understands its customers and its customers depend on Alal's leadership and support.

The company has a solid financial basis and currently is a diversified group with three major business units:

- Agricultural business
- Cotton gins and cotton mills
- Leather

The tannery handles only vegetable leather and this focus has contributed to enhance the expertise and proficiency in this area. In fact, the company is carrying out an expansive investment plan in its tannery operation in order to stay in the vanguard of industrial progress.

The company's long-term goal is to offer their clients better products and services, maintaining the best price / quality relationship possible.



Aerial view of tannery



State-of-the-art samming machine



New rolling machine



Sorting area

## History of the Company



Emilio Alal was an immigrant who arrived in Argentina in 1914 and began his business activity with the leather trade. As years passed, his children joined the company and the business grew steadily. By 1960 they had already become the main supplier and exporter of salted bovine leather from northern Argentina.

The progressive spirit of all the members of the family made the company start in 1966 its work with a vegetable tannery of bovine leather in Reconquista (Santa Fe). Presently, the tannery is one of the leading companies of South America of its type, exporting a variety of its products worldwide.

The 70's were a milestone in the history of the company because it started to become involved with textiles, with the setting up of cotton gins in Goya (Corrientes) and Villa Angela (Chaco), which remain an important part of the company's overall activities.

Later on, they began raising cattle as well as cultivating cotton, investments which have grown steadily.

In 1994, with the setting up of a modern cotton mill (super carded and open-end) in Goya (Corrientes), the company achieved the vertical integration in the cotton



area, a process which includes the sale of seeds and chemical products, cotton cultivation, cotton gins, cotton fiber commercialization, and cotton spinning.

### Alal Group and the Environment

Alal Group has a proactive social stance about the development of Argentina.

Among other activities, the company is funding a program in Reconquista where volunteers provide food to homeless children, social assistance to retired people, training in artisan skills and cooking to low income families.

From an environmental point of view, a new treatment plant for water and effluent was finished in April 2006. With an investment of over \$ 1.2 million, the treatment plant is one of the most advanced wastewater treatment plants in South America and meets all the environmental regulations on both a provincial and national level.



Mr. Marcelo Alal (r) Ceo of Alal Group and Mr. Luis Fara (l) Commercial Director of the Vegetable Leather Tannery

### The Tannery

The tannery is located in the city of Reconquista, in the north of Santa Fe Province, and the owners of the company, the Alal Family, are actively



Double butt in toggling



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running the business on an day to day basis. Furthermore, this personal involvement in the tannery allows the management to have a vital understanding of the vegetable leather business and the requirements of the different customers.

The tannery uses only first quality quebracho from the rainforest in Argentina and selects the best hides from the center of Buenos Aires Province. The purchasing of the hides is oriented to English breeds such as Red Angus steers and Polled Hereford steers.

After putting in place a three year investment plan, the tannery is now soaking 600 hides a day.

The idea was to increase the volume without reducing the quality and hand crafted traditional style of Alal's leather. Today, the tannery is equipped with state of the art technology and has implemented "Lean Operations" with a proactive approach towards maximizing efficiency and ensuring quality.

Recently, Luis Fara former account manager of Sadesa's Vegetable Leather Division, joined the company as the new Commercial Director of the Tannery. This new development was a positive step, on the commercial side of the tannery, towards the further development of the company's business.

Since the company does not work with agents on a commission basis and



Aerial view of treatment plant



Mr Tachi Nardelli, Production Manager of the Tannery, worked for 22 years in the Company.

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photo by Lee Douglas





has a small, flexible structure, this combination results in a very cost-effective operation.

#### Development of a New Segment: Skirting

Alal Tannery has developed a very consistent skirting with the hiring of a technician with more than fourteen years of experience producing skirting.

After going through the steps of "initiation" and "transition" in the learning curve to develop skirting, the tannery is in the "execution" phase, with a leather of even color and oiling, smooth grain, clean flesh, and optimum price-yield relationship.

The skirting is the third segment added to the tannery's range of products, and the heavier and cleaner steers are sorted for the production of skirting sides.

This new production is complemented by the following segments:

- Sole leather: sole leather is available in bends and double bends. The latter allows a very good yield due to the bigger cutting area.
- Vegetable leather: the tannery produces vegetable double butts, vegetable shoulders, and vegetable bellies, in natural color or drum dyed. Vegetable leather is available in an Italian tannage (softer in temper) and in an American tannage (firmer in temper).

Products according to each client's specific requests are also developed.

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