

**ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR THE TANNERY
INDUSTRY IN COLOMBIA,
A tool for benchmarking and study technological and operational management
alternatives**

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ABSTRACT

One of the tools for companies to measure achievements in sustainable production is through an internal management process that uses Environmental Performance Indicators (EPIs). SMEs can use EPIs for benchmarking purposes, among other things. This can be an instrument for decision-makers to analyse policies and programs for the sector. Regarding the research for developing EPIs for peer SMEs in a Third World country for benchmarking and improvement purposes, *this study focus on the case of the tanning industry in Colombia*. Leather and tanning industries often constitute the principal source of wealth generation and employment at local and regional levels wherever they are placed. However, the tanning industry is pointed out as one of the most polluting activities of all industrial sectors. Although some tanneries in Colombia have joined forces to improve their environmental performance, the resulting indicators would help tanneries to work on an environmentally friendly way, to identify pitfalls, to establish environmental targets and to plan how to achieve them. Furthermore, the results of the environmental benchmarking would suggest preventive technological and operational management alternatives for their environmental performance improvement. The research was a part of a wider project to enhance competitiveness of Colombian leather industry conducted by the National Cleaner Production Centre in Colombia (CNPMLTA) and was supported by the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research (EMPA)