

IV.B.1. Common Effluent Treatment Plant in Controlling the Pollution of Tanneries

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Leather industry occupies a place of prominence in the Indian economy in view of its massive potential for employment, growth and exports. There has been an increasing emphasis on its planned development, aimed at optimum utilisation of available raw material for maximising the returns, particularly from exports. The exports increased from Rs. 320 million in the year 1965-66 to Rs. 57,980 million in 1996-97. The exports from the leather sector constitute 7% in the country's export basket. The major production centres for leather and leather products are located at Chennai, Ambur, Ranipet, Vaniyambadi, Tiruchi, Dindigul (in Tamil Nadu), Calcutta, Kanpur, Jalandhar, Bangalore, Delhi and Hyderabad. An attempt has been made to analyse the role of common Effluent Plant in protecting the environment in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu.

Apart from being a significant foreign exchange earner, leather industry has tremendous potential for employment generation. The industry provides direct and indirect employment to around 2 million people. The skilled and semi-skilled workers constitute nearly 50 per cent of the total work force.

Tanneries which discharge in the process of tanning hides and skins, large quantities of toxic effluent polluting the air, land and water. The industry has changed the process of vegetable tanning to chrome tanning. The process contains chemicals that spoils the quality of air, land and water in the neighbourhood of the tanneries. Not only the flora and fauna but men are affected severely due to the continuing pollution. It renders fertile agricultural land unfit for crop cultivation water unfit for drinking and the air impure and all contributed to several health hazards.