

**On the occasion of the 15th Mashhad Bag and Shoe Exhibition****A successful regional event**

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Mashhad Bag and Shoe Exhibition, commemorating the city's distinguished history and significance within the bag and shoe industry. Mashhad's prominence in this sector is attributed to its abundant resources and materials, as well as its historical contributions. Notably, the city is believed to be home to Iran's first leather factory. Furthermore, Mashhad's geographical location has granted it exclusive access to the markets of Central Asia and Afghanistan, positioning the city as a critical trade hub.

As Iran's second most populous city after Tehran, Mashhad boasts a robust labor market. Additionally, its annual influx of 27 million pilgrims and travelers, including approximately 2 million foreign visitors, has cultivated a vibrant and distinct local market for goods and services.

Mohsen Gheysari, one of the founders and first organizers of the Mashhad Shoe Fair, shares his insights on the city's advantages that led to the establishment of the exhibition in 1986. He states, "Mashhad has excellent infrastructure, with its airport, hotels, pilgrim accommodations, and access to eastern and northeastern borders, which provide significant advantages for the city. Additionally, the high capacity and quality of Mashhad leather as the main material in shoe manufacturing are noteworthy. Finally, the foundation of the Mashhad Leather brand 27 years ago has given new inspiration to the entire industry."

Now, the 15th Bag and Shoe Exhibition of Mashhad is taking place with renewed vigor and quality after a period of suspension in previous years. As the exhibition continues to evolve, questions have been raised regarding its position within the shoe industry. In response to this question, Mehdi Abdullahi, a shoe manufacturer and ASSOMES member, explains that the Mashhad shoe exhibition has a longer history than its

counterpart in Tehran. He emphasizes the city's role as a major leather producer, stating, "Mashhad is one of the main producers of leather in the country, a crucial raw material for shoe production."

Abdullahi highlights the city's unique shoe style and fashion, cultivated over the years, as well as its exceptional access to foreign markets. These factors, he says, have allowed the exhibition to thrive and enjoy a successful restart after a period of suspension.

While acknowledging the various factors contributing to the exhibition's success, Abdullahi notes that it is essential to consider its regional context. "The Mashhad shoe exhibition serves as a platform for regional manufacturers who may not have access to larger events like EMPEX," he explains. Ultimately, the exhibition is a significant experience that offers invaluable exposure and networking opportunities for regional industry players.

We can draw new conclusions and identify emerging models after these years of experience. Currently, there are four major bag and shoe exhibitions in the country, with two exhibitions aligning more closely with international standards.

The Qom exhibition has gained prominence by focusing on sales, strategically planning for the attendance of foreign traders. On the other hand, the Tehran exhibition, managed by the Trade Development Organization, mirrors the Iranian shoe industry's international standing and determines its position within the clothing production chain.

Both exhibitions contribute significantly to the growth and global reach of the Iranian shoe industry, offering valuable platforms for manufacturers and traders to connect and showcase their products. As these events continue to evolve and adapt to changing market dynamics, they will play a crucial role in shaping the future of the industry.