GLOBAL TRACEABILITY
FRAMEWORK FOR BEEF & LEATHER

EVENT RECAP · CLIMATE WEEK NYC 2026

From Vision to Action: Traceability and Nature-Positive Supply Chains:

A Tipping Point for Beef and Leather

DATE
September 22, 2026

VENUE
Tapestry headquarters, Hudson Yards

CO-HOSTS
Tapestry Foundation · World Wildlife Fund

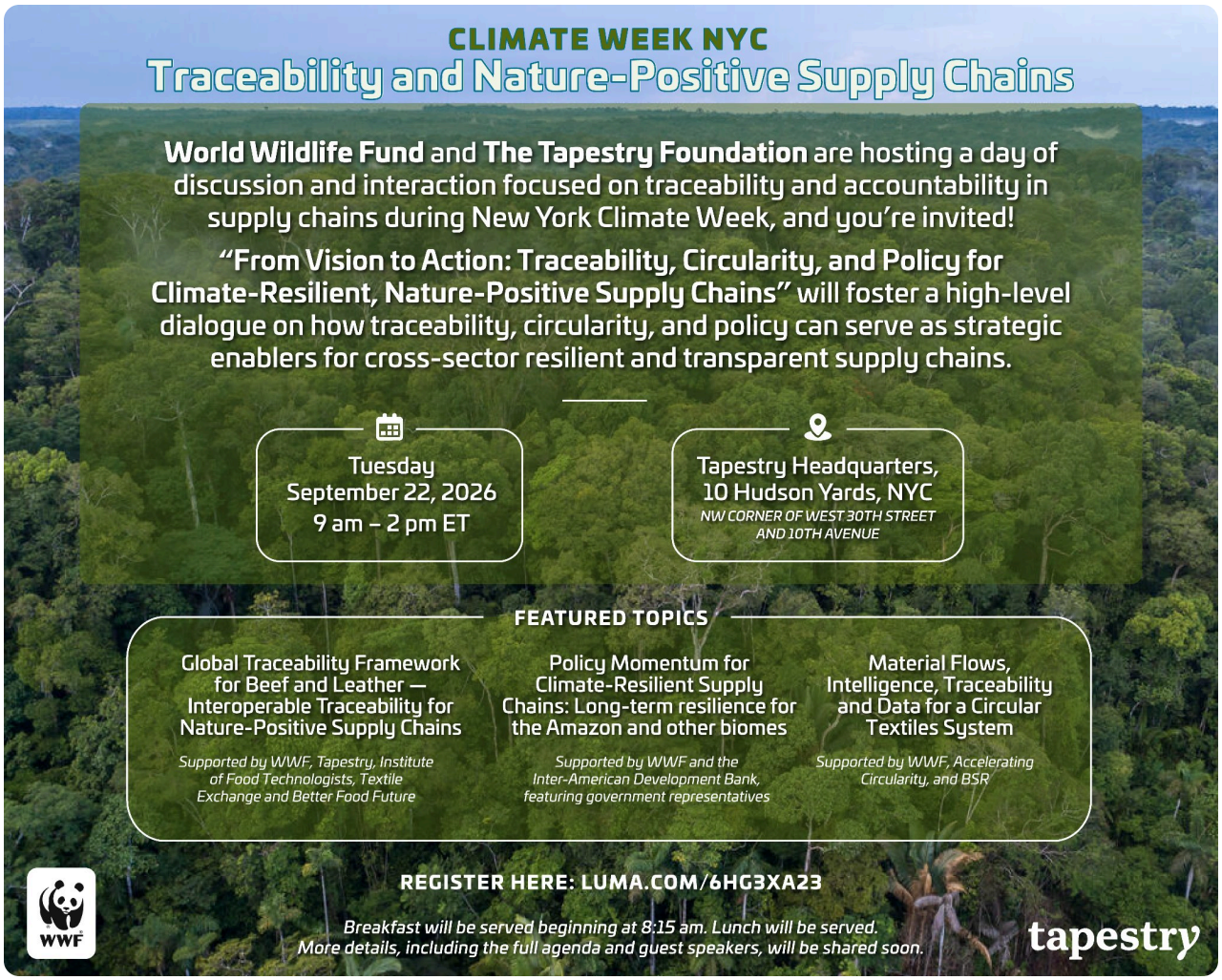
OVERVIEW

On September 22, during Climate Week NYC 2026, the Tapestry Foundation and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) convened a cross-sector group at Tapestry's headquarters in Hudson Yards for *From Vision to Action: Traceability, Circularity, and Policy for Climate-Resilient, Nature-Positive Supply Chains*. Three

sessions worked through the pieces that will decide whether global beef and leather supply chains become transparent, resilient and nature-positive by design:

01	**Global Traceability Framework for Beef and Leather – Interoperable Traceability for Nature-Positive Supply Chains**
02	**Policy Momentum for Climate-Resilient Supply Chains: Long-term resilience for the Amazon and other biomes**
03	**Material Flows, Intelligence, Traceability and Data for a Circular Textiles System**

Traceability provides the foundational transparency for nature positive supply chains, policy is the source of long-term market confidence, and circularity is the way to keep materials in use and ease pressure on natural systems.



Event invitation, issued by World Wildlife Fund and The Tapestry Foundation.

The setting at Tapestry's Headquarters carried meaning. Roughly eighteen months earlier, a small working group first met to build what is now the Global Traceability Framework for Beef and Leather (GTFBL). This time the question was no longer whether traceability in beef and leather is possible. It was whether the industry can align behind one shared approach, implement it, and bring it to scale. Tapestry and Tapestry Foundation have shown leadership by example with their vision and pro-competitive commitments to advance traceability.

The discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule. In that spirit, this recap shares the ideas, evidence and direction that emerged without attributing remarks to individual participants.

The whole value chain in one room

210+
participants in person

~150
organizations

~400
approved registrations

More than 210 participants from roughly 150 organizations attended in person, drawn from nearly 400 approved registrations. What stood out was not the size of the room but its breadth. For the first time at this scale, every link of the beef and leather value chain sat alongside the policymakers, financiers and technologists who shaped it.

The program featured the co-hosts Tapestry Foundation and World Wildlife Fund alongside Better Food Future, Wholechain, the Institute of Food Technologists, Textile Exchange, TrusTrace, the Inter-American Development Bank, Accelerating Circularity and BSR.

Attendees and participants represented:

- **Global fashion, apparel, footwear and luxury brands, and retailers**, the downstream buyers whose sourcing commitments create demand for traceable leather.
- **Meat and protein companies, livestock advisors and leather manufacturers**, the upstream and midstream actors where cattle, hides and data change hands.

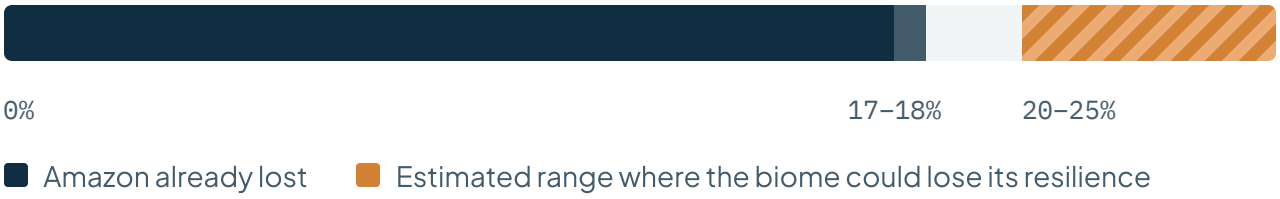
- **Conservation and civil society organizations** from multiple regions, including the Americas, Europe, and Asia, joined other leading environmental groups to represent diverse global perspectives.
- **Standards bodies and multi-stakeholder initiatives** spanning textiles, leather chemistry, forests, cotton and sustainable commodities.
- **Finance**, from multilateral development banks and a major Latin American commercial bank to asset managers, impact investors and investor networks.
- **Government**, including Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- **Traceability, data and material-innovation companies**, together with assurance, advisory and consulting firms.
- **Circularity and recovery organizations**, from textile recyclers and producer responsibility organizations to waste-picker alliances.
- **Academia and philanthropy**, including leading university schools of the environment and management.

Acceleration for the GTFBL

The day marked a tipping point: the GTFBL has moved from a framework under construction to a framework in use, and the conditions for broad adoption are now in place. The closing challenge to every participant was simple:

> **Name one commitment your organization can make to move the framework from design to adoption.**

Two tipping points framed the discussion. The first is ecological. Roughly 17 to 18 percent of the Amazon has already been lost, and scientists estimate the biome could lose its resilience at 20 to 25 percent. Cattle are the largest single driver of that deforestation. The second is a market tipping point, and the evidence shared in the room suggests it is within reach.



What is the Global Traceability Framework for Beef and Leather (GTFBL)?

The GTFBL defines a series of critical tracking events based on GS1 EPCIS and key data elements specific to the beef and leather industries. It defines which data to capture, how and at which points in the supply chain, so that different systems can request and exchange traceability data automatically between different solutions.

It is not a new platform, and it does not require anyone to hand over proprietary data. Under its shared-responsibility principle, each tier owns and controls its own data and shares only what it agrees to share. The framework is free, published online, aligned with the UN Transparency Protocol, and moving toward a cross-commodity approach.

Why adoption is now within reach

The framework is live. Built over roughly eighteen months, with an updated version published this month. It is already being deployed with suppliers.

The data already exists. A pilot in Australia showed that tanneries and meat packers already hold the critical tracking events and key data elements needed. The task is to connect that data and make it usable, not to create it.

Buyers and investors are asking. Over 21 global retailers with an estimated market share of around $2 trillion have committed to implementing transparent, deforestation-free supply chains. Some 14,000 companies now hold science-based climate commitments, many of which depend on addressing land-use change. Investor networks representing more than $95 trillion in assets are pressing for transparent supply chains.

Standardization reduces costs. Data standardization enables portability in addition to interoperability: supply chain stakeholders can move their data from one solution provider to another without rebuilding it, giving them more choices among solution providers. This increases competition to improve capabilities and reduce cost.

The industry has a shared "what" and "how". Industry commitments to deforestation- and conversion-free leather by 2030 define what must be achieved. The GTFBL defines how to map and share the data consistently, including for the large tanneries that supply many brands at once.

Policy is creating a window. Leather was excluded from the EU Deforestation Regulation for now, with a review due by 2030. Participants saw this as a second chance for the sector to lead voluntarily, alongside new producer-country measures such as Colombia's deforestation-free cattle law.

The remaining gap is stark. Newly released industry benchmark data from Textile Exchange shows that 79 percent of raw material and fiber use reported by nearly 400 brands and retailers still has an unknown country of origin. Among companies committed to deforestation- and conversion-free leather, 85 percent have begun supply chain mapping, yet only about 5 percent have mapped back to the birth farm. Closing that gap is the most pressing adoption challenge ahead.

79%

of raw material and fiber use has an unknown country of origin

85%

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~5%

have mapped back to the birth farm

What we heard

Across traceability, policy, finance, and circularity, the same conclusion surfaced: shared data infrastructure is the precondition for nearly every sustainability goal on the table.

Traceability is a business tool, not a reporting exercise

Brands described traceability as the key enabler to make better sourcing decisions, understand risk and strengthen supplier relationships. It also unlocks climate action. Today most companies rely on global average emissions factors for leather. Traceable data opens the path to region-specific factors and to targeted farm-level work on deforestation, feed and methane.

No single company, or sector, can solve this alone

Leather is a by-product of the meat industry, so leather buyers have limited leverage upstream. Cattle move between farms over their lifetimes, and hides are graded, mixed and re-batched. The point where provenance most often breaks is the transformation event, when animals are processed and origin lots are separated. EPCIS-based traceability is designed to carry provenance through those transformations. That is why the framework links beef and leather rather than treating them separately.

Design the system around privacy and trust

Data privacy laws in producer and consumer countries were raised as a real barrier. The response was clear. Traceability under the framework is private and permissioned, not a public ledger. Each party shares only what it opts to share. Participants also noted that digital, standardized data is often more secure than PDFs and spreadsheets, which leave the owner's control the moment they are sent. Verification can often happen at the slaughterhouse level without exposing every farm-level record.

Standardization lowers cost and widens choice

Asked who pays for traceability, participants pointed first to the cost of the status quo. One supplier reported a factory team of about ten people doing little but filling in different buyers' spreadsheets. A common standard removes that duplication. It also breaks vendor lock-in, so suppliers are not forced onto a single buyer-mandated system. Participants stressed that producers must be at the center of any cost model, and that blended models using philanthropic capital can help first-mile producers meet market requirements.

Finance follows transparency

Financial institutions are built to manage risk, and they cannot manage what they cannot see. A Latin American bank described how partners offering guarantees and catalytic capital now ask it to demonstrate traceability. Primary data that follows goods to market, paired with offtake agreements, can de-risk lending to smallholders and shorten payment terms at the first mile. One example from Peru showed how georeferencing smallholder farms for market compliance also opened access to climate insurance, digital government services and credit.

Policy gives voluntary action a landing pad

Policy speakers described a shift from voluntary commitments to common, legally binding rules, citing the UK's forest-risk due diligence rules and Colombia's new deforestation-free cattle law. The COP30 Presidency's roadmap on halting and reversing deforestation by 2030 is expected to be published in the coming weeks, with finance and trade, including

traceability, among its central themes. Participants also cautioned against waiting for new regulation. Enforcing existing laws and acting now with available tools can make a significant difference.

Circularity needs traceability too

The final session turned to the end of a product's life. In the United States, an estimated 85 percent of post-consumer textiles end up in municipal waste. Much of what is collected is exported to dozens of countries through a trade that is largely invisible. Research by WWF, Accelerating Circularity and BSR is mapping those flows, with a final report planned for spring 2027. Brands are already piloting digital product passports that carry material data into second and third lives.

OUTCOME

Could an EPR circularity compliance module be a driver for GTFBL?

One of the clearest outcomes of the day was the opportunity to extend the framework's shared data language beyond first life, through an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) compliance module for the GTFBL to help address circularity.

The morning sessions traced beef and leather from farm to finished product. The afternoon traced products after first use. Put side by side, they revealed the same missing piece: a common way to record what happens to materials, and the data to prove it.

Why EPR needs traceability

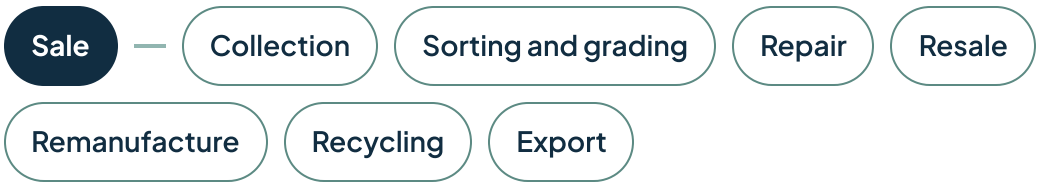
Textile EPR is emerging across a growing number of jurisdictions, and participants from across the value chain described the same data gaps from different angles:

- **Recovery organizations** need to know how much material producers place on the market in order to fulfill producer obligations. As one participant put it — for recovery workers, data means income.
- **Brands** asked whether the repair, resale and remanufacturing services they already run will count toward EPR obligations, and how they would demonstrate it.

- **Collectors and sorters** noted that even basic terms such as "waste" and "reuse" lack shared definitions across markets, complicating cross-border trade in used goods.
- **Importing countries** called for a shared, globally consistent approach to textile EPR to close policy loopholes in a trade that crosses dozens of borders.

Why the GTFBL framework is a natural fit for EPR

The GTFBL already models a product's journey as a series of standardized critical tracking events with defined key data elements. The same EPCIS event model can describe what happens after sale: collection, sorting and grading, repair, resale, remanufacture, recycling, and export. An EPR compliance module would add those after-use events and data elements to the existing standard. It would not require a new platform.



After-use events an EPR compliance module would add to the existing EPCIS event model.

The benefits would compound:

One data trail across a product's lives.

Origin data captured at the farm, tannery and factory would stay connected to the product through repair, resale and recovery, much as digital product passports already aim to do.

Verifiable credit for circular services.

Brands could evidence repair, resale and remanufacturing volumes in a consistent format that EPR schemes could recognize.

Transparency that pays at the end of the chain.

Producer-side put-on-market data and recovery-side outcome data would meet in a common language, supporting fair allocation of EPR fees to the collectors, sorters and recovery workers who do the work.

Protection for reuse.

Harmonized definitions and evidence could help ensure new regulation strengthens, rather than inadvertently undermines, the reuse economy that already keeps billions of pounds of material out of landfill each year.

Leather goods are a strong starting point. They are durable, repairable and high-value, and leading brands in the room already operate long-standing repair and resale programs. Linking first-life traceability with second-life accountability would make beef and leather the proving ground for a circular data standard that could later extend to other materials.

From framework to adoption: what comes next

The next phase is about collective implementation, and it does not have to start big. Implementation can be phased, entry points will vary, and every organization can begin with the data, relationships and systems it already has. The question to ask is not whether you are ready to implement everywhere, but what is one step you can take now.

Brands and retailers	Assess what traceability data you already hold and where the gaps are, then pilot standardized data with one product, supply chain or trading partner.
Meat packers, tanneries and manufacturers	Identify the key data elements already stored in your ERP systems, bills of lading and processing records, and connect them at transformation events.
Solution providers	Build framework support natively using the free developer kits, or map existing databases through the available data-mapping tools.

Financial institutions and investors	Use traceability as a basis for de-risking finance, especially for smallholders and SMEs at the first mile.
Policymakers	Align national tracking systems and regulations with open, interoperable standards so that public and private systems speak the same language.
Circularity and recovery organizations	Help shape the after-use events and definitions that an EPR compliance module would need.

The GTFBL, its technical specifications and its implementation guides are free and open to all. To learn more, join the working group, or explore piloting the framework, visit the Better Food Future Global Traceability Framework for Beef and Leather website or contact WWF, the Tapestry Foundation or Better Food Future.

Global Traceability Framework for Beef & Leather

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