

Media Information
07 September 2022

On the market from 2023: BMW and MINI models with vegan interiors.

- Sustainability in vehicle production through innovative bio-based materials to replace raw materials of animal origin.
- Replacing leather reduces CO₂e emissions by 85 percent.

Munich. The BMW Group plans to launch its first vehicles featuring completely vegan interiors in 2023. This is being made possible primarily through the development of innovative materials with leather-like properties. It will also be possible to use these materials for steering wheel surfaces, which must fulfil demanding criteria when it comes to feel, premium appearance and wear resistance. Fully vegan interiors will be available for both BMW and MINI models for the first time from 2023. The BMW Group is thus serving the demand for vegan and leather-free interiors, which is set to increase further in the near future, especially in the US, China and Europe.

The reduction of CO₂ emissions over the entire life cycle of a vehicle is the central goal of the BMW Group on the road to climate neutrality, which is to be achieved by 2050 at the latest. Material selection has a key role to play in achieving this goal. Replacing raw materials of animal origin makes a significant contribution to increasing sustainability in vehicle production. The introduction of a new surface material for steering wheels will see the proportion of vehicle components that contain traces of raw materials of animal origin fall to less than one percent in the respective BMW and MINI vehicles. As a result, these materials will now only be found in areas that are not visible to the customer, for example in various waxy substances such as gelatine used in protective coatings, lanolin in paints, tallow as an additive in elastomers and beeswax as a flux for paints.

The BMW Group has for a long time been offering various fabric alternatives to leather. Now, for the first time, it is possible to offer a suitable substitute for leather for the most important interface between driver and vehicle. The steering wheel surfaces must fulfil demanding criteria when it comes to appearance, wear resistance and durability. "With a steering wheel made from a high-quality vegan surface material, we are fulfilling the wishes of our customers who do not want to make any compromises in terms of look, feel

and functionality. The innovative material withstands wear and tear caused by abrasion, perspiration and moisture and has all the desirable properties of leather," says Uwe Köhler, Head of Development Body, Exterior Trim, Interior at the BMW Group. The only distinguishing feature of the new material will be a new grain effect on the steering wheel rim.

Leather-free surfaces reduce CO₂e emissions by 85 percent.

The fact that there is now a high-quality vegan surface material with equivalent properties to the real leather previously used in the production of steering wheels represents another major step towards CO₂ reduction. The new steering wheel surface material reduces CO₂e emissions along the value chain by around 85 percent compared to leather. Up to now, most of the emissions produced, around 80 percent, were in the form of methane gas from cattle rearing. The remaining 20 percent was accounted for by processing of the cowhide, which is highly energy- and water-intensive.

Climate neutrality and a circular economy are the top priorities.

To achieve the goal of climate neutrality, the BMW Group is relying on the use of green electricity in production and in the supply chain, a consistently increased proportion of secondary materials and natural raw materials, highly efficient electric motors and combustion engines and a high recycling rate in line with the principles of a circular economy.

It's all in the detail: The floor mats for various models are made from mono-material, thus avoiding material mixes that are difficult to recycle. As a result, the BMW Group saves around 23.000 tonnes of CO₂ and an additional 1.600 tonnes of waste every year, since the recycled floor mats and waste material are also reused within the production process.

Research and development in the field of secondary raw materials and sustainable materials are a top priority. Future vehicle generations will offer other attractive alternatives to leather. The BMW Group is working with start-up companies to develop innovative bio-based materials. Compared to the synthetic leathers previously used, these result in around 45 percent lower CO₂ emissions. Mirum™, which is 100 percent bio-based and petroleum-free, has the potential to mimic all the properties of traditional leather. Another

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new material, Deserttex™, is made from pulverised cactus fibres with a bio-based polyurethane matrix. With these materials, replacing raw materials of animal origin can be combined with a significant reduction in CO₂.

The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2021, the BMW Group sold over 2.5 million passenger vehicles and more than 194,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2021 was € 16.1 billion on revenues amounting to € 111.2 billion. As of 31 December 2021, the BMW Group had a workforce of 118,909 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company set the course for the future at an early stage and consistently makes sustainability and efficient resource management central to its strategic direction, from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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