

# Soisa Aircraft Interior's art of wonderful

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The Tarahumara are renowned for their long-distance running ability. Image credit: Soisa Aircraft Interiors

“Sustainability is a huge issue today, not only in the aerospace industry but across the world. Making the world a better place is part of our ethos at [Soisa](#) — we didn’t want to be a company that only talks about sustainability and does nothing towards it. We needed to act!” says Jacobo Mesta, CEO of Soisa Aircraft Interiors, speaking to *PAX Tech*. And act, they certainly did.

In May 2023, collaborating with the Chihuahua State Government and airline leasing company, [Avolon](#), the “From Waste to Wonder” program was launched.

As Mesto explains, “Being an upholstery manufacturer, we knew that our scrap needed to be recycled and reused, but because of import/export regulations, it was very difficult. However, we were able to find the solution to be able to donate these materials instead.”

Second chances are nothing new to Soisa.

Originally founded in 1949 as a jeans manufacturer, the company transformed itself in 2006 to cater to aircraft upholstery, creating Soisa Aircraft Interiors. Under the guidance of the family’s third generation, the company counts over 100 airlines as customers and has recently expanded its global manufacturing footprint with a new facility in Dubai, UAE.

Under the “From Waste to Wonder” program, leather, fabric, synthetic leathers, Velcro and other products from the scraps of Soisa’s manufacturing process are donated to the members of the Tarahumara tribe in Chihuahua, Mexico. So far, over 800 kgs of leather have been donated.

Donation is key to this circular economic initiative. “We don’t sell any of the materials, they are all donated. Soisa even pays regulation fees to be able to do a final import of the materials and be able to donate with no cost at all to the organizations,” Mesto says.

Cancelled orders, which affected the company during the pandemic, also provide a stream of left overs which are donated. These include full hides in addition to scrap parts and full synthetic leather rolls, making the produce much more attractive. Other sources include complete bottoms, backs and headrest dress covers from airlines that change their design and would otherwise throw all their dress covers away.



Designs often reflect Tarahumara culture with artistic motifs and details.

Image credit Soisa Aircraft Interiors

For its part, Avolon supports the initiative by sending scrap dress covers from all over the world. “Avolon has been participating in this project since the beginning,” says Mesto. “When Avolon leases aircraft to different clients, they need to change the dress covers. Before the initiative, there wasn’t a recycling plan in place for any excess dress covers. Yet through our Waste to Wonder project, Avolon sends us these dress covers to be donated to the artisans, resulting in a high yield to fabricate their products.”

Avolon is also providing financial support for sewing equipment to increase production.

To date, in partnership with a government organization, more than 40 Tarahumaras have received over 30 hours of training on upholstery to produce products like wallets, bags, shoes, aprons, tablecloths, dolls, lamps, Tarahumara art design products, among others, with proceeds increasing their household income, supporting over 250 people.

Mesto says it was the Mexican government that put the company in contact with artisans from the Tarahumara tribe. When asked how tribe members benefit, Mesto is unequivocal.

“First, we are giving them work as some members didn’t previously have an income source. Second, they previously needed to buy leather, but through the initiative, they get it for free, increasing their sales margin. Third, we are giving them a store where they can sell their products, increasing their client baseline. Fourth, we are starting to focus on prisoner reform, working with women and men in jail where they have the opportunity to gain additional income — of which, at least 50 percent is sent to their families. Finally, the initiative is creating a larger community of artisans who are learning new skills and producing one-of-a-kind products, remade from waste while also increasing individual incomes.”

“We certainly don’t plan to stop here!” he adds. “We need to increase our donation base. It is our intention to continue to share the Waste to Wonder initiative with all our partners and ensure that whenever there is a retrofit or rebranding program, the leather products and materials are donated to grow the Waste to Wonder capabilities and finalize a circular economy.”