

# GROW

Press Release | ILM Offenbach and MELINA BUCHER | For Immediate Release

## **GROW at ILM Offenbach: A Resounding Success and an Outlook to the Future**

**March 2025** – The 161st edition of ILM Offenbach marked an industry milestone with the debut of **GROW – The Future of Leather Goods**. Curated by Melina Bucher, this pioneering exhibition provided a comprehensive showcase of bio-based, plastic-free materials, redefining the conversation around sustainability in the leather industry.

With an 11% increase in visitors compared to the previous year and attendees from 62 countries, **GROW** captured the attention of international industry leaders. The fair's foreign visitor share rose to 29.8%, marking a 1% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels—a testament to ILM's ongoing relevance as a global innovation hub.

### **Shaping the Future with Biobased Materials**

**GROW** showcased a curated selection of next-generation materials derived from mycelium, algae, natural rubber, and plant residues. These innovations go beyond traditional leather alternatives, offering fresh design impulses, unique aesthetics, and entirely new sensory experiences. The exhibition invited visitors to engage directly with these materials, touch and explore their properties, and connect with the visionaries behind them.

*"The overwhelmingly positive response confirms that the industry is ready for change," said Melina Bucher. "GROW demonstrates that we are not just replacing*

*traditional materials—we are creating something entirely new. The conversation is no longer about imitation but about expanding possibilities and redefining design.”*

## **Key Insights from the GROW Panel Discussion**

As part of the exhibition, the panel discussion “**GROW – How Biobased Materials Change the Leather Industry**” brought together leading experts to explore how material innovation is shaping the future. Moderated by **Cheryll Mühlen**, the discussion featured insights from **Tom Schneider (ISA TanTec)**, **Cornelia Wittke (Ecovative)**, **Sabrina Kliese (Revoltech)**, and **Melina Bucher**. The panel emphasized that for sustainable materials to gain widespread adoption, they must be integrated into the commercial realities of the industry. Brands do not adopt materials solely because they are more sustainable; they require a compelling balance of quality, price, scalability, and innovation. The discussion underscored the importance of commercial strategy alongside material development, highlighting the need for strong industry partnerships and excellent customer service from material innovators.

*“We are at a turning point where sustainable innovation must be seamlessly integrated into business strategy—beyond just being a trend,”* emphasizes Melina Bucher.

Another key theme at **GROW** consumer perception. While sustainability is becoming a key purchasing driver, it is not enough on its own. Consumers need a reason to choose these new materials beyond their ecological benefits. Design, storytelling, and branding must work together to make biobased materials desirable. Without proper education at the retail level, even the most advanced materials risk being overlooked by consumers.

## **What’s Next? A Bigger, Bolder GROW Returns at ILM 162<sup>nd</sup> edition**

Following the exhibition’s success, **ILM Offenbach has confirmed that GROW will return in August 2025 with an expanded program**. The next edition will feature a broader range of biobased innovations, more immersive experiences, and deeper conversations on the future of materials in fashion and accessories.

With growing industry interest, **spaces for the next edition are already filling fast**. Innovators in **sustainable materials** looking to be part of GROW 2025 are encouraged to **apply now**.

## **Join the GROWing Movement**

The industry is undergoing a transformation, and **GROW** is at the center of it. Be part of the next chapter in material innovation at ILM Offenbach.

**Next Edition:** 30<sup>th</sup> August – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025

**Location:** Messe Offenbach

**More information:** <https://grow-exhibition.com>

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The press release, pictures as well as high-resolution logo files in different formats are available for download [at this link](#).

### **About ILM Offenbach**

ILM is one of the world's leading trade fairs for leather goods, bags, travel accessories, and fashion items, bringing together industry professionals from around the globe. Renowned for its tradition and innovation, ILM continues to be a driving force in shaping the leather goods industry. For more information, visit [www.ilm-offenbach.de](http://www.ilm-offenbach.de).

### **About Melina Bucher**

Melina Bucher is a pioneer in biobased materials and sustainable design, creating products that unite innovation, ethics, and aesthetics. Her visionary approach to materials and fashion positions her as a leader in the movement toward a more sustainable industry. For more information, visit [www.melinabucher.com](http://www.melinabucher.com).

### **Contact**

For more information, press inquiries, or interviews with the curator of this exhibition, please contact the team of Melina Bucher at [grow@melinabucher.com](mailto:grow@melinabucher.com).