

Brazil Shoes Get Sustainable Seal to Win Foreign Markets

Written by Isaura Daniel

Monday, 18 February 2013 14:48



Brazilian shoe and input companies in the sector aim to win international markets with sustainability. The companies united and created a stamp to certify the following of norms in the economic, social, environmental and cultural areas.

"One of the objectives is that, to help export. Brazilian shoes are aiming to escape the price war, to compete having a differential, and they want the market to pay more as the product is sustainable," said Linda Pienis, the coordinator of By Brasil Institute, the project manager.

To get certification, companies must follow demands in each of the four established pillars. To comply with the norms in the economic area, for example, it is necessary to have rational use of water and electric energy, to use renewable energy, as well as non-renewable energy, promote performance evaluation of collaborators, invest in research and development, among others.

In the environmental area, among the demands are the origin control of raw materials, selective collection, the use of recyclable packaging and support to public transportation.

In the social pillar, the norms range from the use of work safety norms and preventive health to compliancy with labor laws. In the cultural area, one of the differentials of the program, the company needs to get employee engagement in programs for preservation of entrepreneurial culture and promote actions turned to culture, among others.

For each of the pillars, apart from compulsory indicators, there are the "very important" and the "desirable" ones, with which compliancy is also taken into consideration.

Companies may be certified in the Sustainable Origin program in several levels, from White, which is simple compliancy with the program and availability to comply with norms, Bronze, for

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which it is necessary to answer a self-evaluation questionnaire, and Silver, Gold and Diamond. To be certified Silver the company must undergo auditing. The greater the level, the greater the demands that must be complied with.

In January this year, 12 companies received Bronze certification, of which three are working on Gold certification, according to Linda. Of the 12 industries certified, nine are producers of components - Killing, FCC, Prisma, Endutex, Dublauto Gaúcha, Jotaclass, JR Dublagens, Cipatex and MK Química – and three are makers of shoes - Piccadilly, Calçados Bibi and Dian Patris.

The project started being implemented two years ago and was the result of perception of companies connected to the Brazilian Association of Shoe and Leather Components Industries (Assintecal) and of demand for sustainability by part of international shoe and garment producers who are clients of the Brazilian industry. "Each company had its activities, but there was not a standard," explained Linda.

It was Assintecal that gave the starting kick to the project, which now also includes participation of the Brazilian Association of Shoe Manufacturers (Abicalçados) and partnership of the Sustainability Laboratory at the University of São Paulo (USP), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and By Brasil Institute.

The latter, the manager, is a non-profit-making institution in the area of science and technology. There is also sponsorship of the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae).

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