

US Economic Troubles Draw Brazil Marble Firm to Middle East

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
Monday, 20 October 2008

Granibras, Granitos Brasileiros, a Brazilian company that sells marbles and granites, sees the Arab market as an alternative for boosting exports and minimizing the reduction in sales to the United States, the company's main market, in the face of the ongoing financial crisis.

In order to showcase its products, Granibras is going to participate in the Big 5, a trade fair for the construction sector, to be held from November 23 to 27 in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates.

This will be the company's first time at the Big 5. "We have not exported to the Arab countries yet, and we wish to change our focus because of the crisis," said the sales manager at Granibras, Renato Catalano.

Approximately 90% of foreign sales by the company are destined to the United States, which is cause for concern at the company. "I believe that the Arab market is fairing better than the others right now," he said.

According to Catalano, Granibras is going to take approximately 20 types of granites to showcase at the fair. "We are not familiar with the taste of the Arabs, therefore we are going to take various types, from the most basic to the most exotic," he stated. The colors of the stones include white, yellow, pink and green. "There are over 30 types of granite," he said.

Currently, the company exports half its output. "Up until the end of last year, 85% of our production was turned to the foreign market," said Catalano, who peaked at 40 containers shipped per month, and now is down to 15 a month. Besides the United States, Granibras has also shipped its products to Canada and Europe.

"Our production capacity is now 50% of what we can offer, therefore we are capable of expanding and supplying to new markets," said the manager. According to him, Granibras has capacity for processing 20,000 square meters of granite per month and counts on 30 employees. Besides granites, the company also imports marbles and other artificial facing stones, such as herculite (artificial granite).

Betting on the foreign market, Granibras is investing 8 million Brazilian reais (US\$ 3.6 million) in a new processing unit in the city of Colatina, in the northern portion of the state of Espírito Santo. "The equipment is going to be all new, therefore production capacity is going to be larger, and faster than production in the city of São Paulo. Our focus is going to be exports," said Catalano.

Service

Granibras

Telephone (+55 11) 4524-1149

Website: www.granibras.com.br