

A Little Coffee Maker from Brazil Looks For Coffee Lovers Overseas

Contributed by Cláudia Abreu
Tuesday, 03 January 2006

The landscape of Volta Redonda, in the interior of the southeastern Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro, is nothing similar to that of the desert, but the city has, since the early 1950's, housed coffee roaster Café Faraó (Pharaoh Coffee).

According to Adriana Oliveira, who is the company commercial director, the name is in homage to the Middle East, which spread coffee around the world. The drink, which arrived in Europe in the 14th century, was known as "the wine of Arabia".

Café Faraó is in the second generation of administrators and is run by three women, among them Adriana. They are the daughters of the company founder, Ubirajara de Oliveira, a businessman who appreciated Egyptian culture and who inaugurated the coffee toaster in 1952, with just two employees.

Monthly production is currently at 150 tons. Apart from ground and toasted coffee, the company also has a line of soluble cappuccino.

Most of the company production is turned to the domestic market, and supplies, mainly, the southern region of the state of Rio de Janeiro and cities on the coast of the state of São Paulo, also in southeastern Brazil, like Ubatuba, Caraguatatuba and São Sebastião. Exports started last year. "We are crawling," stated Adriana. The first shipment, practically samples, was to Germany.

Among the Arab countries, the company has contact with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. "We are very interested in selling to the Arab countries, but in our talks we noticed that their greatest interest is in raw coffee, and not industrialized, as is our product," stated Adriana. The company hopes, however, that talks may begin again next year.

The coffee used by the company comes from crops in the south of Minas Gerais, which is the largest state in southeastern Brazil, and is the largest coffee producer. According to Adriana, the loads are sampled and classified for roasting.

The objective is to have greater control of brand quality standards. "So as to be toasted, the grains must have a 'hard' drink (bitter and astringent)," explained the businesswoman.

Currently with 88 employees and annual revenues of US\$ 4.5 million, this year Café Faraó received the Quality in Labor Award offered by the Social Service for Industry (Sesi).

The company was first place in the Small Company category. The reasons that caused the award, according to Adriana, were the constant investments made by the company in improvement of the work environment.

At the company, whose history coincides with the evolution of coffee processing in the country - from the manual processes of the 1950's to the current mechanical phase - the installations and machinery follow ergonomic standards.

"The objective is to avoid the carpal tunnel syndrome among workers," stated Adriana. The company also adopted participative management with suggestions of employees and reduction of hierarchical levels among positions and jobs.

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