

## Despite NAFTA Losses Brazil Footwear Sector Grows

Contributed by Flávia Albuquerque  
Sunday, 29 January 2006

Brazil's Minister of Development, Industry, and Foreign Trade, Luiz Fernando Furlan, affirmed that, despite its difficulties, the Brazilian leather and footwear sector registered last year US\$ 80 billion in export revenues and positive domestic results, which means that 2005 was a year of growth.

Furlan highlighted the export and domestic market performances and remarked that losses were confined to the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Area), where sales were down US\$ 90 million, equivalent to 23 million pairs of shoes, and Chile and Argentina, each with declines of a million pairs.

Nevertheless, in the markets where the Exports and Investments Promotion Agency (Apex-Brasil) was active, sales volume and revenues increased, the minister announced at the opening of the 33th International Footwear, Sporting Goods, and Leather Goods Fair (Couromoda), in São Paulo.

According to Furlan, the economy's overall export target this year is US\$ 132 billion.

This year's Couromoda, which happened earlier this month, in São Paulo, in the Brazilian southeast, had 1,200 exhibitors, who account for 90% of Brazil's annual production of around 700 million pairs of shoes.

Approximately 3,000 brands of all types of leather and footwear merchandise were on display. Participants came from 15 Brazilian states, and there were 18 foreign exhibitors. Buyers came from all over the country and the world.

ABr