

## US, Europe and Japan Import from This Brazilian Carnauba Wax Maker

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In the northeastern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Norte, a small company is exporting a product typical to the region: carnauba wax.

In reality, the product exists in other countries, but it can only be extracted in industrial scale in northeastern Brazil, specifically in the states of Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí and Ceará.

Making use of this benefit of nature, company Ortal, from Mossoró, produces 200 tons of wax, of which 80% is exported.

The main destinations are the United States, Germany and Japan. Ortal also sells to an Egyptian buyer, who resells the product in his country.

And, according to the company's export director, Márcia Gomes de Paula, there is a Syrian buyer interested in the product. "Our objective, now, is to expand sales to other Arab countries," pointed out the director.

Carnauba wax is extracted from the leaves of the Copernicia prunifera palm - named after astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus -, which is also found in Africa and Sri Lanka. The wax is extracted from a powder removed from the leaves.

Ortal works with an average of 1,000 producers, mainly from the cities of Assu, Apodi and Russas, in the state of Ceará. They pick the leaves during the harvest season, which is from August to January.

After drying, they scrape the leaves, heat up the powder and melt the wax into bars, which they sell to Ortal. The company then processes and clarifies the product. Extraction does not affect the palm. Cutting makes the tree's lifecycle longer.

Carnauba wax has varied applications. It may be used both in personal hygiene and in food products. "Some chocolates have a fine layer of the wax so they do not melt," explained Márcia.

Apart from that, it is used in photographic film, medicine capsules, dyes, dehydrated vegetables, lacquer, etc. The list is vast.

Ortal was established in 1988 by João Melo, who was a carnauba wax farmer before opening his company. Between the office and factory, there are only 20 employees, but over 1,000 indirect jobs are generated.

According to Márcia, in 2005 the company started paying greater attention to the foreign market, eliminating brokers who earned 3% of the profit on sales, and started negotiating directly with foreign buyers. Since then, relations with foreign buyers have improved.

"It was better for everybody. We stopped paying a commission and, thus, improved our selling price," stated the export director. Revenues only didn't boom due to low exchange rates - an appreciated Brazilian real against the United States dollar.

### Contact

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