

## Bamboo Underwear, Another Ecologically Friendly Brazilian Product

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Janimar, a garment manufacturer from the city of Caxias do Sul, in the southernmost Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, could be just one more producer of male underwear among the many in Brazil. The industry, however, is calling the attention of the Brazilian market due to one of the products it makes: viscose rayon underwear made from bamboo fiber.

When the product was released by the company, last year, it answered to between 1% and 2% of Janimar revenues. Today, together with other products that have also started being produced out of bamboo fiber, like T-shirts, children's underwear and female underwear, the product answers to 5% of company revenues.

The garments are already sold in most of the Brazilian states and the company now wants to start a serious effort to export. The underwear made out of bamboo fiber is part of one of the Janimar collections, Upman, a more upmarket product.

The garment manufacturer from Caxias do Sul buys the fabric from Malhas Menegotti, which is in the state of Santa Catarina, also in southern Brazil. According to the stylist at the company in Santa Catarina, Juliana Santos, the organization took two years to develop the bamboo viscose knit, called Tecnobambu by the company, and placed the product on the market one and a half years ago.

"We pioneered," stated Juliana. The bamboo fiber, from which the fabric is made, is imported from Asia, where there is abundant production of the plant and also industries specialized in the field. According to her, no company in Brazil is yet prepared to produce bamboo fiber.

The demand for the material, according to Juliana, has grown due to the worldwide concern with global warming. "It is clear that consumers are more conscious," stated the stylist.

Some kinds of bamboo take just 59 days until the pulp, out of which the raw material for the viscose rayon is made, may be removed. Common trees generally take around 20 years to grow.

"As the cycle is very fast, we do not speed it up, using pesticides," she explained. The end result is an ecologically correct garment.

Bamboo fiber, according to the owner of Janimar, also provides protection against ultra-violet light. The Upman underwear is also anti-bacterial and, as it allows the body to breathe better, dries fast when dampened.

One of the characteristics of the Upman brand is innovation. Brand products also include scented underwear - the scent is applied through the insertion of perfume microcapsules in the fabric -, articles with printed lining and others with silver labels. In Brazil, according to Remussi, they cost between 20 and 40 Brazilian reais (US\$ 10 and US\$ 20) for end users.

Janimar also owns brands Skatekids and Skateboys, as well as another that goes by the company name. The Janimar brand makes adult underwear in very Brazilian style, Skateboys is for the infant and youth sector, and shows elements that are characteristic of the tribes of these age-groups, and Skatekids is for the male children's market.

The company has a capacity for production of 70,000 garments a month, according to Remussi. The company was established by Remussi, his sister, Jacira Remussi, and his niece, Janete Facon, in 1991. Nowadays, however, the organization is run exclusively by Remussi.

The initial intention, when the brand was established, was only to produce underwear. The garment manufacturer, however, eventually moved into other market sectors, producing all kinds of garments.

Around seven years ago, the company was reformulated, and again turned exclusively to the underwear market. The Skateboys brand was established four years ago, and Skatekids around three years ago. Upman has been produced for about two years.

The company has been exporting sporadically for three years. Products have already been sold to Europe and Central America, but in small volumes. Next year, however, the brand intends to invest in the foreign market.

Service

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