

Certified forests are a priority in the environmental area

An event in São Paulo brought together sector executives who reiterated growing interest in labels, like FSC and Cerflor. Final consumers and large buyers, like the packaging manufacturer Tetra Pak, have also signalled that they're looking for documentation that proves the correct management of natural resources

By Marina Faleiros and Thaís Mattos

What was a tendency, has now become a rule: forest certification today is part of the dynamic of the whole pulp and paper industry, and more and more clients demand labels that prove good environmental and social practices when they're buying products. "The certification has an important impact on the market, those who aren't paying for this now, will soon be doing it, as the consumer markets will demand these products", confirms Antônio Maciel, president of Suzano. The executive was one of the speakers at the Brasil Certificado (Certified Brazil) event, that took place in April in São Paulo and which saw the presence of diverse CEOs from the forestry sector and members of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council).

According to Roberto Waack, the president of the International Council at the FSC, Brazil is one of the main forest certification markets in the world. "There's no way the companies from here won't stand out in the Council, due to the potential of the forests and the market of global forestry products won by the Brazilian companies", he said.

José Luciano Penido, President of the Administration Council of the largest pulp company in the world, Fibria, pointed out during the event that the company is committed to

certifying all its forested areas by the FSC and Cerflor. "Our way of managing the forests means we must attend to the demands of both, and the client can decide which certification is best for business", he explains. The executive cited the Fibria factories at Três Lagoas (MS), Jacareí (SP) e Veracel (BA) that already have the FSC label. The company is in the process of obtaining the same certification for the old unit at Aracruz (ES) that should be completed in 2013, and for the plant at Jacareí, which doesn't yet have the Cerflor.

Penido said that the company is dedicated to the search for forest certification in order to have a management model that leads to forest sustainability, creating a process of continuous improvements and demanding the constant advances in standards and practices, in addition to being a powerful instrument to mobilize transformations that values the society and brings concrete benefits. "For this reason we consider the certification system fundamental in the strategy of our business, as it also creates interaction with public organizations, gives new global market opportunities and brings the international recognition of our products", he reiterated.

According to Sergio Amoroso, president of Orsa Group, it is also


important to consider that the Brazilian consumer is not yet aware of the label's importance and, because of that, does not valorize certified products in the correct way. "The sector's companies should develop communication strategies to allow the consumer to differ and see the value of those products. On the other hand, the Government should support a positive view about certified products", says.

Maciel from Suzano, emphasizes that the certifications are fundamental to guarantee the economic, social and environmental sustainability, in addition to helping in the development of the communities where the company operates. "The search for labels has an important emphasis inside the company's council, as sustainability is our business strategy", he says. In addition to this, the company is going even further and searching for certification of the custody chain for all the company's units, already obtained for Mucuri (BA) in 2004 and Suzano (SP) in 2006. "Practically all our areas are certified by the FSC and we have a very large area of Cerflor. From 2009 onwards, we started the process to certificate areas from the forestry partnership program, which helps small farms and will make a tremendous difference in

the whole custody chain”, he points out. Suzano’s work of disseminating the certification also reaches final clients, like printing houses. In total, 29 of Suzano’s printing plants clients received support with technical assistance to obtain the label.

Mario Abreu, the global director of Environment, Forest and Supply Chain Support at the packaging manufacturer Tetra Pak, says that the company in Brazil only buys certified paper and that in other regions it doesn’t reach 100% of its company purchases because of the lack of products offered with certification. “The tendency is that this demand is growing more and more”, he points out.

For him, the care for the environment has had an organic evolution inside the market throughout the years. In 1994, for example, Tetra Pak started to evaluate its suppliers including issues about the environment; in 2001 it made its first public commitment to having only suppliers that followed the principle of sustainability. With this, in 2004, part of the packaging of the company already had the FSC label; and in 2006 the company became a member of FSC. “Currently we sell 2.3 billion packages per year with the FSC certification, and this is a small figure compared to the volume we produce, which is around 145 billion. Our goal is to reach 100%”, says Abreu.

Elizabeth de Carvalhaes, Executive President of Bracelpa, was also at the event and highlighted that the panelists and exhibitors showed the importance of the certified seals as a manage tool towards sustainability. “This theme is very popular nowadays and the trend is that it will be, even more, a society and global market’s request. The companies of the sector that already have the certifications on its processes and businesses have surely reached very positive results”, says. 

MARKET IMPELS CERTIFICATION

The debate about the certifications is ever larger and transparent and one of the thermometers to understand these control models is becoming more widely known by the public, and required by companies. For Waack, events that debate the theme are extremely important to explain the exact significance of a company with this certificate, as there are many labels and terms that confuse the consumer. “Today there is an exaggerated use of the term ‘certified’ and we need to make it clear what each one represents”, he explains

One of the great issues surrounding the certification is the cost of this process and if the final client would pay more to recognize the effort of the companies that undertake to obtain it. According to Waack, the cost of obtaining the FSC is moderate, but the necessary adaptations are generally very small if the company already works with sustainability concepts. “Whoever fulfills the environmental legislation and is responsible for dealing with nature and society, generally doesn’t need to invest large amounts to modify practices that meet the FSC requirements”, he explains.

From the client’s side, Maciel explains that before the crisis the company had, for example, around five clients that accepted to pay a bit more for pulp coming from certified forests, but now this movement has decreased. “But if a buyer sees competitors in the market with the same price and one of them is certified, the buyer doesn’t think twice about buying from us”, he says. For him, the tendency for the demand of certification is very strong: “We don’t yet have the advantage of price, but we’ll continue investing in this, as it’s a market opportunity.”

Abreu, from Tetra Pak, says that even the companies that buy the paper are very attentive to how the models of social and environmental management adapt themselves. He made a company report showing this: In the 70s, he remembers, the focus was recovering, energy, the creation of returnable packaging and how to deal with rubbish and waste. In the decade of the 80s, the focus was gas emissions in air and transport, and in the 90s it was how to prepare packaging to be recycled and creating environmental reports. “Since 2000, people started talking about climate change, electricity consumption goals and carbon emission, life cycle performance indicators, and partners in the environmental area.” And in this period the certifications came into play. “The FSC helps to orientate the consumer in the middle of all of this, and therefore we started to look for certified paper, for this reason the label is already on many of our packages,” he says.

For Penido, because of the way the FSC is structured, it can be an active participant in the discussion about the challenges of the forestry chain, and also calls the entity to help and debate the social problems in Brazil. “Brazil went through a very intense urbanization process, only those who had less access to education stayed in the open country.” In the past the companies forgot to include these people in their strategies, he said. “For this reason, the FSC would be very welcome in the regional discussions about the diagnostics and platforms that the communities desire”.

Maciel still highlights that the effects of the certification go far beyond the tangible value, as even among the employees it’s possible to verify more job satisfaction and productivity, as they know that they’re in a company that doesn’t cause damage to the environment. “The certification that proves the credibility of what’s done within the companies helps to follow the legislation.”