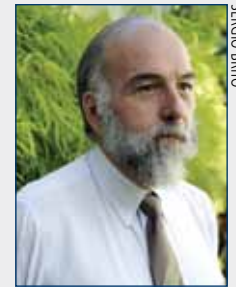


BY CELSO FOELKEL,

DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT ABTCP
AND GRAU CELSIUS CONSULTORIA
✉: FOELKEL@VIA-RS.NET

SÉRGIO BRITO

THE SECTOR'S FORESTRY INTERFACES

The sector of planted forests in Brazil is recognized worldwide for its competitiveness, quality, productivity and results. This is valid for both *Eucalyptus* and *Pinus* forests. The success of this achievement is thanks to the collective effort of leading forest-planting companies these past few decades in developing the necessary and appropriate technologies for achieving world-record levels in productivity.

At the same time, companies invested effort and committed to sustainable forest management in order to ensure good environmental and social performance in their operations. This is demonstrated by the environmental and forestry certifications conquered by the majority of companies in the recent past. Everyone in our sector is proud of this; after all, our sector's performance is largely dependent on this huge forestry success.

Over the last four decades, managers and technicians in the sector were able to conceive management methods and innovations that allowed producing forests for industrial purposes and, at the same time, improve environmental quality and the quality of life of people in communities surrounding these forests.

Additionally, the pulp and paper sector is present in practically all regions of Brazil, from Amapá down to Rio Grande do Sul and from Bahia to Mato Grosso do Sul – that is, from north to south and from east to west of the country. One of the key factors of success was precisely the integration capability between technology developers, achieved thanks to the creation of cooperative research institutes like the Forestry Research and Studies Institute (Ipef), Society of Forestry Investigations (SIF), Paraná Forestry Research Foundation (Fupef) and many others. Embrapa Florestas has also been vital in this bundling of technologies, particularly with other forest species, besides eucalyptus.

The fact, my friends, is that the world is changing rapidly and success today does not ensure success in the future. New trends are taking place in society that will affect us in an incisive and direct manner. Building a healthy and successful forest base will almost put us at the center of environmental topics being discussed in

the country, given the nature of our business activities. In spite of our effort to increase natural forest reserves through permanent preservation areas, legal reserve areas and Private Natural Heritage Reserves (RPPNs), the sector still receives criticisms from society, which is incapable of perceiving it in the positive manner we believe we deserve to be seen for everything we have done.

Perhaps this is due to our own inability to show and be successful in communicating and relating with our stakeholders. I have seen a sector full of very busy people, with no time for anything, perhaps victims of the own model that information technology has offered us. In spite of valid, this is not the root cause.

On my side, I believe that companies significantly reduced their human resources due to difficulties in maintaining their costs competitive. Such fact is due to two factors: an unfavorable exchange rate for exporters and the new culture stemming from the global economic and financial crisis that exploded in 2008. I notice that the result of all this is being quite perverse.

The integration among peers is practically nonexistent. Competition between companies has increased, group work is being substituted for individual and the vision of the present is surpassing that of the future. Just a decade ago, we used to look at the future regarding our forests, whereby the pursuit of future realizations was the foundation for actions in the present.

Today, the concern centers around the present, in perfecting current operations and being more efficient at a lower cost as a means for maintaining products victorious in international trade. All this is being done at a very fast pace, since time is of essence and requirements are many – especially for company employees who, in order to sleep, are even resorting to antidepressants.

One thing I am absolutely certain: our forestry business possesses excellent quality, but also a few "Achilles tendons" that cause concern and require actions. A few examples I would like to list include: our incompetence in relating with stakeholders; our extreme dependence on eucalyptus forests with a very limited genetic base and the horrendous possibilities of change from a

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forestry model of considerable environmental quality to wanting to produce biomass energy in thick forests and of questionable long term sustainability.

Some managers even believe that what had to be done in socio-environmental and sustainability terms is being fulfilled (and this "is more than satisfactory", according to some), since companies already possess the certifications that "ensure peace of mind in this subject matter". Unfortunately, some are thinking like this, certainly in a typical effect of the moment.

As such, despite these certifications and all the technological recognition attributed to the planted forests sector, we are being surprised by new movements in society that have halted expansion and affect the sustainability of companies in their activities. Such is the case, for example, of Court actions against the planting of eucalyptus in various cities in Vale do Rio Paraíba do Sul, in the state of São Paulo.

Something similar to this already took place in Rio Grande do Sul, where the state created zones outlining tree-growing areas, which considerably reduced the availability of land for the sector. This is tending to increase – and a lot.

The role of associations representing the forest base sector will become even more important and necessary.

These new demands – be it from Courts, Congress, CONAMA, licensing entities or even the media – will call for much more technical and scientific work than simple relationship actions. The explanations about hill tops, soil degradation or improvement, about hydrology of plantations, new propositions by Brazil's Forestry Code, among many others, will require very well-prepared technical argumentations by the people in presenting them.

Are we ready for this? Will the people who have no free time at all be successful in maintaining growth and public recognition for our sector in this second decade of the 21st century? If a model of separation is maintained between players, with little integration between people, companies and entities that generate forestry knowledge in creating the technical argumentations necessary, I believe we will lose a lot of what we've achieved so far.

The moment is somewhat complicated for the sector. We are not coming up with safe paths, however, not always should we only seek safety – we need to run certain risks and move around a lot also, like in the past. There is still time, and our Brazilian Pulp and Paper Technical Association (ABTCP) is, as always, very willing to cooperate. ■

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