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WRITING OUR FUTURE ON THE PAPER

Longevity is, perhaps, one of the concepts closest to the definition of sustainability. Surviving thru the times asks for innovation, among other actions. Nothing crosses the times without changes along the way, without transformation or renewal, whatever.

The production process of our paper is a good example of this. It was invented thousands of years ago in the most handmade version in China and these days it already exists in a digital version: the *e-paper*. A large number of the uses of paper was preserved, but the raw material and the production process have changed dramatically!

Historically, the continuous production process of paper was established at the end of the XVIII century in France. Since then, its development, both in processes and in applications, has been important to our society.

Now, in the XXI century, after so many innovations and improvements, it is our challenge to think and define the future of this important product, as a means of preserving its sustainability. What will happen in our country in the coming years? How will paper be inserted in this social development? These are only a few questions about the future of our paper.

We cannot think of innovation and future of the paper in Brazil as natural processes of this development if we still have some segments in our society which believe paper is something nasty due to the fact that it is manufactured from natural forests. The lack of knowledge leads to such a feared prejudice.

For this reason, it is extremely necessary that we initiate an education effort in our schools and in several segments of our society, explaining and showing how paper is produced and its importance in our lives, as, for example, the fact that paper is the means of knowledge transmission.

In this regard, paper for printing and writing is extremely important and will continuously making its contribution, since we will only overcome the educational gap in Brazil with an effective

distribution of textbooks and exercise books, fundamental articles for achieving the educational objectives of the country. Access to tablets, recently launched in Brazil, will be for a minority on short term. Paper will still be the main knowledge transmission means in most schools.

Brazil is growing socially, and this means that our population is conquering access to products and goods which were not accessible some time ago. Economic programs of the government which allowed many people to leave the state of misery they lived in opened space for the tissue sector to put on products of higher added value in the market for these people consumption.

Similarly, there is more room for increasing the production of paper for food packaging, among other products, due to the economy heating and the increased access to some specific products consumption, such as frozen foods, by the Brazilian people.

We cannot either define ourselves as innovators of the paper industry just taking into account paper utility. It is mandatory to think and promote innovations in the production process for the coming years. Think of more competitive production patterns.

Patterns in which the integration of the pulp and paper chain, from highly efficient production clusters, will effectively contribute for a better positioning of our industry under the economic point of view. Not even considering the gains obtained from this pattern, in environmental and energetic terms, including improvements in the reduction of carbon emission, which confirms with São Paulo Government target, as presented in our *Entrevista* section, in this month edition of *O Papel* magazine.

By analyzing the reality and the perspectives of our paper in the country, it is possible to state that packaging and tissue will for sure – besides the printing and writing papers – enjoy important development for the next twenty years. This means that we will have at least all that time to think about how we will write the history of the future of our paper after that. A good start may be the products obtained from our forests.

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The biomaterials, for instance, which will be developed and used in the future in pulp and paper production. From the biopolymers, able to replace films and thermoplastic materials presently used as barriers, to the nanomaterials, highlighting the nanocellulose, with enormous diversity of applications in the process.

Such variety of raw materials will generate papers with better printing yields; the development of the “Smart Papers”, in which packages made out of cardboard will offer to the consumer a large number of information about the product. This will be attained through the printing of chips which will contain such information.

We will also have the packages made with low basis weight paper offering high protection to the packaged products; lignocellulose derivatives which will be used in the manufacture of voltaic cells and battery electrodes, among others, also bringing the development of flexographic and inkjet printing inks with conductive properties.

This way, we will be able to anticipate the future that seems so unattainable today. Indeed, the future is closer than we think and, for this reason, it is wise to approach the world research centers which are

already working in the development of many of these products, still unconceivable in our market.

Brazil, with its forest potential, must engage in the development of these and other innovations, and doing this will be in the position of unbeatable ally in the field of forest competitiveness, adding value to products, besides the fiber and the use of wood as fuel.

Thus, we must dare! Have the courage of facing some truths. Dare to imagine and create the desired future for our sector. Therefore, we have to consider the training of our professionals as part of the construction of the future basis of our companies. Innovation also fits as a message for us in our own professional carriers.

At this moment, ABTCP invites all the interested people, companies and universities, to walk together towards this desired future. In a path that includes participation in our Technical and Human Relations Commissions, with the purpose of constructing a professional training model for our industry. Mainly, for thinking of how to attract the world knowledge on new cellulose based products, from papers to raw materials in order to develop them in our own country. I am waiting for all of you! ■

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