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INNOVATION TO BOOST COMPETITIVENESS

It is clear that our sector will grow over the next few years given the new investments in pulp and the growing attention towards biomaterials, which broaden the business paths of the so-called bioeconomy and, additionally, guide the sector's vision for the next years. Further details about these subject matters are presented throughout this issue.

It is fundamental to assess how competitive we will be in the near future, in order to ensure the economic sustainability of our activity. Therefore, we must distinguish our short-term actions, such as, a more intelligent tax policy, regulation on paper considered tax exempt - and imported without any control whatsoever -, inclusion of the sector in the *Reintegra* regime and a more up-to-date highway and port infrastructure, among other items.

All these aspects are being handled very well by the Brazilian Pulp and Paper Association (Bracelpa), which oversees our present, since, if it doesn't look out for it, there would be no prosperous future. We must also think about our industry in the long-term and how we will be competitive over the next 20 years. This involves innovation, an attitude to innovate to increase our competitiveness. We are not talking about innovation solely and exclusively related to Research & Development (R&D), in spite of its major importance, but rather the activity as a means for conducting the innovative management of aspects pertaining to the sector's value chain.

To be competitive does not mean being cheaper; however, obligatorily, it refers to being more productive in favor of sustainable competitiveness. Hence, a few questions: What innovative ways of managing our

assets are we conceiving for our future? What alliances could be established between suppliers, manufacturers and end clients? Until when will the old relationship between seller and buyer resist?

ABTCP is engaged at creating this industry thinking and so is the Brazilian government. Through the Ministry of Development, Industry and Commerce, the government is engaged at creating conditions to strengthen industrial activity in our country, as it is doing with the creation of the Greater Brazil Plan and the institutionalization of Sector Competitiveness Councils, among other means.

Our Association is part of the Pulp and Paper Sector Council and will make its contribution, informing authorities on how innovation can help boost the competitiveness of our companies and what resources will be necessary for this to occur.

Additionally, we need to define how we will train our human resources to be apt to face the challenges that will certainly arise in our pursuit of sustainable growth, since we cannot think about competing and maintain our international position without qualified people prepared to overcome obstacles. Hence, your suggestions are and always will be very welcome.

ABTCP invites everyone to participate in this evolution journey, presenting your opinions and suggestions through our various communication means and our Technical Committees, on how to build a more competitive tomorrow through innovation in the pulp and paper industry's value chain. In this new era of collaborative networks, we are counting on you to help build the foundations of this future desired by everyone in the sector! ■