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## **WRS2018 – Brazilian discusses sustainability and certification in rubber tree cultivation**

*Camila Gusmão*

The development of a national certification for the production of natural rubber, as well as sustainable models of rubber tree cultivation in Brazil will be discussed during the World Rubber Summit (WRS) 2018, an event that will take place on the 7th and 8th of May in Colombo, the former capital of Sri Lanka.

LATEKS/ Heiko Rossmann



Certification may be the way to 'not commoditize' the Brazilian rubber

The lecture “Opportunities and challenges for the sustainable development of the rubber industry in Brazil” will be delivered by Fernando do Val Guerra, executive director of the Brazilian Association of Natural Rubber Producers and Processors (Abrabor).



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Today, more than 90 percent of the world's natural rubber production is concentrated in Asia, supported by a social policy in which the vast majority of farmers are on one-and-a-half hectare, family-owned and subsistence farms.

“The problem begins when this social policy is treated in a populist way, that is, even when prices fall due to oversupply, local governments continue to provide sustainability to production through production purchase policies. Faced with this scenario, the population expands cultivation into forested areas throughout Southwest Asia, promoting illegal deforestation. The situation worsens when the terrible working conditions of the Asian tapper are observed”, states Guerra.

According to the executive, the high concentration of production of the commodity brings climatic, environmental, social and geopolitical risks.

“Brazil has enormous potential to mitigate these risks, and certification of national rubber production is the way to ‘not commoditize’ the Brazilian natural rubber and seek to fulfil a niche market that could better compensate this differential,” he emphasises.

### **How to sign up for the certification**

The certification model supported by Abrabor and deliberated by the Sector Chamber of the Natural Rubber Production Chain (CSBN), linked to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (Mapa), is the Integrated Agricultural Production model, which is already used for the cultivation of other crops.

Adherence to this certification is voluntary and, in addition to differentiating the product, the adoption of good agricultural practices promotes the reduction of production costs, consequently increasing profitability for rural producers.

The main benefit to the consumer is that they will have access to a safe product with a known origin and produced in accordance with good agricultural practices, thus contributing to sustainable development and respect for nature.

After completing the certification stages, compliance with the specific technical standards, field and harvest records, defensive grid and third-party auditing conducted by inspectors from the National Institute of Metrology, Quality and Technology (Inmetro), the product earns the official seal of “Certified Brazil”. For example, the seal has long accompanied Brazilian agricultural products exported to Europe.



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According to Guerra, in addition to the environmental aspect, certification will lead to an improvement in the competitiveness of national production. “Productivity in rubber tree cultivation today exhibits a huge fluctuation, ranging from 400 kilogrammes of dry rubber per hectare per year to more than 2,000 kilogrammes of dry rubber. Having a minimum standard of good agricultural practices should also aid in the production”, he explains.

### **Sustainability within the industry**

The largest tyre manufacturers in the world have already signed a commitment to the environment and the sustainable production of the raw materials for their products.

“The tyre industry has already declared a commitment to sustainable production. The world is changing and soon consumers may demand the seal that certifies the sustainability of the 'tyre' product. It is an opportunity for Brazil to be able to offer this type of product”, he concludes.

### **Upcoming certification**

The list of members that comprise the commission to prepare the Specific Technical Standards for Rubber Production in Brazil for future certification was published in the Official Gazette of the Union (DOU) on 9 April.

In addition to Abrabor, the group includes representatives of the Brazilian Association of the Rubber Goods Industry (Abiarb), the Association of Rubber Growers of the State of Mato Grosso (Ahevea), the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa), the Agronomic Institute of Campinas (IAC) the Capixaba Institute for Research, Technical Assistance and Rural Development (Incaper) and Brazilian Rural Society (SRB).

*(Translated by Daniel John Ruddy)*

*The **Lateks** is an official media partner of World Rubber Summit (WRS) 2018.*

*Check out the full event schedule at [wrs2018.rubberstudy.com](http://wrs2018.rubberstudy.com).*

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