## Abstract 025-1573

# Brazilian Agribusiness Industries Corporate Sustainability Evaluation

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**Abstract:**

This research aims to evaluate corporate sustainability of Brazilian agribusiness industries. A preliminary index to measure corporate sustainability assessment across industries was developed. Results show that sustainable practices are adopted by Brazilian agribusiness industries. The level of corporate sustainability is explained by the model of sustainability management they adopt.

**Key-words:** corporate sustainability, agribusiness, Brazil

**Track:** sustainable operations 1486

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Corporate sustainability can be represented by the importance given by companies to issues such as climate change, environmental preservation, social equity, ethics and community development (KIDD, 1992). According to Layrargues (1998), many companies have sought to align their strategies to sustainability, instead of reacting negatively, and end up finding significant gains in productivity and competitiveness, which is the ultimate goal.

While concern is growing, there are still many questions to be addressed pertaining to the subject. In a scenario where agribusiness stands out as an important inducer of the global economy, it is important to understand how companies who participate as agents of this process are reacting to meet the challenges of sustainability.

In Brazil, exports represent a major contribution to its economy. According to the Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade (MDIC, 2010), Brazil exported US$ 383.6

billions in goods in 2010. Among the main products exported by Brazil, an exemplary amount of products originated from agribusiness, such as soybeans, sugar cane, coffee and meat.

A good example of companies operating in this scenario can be found in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS). According to the Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade (MDIC, 2011), the state has accumulated US$ 1.44 billion in products exported in the period of January to May 2011.

The research is part of a larger study, which involves developing a diagnosis of sustainable practices in the State of MS, comparing the results with the best practices observed in Brazil in order to develop specific guidelines for corporate sustainability of agro-exportation companies.

At this stage, we started with a conceptual reflection on corporate sustainability, exploring four constructs: environment, social responsibility, sustainability management and strategy, which were identified in previous stages of the research (Paiva and Queiroz, 2011).

A revision of the survey instrument was conducted and a second round of questionnaires was enacted via websurvey, the analysis comprised fifteen industries. Most participants are represented by small businesses (maintaining between twenty to sixty employees), all headquartered in the state of MS.

Sustainable practices have been identified by their relation to the four constructs being assessed, however, it was found that companies are prioritizing social responsibility actions, especially actions involving its employees. In addition, most participants stated that the senior management of its industry is committed to sustainable development.

By relating the existence of sustainable practices with features observed in the profile of industries – such as annual revenues, number of employees, degree of nationalization, and

exportation among others –, no significant influence of these characteristics has been observed in the superior performance of companies.

It was also found that companies possess superior performance with their sustainable actions, apparently due to the indication of personnel exclusively responsible for sustainable practices, which indicates their sincerity in the pursuit of sustainable development objectives, by putting sustainability into their organizational structure. In addition, industries that monitor its sustainable practices through indicators can continuously improve the performance of these actions.

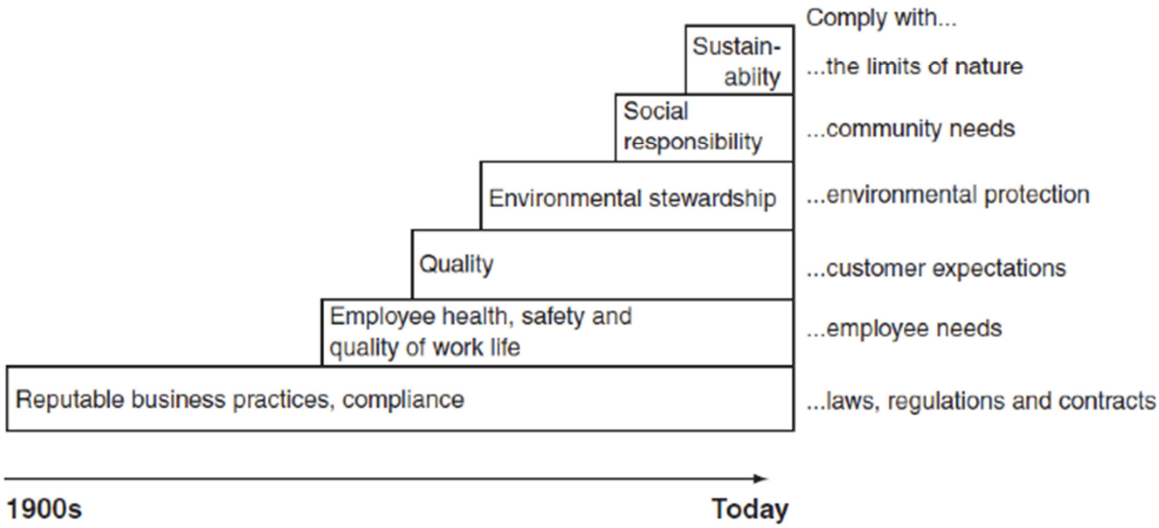
## 2 CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

The first relevant distinction in this study is the understanding of sustainability as a result of the process of sustainable development (REID, 1995; LOZANO, 2008; MARTIN, 2003 apud LOZANO, 2008).

The history of crises and pressures occurring in the world, especially with the final years of the1960s, established a milestone of the importance of the global movement for sustainable development, including the pressures on companies for their sustainable performance (NEHME, 2009).

In regards to corporate sustainability, Hitchcock and Willard (2006) presented an approach to the history of the subject. According to these authors, sustainability is not something new, but rather a framework for a new set of expectations that society expects from companies. These emerging expectations of society have been developing since the beginning of the twentieth century, and companies have been slowly incorporating these demands into their existence (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Evolution of social expectations. Source: Kidd, C.V. (1992).




In the early twentieth century, governments and lawmakers began to discourage monopolies, deceptive products and dishonest agreements. In the 1970s, labor laws began to emerge in several countries that promoted health, safety and quality of life in the work place. Many of these laws and provisions met the recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the quality movement began to influence companies to adopt a focus based on customer needs in order to remain competitive (BARBIERI and CAJAZEIRA, 2009; HITCHCOCK and WILLARD, 2006).

During the 1980s, serious environmental disasters such as a toxic gas leak in Bhopal, India, which left over 3,000 dead, and the Valdez oil tanker spill in Alaska (USA) shocked the international community, and resulted in growing pressure on governments to make environmental laws more stringent, and their enforcement more effective (BARBIERI and CAJAZEIRA, 2009; HITCHCOCK and WILLARD, 2006; KAHN, 2007). Beginning in the 1990s, the internet began to provoke an increase in corporate transparency through various Sites raised issues related to corporate social responsibility as international labor practices. Moreover, since the 2000s, shareholders begin to use their representatives to remove

business leaders and redirect policies when they perceived that their companies were not in accordance with their expectations of ethical, social and environmental subjects (HITCHCOCK and WILLARD, 2006).

A survey in 1999 involving 25,000 people in twenty-five countries on all continents found that most people expect companies to do more than just earn profits and comply with laws, they want companies to establish the highest possible ethical standards and help build a better society for all. The priorities contained in the survey were: health and safety of employees, fair treatment of employees, elimination of corruption, environmental protection and the elimination of child labor. All of these issues are related to the dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability (HITCHCOCK and WILLARD, 2006). Thus, sustainability is the culmination of society's expectations for over a century and what companies are seeking to meet (HITCHCOCK and WILLARD, 2006).

From a conceptual and historical review on the subject, Paiva and Queiroz (2011) presented a theoretical orientation for the analysis of corporate sustainability from observations of sustainable practices (see Table 1), selecting the following constructs: the environment, social responsibility, sustainability management and strategy.

Table 1. Theoretical guidance of the analysis of Corporate Sustainability from the observation of sustainable practices

| Construct | Observable Variables | Bibliographic Reference | Sustainable Practices |
|---|---|---|---|
| Environment | Environmental Management | Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Marrewijk, 2003; Araújo and Mendonça, 2008; Claro, Claro, Amâncio, 2008; Barbieri and Cajazeira, 2009; Barbieri, 2010; Lozano and Huisingh, 2011 | Wastewater treatment, solid waste and / or emissions |
| | | | Reuse / recycling of wastewater, solid waste and / or gases |
| | | | Sustainable use of resources (water, energy, raw materials) |
| | Biodiversity | | Conservation / preservation of environmental biodiversity |
| | Supply Chain | | Requires environmental compliance for suppliers |
| Social Responsibility | Human Capital | Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Marrewijk, 2003; Faber, Jonas and Engelen, 2005 Araújo and Mendonça, 2008; Claro, Claro, Amâncio, 2008; Barbieri and Cajazeira, 2009; Lozano and Huisingh, 2011 | Development, training and education of employees |
| | | | Equal treatment for men and women |
| | | | Occupational health and safety at work |
| | Legislation | | Meets the labor practices of employees |
| | Corporate Capital | | It promotes social activities for community development |
| | Transparency | | Prepares and disseminates Social Balance, Sustainability Report or similar documents |
| Sustainability management | Monitoring | Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Barbieri and Cajazeira, 2009 | Monitors social and environmental actions by some indicator |
| | Operations | | Description of the management of sustainability |
| | Management Instruments | | Do you have any certified management standard |
| Strategy | Relevance of Sustainability | Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Barbieri and Cajazeira, 2009 | The sustainable actions are aligned with company strategy |
| | | | Top management is committed to sustainable actions |
| | Guiding Principles | | The company is a sponsor of any documention or commitment related to sustainable development |

Source: Paiva and Queiroz (2011)

Looking at the scope and complexity of the concept of corporate sustainability, Paiva and Queiroz (2011) sought to select the aspects present in the definitions of sustainability, classifying them into the four groups (constructs) presented. In order to observe sustainable practices, these aspect definitions that relate to the observed variables of each construct were highlighted.

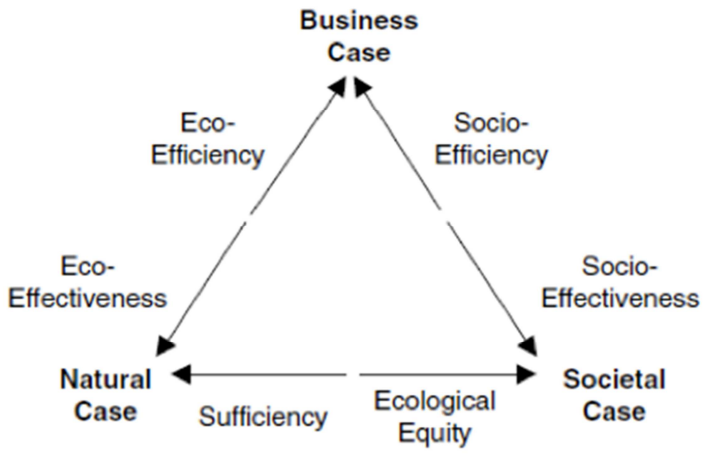
It initially began due to one of the first reflections of Dyllick and Hockerts (2002), who point out that most entrepreneurs and academics still tend to focus solely on the case of business

for sustainable development, so they ask how companies can promote their economic sustainability practices in order to give attention to social and environmental issues, for example, increasing ecological efficiency and social environment.

In order to become truly sustainable, a company must also focus on two other issues of sustainable development (environmental and social). First, managers must consider the nature of the case for corporate sustainability: since a company is operating near (or even beyond) the capacity of the environment, it can never become truly sustainable. They can do this by using the criteria of eco-effectiveness - when it focuses on the environment, taking into account economic aspects - and with sufficiency - when it prioritizes the environment taking into account society.

Second, firms also need to consider sustainability in the case of society by using the criteria of socio-effectiveness - when it focuses on the needs of society, in consideration of economic aspects and ecological equity – and when it focuses on the needs of society, in consideration of the environment (DYLLICK and HOCKERTS, 2002). Figure 2 shows the six criteria of sustainability presented by the authors.

Figure 2 – Panorama of the six criteria of corporate sustainability. Source: Adapted from Dyllick and Hockerts (2002).



When we analyzed the concepts that relate to environmental sustainability, Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) point out that, environmentally sustainable companies only use natural resources that are consumed at a rate below its natural reproduction, causing no emissions that accumulate in the environment at a rate exceeding the capacity of the natural system to absorb them and assimilate them. In addition, they do not engage in activities that degrade ecosystem services.

Barbieri (2010) adds that the medium used to organize these actions is environmental management, through guidance and administrative and operational activities aimed at obtaining a positive impact on the environment. It is done by reducing the damage or problems caused by the activities of companies or even by preventing these problems from appearing.

Social responsibility for companies is already seen as a way to achieve corporate sustainability (FRAY, 2007). For Dyllick and Hockerts (2002), socially responsible companies manage capital so that stakeholders can understand their motivations and agree with their value systems. These are companies that add value to the communities in which they operate by increasing the human capital of individual partners and promoting the social capital of these communities.

According to Carroll (1999 cited in CARROLL, 1979), the corporate social responsibility understands the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic expectations that society has of organizations in a given period. For Falck and Heblich (2007), social responsibility is considered to be a voluntary corporate commitment that exceeds the explicit and implicit obligations imposed on a company by society's expectations concerning the behavior of a conventional company. Grajew (2010 cited in BARBIERI and CAJAZEIRAS, 2009) states that a company will practice social responsibility when concerned with the quality of the impact of their actions on people and seeks to measure the consequences of this impact and only undertake or continue

with the actions when it has certainty that it will positively impact people in improving their lives.

In order to implement corporate sustainability through management models such as the *triple bottom line*, Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) suggest that a separation must occur between the three dimensions of the operational level (maintaining the function of economic, environmental and social responsibility distinctly), while a strategic decision would only be possible when considering the three dimensions simultaneously.

Cajazeira and Barbieri (2009) suggest that the management of sustainability in business should be implemented through two types of approaches: guiding principles and management tools. The guiding principles guide the formulation of corporate social responsibility policies in order to align them with the objectives of sustainable development. It requires the adoption of these guiding principles from the strategic level of the organization so they can effectively guide the activities that occur everyday in the organization. These guiding principles allow the company to review the vision, values and mission to put them inthe direction of the concepts, objectives and proposals for sustainable development. Thus, corporate policies can be based on these guiding principles that are present in documents that represent international consensus such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Global Pact and Agenda 21.

The management tools allow the guiding principles embodied in the strategic level to become reality by providing specific procedures for the organization's activities. Some examples of management tools are: ISO 9001, ISO 14001, SA 8000, NBR 16001. The management tools are management standards created by highly reputable national and international institutions and certified by independent organizations. These instruments are targeted at the operational level and are applied to the processes aimed at achieving positive results in the economic, social and environmental terms of the organization. Many of these standards are based on the PDCA cycle:

*plan, do, check and act*. The use of this cycle fosters continuous improvement of business processes in order for it to achieve sustainability, because it allows the company to monitor and evaluate the performance of their processes after executing them and, if necessary, correct them so as to comply with their goals. Generally speaking, the diversity of existing instruments becomes a problem. An issue as complex as sustainability can only be inserted in an organization through various management tools (BARBIERI and CAJAZEIRAS 2009).

The adoption of sustainability practices can be done in various ways. Each company must find what is most convenient according to its level of consciousness, ambition, size, products offered, the activities it performs, its physical environment and its stakeholders. However, the success of this effort always depends on the effective commitment of the upper management of companies (BARBIERI and CAJAZEIRAS 2009; MARREWIJK, 2003).

To Barbieri (2010), a company raises environmental problems to the level of its business strategy, enabling it to seek out advantages in dealing with these problems. Thus, the company, instead of performing control practices and pollution prevention, it seeks to take advantage of business opportunities and neutralize threats posed by existing or future environmental issues. By adopting this approach, the company can deal with environmental issues systematically, providing value to its stakeholders, and enabling it to differentiate itself from its competitors and aquiring a sustainable competitive advantage. These approaches are not only stages of implementation of environmental management; they can be adopted simultaneously in different processes.

Several studies have found that the market praises the social activities of companies. Thus, we have the possibility that social responsibility can also be considered a management strategy, and can be a crucial factor for business success (BARON, 2003 by HEBLICH and FALCK, 2007). Short-term actions, such as donating money for social gains or sponsoring

popular events are not the most effective means of achieving this goal. Instead, effective corporate social responsibility is often a long-term proposition. The practice of social responsibility is an investment in the company's future and, as such, should be specifically planned, carefully supervised, and evaluated regularly. Well executed corporate social responsibility is a way to actively contribute to the basic order of society, while at the same time, reinforcing the company's reputation (FALCK and HEBLICH, 2007).

Observing from the supply side, ie, businesses, a good reputation is necessary to attract, retain and motivate quality employees. From a demand perspective, ie the customer, a good reputation increases the value of a brand, which in turn increases the company's customers (FALCK and HEBLICH, 2007).

In order to exercise social responsibility, it is important that businesses maintain a constant and transparent dialogue with its stakeholders. Companies can conduct this dialogue through reports about sustainability or similar documents that are published for the general public. In such documents, companies can evaluate their actions in the environmental, economic and social areas, and publish its results. Thus, companies can verify the current state of the three dimensions of sustainability and communicate this to their stakeholders (BARBIERI and CAJAZEIRAS, 2009; LOZANO and HUISINGH, 2011).

Altman and Berman (2011) argue that socio-environmental actions can compete on equal terms for scarce resources of the companies with merely economic projects. This will be provided only if the companies significantly extend the time allotment for achieving their results.

By integrating the time dimension in sync with the triple bottom line, it can give similar relevance to both short and long term aspects, however, typically, companies give more emphasis to short-term gains. Which is contrary to the spirit of sustainability, which demand that

companies meet the needs of its stakeholders in the future as in the present (BARBIERI and CAJAZEIRAS, 2009: DYLLICK and HOCKERTS, 2002; LOZANO, 2008).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

The approach applied for this research was exploratory, generally used when one wants to know more about a particular subject (HAIR et al., 2005). The study was developed from two lines of analysis: qualitative and quantitative. Both had, as their object of observation, industries with operations in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul and functioning as participants in agribusiness supply chains. It is, however, to be treated as ongoing research, and all results of this paper should be considered preliminary results concerning the preliminary qualitative analysis.

The first contribution of the study was to elaborate the analyses orientation beginning with the criteria identified in the conceptual and historical review of the concept of corporate sustainability given above. The main constructs found in the theoretical review are highlighted, which identified variables that form the foundation of the elaboration of the questions about the sustainable practices of the questionnaire sent to the industries, being the first contribution of the study.

Data for sustainable practices used by industries was collected through an automated electronic questionnaire in which the respondents fill out, without the aid of the researcher, located on the site "Google Docs," which was e-mailed through a hyperlink. The questionnaire contains thirty questions – eleven questions about the characteristics of the industries, seventeen questions about their sustainable practices and two on the impacts of these practices on the results of the industry. The questionnaire consisted of both open and closed questions. In the questions about sustainable practices, the company is asked if it is performing the practices due to some sort of external demand or is it voluntarily. In some of these issues, when deemed appropriate,

we used the five-point Likert scale to evaluate the performance of sustainable practice, asking the respondent to describe.

With the completion of the research, we expect to produce significant analyses of the constructs considered significant in the results of the survey. Depending on the response rate, we will add to this stage the test of hypotheses or the correlations between the responses.

The research sample was aquired from the records of the Federation of Industries of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul (FIEMS). Initially, the industries selected were of the agribusiness sector and had an e-mail contact within the registration data, amounting in a total of 623 industries for the core of the research. We began our research by selecting companies with e-mail addresses in their registration information. Due to the ease of this criteria and the lack of other resources that could favor the formation of a more representative sample, the sample of this current research is classified as a non-probabilistic sample of convenience, because it is not known the probability of choosing the elements of this sample. Hair et al. (2005) argues that this type of sample is not statistically representative of the population to which it belongs. So it is not possible to generalize for the population with the results obtained with this research that uses this type of sampling.

The first stage of implementation of the pilot test presented the results of six industry participants (Paiva and Queiroz, 2011) and also verified that 52% of the emails were invalid. With this, the Federation of Industries was contacted again, and produced a new database, which is currently being revisited. This paper presents the preliminary results of the second test, applied with fifteen respondents, and also considering a review of the survey instrument.

## 4 ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

From the first contribution, an adjustment was made to the survey instrument and a second wave of respondents was contacted. At the moment we are already completing the final survey, by following up with the participants of the survey. In this paper, we present the results of fifteen industry respondents, from which the primary considerations are presented.

Among the fifteen responding companies, fourteen are headquartered in Mato Grosso do Sul and one of them in another state in Brazil. As can be seen in the tables 2 e 3, the profile of the majority of the industries surveyed is that it is a company based in Mato Grosso do Sul, retains twenty to sixty employees, is classified as a small company and operates only in the state of MS.

Table 2. Number of employees of the companies studied

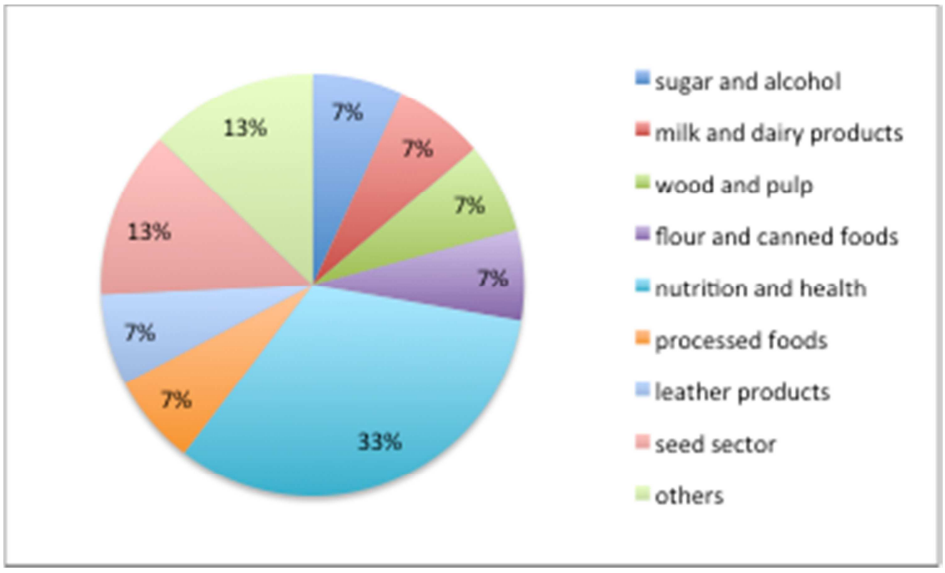
| Company | Emplyee Number in MS (A) | Total Employee Number (B) | % A/B (State level of operatio in the State) |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 40 | 40 | 100% |
| B | 30 | 30 | 100% |
| C | 35 | 35 | 100% |
| D | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| E | 432 | 3000 | 14% |
| F | 32 | 38 | 84% |
| G | 46 | 48 | 96% |
| H | 650 | 2500 | 26% |
| I | 10 | 10 | 100% |
| J | 5 | 5 | 100% |
| K | 60 | 60 | 100% |
| L | 20 | 20 | 100% |
| M | 15 | 16 | 94% |
| N | 138 | 138 | 100% |
| O | 40 | 40 | 100% |

Table 3. Size of industries surveyed by revenue

| Business Size | % |
|---|---|
| Micro | 27 |
| Small | 67 |
| Medium-Large | 7 |

Of the fifteen industries that responded to the questionnaire, five industries in the state belong to the field of animal nutrition and health, which is the sector with the largest number of representatives of the sample with 33% of the industries surveyed. Two industries belong to the seed sector, accounting for 13% of the sample. In the sectors of leather products, flour and canned foods, sugar and alcohol, wood and pulp, dairy products and processed foods were identified as only one industry, of which only accounted for just 7% of the sample studied. Two companies were not classified in any of the sectors presented in the questionnaire, representing 13% of the sample. For better viewing, the data is presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Industrial Sectors Surveyed



The research identified sustainable practices in the four areas mentioned in the questionnaire. However, the surveyed industries are prioritizing the practices of social responsability, especially actions involving its own employees. To view the results, see the table 4.

We tried to identify what factors influence the above average performance of some companies in sustainable practices. In order to investigate these relationships, a sustainability index (SI) was set up for each of the industries surveyed. An analysis of the data indicated that not one feature of the profile of the industries, such as annual revenues, number of employees, degree of nationalization, and exportations among other items asked in the questionnaire, had significant influence on the performance of corporate sustainability.

However, it was found that virtually all industries employing a specific person whom was solely responsible for sustainable actions, and continually monitored these actions through some sort of indicator possesses a performance in sustainable practices above the average of the companies surveyed. To view these findings, see Tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5 indicates that companies that monitor the Index of Sustainability have Sustainability Indexes above average. The only exception is Company D, which presents an above average index, and yet claims to not monitor the SI.

Table 4. Sustainable Practices identified in the surveyed industries

| Construct | Sustainable Practices | Practitioners Industries (%) | Sector average (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Environment | Wastewater treatment, solid waste and / or emissions | 40 | 52 |
| | Reuse / recycling of wastewater, solid waste and / or gases | 40 | |
| | Sustainable use of resources (water, energy, raw materials) | 100 | |
| | Conservation / preservation of environmental biodiversity | 60 | |
| | Requires environmental compliance for suppliers | 20 | |
| Social Responsibility | Development, training and education of employees | 100 | 80 |
| | Equal treatment for men and women | 100 | |
| | Occupational health and safety at work | 100 | |
| | Meets the labor practices of employees | 100 | |
| | It promotes social activities for community development | 80 | |
| | Prepares and disseminates Social Balance, Sustainability Report or similar documents | 0 | |
| Sustainability management | Monitors social and environmental actions by some indicator | 40 | 46,7 |
| | Description of the management of sustainability | 40 | |
| | Do you have any certified management standard | 60 | |
| Strategy | The sustainable actions are aligned with company strategy | 80 | 66,7 |
| | Top management is committed to sustainable actions | 100 | |
| | The company is a sponsor of any documention or commitment related to sustainable development | 20 | |

Table 5. The Influence of monitoring the Sustainability Index of companies (SI)

| COMPANY | Monitor actions? | SI above average |
|---|---|---|
| A | Yes | Yes |
| B | No | No |
| C | No | No |
| D | No | Yes |
| E | Yes | Yes |
| F | No | No |
| G | Yes | Yes |
| H | Yes | Yes |
| I | No | No |
| J | Yes | Yes |
| K | Yes | Yes |
| L | No | No |
| M | No | No |
| N | No | No |
| O | Yes | Yes |

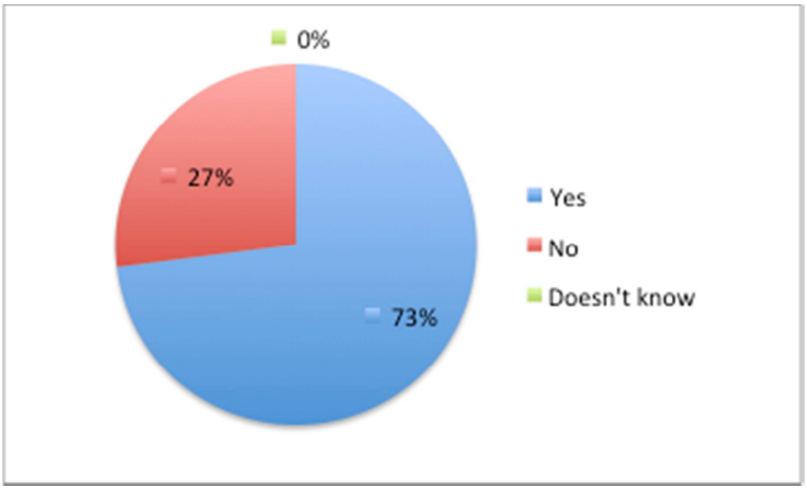
Table 6 indicates that most companies that have one person responsible for managing sustainability also show sustainability indexes above average, while those who do not have an employee assigned to this function do not possess a SI above average. An exception exists for companies D and J, which show an index above average and claim to not have specific employees responsible for the area of sustainability, and company F, which, despite standing out in the area, does not have a SI above the average.

Table 6. Influence of sustainability management structured in the Sustainability Index of the company (SI)

| COMPANY | Sustainability Management | SI above average |
|---|---|---|
| A | Yes | Yes |
| B | No | No |
| C | No | No |
| D | No | Yes |
| E | Yes | Yes |
| F | Yes | No |
| G | Yes | Yes |
| H | Yes | Yes |
| I | No | No |
| J | No | Yes |
| K | Yes | Yes |
| L | No | No |
| M | No | No |
| N | No | No |
| O | Yes | Yes |

The majority of respondents, 73% of the companies surveyed, stated that sustainable practices used are contributing to the achievement of their economic results. This information reflects the importance of sustainability for these industries.

Chart 2. Influence of sustainability within the economic results of the industries




Five industries surveyed belong to the sector of animal nutrition and health. The results found in sustainable practices in this sector are very similar to the results of all the surveyed companies shown above. Even the emphasis of these companies in social responsibility practices appears the same. The results are shown in Table 7. It was also noted that for this sector, all companies employing someone solely responsible for sustainable practices and continuously monitoring these practices through sustainability indicators had rates above average.

Table 7. Sustainable Practices identified in the industries of the sector of animal nutrition and health

| Construct | Sustainable Practices | Practitioners Industries (%) | Sector average (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Environment | Wastewater treatment, solid waste and / or emissions | 40 | 52 |
| | Reuse / recycling of wastewater, solid waste and / or gases | 40 | |
| | Sustainable use of resources (water, energy, raw materials) | 100 | |
| | Conservation / preservation of environmental biodiversity | 60 | |
| | Requires environmental compliance for suppliers | 20 | |
| Social Responsibility | Development, training and education of employees | 100 | 80 |
| | Equal treatment for men and women | 100 | |
| | Occupational health and safety at work | 100 | |
| | Meets the labor practices of employees | 100 | |
| | It promotes social activities for community development | 80 | |
| | Prepares and disseminates Social Balance, Sustainability Report or similar documents | 0 | |
| Sustainability management | Monitors social and environmental actions by some indicator | 40 | 46,7 |
| | Description of the management of sustainability | 40 | |
| | Do you have any certified management standard | 60 | |
| Strategy | The sustainable actions are aligned with company strategy | 80 | 66,7 |
| | Top management is committed to sustainable actions | 100 | |
| | The company is a sponsor of any documention or commitment related to sustainable development | 20 | |

Two industries surveyed belong to the seed sector. This sector presents only one result that is slightly higher than the overall result of all companies surveyed in the area of the environment. In other areas, the seed sector performance in corporate sustainability is below the average of all companies surveyed.

There was no practice identified in the area of sustainability management. This explains why the two companies in this sector had sustainability indexes below the overall average.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The research identified within the industries analyzed sustainable practices in the areas of environment, social responsibility, sustainability management and strategy. However, it was found that there is an imbalance in these areas, due to the fact that these companies are prioritizing social responsibility practices, particularly actions involving its employees.

Sustainability requires balance in the treatment of the various areas that comprise it. Within social responsibility there exists an imbalance between the actions involving the internal and external communities of the industries. Because of this, companies can invest more in assets that help to develop the community and that are beneficial to both parties and also start to develop its dialogue with society through sustainability reporting, social balance and other similar documents.

Moreover, the industry can improve its performance in the environmental area through improved environmental management.

The great majority of the respondents of the questionnaires reported that the issues of sustainability are aligned with the strategies of their industries and that senior management of their companies is engaged with the objectives of sustainable development. Besides, it was found that sustainable practices performed are contributing to the achievement of the economic results anticipated by these industries. Thus, the importance of sustainability for these companies is noticed.

For companies that want to improve their performance in sustainable practices, the survey found that indicating someone as officially responsible for these practices, and the monitoring of them through indicators will allow a company to track its performance and improve it continuously.

The adoption of certified management standards (ISO 9001, ISO 14001, SA 8000, OHSAS 18001 and NBR 16001) allows systematization of sustainable practices, which facilitates their implementation. In addition, through these certified standards, the company can prove their execution of these actions.

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