



M.A. Silva
Corks, USA

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M.A. Silva Corks, USA Receives Green Business Certification

Santa Rosa, California (April 13, 2009) -- The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors will award M.A. Silva Corks, USA with a certificate from the Green Business Program Sonoma County on April 14, 2009 at a ceremony in the supervisors chambers: 575 Administration Drive, Room 102, Santa Rosa. M.A. Silva Corks, USA is the first wine cork processor in California to be recognized by the program. Per program guidelines, MA Silva Corks, USA complied with all applicable environmental regulations before taking measures to conserve natural resources, reduce waste and prevent pollution (see <http://www.greenbiz.ca.gov>).



According to Neil Foster, the president of MA Silva Corks, USA, achieving the Water and Energy Conservation requirements was not difficult for his firm since their 2006 building was designed and constructed as a state-of-the-art food-grade facility with efficient water and air purification systems, caulked floor and wall joints, and covered insulation.

In addition, the company implemented a battery of water and energy-saving procedures identified on the Green Business Program checklist: from installing rain shut-off valves on irrigation systems and planting drought-tolerant flora to purchasing Energy Star® appliances and operating them in standby mode, to choosing programmable thermostats and lighting controls such as occupancy sensors and delay timers, to shading sun-exposed windows and painting exterior surfaces with light colors.

MA Silva Corks, USA was particularly active in the category of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling. "We've reduced our solid waste by 60% with the help of the program's recycling coordinator," said Quality Assurance Supervisor Adolfo Hernandez. "From a business viewpoint, we've been able to reduce the size of our garbage bin and the number of scheduled pickups, and cut our bill by a third."

To lower waste, MA Silva Corks, USA discouraged the printing of emails, eliminated unnecessary company forms and non-recyclable packaging such as Styrofoam, and replaced disposable break-room items with permanent ones such as dishes and refillable condiment containers.

The 11-page checklist also calls for the purchase of at least four recycled products. "Our packaging materials were already environmentally friendly," said Hernandez. "Our boxes are 60% post-consumer recycled content with food-grade inks, but we now buy recycled substitutes for all paper products including tissues, towels and copier paper. We found a source for biodegradable bubble wrap, and used that in conjunction with cornstarch packing peanuts. We've looking into experimental biodegradable shrink-wrap and plastic bags as well."

Hernandez believes that changing the mindset of the whole organization is essential to working the program. "Our staff is more conscious about waste and the environmental impact of the operation," he said. "We have bins in the production area that are dedicated to specific recyclables such as plastic bags, paper, bale bags, and plastic bale ties. These were initiatives put into practice by the production crew."

The Green Business Program requires participants to "practice good housekeeping in seven ways" such as storing supplies under a roof or refraining from washing equipment where runoff water flows directly to storm drains. It also mandates that companies reduce chemical use in three ways. MA Silva Corks, USA complies with these standards by contracting a green certified janitorial service, and using electric rather than gas-powered tools.

Finally, the company returns toner and ink cartridges to the manufacturer and recycles vehicle fluids in compliance with the requirement to "recycle or reuse three potential pollutants". "The cork industry is a naturally green and sustainable business," said Hernandez. "We don't use or work with toxic chemicals or hazardous materials."

On December 22, 2008, M.A. Silva Corks, USA became the first California wine cork company to enroll in Pacific Gas & Electric's ClimateSmart™ program. ClimateSmart™ allows customers to take action on climate change by balancing out the greenhouse gas emissions from their energy use.

About M.A. Silva Corks, USA Established in 2000, M. A. Silva Corks, USA (www.masilva.com) is a collaborative effort between Manuel Silva Sr. of M.A. Silva Cortiças, Lda. and long-time industry representative Neil Foster. The company imports high-quality natural cork wine stoppers from the southern region of Portugal, and processes them domestically for distribution throughout the United States. M.A. Silva Cortiças, Lda. was awarded ISO 22000:2005 food safety certification in December 2005 by the International Organization for Standardization. It was one of the first companies in the world to certify with the standard, and the first cork producer anywhere to garner that distinction.