

2011 Green Dot Awards

Company: COCO-MAT (production of sleep products)

Title of Entry: SLEEP ON NATURE

Name and Contact: EUGENIA LIANO

Address: Tatoiou 165, 14564, Kifissia, Greece

E-mail: elianou@coco-mat.com

Web: www.coco-mat.com

COCO-MAT was established in Athens in 1989, and was originally involved in the production of bed mattresses made of natural raw materials. Since then it has expanded, and in 1992, the company's headquarters relocated to the industrial region of Xanthi. Nowadays, an increased range of products is manufactured in privately owned factories of 26.000 m² in 123.000 m² of land. Since its first steps, the company has developed a policy focused on quality, and has taken part in the European Foundation of Quality Management Excellence Model since 1997. The company has implemented the Systems of Quality Management and Environmental Management, whose design and function are based on the requirements of the models of ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 14001 respectively.

COCO-MAT has acquired a dynamic profile with excellent prospects in a very competitive field. This has been achieved through the use of highly specialised, technically advanced equipment, proficiently and continuously trained personnel and first-rate associates. In addition COCO-MAT has implemented contemporary management methods, and made use of results from recent research on the needs of its European customers.

COCO-MAT's policy is based on sustainable development and is focused on four main areas:

1. NATURAL - QUALITY PRODUCT
2. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
3. EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION
4. SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

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The raw materials used for COCO-MAT products are 100% natural, therefore the manufacturing of products and the products are friendly to human being and the environment. As an indication, some of the raw materials that constitute the manufacturing basis of COCO-MAT products are:

- coco fibre (the fibres covering the coconut fruit which after suitable processing together with natural rubber, produce elastic coco fibres),
- natural rubber (the juice from the HEVEA tree becomes a foamy layer of natural rubber),
- wool and cotton (coming from the region of Thrace and considered to be of best quality due to the unique climate conditions and soil composition),
- seaweed (used to provide extra iodine to customers with asthma and breathing problems),
- horsehair (regulates humidity),
- silk,
- linen,
- down,
- cactus.

New technologies are also a focal point for the company. Their contribution to the formation and realisation of policy and strategy is important and relates to the company's resolution that it would use technology to reduce harmful effects to the environment, to improve work conditions and reduce waste of energy and of raw materials.

The company's relationship with its suppliers is based on the fundamental condition: to primarily comply with the company's requirements on quality, and secondly to work together with the company to a common target of development. The company provides its suppliers with technical support and training, in order for them to effectively support the common goals.

Moreover, COCO-MAT started a campaign for the suppression of use of plastic under the name "2004 without plastic". That's way the plastic package of the mattresses has been replaced with cotton cases. According to this philosophy furniture is delivered in wooden boxes.

The cultural variation and multilingual pattern of its work force are quite evident, as most of the employees do not speak the Greek language fluently, being refugees from ex- Eastern Block countries such as Russia.

It is also important to point out that COCO-MAT implements a recruitment and employment policy that provides equal opportunities to people with “special skills” (the usual term used is “disabled people”).

Our main objective has been the formulation of an ecological profile as a reference point for the company. This has been achieved to a very satisfactory level, since more than 90% of the customers have connected the name of COCO-MAT with SUSTAINABILITY. An also, customers’ perception regarding the quality of company product, relative to that of competitors, is getting better. COCO-MAT and quality are strongly linked in customers’ minds COCO-MAT does not have a firm target group. Its customers are people of all ages and from different social groups.

The number of outlets has increased drastically over the past few years and there are now 34 COCO-MAT retail outlets in Greece, 10 in Europe (Limasol, Nicosia, Madrid, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Arnhem, Antwerpen, Irland, Hamburg), one in the U.S, one in Saudi Arabia and 10 in China. For these investments COCO-MAT was able to use its own capital and not rely on loans. The tremendous growth and expansion of COCO-MAT, in combination with its high quality products, has now resulted in the name of “COCO-MAT” being familiar in most European consumer markets. During the 20 years of its operation, COCO-MAT has won significant awards and top distinctions, as the Total Quality Management Award in EFQM competition and the National Quality Award of Business Excellence by the Ministry of Development.

The vision of the founders of COCO-MAT is to remain at the top position worldwide in the manufacture of natural products, and to achieve a working culture of sustainability, embracing all types of human activity - giving equal chances to everybody irrespective of their nationality, colour, religion, or physical disability.

Sustainable management, even if it is in part implemented in managerial, technical or typical processes, will make us all feel safer and is a step into the right direction – for a city, for society, for mankind and nature. Aephoria is increasingly seen as a process, not an ultimate goal, more as a journey than the destination.

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COCO-MAT believes that Mother Nature's products cannot be improved and based on this belief, the use of natural materials has become one of its indisputable values. With this, it leads by example, not only the competition, but also by creating close relationships with its customers who trust a company which puts its words and values into actions.

The exclusive use of natural raw materials for the manufacturing of the company's products aims at being able to provide a high-quality product to its customers and consists of COCO-MAT's competitive advantage. Customer satisfaction is the guide and motivation in one for COCO-MAT. For this reason, products and services are designed based on the needs and expectations of the customers.

This practice is derived from the founder's philosophy which is based on quality and makes up the foundation of the company's policies and practices. Management as well as employees support the use of natural material and the protection of the environment and prove this with their daily conduct within the work place and outside of it.

Sustainability and the protection of the environment are part of COCO-MAT's policy and belief system and putting this philosophy into practice every day by respecting the customer and the environment is a pillar of COCO-MAT's philosophy.

COCO-MAT operates in the industrial area of Xanthi, in the wider region of Thrace, which is designed to become one of the most developed industrial areas of Greece. COCO-MAT's premises are located in the industrial park of the Industrial Development Bank of Greece. The infrastructure of the area allows the company to manufacture its products without any adverse noise pollution. The machinery is certified with the sign C.E. and as far as the level of noise is concerned, its contribution to the general noise is less than the limit imposed by E.U. legislation.

The operation of COCO-MAT's factory has the minimum possible harmful impact on the environment. The liquid waste of the factory is only that generated by the people and by ordinary cleaning.

In addition, all the packaging materials that are used by the company are recyclable and are collected by the company upon delivery of its products to the customers, for returning to the factory for recycling.

It should be pointed out that the percentage of rubber foam purity that is manufactured at the company's premises, reaches a level of 96% - for which COCO-MAT can be proud as it has a worldwide record.

COCO-MAT places great emphasis on the protection of the environment, a commitment that is evident in the use of ecological materials and the avoidance of chemical materials. This includes the packaging of products - mattresses are transported in cotton cases.

Sleep is a complicated phenomenon, which up to now hasn't been completely decrypted. Some theories state, that sleep is like a third state of awareness, which enables our brain to process memories and the experience of our day and to create links between events, sensory input, feelings and memories – just like making a backup of our hard drive, in this case our brain. Other theories say that sleep gives the body time to heal and to repair damages caused by stress, ultraviolet rays and other harmful exposures.

Whatever the reason, fact is that humans need sleep because good sleep contributes to a longer and healthier life and increased quality of life. Other factors, like a healthy diet, exercise and heredity are certainly just as important, but sleeping enough hours each night is just as vital as the food we eat and the air we breathe. One of the causes of sleeping problems (insomnia, disturbed sleep, etc.) can often be contributed to bad quality mattresses. Recent EU research has shown that 1 in 3 adults has problems sleeping. Sleep deprivation studies have shown, that sleep consists of a recreative activity which influences our ability to function and perform as well as our physical and mental fitness. Insufficient sleep or a bad quality of sleep leads firstly only to fatigue, but over time can have dramatic consequences, such as decrease in learning power, less creativity, inability to fully concentrate, memory loss and slower reactions.

Below you can find some information about mattresses, our core product:

The human body has various angles and curves and is in no way flat or straight. This is a general fact, regardless of weight, height or type. In order for a human body to rest the muscular spasms must be eradicated without altering natural shape of the body. To achieve this, the mattress must offer support to the whole body "filling" its every curve or void. The mattress must "follow" the body shape and adjust to it and not vice versa.

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Atlas, our best selling product, consists of three layers of natural rubber, two of them 6 cm thick and the third 2,5 cm. In between these layers are two layers of elasticated coco fibre (1,5 cm and 1 cm thick). The one, which is 1 cm thick, also contains another layer of seaweed.

Seaweed is collected by hand from unspoilt Greek beaches, are then sundried and forwarded for use in production. They are rich in iodine which is beneficial for the respiratory system, as well as being excellent insulators.

The cover consists of two different covers: the interior cover is made out of 100% cotton and has a perimetric zipper. The external cover is made out of 100% cotton, padded with woollen pads and also carries a perimetric zipper. It is removable and can be machine washed or dry cleaned.

During the complete manufacturing process, our foremost concern is the right selection of raw materials, which needs to happen based on their quality. As such, we consider those raw materials, which do not contain any traces of chemicals or other substances, which could lead to health problems of our consumers. This way, we were able to exclude the use of chemicals from the complete manufacturing process of our products.

What makes COCO-MAT different? It uses exclusively natural materials for its products: coco fibre, natural rubber, seaweed, horsehair and many more turn COCO-MAT's mattresses into a 'sleep on nature' experience. 175.259 hours of research, product development, learning about nature and interacting with people led us on our way to perfection.

COCO-MAT's mission is to provide the best possible sleeping products in order for us to get the good night's sleep we all so greatly deserve. Ultimately, our mission is to improve your quality of life. This mission guides us, motivates us and makes us get up every day and face the day ahead with a smile.