

Texto Tipo: Artículo de Periódico (Newspaper Article)

Confecciones Textiles El Aguila, Chile's biggest denim clothes manufacturer, was the first Chilean company to export jeans to the United States after the Chile-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into force at the beginning of this year.

It's one of the growing number of local manufacturers that are taking advantage of the zero tariffs now placed on textile imports into the United States. El Aguila made its first monthly shipment of 20.000 pairs of jeans for a large US department store brand on February, 2004. The biggest profit, however, will come from domestic sales of its own brands, Robert Lewis, Ricciardi and Barbados and from franchise to sell two Argentinian brands in Chile. A small fraction is expected to come from exports to Perú, Ecuador, Bolivia and Mexico.

Jaime Link K., now president of the firm's board, founded El Aguila in 1970. The company started off as a small workshop on Avenida Alameda with just 12 sewing machines, producing denim work clothes under the brand name El Aguila, and later Mr. Rodeo and Mr. Hick's jeans.

In 1977, the firm launched its Robert Lewis collection for men and women inspired by the styles in the fashion of the seventies. It was an instant success, bringing to Chile what was fashionable abroad, Robert Lewis was Chile's top clothing brand until 1985.

In 1986, El Aguila built its current 40.000 m² factory to take advantage of the export boom to the US. From then until 1992 it has been the country's largest manufacturing exporter.

The management of the company at present consists of an executive manager, a board of directors, a president of the board all of them belonging to the Link family and a general manager, a production manager and a business manager from outside of the family.

Plant capacity currently stands at 200.000 articles of clothing a month, of which 50% supplies the local market. Of the remaining 100.000, the company currently has exports contracts requiring 35.000 pieces a month.

In the longer term, the company is planning more investment to expand installed capacity at the factor, which would require hiring 60 more workers.

In relation to the company workers the question is: Are the workers sharing the company profits? Are their salaries and working conditions good enough? The answer is yes, if we consider that US companies comply contracts to the letter and they also expect the same of their counterparts.