

World Leader in Cork Oak Flooring Releases Industry's First Sustainability Report

In a model proven to create shared value for both industry and ecosystem, **Amorim**, the world leader in cork oak manufacturing and creator of **Wicanders** flooring, has released an independently verified report detailing the company's effects on sustainability. The report shows that **cork oak forests** and the resulting products are crucial in minimizing the world's ecological footprint by increasing CO₂ retention, preserving biodiversity, and combating desertification.



According to **Forbes**, “Amorim is number one, two, three, four, and five in the cork industry.” As world leaders, they are in a position to have a powerful impact on the preservation of our environment. By vertically engaging in consistent environmentally conscientious behavior, **Amorim** has adopted a paradigm that places social responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the industry. Wicanders cork oak floors represent a generations-old balance between environmental conservation, creation of wealth, and social development that benefits millions of people worldwide.

Since 1868, Amorim has made a continuous effort in the R&D area, to optimize the shared value of every ounce of cork oak. Cork bottle stoppers are the main production of Amorim, yet any remaining materials from the stopper production process are incorporated into other high-value applications such as **Wicanders** flooring. Their manufacturing process is practically waste-free. Pieces of cork oak that cannot be incorporated into products are used as biomass and are converted into fuel as an energy source. Therefore, there is no waste and no cork oak residue—nothing is discarded, everything is transformed.

Wicanders flooring is considered unique for its properties of thermal insulation, acoustic dampening, health benefits, and resiliency. Cork oak is free from allergens and hidden germs and is naturally anti-microbial, anti-bacterial, and hypoallergenic. For these reasons, the cork oak forests of Portugal, called the *Montados*, are considered to be extremely valuable and are a protected national resource. The harvesting of **cork oak** is unique in that the tree itself is never harmed in the process of stripping its bark, and biodiversity is aided by this necessary task. The *Montados* are home to wildlife such as nesting black storks, owls, Iberian lynxes, Imperial eagles, and wild boars. The forests are naturally hardy and survive without any use of synthetic or chemical herbicides, fertilizers or irrigation.



The Portuguese law to protect the cork oak dates as far back as **1209**, protecting the acorn of the tree. A fine was to be paid by anyone who "shakes oak trees with a stick". With time, even more legislation was passed regulating the precise thinning, pruning and stripping the tree's bark. To this day, felling a cork oak, unless it is too old for productive purposes, is illegal and punishable by fines. Pruning requires permission from the Forestry Commission, and saplings are allowed to be stripped only after the circumference of the trunk reaches 60cm (about 25 years). Agricultural

cultivation between the trees of cork oak groves is strictly prohibited as well.

As a result of the governing laws in Portugal, the cork oak forests are preserved for centuries. **Amorim** is one of the 1st companies to have obtained **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** certification for several of their processing units. The forests are privately owned by many farmers, and because of this, it is nearly impossible to certify the entire forest, however, the certification provides written documentation of the Portuguese law already in existence for almost 800 years. In the words of Amorim's marketing and communications director Carlos de Jesus, "In part, FSC certification is recognition of something that has been there for centuries - and because it asks more of growers and producers it will have a positive impact on cork quality." Because of their dedication to quality, **Amorim** has also achieved ISO14001 accreditation, an internationally recognized standard of excellence relating to environmental practices.

As the importance of reducing our environmental footprint becomes more apparent, carbon offsets and personal carbon reductions provide viable solutions to global warming. **Cork oak forests** and the products born of them play a valuable role in retaining the earth's CO₂. The *Montados* are responsible for nearly **4.8 million tons** of the world's CO₂ retention per year. Amorim's annual production of wine stoppers alone retains over 25,000 tons of CO₂. To provide an example, a mid-sized 30-mpg car driving 12,000 miles a year gives off about 3.55 tons of CO₂ per year according to Ecobusinesslinks.com. By choosing **Wicanders cork oak**, consumers can participate in offsetting the emissions of over 7,042 cars every year.

To ask questions about contributing to carbon offsets and how to lessen your eco-footprint, or to download the full sustainability report, visit Wicanders blog site for links, information, and answers from the industry leaders: <http://WicandersCorkOakBlog.com>.

Amorim has been the environmentally conscious world leader in the cork oak industry for over 130 years. Amorim's North American headquarters is located in Hanover, Maryland. For more information about Wicanders Cork Oak flooring, please contact Amorim Flooring at 410.553.6062 or visit Wicanders website: www.wicanders.com/us.

