



Innovative New Uses for Soy

Soy the Heart and Sole of New Footwear Product



Since 2008 some women throughout the world have been sporting a new shoe containing a soybean polyol made by The Dow Chemical Company. The United Soybean Board (USB) and soybean checkoff helped fund some of the initial scale-up to develop the soy polyol used in the shoes.

Grupo Ravi, a well-recognized Mexican footwear company, introduced the product as well as envisioned and developed it beginning in 2006. The shoe's sole and insole consists of a soy-based polyol made by Dow.

Giuliano Garuti, Dow's footwear global marketing manager, says the polymer contains 20 to 25 percent of a renewable product, which can be soy-based or other biobased products. The polyol can be polymerized using an isocyanate, creating a soy-based polyurethane.

"Using soy-based polyurethane helps reduce our consumption of petrochemicals, creating an environmentally friendly product for manufacturers and ultimately consumers," Garuti said.

Wal-Mart de Mexico launched the sale of the Green Comfort sandal by doing a pilot test in 40 stores. In April 2009 Wal-Mart expanded the sandal's distribution to its 155 Super Centers in Mexico as part of its "Month of Earth" campaign in that country. Garuti expects the Green Comfort sandal to be adapted by shoe manufacturers internationally. Currently the product is made for niche markets for consumers wanting to buy environmentally friendly products, but Garuti sees potential for that to change. "Perhaps in five to ten years polyurethane like this one will be used more as an industry standard considering the increasing emphasis on green products in the United States and European governments," he said.

To learn more about new uses for soy visit www.soynewuses.org.

USB is made up of 68 farmer-directors who oversee the investments of the soybean checkoff on behalf of all U.S. soybean farmers. Checkoff funds are invested in the areas of animal utilization, human utilization, industrial utilization, industry relations, market access and supply. As stipulated in the Soybean Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service has oversight responsibilities for USB and the soybean checkoff.