

# SUSTAINABLE COLOMBIA, LATIN AMERICAN SMES.

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*Abstract:* The following article presents the results of the research "Study of the Sustainability Practices of the SMEs of the Municipality of Bugalagrande, Facing the Challenges of Sustainable Development", which seeks to understand the coherence between the objectives of the report of the United Nations and the commitment that the entrepreneurs of the sector present in sustainable matters for the conservation of the planet, referring to its three elements that make up the concept of sustainability. The report contemplates sustainable development from a sustainable, social and political reference, and environment. To this end, the UN objectives that the companies put into practice in the development of their corporate purpose were analyzed, obtaining satisfactory results for their authors. Results that were perceived through surveys made to entrepreneurs under the methodology of mixed descriptive research which helped to understand the situation in sustainable and sustainable matters in the companies of the municipality of Bugalagrande.

*Keywords:* Environmental, Company, Political, Social, Sustainability and Sustainability.

## 1. Introduction.

The Unidad Central Del Valle (Uceva, for its acronym in Spanish) and its Public Accounting Program, developed the research called Analysis of Sustainability Practices in Small and Medium Enterprises in the Municipality of Tuluá and Its Surroundings, Facing Challenges in Sustainable Development "where They analyzed some sectors of the economy of Tuluá and its surroundings.

From the research several studies were derived by sectors of the economy, among them, the "Study of the Sustainability

Practices of SMEs of the Municipality of Bugalagrande, Facing the Challenges of Sustainable Development", carried out by the students David Fernando Fajardo and Juan Camilo Orozco in his undergraduate work, which belong to the research group of the GIDE group (Research Group of Business Development), attached to the Uceva Public Accounting program.

Sustainable development is understood, as the knowledge in matter according to the report of the United Nations (UN), objectives that society must practice for the conservation of the planet. The main characteristic of this research is to identify the improvement of the

quality of life of the population of the municipality of Bugalagrande; currently and of course their future generations, through the practice of the 17 sustainability objectives proposed by the UN in the companies of the municipality of Bugalagrande.

In order to analyze this problem it is necessary to mention its causes, among them the following are identified: the lack of practice of the sustainable development objectives according to the UN report. Similarly, lack of knowledge of the SDGs and lack of commitment to put them into practice.

The purpose of this research article (study of sustainability practices of SMEs in the municipality of Bugalagrande, facing the challenges of sustainable development) is to publicize the perceptions about sustainability that companies in the municipality of Bugalagrande have of the jurisdiction of the Chamber of Commerce of the municipality of Tuluá, with the intention of analyzing and evaluating the commitment of these in this subject.

With this investigation it was known, in what way the companies of the municipality of

## **2. Methodology.**

### **2.1 Approach.**

The approach used was mixed, which allowed to have a more precise perspective of the research object, with this approach was collected, analyzed, linked qualitative data as quantitative and deepened more in the study of the data found. Using a "mixed" approach brings several advantages, including the accuracy of the results to be revealed "(Hernández S, 1991), helps to clarify the approach to the problem and, of course, helps to select more precisely the important data to support the research project. The data were

Bugalagrande, are providing solutions to these problems in the aforementioned municipality. Therefore, the project starts from being an investigation that explains, details and makes aware to the entrepreneurs of these small and medium enterprises about the great importance of the development of their economic activities in the transformation of Bugalagrande.

In the framework of sustainability, the research was conducted with a series of interviews with businessmen enrolled in the Chamber of Commerce of Tuluá with jurisdiction in the municipality of Bugalagrande.

The methodology for this research was a mixed approach, which allowed to have a precise perspective on the research object, with this approach it is intended to collect, analyze and link qualitative and quantitative data, deepening in the study of the data found. During the field investigation one of the perceived obstacles was the fear of some representatives to give answers to the questions asked.

collected from reality, according to Abel Flames (2001: P26) the data must be collected from the reality or its natural scenario "to have truth in the results obtained directly from the research object.

### **2.2 Type of investigation.**

The type of research was descriptive, with a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach, which Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2003: 119) define as "descriptive research seeks to specify properties, characteristics and important features of any phenomenon that is analyzed." This type of research was applied since it allows observing and

describing the behavior of the companies that are research objects without influencing it in any way. This also consists of identifying the customs, situations of people and the relationship that exists between two or more variables. Hernández Sampieri (2003, P 54), in his book the research methodology mentions that descriptive studies seek to specify the important properties of people, groups or any phenomenon that is subject to analysis.

### 2.3 Research method.

The method used was the inductive, which is the reasoning that, starting from particular cases, is raised to general knowledge. "This method allows the formation of hypotheses (Madé Serrano, N. 2006)". It can be said in other words that the inductive method is to study a proposed topic from the inside out. Now the deductive method applies the principles discovered to particular cases, from a link of judgments. It can be concluded that the "deductive" study method is characterized by an analysis of general situations that later lead to a particular vision of the phenomena "(Madé Serrano, N. 2006: P54)", contrary to the inductive method, which starts from the particular aspects or knowledge.

### 2.4 Information source.

Bearing in mind what Hernández, Fernández Collado C., & Bautista Lucio P., says, in

which he mentions that "there are a variety of sources of information that can generate ideas in research", it was managed as a source of data collection, the realization of survey by the legal representative of the companies that were part of the field work. This type of information source contains all kinds of data that provided ideas and finally bases to conclude about the results of the present research project.

**Unit of Analysis:** As a unit of analysis, there is a population of 79 companies registered in the Chamber of Commerce of Tuluá; companies belonging to the jurisdiction of the city of Bugalagrande, "type of object of which will be investigated" (Azcona, Maximiliano, Manzini, Fernando and Dorati, Javier: P09, 2013) in this case are the companies of the SME sector of the municipality of Bugalagrande.

**Unit of Work:** The unit of work is composed of the population with which it will work, in this case are SMEs registered in the Chamber of Commerce "in a small sample, if you can access it, then work with the entire population "(Allan S, 2011); The research unit was 9 companies belonging to SMEs equivalent to 11% of the unit of measurement. The unit of measurement are the companies under investigation, belonging to the commerce and service sector of the city of Bugalagrande Valle Del Cauca.

## Table 1

### SMEs trade and service of the municipality of Bugalagrande.

<i>Company</i>	<i>Economic activity</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Department</i>
<i>Electrinox Ltda.</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>SEBugalagrande Ltda.</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>Bentonitas Colombianas S.A.S.</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>Ferro eléctricos La Cuarta</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>Ferretería Bugalagrande</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>Quimiplast</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>Funerales y Proexequiales San Bernabé S.A.</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>Hacienda Lucerna S.A.S.</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca
<i>Trapiche Lucerna S.A.S</i>	Commerce and service	Bugalagrande	Valle del Cauca

**Source: Of the authors.**

### 3. Results.

The results of the analysis of the sustainability practices of private sector companies in the municipality of Bugalagrande del Valle Del Cauca are presented below.

#### 3.1 Sustainability.

They are policies, norms, guidelines, attitudes, which are found from knowledge, natural and legal, in the development of products or services. On the other hand, "prepare people to face and solve the problems that threaten the sustainability of the planet" UNESCO (2007, P6), under the concept of sustainability, which "impacts on the social, economic, political and ecological"

UNCED (1992), the application of these concepts was called sustainable development.

"The sustainability or sustainable development of a country or territory, depends on fundamental aspects of people" López, C. and Sánchez V., (2017), aspects that should be done by the rules and regulations of each economic entity, such as training programs environmental, social and economic.

#### 3.2 Sustainability.

These are all the actions carried out by people in the care of the environment, "small actions that facilitate the care of natural resources" EACNUR (2017). Within this concept, sustainability refers to biological systems that can conserve diversity and productivity over time, linked to the balance of any particular species with natural resources.

By recognizing the perceptions about sustainability that the companies of the municipality of Bugalagrande have, with the

intention of analyzing and evaluating the commitment of the same in this subject, and recognizing that there is an infinity of deficiencies "condemning people in a degree of vulnerability ", As a consequence of unemployment and therefore by poverty produced by the same factor; such as hunger, diseases, illiteracy, insecurity, lack of guarantees regarding the service of drinking water, damage to the environment caused by the waste of natural resources and the lack of care for them and a number of needs which reflect the most vulnerable populations on the planet.

According to the above, it will be possible to know in what way the companies of the municipality of Bugalagrande are committed in terms of "economic and environmental sustainability to promote greater welfare to the community" Municipal Development Plan (2016), and providing solutions to these problems in the aforementioned municipality, therefore, the investigation starts to be an investigation to explain, detail and raise awareness among the entrepreneurs of these small and medium enterprises about the great importance of the development of their economic activities. "The development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the global market is a priority for the economic growth of each country" Dolphin F, Acosta M. (2016) and the transformation of each territory.

Due to the above, the objective focuses on recognizing the successful practices of the UN report (2001) on sustainability, determining the competitiveness of the companies analyzed according to the UN report.

According to Morín (2010) sustainability is one of the basic concepts, of the policy is sustainable development as a universal concept to "meet the needs of the present

generation without affecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (p.35), this notion is materialized in the balance between three basic components: "environmental, social and economic" UN (2001), the three components are interrelated and interdependent.

The environmental system includes environmental services for provisioning; Cipav (2012) defines environmental services as "the benefits that society receives from ecosystems". On the other hand, social welfare policies, which include the "satisfaction of basic needs" Montserrat C (1983), improving the living conditions of society, as well as the rules of labor equity and the fair treatment of employees, between others. These two systems are the basis for the functioning of the economic system, understood as the increase in monetary income, financial performance, compensation of employees and contributions to the community.

As indicated (Scribano, 2016), that is why sustainable development is an emergency of the described model. However, for some thinkers this may be a utopia, since precisely the cause of unsustainability is the same development. It has even been suggested that the word "sustainable" has been an adjective or literary qualifier only, written in policies and programs, but in the end this purpose has not materialized. (p.85)

The term "sustainable development" remained largely unnoticed until its reactivation in the Gro Harlem Brundtland report "Our common future", published in 1987. As Norway's Prime Minister and chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in time, she aimed to clarify this concept of sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising

the ability of future generations to meet theirs" Estrella S, (2014), since then, the concept of development sustainable has been accepted throughout the world.

The recognition of the sustainability objectives proposed by the UN is opportune, identifying that not all of these can be applied

to the SMEs of the municipality of Bugalagrande.

Next, we proceed to indicate the objectives analyzed for the Bugalagrande companies. See Table 1

**Table 1.**  
**SDGs analyzed for SMEs in the municipality of Bugalagrande Valle Del Cauca.**

Municipality of Bugalagrande	
Goals	
<b>Objective No. 1. End poverty in all its forms around the world</b>	"Poverty goes beyond the lack of income and resources to guarantee sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, discrimination and social exclusion, and lack of participation in decision-making. Economic growth must be inclusive in order to create sustainable jobs and promote equality.
<b>Objective No. 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</b>	<p>Reviewing the United Nations Development Program, which shows rapid economic growth and increased agricultural productivity in recent years, the number of undernourished people has decreased by almost half, legal representatives of the companies report.</p> <p>Although in Colombia and mainly in the municipality of Bugalagrande, it is not possible to demonstrate a sustainable treatment to guarantee food security because the environment in agriculture is severely affected, since different types of chemical inputs are used for the care of crops without having knowledge of the problems that these can generate for the lands in which they are used, and the infertility that can be generated in the medium and long term.</p>
<b>Objective No. 3. Ensure a healthy life and promote the well-being of everyone at all ages.</b>	<p>"The most common causes of death, such as diseases caused by the lack of drinking water, are a problem that prevents the achievement of sustainable development, for which it is necessary to completely eradicate a wide range of pathologies from the root."</p> <p>Taking into account what has been named, it is recognized that companies in the sector of Bugalagrande, contribute to the goal in terms of sustainability, trying to ensure the health and well-being of all people, ensuring good care, a good education in reproductive health, where all people have access to sexual and reproductive health services; maternal and infant mortality in order to reduce</p>

	the neonatal mortality rate; End epidemics of communicable and non-communicable diseases.
<b>Objective No. 4. Guarantee an inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</b>	It is recognized that some companies in the sector of Bugalagrande contribute to a quality and equitable education where people who are part of the organization meet their technical training cycles, ensuring effective results and increasing the number of qualified teachers to offer training where Strengthen the knowledge, skills and values of students in order to contribute positively to society and your company.
<b>Objective No. 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.</b>	The companies in the Bugalagrande sector comply with gender equality, giving women the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in different types of jobs and in this way, they can develop their full potential at a productive level for the benefit of the organization, participating in an equitable with men in different areas such as some at a political, economic and social level.
<b>Objective No. 6. Guarantee the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.</b>	It is recognized that companies in the sector of Bugalagrande, in terms of sustainability, are concerned that people have equitable access to drinking water, and that some are concerned about getting their employees to take care of the environment by reducing toxic waste pollution to the atmosphere and water, reducing the percentage of untreated wastewater and a small increase in recycling which is essential for the survival of people and the planet.
<b>Objective No. 7. Guarantee access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</b>	The research recognizes that companies in the sector of Bugalagrande have a bit of awareness because people have access to modern and sustainable energy service, as they take into account elements that make it a little more efficient and less polluting to which investments are made, although small, in electronic devices that use technologies that have been designed to help and contribute to the care of the environment.
<b>Objective No. 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</b>	The research recognizes that companies in the sector of Bugalagrande meet the objective of promoting economic growth, productive innovation, as it offers jobs, but are not sustainable and on the contrary if they are decent for their workers, eradicating work Forced, it deals with people and child labor protecting labor rights promoting it equally for men, women, young people and the disabled.

<p><b>Objective No. 9. Build resilient infrastructures, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and encourage innovation.</b></p>	<p>In this objective, the promotion of infrastructure development, industrialization and innovation is sought. We can recognize in the research that in the companies of the municipality of Bugalagrande if they comply with the objective N ° 9 of the UN since they are in constant growth promoting industrialization consequently employment and continuous development of the infrastructure of the sector, contributing to the economic development and well-being of people.</p>
<p><b>Objective No. 11 To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.</b></p>	<p>The research recognizes that companies in the sector of Bugalagrande meets objective No. 11 because their contribution to industrialization generates jobs, which are helpful to build homes with adequate basic services improving the quality of life of the inhabitants and the infrastructure of the sector, such as public spaces, roads and public transport, which is of great support for the inhabitants of the sector, especially the most vulnerable people, such as children and the elderly, in terms of material of sustainability, it was not possible to see clearly because they are settlements with very basic needs and do not even have a clear concept on this issue.</p>
<p><b>Objective No. 12: guarantee sustainable consumption and production patterns</b></p>	<p>In the research a high percentage of ignorance of the subject is noticed, because several of the companies of different sectors, are not even clear the concept of the sustainable production. Therefore, it can be seen that there is a big problem in most of the entrepreneurs, where they only worry about the economic development of their companies and do not compare it with the same development of the social and environmental environment of the societies where they carry out their activities.</p>

**Source: Of the authors.**

Going into the context of the companies analyzed, it can be indicated that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute little to the issue of sustainable development in the region. The lack of knowledge is due to misinformation about the research topic, but they adopt economic and sustainability

Strategies at the same time, allowing local communities to benefit from sustainable development, innovation and economic development in their regions, as shown in the Table No. 2

**Table 2.**

**List of SMEs and the SDGs.**

**Relación de las Pymes y los SDGs**

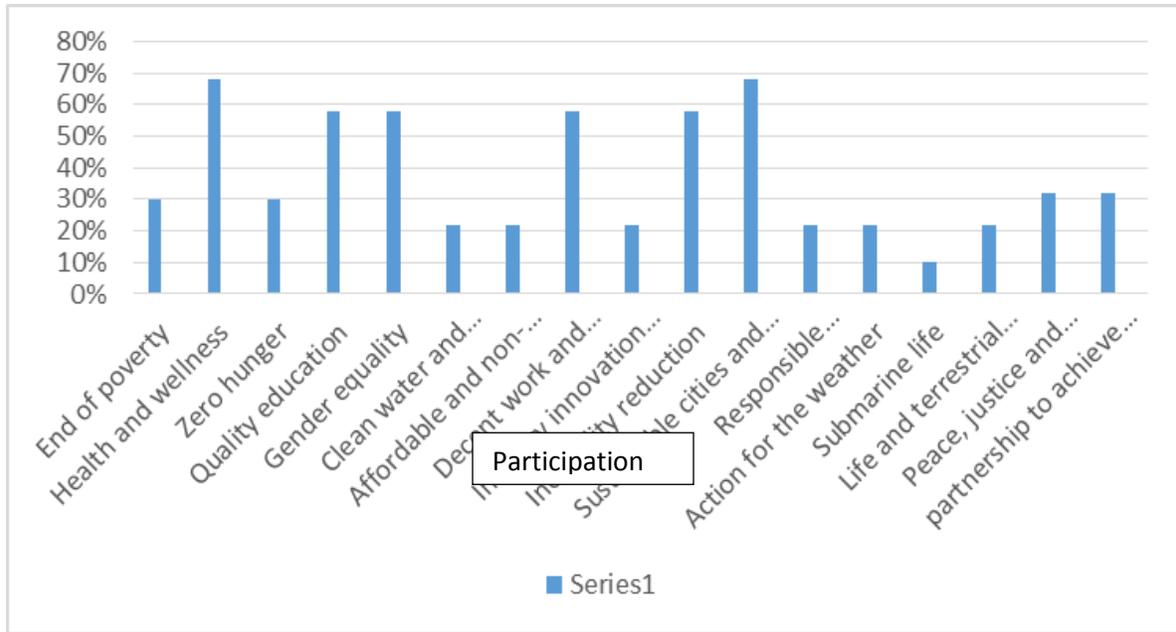
Objectives of Sustainable Development	Companies									Total
	Electrinox Ltda.	SEBugalagran de Ltda.	Bentonitas Colombianas S.A.S.	Ferro eléctricos La Cuarta Hardware store	Bucalagrande Quimiplast	Funerals and Proexequiales San Bernabé	Estate Lucerna S.A.S	Trapiche Lucerna S.A.S.		
End of poverty			X					X	X	3
Zero Hunger			X					X	X	3
Health & Wellness	X	X		X	X			X	X	6
Quality education			X	X		X		X	X	5
Gender equality		X	X	X				X	X	5
Clean water and sanitation	X	X								2
Affordable and non-polluting energy	X					X				2
Decent work and economic growth		X	X				X	X	X	5
Industry, innovation and infrastructure			X				X			2
Inequality reduction			X	X			X	X	X	5
Sustainable cities and communities	X				X	X	X	X	X	6
Responsible consumption production			X				X			2
Action for the weather						X	X			2
Submarine life						X				1
Life of terrestrial ecosystems						X	X			2
Peace, justice and solid institutions							X	X	X	3
Partnerships to achieve the objectives							X	X	X	3

Source: Of the authors.

Table 2 shows the way in which companies consider the so-called objectives of

sustainable development, resulting in the prioritization that each organization gives to the exposed objectives.

## Graphic 1 Recognition of Sustainable Development in SMEs.



Source: of the author

The previous graph gives a reading of the SDGs. with which companies are associated with sustainability issues; they recognize health and wellbeing, sustainable cities and communities, quality education, gender equality, decent work and reduction of inequalities as the objectives most associated with the subject of sustainable development.

#### 4. Compilation of Results

Next, the information extracted from the companies under investigation in the city of Bugalagrande is related. Information that was

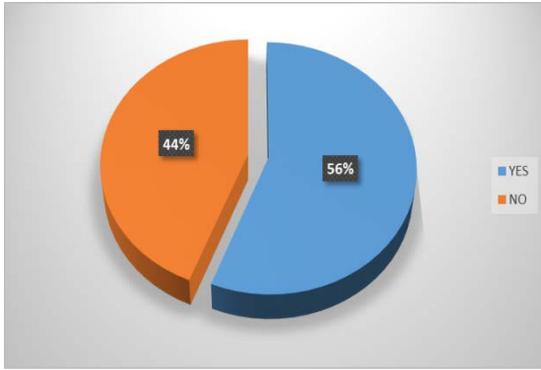
Collected in the surveys conducted as an instrument for data collection in the exploration; These data were those provided according to the perceptions of the representatives of each selected company.

The following information comes from surveys conducted with SMEs registered in the Chamber of Commerce of Tuluá with jurisdiction in Bugalagrande, but now, in response to the question, does the company address initiatives for sustainable development?

Given the above, the representatives of the companies related to the research indicated in forty four (44%) percent, where they say that if they address initiatives for sustainable development. The other fifty-six (56%) percent did not comment on the question.

#### Graphic 2

#### Business Initiatives in Sustainable Development.

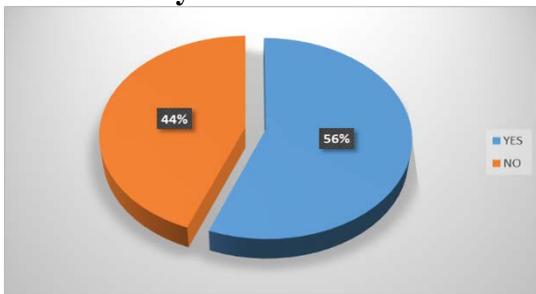


Source: Of the authors.

Figure 2. Reveals that four (4) of the nine (9) surveyed companies address the practice and implementation of the objectives of sustainable development, with campaigns on proper waste management derived from the development of the corporate purpose of the companies, the use of zero papers, using this business practice, is an important part of environmental policies.

With respect to the question "Does the company empower employees on sustainability issues?" The representatives indicated that forty-four (44%) percent, if they address initiatives for sustainable development. The other fifty-six (56%) percent did not comment on it.

**Graphic 3.**  
**Training for Employees in Sustainability.**



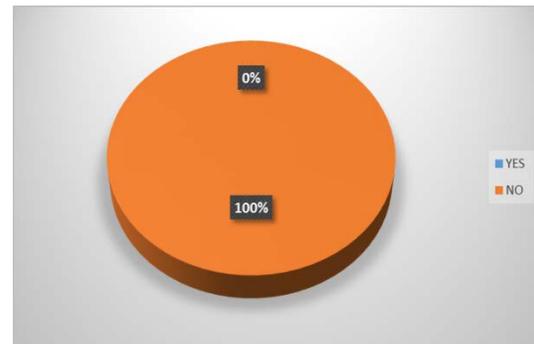
Source: Of the authors.

The results show that four (4) of the nine (9) companies surveyed approach the practice and implementation of the objectives of

sustainable development, through talks to their employees. According to the above, the respondents reveal that the talks are motivated by themselves, but not by an expert on the subject; ideally, employees should be socialized on issues of sustainability and sustainability, by a person versed in this regard.

Next, the businessmen responded to the question: Does the company have investment programs in terms of sustainability?

**Graphic 4.**  
**Investment Programs in Sustainability.**



Source: of the authors

The graph represents the managers' responses, where they reported that they do not have investment programs in terms of sustainability, which suggests that they do not allocate economic resources for the development of mechanisms related to sustainable development policies, such as campaigns. Of awareness of the care of the environment, economic and social sustainability.

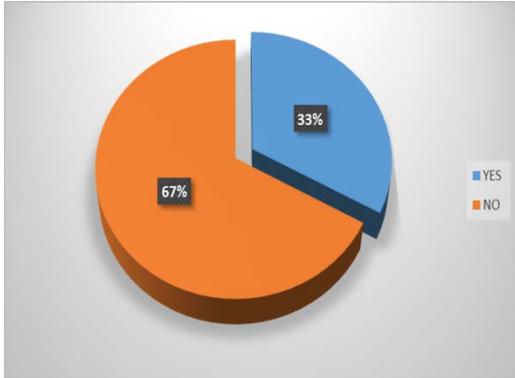
On the other hand with respect to the question: Are the services or products made by the company sustainable?

Thirty-three (33%) percent of the representatives indicated that the products are elaborated with an environmental thinking protocol; in responsible consumption of

resources, in production. On the other hand, sixty-seven (67%) percent of representatives reveal that they are engaged in the commercialization of products and that the question does not apply to this sector.

### Graph 5

#### Sustainable Products



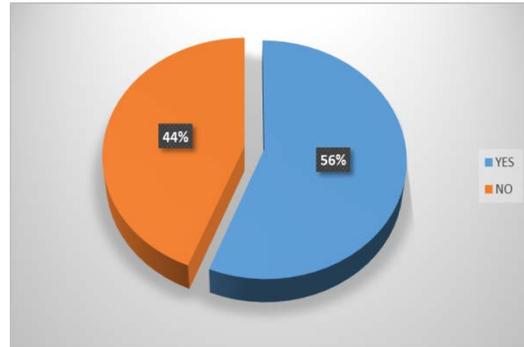
Source: Of the authors.

Graph 5. Discern, in which three (3) of the nine (9) companies surveyed carry out sustainable practices for the transformation of products in the development of their economic activity. The other six (6) companies are engaged in the sale of manufactured goods and therefore do not externalize in this regard.

In the same way, to the question "Does sustainability and sustainability benefit employees?" Fifty-six (56%) percent of the representatives indicated that they are benefited when putting sustainability issues into practice. The remaining (forty-four, 44%) of the representatives did not speak on this question.

### Graph 6

#### Sustainable Practices for Employees and Society.



Source: Of the authors.

Figure 6. Reveals that five (5) of the nine (9) companies surveyed, state that this type of sustainability practices greatly benefits companies, which gives considerable value to the fact that companies allocate resources for that employees and society in general are participants in sustainable development processes.

### 5. Conclusions.

SMEs (small and medium enterprises) contribute little to the issue of sustainable development in the region, because they are companies with few economic resources and low incomes. They do not allocate resources in terms of sustainability, but they adopt strategies and innovation to carry out practices in this regard.

The products and services offered by the companies located in Bugalagrande are elaborated with an environmental thinking protocol; responsible consumption of renewable resources and are not part of the commitment in terms of sustainability with the consumer society of their products.

It can be seen in the companies surveyed, a commitment to provide information, in relation to their own state in contrast to the

so-called processes of sustainable development.

The companies were widely receptive to the concepts and foundations of sustainable development and protection of the environment, showing an interest in knowing about the subject more in depth, since in a few occasions they have had advice on this and therefore did not have a clear knowledge, nor an investment plan on the 17 sustainability objectives of the UN to contribute to the sustainable development of organizations.

Entrepreneurs must be motivated to invest in sustainability issues within their companies, in order to contribute to the control of the environment, in order to raise awareness among companies about the importance of meeting the objectives of sustainable development, advantages that this has and its contribution in the different sectors to the progress of the organizations and the community.

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