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The Biomes Project combines food production and nature conservation

For a long time, the Brazilian agricultural sector and the environment appeared to be at odds with the goal of feeding the world versus preserving the environment. This is no longer the case. In 2010, the Biomes Project was created as a nationwide initiative that merged the goals of agricultural production and nature conservation in Brazil.

The Project started from a partnership between the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA), the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) and other public and private institutions. The Project has two main objectives. First is to establish sustainable models through planting various species of trees, so as to ensure a greater presence of trees on rural properties. This will achieve a balance between nature conservation, economic production and social development. The second objective is to apply scientific findings for the enhancement of Brazil's environmental legislation.

Since 2010, with the collaboration of universities and research centers from all regions of Brazil, 400 specialists have been engaged in field studies in the country's six major biomes: Pampa (lowland), Atlantic Forest, Cerrado (tropical savanna), Caatinga (desert-like vegetation), Pantanal (tropical wetland) and Amazonia.

Two properties were selected in each Biome. On the first, in an area of well-preserved native vegetation, diagnostic surveys were carried out. These are considered benchmark areas. A scientific team comprised of local researchers examines soils, vegetation, climatic conditions, and water resources, as well as economic and social aspects of that region. On the second property, the team carries out experimental tree-planting projects. The constant monitoring generates significant technical data that support the scientists in recording and assessing the research outcomes. For instance, these data help them to identify the most appropriate species of trees for a particular type of soil fertility and water availability, and for the economic and environmental needs of the region. In addition, the data help the producers to select the best planting strategy, in accordance with characteristics of the property, the available technology, and market conditions.

Farmers are beginning to reap the rewards of the project. On Field Days, with the participation of various farmers' institutions, specialists demonstrate the advantages of planting trees. In the future, models prepared for Areas of Permanent Preservation, Legal Reserve and Production Systems will be applied in similar areas in other farms. Multipliers are being trained to spread this information to farmers throughout rural Brazil. Native and exotic tree species offer economic and environmental alternatives for farms. The trees represent a sustainable solution and an essential component for achieving the balance between agricultural production and environmental conservation.

The Biomes Project is a leading initiative on the path toward sustainable development and the application of sustainable production systems. It is helping to make Brazil a worldwide benchmark in technical research on how to use and conserve trees in the country's different biomes. In the coming years, the outcomes of these studies are expected to transform the countryside, generating greater advantages for the economy, the environment and the communities.

The Experience of Caatinga Biome Project

Ceará, which is covered by the Caatinga Biome, is one of the states in Brazil to host the Biomes Project experimentation. Research has been collected on the trees in this state for the past four years.

The Caatinga Biome Project, which has been in progress since 2013, is reaching the first results. The research already indicates that the production cycles on this biome can be reduced by half according to Brazilian Law. That is, the natural cycle of maturing of the Caatinga Biome crops can be reduced from 20 to 10 years through the use of appropriate planting and management techniques. In addition, they are bringing to the country the possibility for producers to use different types of trees in a sustainable manner.

Another experiment involves different forms of control of Criptostegia Madagascariensis (rubber vine), an exotic

and invasive plant which is extremely aggressive on the Caatinga ecosystem. This species mainly attacks the Carnauba Palm Tree, causing significant loss for the production systems and the preservation of northeastern Brazil. Therefore, ten experiments led by a group of researchers from different states of Brazil are being implemented in this area.

The Biome Project is not only offering new scientific information, it has also planted more than 5000 trees of 37 species in the experimental area of the Caatinga Biome Project.

The new Minister of Agriculture of Brazil

In May Senator Blairo Maggi was appointed as the new Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply by the acting president of Brazil, Michel Temer. The new Minister replaced Senator Katia Abreu, who had been leading the Ministry since January 2015. Maggi has extensive experience as a producer and manager in the agribusiness sector, and in defending the rights of farmers in Brazil's Senate.

The new Minister's priority is to prevent the economic crisis within Brazil from affecting the agricultural sector. To compose the leadership of the Ministry, Maggi has already appointed Eumar Novacki as his Executive Secretary, and Neri Geller, a former Minister of Agriculture, as Secretary of Agricultural Policy. The assignment of the other Secretaries should happen in the coming days.

CNA criticizes EU'S offer without further access for beef and ethanol

The European Union and Mercosur have made an important step in their trade relations by exchanging market access offers after 12 years without significant progress. However, the decision by the European Commission to present a proposal which does not include quotas for beef, meat and ethanol has frustrated Mercosur producers.

The EU has not excluded market access for bovine beef meat in any of the current negotiations. It has recently conceded Canada a quota of 50.000 tons per year. It is also currently negotiating market access in the meat sector with the United States and Japan. Furthermore, it will do the same with Australia and New Zealand, when negotiations start.

An agreement between two important trade blocs like the EU and Mercosur represents a unique opportunity that should not be missed. Mercosur as a market accounts for 250 million consumers and offers great opportunities for European companies. In addition, through the agreement European citizens will have access to high quality and high sustainable products produced in the Mercosur region.

CNA considers that the Brazilian agricultural sector should be given priority in the negotiations. This is fundamental for a balanced outcome. CNA also urges the European Union to acknowledge the strategic importance of the relations with the Mercosur countries, which is based not only on strong economic but also historical links, by engaging in a serious and credible negotiating process.

Brazil's State Espírito Santo is recognized as an area free of classical swine fever

Espírito Santo State received international certification as an area free of classical swine fever (CFS) during the General Session of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) held on May 26 in Paris, France. In Brazil, thirteen other states have already received the certification, including Paraná, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul, Mato Grosso, Goiás, Tocantins, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Sergipe, Rondônia, Acre and Distrito Federal.

Japan tariff peaks to Brazil's Agribusiness products

Tariff peaks imposed by Japan to Brazil's agribusiness products inhibit foreign sales of Brazilian agriculture. In some extreme cases the rates are equivalent to 374.41%. This is demonstrated in the study "Trade Barriers: the Japanese Tariff Peaks and the Brazilian Agribusiness" carried out by the International Relations Department (SRI) of the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA).

CNA's analysis shows that Japan has a "consumer market of 126.9 million citizens, and is one of the major importers of agricultural products, having bought an average of US $ 119.1 billion between 2012 and 2014." Even though these figures are impressive, Brazil's share in this market is still relatively small, only $ 4.1 billion. For example, Brazil is a major producer and exporter of meat and offal, and Japan is one of the largest importers of these products. "But the bilateral meat trade remains small due to the high tariffs applied by the Japanese to meat, in addition to sanitary restrictions that prevent the importation of fresh beef from Brazil", says the study.

CNA points out that Brazilian producers face huge difficulties to export different kinds of swine cuts to Japan. According to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), between 2012 and 2014, Brazil remained in fourth place among the world's leading producers of this type of meat. According to CNA's study, Japan recognizes only the state of Santa Catarina as free of Foot-and-Mouth disease (FMD) without vaccination. The other states are also free of FMD with vaccination, a status that does not permit access into Japan's market.

Another sensitive product is honey. Japan is a major importer of the product, buying nearly US $ 114 million annually. Brazil exports annually US $ 68.35 million of that product, but trade between the two countries is still not maximized. For CNA, this situation can be explained, in part, by high tariffs applied to Brazilian natural honey: 25.5%.

The study identified that 20.7% of Brazilian agribusiness products suffer from Japanese tariff peaks. For selected products in the study, 1/3 of the tariffs exceed 30% of the value of imports, and these rates can reach more than 100% in some cases. Protein concentrates and textured protein substances are the most severe case, where the tariffs applied by Japan can reach 374.41%.

Another sector that faces obstacles due to tariff peaks imposed by Japan is livestock, including offal, as tongues and intestines of bovine and swine, and processed meats of turkey, chicken and bovine. For bovine offal the rates vary from 12.8 % to 50%.

In regards to hides and skins, Japan was a great importer between 2012 and 2014, but the country also exported those products. To CNA, in order to protect their industry, Japan maintains tariff peaks to ten of their hides and skin products and their byproducts.

Japan is an important market to Brazilian agribusiness. Therefore, CNA recommends the conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement with Japan.

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