

SOYBEAN EVOLUTION IN BRAZIL

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The first soybean seeds entered Brazil in 1882, by the Bahia State (Northeast Brazil), coming from the USA. Because the cultivars were not adapted to low latitudes and high temperatures, production failed. Later on, it moved to south Brazil where, until 1960, only American cultivars were grown.

The soybean “boom” started in the 1960, when in one decade the cropped area increased 5.3 fold (171,000 ha in 1960 to 906,000 ha in 1969). From 1970 to 2011, the grain production increased 5,000 % (1.5 million tons to 75 million tons) and yield increased by 172%.

In that same period, soybean started moving slowly from the South to the Middle-West, especially in new cultivars adapted to low latitudes and high temperatures and because of the “domestication” of the low fertility soils of Brazilian Cerrado, achieved by liming and mineral fertilization. Today, more than 60% of soybeans come from this region of the country. It is expected that the growth in that region will continue in the coming years, especially because of the available land from degraded pastures.

Brazil is the second largest soybean grower, behind the USA, and its production represents 28% of the global production (264 million tons). The high prices and strong demand keep increasing the cropped area and production. For 2020, the expected production is 105 million metric tons, when Brazil will assume first place among the producing countries. Brazil represents the best competitive advantages (abundant land available, favorable climate, high technology, innovative and well prepared farmers, among others). The major constraints are related to infrastructure, especially roads, storage facilities and ports.