

Brazil Starts Plan to Eradicate Slave Labor

Contributed by Irene Lôbo
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The implantation of the Plan for the Eradication of Slave Labor, announced yesterday by Brazil's Ministry of Agrarian Development (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário, MDA) and the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária, Incra), will start in two municipalities and one region and later be extended to the rest of the country.

The municipalities that were chosen are Açailândia, in the state of Maranhão (MA), and Barras, in the state of Piauí (PI). The region that was chosen comprises nine municipalities in the south of Pará. The areas were selected because they are where the largest numbers of duped workers are concentrated.

"What we are providing, therefore, are better and stronger prevention programs, offering income and work quality alternatives to these populations. Without, at the same time, neglecting the development of rehabilitation programs that permit rescued workers to gain a livelihood," said the Minister of Agrarian Development, Miguel Rossetto.

The inauguration of the Plan for the Eradication of Slave Labor is part of a national plan launched by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in March, 2003, to eradicate slave labor in the country by the end of 2006.

Data from the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT), an organization connected to the Catholic Church, indicate that there may be as many as 25 thousand rural workers in various Brazilian states subjected to working conditions that resemble slavery. The highest incidence is in the Northern region.

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