

Brazil Allows Farmers to Use Non-Certified GM Soybean Seeds

Contributed by Shirley Prestes
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Brazil's federal government extended permission to use non-certified soybean seeds for the next growing season, in 2005/2006.

The decision was announced by the Minister of Agrarian Development, Miguel Rossetto, at the International Exposition of Animals, Machinery, Implements, and Agricultural Products in Rio Grande do Sul (Expointer, 2005), in Esteio, in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre.

Rossetto informed that the decree will be signed by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva by the end of this week.

This decision, which favors 150 thousand small farmers in the state, eliminates the need for farmers to prove the origin of their seeds when they request loans from the National Family Farming Program (Pronaf).

Rossetto affirmed that the government chose this solution, "because the quantity of registered seeds is insufficient to supply more than 30% of the estimated area of cultivation for this year's harvest."

He pointed out that the possibility of extending the period for using unregistered transgenic seeds is conceded in the Biosecurity Law.

The Federation of Agricultural Workers of Rio Grande do Sul (Fetag) says that only 10% of the state's farmers possess certified seeds. The Federation was urging soybean producers not to pay debts that have yet to be negotiated.

On Tuesday, August 30, the president of the Fetag, Ezídio Pinheiro, said at the Expointer that the lack of credit for farmers who don't have certified seeds "justifies drastic actions to press for resources to be made available."

The Expointer, the biggest agribusiness fair in Rio Grande do Sul, began on August 27 and will run through September 4.

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