

Coffee Producers Gather in Brazil for World Conference

Contributed by Lourenço Melo
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The Second World Coffee Conference, the most important international gathering of world coffee producers, took place this weekend in Salvador, in the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia.

The event was opened on Saturday, September 24, by Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply, Roberto Rodrigues.

The agenda of the conference, which was sponsored by the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture in conjunction with the International Coffee Organization, covered topics related to production and the market.

The presidents of Colombia, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, and El Salvador, Elias Antonio Saca, were invited to attend, along with dozens of delegations from other producer countries.

Around 1000 people participated in the conference, half of them Brazilian coffee planters and technical specialists. Brazil is the world's largest coffee exporter, with an estimated crop of 33.3 million 60-kilogram sacks for the 2005-2006 agricultural year.

The secretary of Production and Agro-Energy in the Ministry of Agriculture, Linneu Costa Lima, contends that Brazil "must maintain or surpass its current 40% share of the world coffee market."

Data from the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture (CNA) reveal that coffee production generates US\$ 90 billion in business around the world and that global consumption will amount to 119 million sacks in 2005, while production is expected to attain 105-110 million sacks. International coffee stockpiles currently stand at 20 million sacks.

"World coffee consumption should reach 146 million sacks per year in 10 years. Brazil will have to furnish 60 million sacks in order to maintain its market share," observes Costa Lima.

He recalls that coffee production is one of the world's most important activities in terms of job creation. "8.5 million people in Brazil depend on coffee, directly or indirectly. In Bahia state this segment corresponds to 250,000 people." According to the CNA, 25% of Brazil's coffee producers are engaged in family farming.

The Brazilian Agricultural Research Company (Embrapa) unveiled a machine invented by its research nucleus to multiply cuttings of coffee and other plants with much greater hygiene, security, and economy. The equipment constitutes a bioreactor devised to produce plants semi-automatically, with monitoring and control of planting conditions.

According to Embrapa researcher, João Batista Teixeira, in charge of the development of the bioreactor, "plant cloning has shown itself to be an excellent option to accelerate the production of high quality hybrid coffee varieties with resistance to pests and diseases."

In commemoration of the conference, the Brazilian Post Office and Telegraph Company decided to launch a personalized stamp and a postmark alluding to the event. Distribution of the stamp, in a limited edition of 1,800 units, was to be solely for conference participants.

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