

## After US and EU, Brazil Opens Agricultural Research Unit in Africa

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Brazil's Minister of Agriculture, Roberto Rodrigues, announced Wednesday, April 26, that an office of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company (EMBRAPA) will be opened in Africa.

The announcement was made at EMBRAPA headquarters in Brasília at the opening of the Science for Life exposition, to commemorate the company's 33 years of existence.

"The idea is to create an EMBRAPA center in Ghana to act as propagator of technology to other African countries," the minister remarked.

He pointed out that EMBRAPA already has offices in the United States and the European Union (France).

During the ceremony Rodrigues also announced the creation of a National Agro-energy Consortium, for the purpose of encouraging and organizing research into and production of fuel alcohol and biodiesel. According to the minister, agro-energy "is world agriculture's new paradigm."

He explained that "humanity depends on a product, called petroleum, that will run out someday. A clear vision exists nowadays that what is needed is an alternative to petroleum and its derivatives, an alternative that is renewable, that any country can have, and, most of all, that is more environmentally correct."

He went on to say that the model developed in Brazil "is a model that the entire world is observing with curiosity" and has become "the grand project of developing countries."

EMBRAPA's African office will function in Accra, the capital of Ghana, at an estimated annual cost of US\$ 500 thousand. At the outset, two Brazilian researchers will be assigned to work there.

According to EMBRAPA's coordinator of International Cooperation, Sotó Pacheco, the African unit will be entrusted with the mission of adapting Brazilian technologies that can be utilized in African soil.

Opening an office in Africa is aligned with the Brazilian government's current policy of establishing closer ties of cooperation with Africa.

"The mission of the office is to facilitate and perfect the mechanisms and instruments used in technical cooperation between EMBRAPA and the African countries," Pacheco observes.

According to the coordinator, there is a growing demand for the transfer of tropical agricultural technology to the African countries. The chief partnerships involve the production of tropical fruits, cotton, rice, and cashews.

EMBRAPA already has two foreign laboratories, one in the United States and the other in Europe (France), charged with developing cutting edge technology. The African office, unlike the two laboratories, will be oriented towards development activities.

"Our physical presence will permit the development of projects that can function as showcases for EMBRAPA technologies adaptable to the African environment," Pacheco affirms.

The office will serve all of Africa, with an emphasis on the continent's Portuguese-speaking countries. Brazil also expects to reap benefits from the enterprise.

"We will be able to avail ourselves of native African genetic material, such as the gene stock of forage plants. We will be able to exchange this material, bring it to Brazil, and integrate it with our agricultural and livestock system," Pacheco foresees.

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