

## Brazil Wants to Be a Biotech Powerhouse in 15 Years

Contributed by Marina Ramalho  
Tuesday, 20 February 2007

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, earlier this month, launched a new development policy that aims to make Brazil a world leader in biotechnology within 15 years. The policy aims to encourage companies and scientists to approach one another, and establishes initiatives making it attractive for scientists to focus on biotechnological innovation.

The policy foresees private and public investment in the biotechnological industry reaching US\$ 4.8 billion over the next ten years.

"We will produce cheaper medicines and vaccines, industrial enzymes, more nutritive foods and we will improve our research," said Lula at the launching ceremony.

The policy will cover four priority areas: human health, arable and cattle farming, industry and the environment. It will also strengthen already available schemes for long-term funding of innovative companies.

For example, there is a special program to stimulate the employment of scientists by companies, and one launched to fund innovation research in firms.

Antonio Sergio Martins Mello, secretary of production development at the Development Ministry, said that "Brazil has 1,700 research groups dedicated to biotechnology. The policy will allow scientific knowledge to reach industry and generate biotechnological products."

Mello said reducing the gap between science institutions and industry is a goal for all research fields, but even more so for biotechnology because there is a lot of scope for improving production methods, and because biotechnology has great potential to accelerate economic growth.

The government has created a National Biotechnology Committee to coordinate the policy. Its members are drawn from the Civil House of the Republic's Presidency and the ministries of health, science and technology, development, justice, agriculture, cattle breeding and supply, environment, education and agricultural development, as well as other public organizations.

The committee will be advised by the Forum of Biotechnology Competitiveness.

SciDev.Net