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## Family Tradition Not Enough: Brazil Sends Its Dairy Farmers to School

Contributed by Geovana Pagel  
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The region of São Luiz dos Montes Belos, in the mid-western Brazilian state of Goiás, is becoming a reference in terms of workforce specialized in agribusiness. Ever since the establishment of the Milk Production Cluster (APL), in 2003, two technical courses in Milk Culture were created.

Two higher education courses were also started in the Goiás State University: Agribusiness Management and Dairy Technology.

Also implemented was a Technological Milk Center (CTL) at the University Farm School, in the city of São Luís de Montes Belos.

The establishment of CTL is being managed by the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) Milk Cattle unit, and its structure includes a milk farm-school scheduled for inauguration in September.

"The center is going to train milk farm workers and create new milk derivatives, such as cheeses and yogurts," according to Jesus Camargo da Silva, president of the Association of Milk Producers of São Luís de Montes Belos and Surroundings (AproLeite).

According to Camargo, courses specializing in agribusiness are the solution to one of the main problems facing producers: the shortage of specialized professionals to provide quality to the local production.

"We are still producing milk the way we learned from our parents, who in turn have learned from our grandparents. In order to grow, we need specialized technicians to help professionalize our production," said Camargo. He believes that the courses are one of the best results achieved to date by the APL cluster.

"We have given over 20 courses in rural settings, directly to producers. Our goal is to become the most organized cluster in the state of Goiás by 2014", he said.

Camargo explained that the cluster was created through articulations between the state government and other public organizations and institutions, the private sector, and support organizations such as the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae).

Presently, the cluster includes 5,000 milk producers, mostly from micro and small farms in 18 different municipalities, including São Luiz dos Montes Belos and the other 17 that surround it. Active workforce is estimated to exceed 12,000 people.

Currently, 424,000 liters of milk are produced daily. The aim is to achieve a 30% increase in milk production in the periods between crops in 2007, and another 30% in 2008, to cater to the demand from the local milk derivatives industry, which processes 715,000 liters of milk a day.

Some of this milk is brought in from other micro-regions. Another goal is to achieve, by December 2008, a 16% increase in gross revenues from the sector's industries.

To that extent, several actions have already been developed, including the technical assistance sector, since the lack of technical efficiency from producers is one of the main problems.

Another objective is to seek resources for implementing the actions devised by APL members for the development of the project.

According to Benedito Cardoso Laureano, development manager for Western Goiás, a branch of the State Secretariat for Development of the State of Goiás, at least three actions have already been defined, for which APL will shop for resources from the federal government.

"One of these actions is the implementation of a technical and managerial assistance service specially designed for the milking activity, an innovation which will benefit from the methodology of Educampo, a project of Sebrae that offers technological and managerial capacitation to groups of rural producers," he explained.

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