

Brazil: New Plant Will Almost Double Fruit Processing for Savannah Fruits

Contributed by José Antônio Cardoso
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The northeastern region of the state of Goiás in the Brazilian Midwest has already ordered its Christmas present. December will see the inauguration of an agroindustrial plant for processing fruits of the Cerrado (Brazilian savannah) in the municipality of Damianópolis.

The plant should revolutionize the work of the Association of Producers and Processors of Fruits of the Cerrado (Benfruc), which was founded by ten people in 2003, and currently has approximately 100 members in the municipalities of Damianópolis, Sítio d'Abadia, and Mambaí.

They are members of the pilot project for Sustainable Exploration of Fruits of the Cerrado, promoted since 2005 by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae) in Goiás.

"The agroindustrial plant will consist of a 154.3 square meter building, equipped with premises for processing and storage of 100 tons of Cerrado fruits per year," claims the project manager Marcos Fernando Passos, of the Sebrae Agribusiness Unit in Goiás.

The construction work, estimated at 99,000 Brazilian reais (US\$ 53,091), is currently undergoing a tender process, and will be built next to the GO-040, which is the highway exit to Sítio d'Abadia.

According to Marcos Fernando, the new plant should increase Benfruc's production capacity by 70%. Last year, the association processed approximately 30 tons of fruits.

"The association must cater to an expanding market, as ice cream manufacturer companies in the southeastern Brazilian state of São Paulo are showing interest in purchasing Cerrado fruit pulps," the manager explains.

Until December, members of the project for Sustainable Exploration of Fruits of the Cerrado will undergo various training courses in processing Cerrado native fruits, production of saplings of native fruit bearing species, best manufacturing practices, adaptation to the specific laws, package design and label creation, administration, marketing, and agroindustry management.

According to Marcos Fernando, 107,000 Brazilian reais (US\$ 57,381) will be invested in training, and a technical supervisor will be hired to design and execute the basic project for the agroindustrial plant.

"The Benfruc will be completely restructured through the training of its members, which in turn may influence the work of 250 other persons indirectly involved in the production of the Cerrado fruits," the manager says.

Presently, the Benfruc operates from a 41.7 square meter building, which was handed over by the president at the association, Giovanda de Souza Brandão. The small premises have capacity for 16 workers in each crop of Cerrado fruits, such as the pequi.

In the building, pulp is extracted from the fruits, and frozen in plastic one-kilogram bags, ready for sale. Giovanda informs that the main buyers from the association are three ice cream manufacturer companies: two from Goiânia (capital of Goiás), and one from Brasília (capital of Brazil).

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