
Brazil Earmarks US\$ 23 Billion for Science and Technology

Contributed by Carla Almeida
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Brazil has just launched a new science plan, aiming to strengthen the role of science, technology and innovation in sustainable development. Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, presented the four-year Plan of Action for Science, Technology and Innovation on November 20, in Brazilian capital Brasília.

The government will invest almost US\$ 23 billion, half from the Ministry of Science and Technology and half from the ministries of Mines and Energy, Health, Education, Agriculture, and the National Bank of Economic and Social Development.

Scientific institutions, parliamentarians and ministries have been discussing the plan since the beginning of the year. It has four strategic priorities.

The first is to expand and consolidate the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation, which includes increasing human resources in scientific research and improving research and educational infrastructure.

Promoting innovation in the industry sector is the second priority. Next year, federal agencies will offer approximately US\$ 267 million of tax-rebates and funds to companies to develop research and development.

The last two priorities are to support research and innovation in strategic areas, particularly biotechnology, biofuels and biodiversity; and to foster science popularization and education.

Luiz Antonio Rodrigues Elias, executive secretary at the Ministry of Science and Technology, said that the merit of the plan is to consider not only what must be done in the science sector but also incorporate the developments and needs of other sectors associated with science, such as health, education and agribusiness.

"This is an integrated and horizontal plan," he says. "Besides looking at the science dimension, it creates a system of articulated governance among the diverse ministries."

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