

The Offspring of Brazil's Runaway Slaves Can Help Your Insomnia

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Brazilian residents of former slave communities (quilombolas), who produce lime flour will soon exports their product to the US. The flour is being made in the Cidade Ocidental, in the outskirts of Brazilian capital Brasília.

In the second half of 2008, the first 20 kilograms (44 pounds) of the product should be shipped to an importer in the United States. "We are working on the final details of certification and bureaucratic requirements for export," said Oscar Andrades, who thought up the project that is benefiting over 200 families.

The lime was developed through technologies transferred by the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) and, according to its promoters, brings many health benefits.

"It helps fight insomnia, migraines and respiratory problems," explains Andrades. According to him, the flour may be consumed together with foods, without changing their taste, as it is 100% natural and does not include preservatives. It may also be used to make cakes and sweets.

Apart from lime flour, the community also produces passion fruit fiber, recommended for the control of diabetes, and aubergine fiber, used in the control of constipation and arthritis, and also banana fiber, recommended as a food supplement as it is rich in calcium and potassium.

"As soon as we have business possibilities, we are also going to seek certification for these three fibers," stated Andrades, who is a retired journalist and was always connected to the area of agriculture.

"In 2006, when I first learnt about passion fruit fiber, which reduced my diabetes levels, I also saw an opportunity in this area as well as a way of providing jobs and alternative income to quilombola communities, an old project that I finally managed to put into practice," he pointed out.

The first step was participation in courses at the Embrapa and at the Rural Extension and Technical Assistance Company (Emater) to learn more about the matter and to have access to technology. After that, Andrades purchased the equipment necessary to produce the fibers and flour and started a partnership with producers of raw material.

For banana fiber, Andrades also has other plans. He wants to include the product in the list of products used in school meals and also to produce macaroni, much more nutritious than the traditional product.

The problem is that the area of pasta and biscuits is dominated by multinationals and a product that costs 1/3 of the value of those that are already on the market may take a little more time to find its space," he explained.

Andrades' great dream is, after production of each of these products, for small agro industries to generate new income opportunities within the quilombola communities - made up mostly of the descendants of slaves who survive basically from agriculture, planting corn, raising chickens, pigs and, now, cultivating passion fruit, aubergine, banana and lime.

"We have already been sought by people interested in buying the idea, but what we want is not just economic compensation, but to understand the social needs of these communities. The guarantee that they may continue working and guaranteeing their survival by their own means," he says.

According to Andrades, the shipment to the US should capacitate brand Quilombola's to enter other foreign markets like Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates. "I have done very much searching on the Internet, in newspapers and magazines, and have identified an enormous potential for our products in the Arab market," he explained.

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