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ABRANGE fosters non-GMO food production in Brazil

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Leading the promotion of non-GMO food production in Brazil is the Brazilian Association of Non-Genetically Modified Grain Producers (ABRANGE). Established in 2008, ABRANGE aims to promote the market for GM-free products and ensure that consumers have the right to choose such products.

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ABRANGE has about 40 members, which includes non-GMO soybean producers and processors, cooperatives, and certification organizations. Founding member companies include Grupo Andre Maggi, Brejeiro, Caramuru, Imcopa, and Vanguarda, all major soybean processors and suppliers.

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Non-GMO exports growing

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Brazil is the world's leading producer of non-GMO soybeans, producing about 26 million tons in 2009.

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ABRANGE executive director Ricardo Tatesuzi de Sousa says about 40% of Brazil's soybean production is non-GMO with Matto Grosso, Parana, and Goiás the leading non-GMO producing states.

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Brazil's non-GMO exports are growing, says Mr. Tatesuzi de Sousa. "A lot of people are coming to us for non-GMO soybeans. Companies here are organizing logistics to have more non-GMO supply."

Brazil exports non-GMO soybeans and processed soy products to Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain, and Japan. Many of the exports, particularly soybean meal, are used for animal feed.

Producing large volumes of non-GMO soybeans is not difficult for Brazil. "We've been organizing all the logistics to guarantee segregation. It's easy for us to do that. It's a matter of organizing farmers, and having markets pay a premium to farmers," Mr. Tatesuzi de Sousa says.

Monsanto eliminating non-GMO seed choice

The challenge is that Monsanto Company is restricting access to non-GMO soybean seeds.

Monsanto, says Mr. Tatesuzi de Sousa, is abusing its economic power by removing non-GMO soybean seeds.

"If we had more non-GMO seeds on the market, we would have more non-GMO production. If you talk to farmers, they want to plant more non-GMO because they receive more return on their investment; non-GMO is more profitable," Mr. Tatesuzi de Sousa says.

Mr. Tatesuzi de Sousa says the percentage of Brazil's non-GMO soybean production has decreased in the past year from 45% to 40% due to the seed shortage.

To address this challenge, ABRANGE has helped organize a joint venture with the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) and the Brazilian Association of Soy Producers (APROSOJA) to develop new non-GMO soybean seed varieties.

Non-GMO standard

ABRANGE is involved in other initiatives to foster non-GMO production. They are helping to establish a standard for non-GMO production. "We will be the first country to have official technical rules for non-GMO production," Mr. Tatesuzi de Sousa says.

In addition, ABRANGE is asking Brazil's minister of agriculture to assign a specific export code to non-GMO soybeans.

These initiatives are in line with ABRANGE's mission to foster non-GMO food production. "If you ask anyone if they prefer GMO or non-GMO, it's easy; they prefer non-GMO, Mr. Tatesuzi de Sousa says.

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