Brazil: Implementing a maize development program in Sudan

Source: Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce

The Brazilian Agro-industrial Company (BAC), property of Brazilian businessmen Paulo Hegg and Gilson Pinesso, will assist Sudan in implementing its maize development program, designed to help the country attain self-sufficiency in chicken feed production, according to ANBA.

The BAC currently harvests 11,000 hectares of cotton, maize, sorghum and beans in Sudan, operating as part of the Sudanese Brazilian Agricultural Partnership (SBMAPA), which also involves the Sudanese Ministry of Agriculture and the Asbnaco, a company from the AAAID group.

The idea to create a larger project for maize came from Sudan's new Agriculture Minister, Ibrahim Hamid, after he saw BAC's harvests and was delighted at the maize crop. Sudanese people do not usually consume maize, but the country imports the commodity in order to provide feed for chickens. Hamid proposed the irrigated planting of 45,000 hectares.

According to Hegg, the minister wanted the planting to start in November, but there will not be enough time to arrange all logistics, such as machinery, fertilizers and labour. Therefore, the BAC will harvest 20,000 hectares of its existing crops, in June 2015, and another 25,000 hectares in November 2015.

Currently, none of the BAC crops utilize irrigation systems; all are rainfed. Therefore, maize crops, for instance, should be planted in the middle of the year. But Hegg says the company is preparing a business plan to seek financing and implement crop irrigation. This will enable the company to have two crops per year.

Sudan currently slaughters 100,000 chickens per day. The BAC's last maize crop was already purchased by one of the leading companies in the industry, according to Hegg. Prior to the maize program's implementation, all companies in the industry were called upon and agreed on purchasing local production instead of importing. Thus, the companies became partners in the project. The land to be harvested is yet to be defined. The BAC will be in charge of farming and profits will be split.

The BAC is also working to implement an agriculture research institute in Sudan and to develop seeds adapted to the local soil, via a project presented by the company to the Agriculture minister, who agreed to seek financing for it from Arab funds. Hegg has already contacted Brazilian research companies, such as Embrapa, the Minas Gerais Agriculture Institute (IMA) and Agro Norte for potential partnerships. He does not rule out asking the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) for financing, if need be.
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