First Cotton Crop in Sudan
16 December 2010

SUDAN - Pinesso Group, a producer in the state of Mato Grosso, is picking the first cotton crop in the Arab country.

Harvesting the first cotton crop of Pinesso Group in Sudan has already started. The experimental area of 400 hectares was sowed in June, with 10 different varieties of seeds, being two varieties Sudanese and eight Brazilian, according to anba.com.br.

The variety that adapted best to the soil and climate in Sudan was a Brazilian one and cotton productivity in Sudan should be above initial expectations. Cotton should generate 1,200 kilograms of lint per hectare, well above the 300 kilograms per hectare reached by local cotton producers.

Production was so strong that the area for cultivation will be expanded to 20,000 hectares in 2011.

"It was a great success. The country had not had a pilot project with such success for many years," said project coordinator Paulo Hegg. "We were greatly impressed. Productivity is very great for a pilot project and the quality of the fibre is too. It is very similar to Brazilian production," he said.

According to Hegg, the result was between four and five times greater than the average productivity in the region in areas without irrigation. "Now the government wants us to develop similar projects in irrigated areas," he pointed out. The technology, management and administration of the area were also in the hands of Pinesso Group technicians who are living in Sudan.

The trade of cotton is in the hands of a local partner. Next year the Brazilians will also take on this part. According to Hegg, there are already interested buyers in Pakistan, Banghaldesh and China.

Apart from that, the cost for production of cotton on each hectare in Sudan is about half of that in Brazil. The Sudanese can grow the product for $850 per hectare, whereas in Brazil it costs around $1,900.

The group also planted 100 hectares of soy, which generated between 1,800 and 2,000 kilograms per hectare, and should be expanded to 5,000 hectares in the next crop. "We identified that soy may also be grown. We tested six varieties and chose the one that presented the best production indices," said Hegg.

Agreement and Partnership

In March, Brazil and Sudan closed an agricultural agreement that may expand the Arab country's cotton production, currently at 80,000 tonnes a year, by three times. The agreement was promoted by the Mato Grosso association of Cotton Producers (Ampa) and the minister of Agriculture of Sudan, Elzubeir Bashir Taha, during a visit by a committee of producers from the Brazilian state to the Arab country.

Cultivation by Pinesso Group in Sudan is developed in partnership with Sudanese company Agadi, headquartered in the city that goes by the same name. Agadi is located in the south of the country, 400 kilometres away from Khartoum. To implement both crops, investment totaled $1 million, especially in the purchase of machinery and agricultural implements.

Incentives for the next crop are estimated at $37 million. Of this total, $17 million will be for the crop and the remains for investment in agricultural machinery and processing.

In the partnership, investment is in the hands of Agadi. Pinesso Group is responsible for the production technique and new technologies. The government of the African country participates with tax breaks on machinery and equipment and financing at 3 per cent interest a year.
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