



AGRO AMAZONIA

A GROWING BUSINESS





A GROWING BUSINESS

Farming makes a major contribution to Brazil's GDP and exports. Agri Amazonia's director Roberto Motta explains to Gay Sutton how the company is helping farmers increase productivity, build a safer workplace, and reduce their impact on the fragile and precious natural environment

Brazil is the world's largest exporter of soybeans



Farming practices in Brazil have been changing rapidly over the past 30 years, as internal and international demand for food products has increased. Today, Brazil is the world's largest exporter of soybeans, for example, while its reputation for producing quality coffee is legendary.

These exports make a significant contribution to the country's GDP. Balancing the demand for increased production with the need to protect the natural environment, however, places considerable demands on the farmer, and this is where Agro Amazonia is making a significant difference.

Launched back in 1983 when farming in the central Brazilian state of Mato Grosso was primarily dedicated to cattle rearing and livestock husbandry, Agro Amazonia began by selling and distributing pesticides, herbicides and veterinary products purely for livestock from a single facility in the state capital Cuiabá. But as the nature of farming began to change the company diversified into agriculture in 1987, adding crop-related herbicides, pesticides, seeds and fertilizers to the product portfolio, and then partnered with John Deere in 1997 to open a series of dealerships offering heavy farming equipment.

Throughout this period the company has developed a comprehensive network of sales and distribution outlets, opening new facilities throughout the state of Mato

Grosso and expanding into the neighboring states of Goiás, Tocantins and Mato Grosso do Sul. That rate of growth looks set to continue into the future. "Our business plan is to expand into more neighboring states," explained Roberto Motta, "and to double our turnover by 2015."

Today, the business is managed as three entities under holding company Sirius. Agro Amazonia has 29 sales and distribution centers across three states dealing in pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, seeds and veterinary products from global suppliers. Agro Amazonia John Deere comprises 9 dealerships across Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. The third strand of the business is Amazôniaphos, which manufactures animal nutrition products, selling them into Mato Grosso and the state of Pará.

Customer service lies at the heart of Agro Amazonia's success in building a strong customer-base. One of its primary services is aimed at boosting productivity and crop yields. "We have a team of highly trained engineers and agronomists operating in all crop growing regions. Through them we are able to provide our customers with analytical and advisory services," Motta continued. "Our agronomists, for example, visit our major clients on a regular basis to analyze the soil and the crop development as well as any pest problems. The objective is to spot problems and solve them quickly, to ensure a high crop yield."

Good health and safety practices are

90,000+
.....
Farmers trained in 2011



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Product demonstration

also high on the company's agenda, and these have been incorporated into ongoing relationships with the customer. "We provide an education program for all farm workers, training them in recognizing the hazards, handling the products safely and protecting the environment." The training is taken directly to the larger farms or to outlying community centers where workers can gather together from a number of local farms. The amount of training provided is increasing year on year. In 2011, the company trained over 90,000 farmers.

Each of Agro Amazonia's outlets includes a purpose-built storage facility designed

1,000

Trees planted last year in carbon offsetting scheme

specifically to store and handle hazardous chemicals safely. Incorporating highly specified ventilation systems and containment tanks, even leakages and spillages can be managed without contaminating the atmosphere, soil or water

table. Each facility also benefits from remotely monitored and controlled security systems as well as stringent security practices.

From these highly specified warehouses Agro Amazonia offers a sophisticated storage and delivery service managed through an ERP system which integrates stock management, billing, invoicing and CRM. "Many of our customers buy very





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large quantities of our products and use them in several applications during the season. We can store those products at our warehouse and deliver the right quantities to the farms exactly when they are needed,” Motta said.

From the farmer’s perspective this has clear benefits. Not only is it an environmentally safer solution, but products are stored in a secure facility and can be used immediately on delivery, greatly reducing the risk of robbery from the farm - a major problem for farmers in Brazil.

Brazil is, of course, host to some of the world’s most precious and endangered natural environments. Even the name Mato Grosso or ‘thick bushes’ hints at the importance of State, which lies south of the Amazon and contains the Pantanal – the world’s largest wetland prairie ecosystem. In recent years the Pantanal has suffered considerable degradation, and Agro

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“OUR BUSINESS PLAN IS TO DOUBLE OUR TURNOVER BY 2015”

Amazonia has been working consistently to reduce the impact of its products and operations on this fragile environment. “Way back in 1997 we launched a program for collecting empty herbicide and pesticide packaging, initially working with the National Institute for the Processing of Empty Packaging (INPEV) to construct a series of 29 collection facilities across the state,” Motta said. “Today, we collect empty packaging from the farms, and train the farmers in the importance of recycling, how to wash the packaging safely, and ensure it can’t be reused before collection.”

The company also operates a carbon offsetting scheme, whereby 1000 trees were planted last year, and that number is expected to increase this year. But ultimately it’s the safe disposal of waste chemicals and the prevention of spillage or leakage that is of greatest importance to environmental protection. “We therefore include all these issues in our training programs, even down to how to wash machines after use and dispose of the water safely,” Motta said. “We also advise on the construction of containment facilities, and the storage of machines away from rivers and water sources. But at the end of the



Herbicide

day, all we can do is advise.”

This environmental commitment extends well beyond the boundaries of the business. Twice each year, for example, every branch takes the message out to local schools, giving a presentation to the children about the importance of preserving the wildlife and forest, and distributing saplings for the kids to plant. “Last year, we did something quite unusual, and it’s turned out to be just the beginning of an interesting scheme.”

Motta continued. “Two cougar kittens were brought in to the National Environmental Protection Institute after their mother died in a fire near Cuiabá. The problem was that the Institute only had a small cage in which to house them and can never release them back into the natural environment. So we have helped build a comfortable, safe and secure enclosure for them. We’ve also begun building two further enclosures which the Institute can use for any animals or birds that are brought in.”

Although the company has never sought formal recognition for its contributions to the environment, it has received a variety of national and international accolades including the Environmental Respect Awards program three times, and the Mérito Fitossanitário award from

the National Association of Pesticide Distributors (Andef), for environmental education achievement in Brazil several years running. In addition the company has been nominated 10 times by Brazilian Exame Magazine as one of the 150 best companies to work for in Brazil – the only company in its business category ever to be nominated.

Alongside the focus on growth over the next few years, the company is continuing its commitment to ethical business practices, customer service and environmental best practice. **BE**

“WE HAVE A TEAM OF HIGHLY TRAINED ENGINEERS AND AGRONOMISTS OPERATING IN ALL CROP GROWING REGIONS”

For more information about Agro Amazonia visit: www.agroamazonia.com.br



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