

## Brazil: Future Farm of the Planet?

Hungry? Want to devour a monstrous meal of **chicken, pork, beef, orange juice, soybeans, coffee, corn, bananas**, and chocolate [**cacao & sugar**]? Scoop it out of your **iron** skillet while wiping your saliva with a **cotton** napkin? And afterwards... relax with some **tobacco** and a drive in your **ethanol**-powered auto?

Ahh...feel good? *Lindo maravilhoso!* Feel... Brazilian?

You will. By 2020 the South American behemoth could easily be the world's leading exporter in each of those fourteen items, according to the OECD-FAO's forecast of 40% overall growth in Brazilian agriculture. That astounding acceleration surmounts all other nations.

Brazil's recent success is inspiring to technoproggressives because the Portuguese-speaking nation is governed by a democratic socialist "Worker's Party" that truly cares for the poor, offering services like "People's Restaurants" that feed 12,000 daily at the price of 50 cents per meal. Infant mortality - an accurate indicator of impoverishment - has also been reduced in many areas of Brazil by as much as 50%. (see wired.com link at the end of this article) Brazil's Worker Party currently offers the most liberal/enlightened agenda of any nation aspiring to Super-Power status.

My personal forecast - shared by numerous other bloggers - is that if China and India are crippled by water shortages, Brazil could become *the world's wealthiest nation* by 2040 (its current economy has 8-9% annual growth).

### Here's why:

Brazil is blessed with natural resources as enormous as the Amazon and largely untapped. Thirsty? It's got one-third of the world's fresh water reserves - as much renewable water *as all of Asia*, with shocking potential for hydroelectric power. Lumber? An estimated \$600 billion value. Minerals? Rich deposits, especially iron ore. Oil and gas? A gargantuan field recently was discovered offshore, containing perhaps eight billion barrels.

Agricultural Land? Take a deep breath, farmers. Brazil is presently using only 12% of its potential arable soil, and it still has *more virgin territory than anywhere else on earth*. The US Department of Agriculture estimates that there remains an additional 420 million acres that could be developed for farming. That's an area bigger than the sum of France + Belgium + Nigeria, or Alaska + Indiana.

Digest these stats on Brazil's agricultural exports, drawn primarily from 2007 & 2005 reports:

**Chickens:** 1st in the world, 41% of export market share  
**Coffee:** 1st in the world, 27% of export market  
**Orange juice:** 1st in the world, 82% of export market  
**Soybeans:** 1st in the world, 38% of export market  
**Beef:** 1st in the world, 26% of export market  
**Sugar:** 1st in the world, 39% of export market  
**Ethanol:** 1st in the world, 52% of export market  
**Tobacco:** 2nd in the world, 17% of export market  
**Bananas:** 2nd in the world, behind India  
**Pork:** 3rd in the world, 15% of export market  
**Corn:** 3rd in the world (behind USA and Argentina)  
**Black pepper:** 3rd in the world (behind Vietnam and Indonesia)  
**Cotton:** 5th in the world (USA is the leader)

In the next decade, Brazil won't catch world-leading Kazakhstan in flour production, or rice queen Thailand, or California in its nutty expertise (almonds, pistachios, walnuts). But with its vast land reserves, Brazil has mind-boggling potential that is difficult to overrate. To postulate where Brazil might be heading, observe its recent history: the total value of its crops shot up 365% from 1996-2006 (\$23 billion to \$108 billion). Beef exports increased 176% from 2001-2007; soybean production doubled from 1989-2004.

Brazil will out-farm all competitors in the future, for reasons already mentioned, plus four more:

- 1) Favorable weather: no hurricanes or tornadoes, rare droughts, steady sunshine and rain.
- 2) World-class scientists. They transformed the acidic plains by adding tons of lime, plus they developed a tropical soybean, an ideal grass for their cattle, and efficient "no-till" techniques.
- 3) Lower population density than competitors (59 per square mile, compared to India's 936, China's 360, EU's 112, and USA's 82) ensuring that fertile soil won't be paved over by human sprawl.
- 4) Adept leadership. Outgoing President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva will probably be replaced by his chief of staff, Dilma Rousseff, who will continue the fertile economic policies.

Examining this data, I believe that the OECD-FAO Outlook's anticipation of 40% growth in the decade is extremely conservative. My prediction is that Brazil's agricultural expansion will double that figure, in the 75-85% range. If this seems hyper-optimistic, just remember: anyone fifteen years ago who correctly envisioned Brazil's farm future would have been lavishly ridiculed, even though they were as right as I am.

### REFERENCES

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