



Bulletin – Soja Plus Program

After launching the Soja Plus Program last April, ABIOVE received several messages of support for the initiative, requests for information and questionnaires. We believe this is a natural result because we are dealing with a process under construction, a proposal that will gradually be structured with the participation of all interested parties, and which will innovate by emphasizing the social-environmental management of the farms. The objective of this bulletin is to clarify the main doubts.

The Soja Plus Program was conceived to contribute to the environmental and social management of Brazilian soybean-producing properties. Sustainability is a part of ABIOVE's commitments and a basic agenda for this sector in Brazil. When it was launched, the objective was to generate a continuous improvement process, developing values and attitudes that are coherent with the precepts of sustainability on a national level. It is complementary to other environmental initiatives and does not have any adverse effects. It will prepare the rural producer for any certification systems by means of technical assistance and will stimulate the intensification of good agricultural and social practices on the rural property. The Program is suitable for Brazil's reality, meeting the wishes of the national and international consumer not to use products that degrade the environment, and was structured to be voluntary, participative, transparent and verifiable.

After all, is this a unilateral action by the production chain, without any transparency? Not at all. The Soja Plus Program is a multiparticipative initiative and will depend on soy farmers and cooperatives, civil society organizations, associations, companies, universities, and research and rural extensions institutions. Some partners, both NGOs and companies, were or are being invited to take part. There is space for those who wish to become associates; they will be welcome and able to take part in specific work groups. It should be emphasized that the program is transparent and will be submitted to public consultations, during which both members and non-members of the Program may give their opinion. Field tests will serve to identify weaknesses in the management of the properties and to validate established requirements.

For this reason, a pilot project was developed for three test fields, which were accompanied by an international certification company. A further 15 field tests will be made shortly, all using the common requirements of certification processes, especially compliance with the strict Brazilian environmental and social legislation. These tests work as a diagnosis that identifies the difficulties faced by soybean farmers were they to be submitted to any certification process.



The technical assistance and training program for soybean farmers is directed towards healing the big difficulties found in the field tests, those that are common to the majority. In parallel, it will also orient producers as regards specific problems of lesser relevance. All this material will serve as a subsidy to the work groups.

The Program is fully in conformity with the objective of the Soy Moratorium to increase the soy farmers' awareness of the need to comply with Brazil's environmental and social legislation and to provide for the environmental registration and licensing of the rural properties. This is an obligatory condition for joining the Program, and thus will collaborate with the improvement of governance.

The Soja Plus Program does not intend to replace the Soy Moratorium, a commitment undertaken by ABIOVE and ANEC, in partnership with NGOs since the beginning, to inhibit soy crops in areas of the Amazon Biome deforested after June 2006. The 2010 monitoring used a new, even stricter methodology, covering a much larger area than that of prior years and those results will be announced shortly.

In comparison with other countries, Brazil has a much stricter and far-reaching legislation to conserve high-value areas. Over 33% of the Amazon region is protected by conservation units, national parks, indigenous reserves, etc., in which agricultural production is prohibited. Several state governments are developing and implementing the participative Economic Ecologic Zoning.

When complying with the environmental entity's registration, the soy farmer submits for approval by environmental authorities a specific project for each farm, clearly identifying the conservation of native vegetation APPs (Areas of Permanent Preservation), such as the margins of water courses. Indicating the farm's Legal Reserve is also obligatory and, in the Amazon Biome, this can reach 80% of the total property, which guarantees preservation of the property's HCVA's.

The audit activities developed by the properties that wish to meet the Soja Plus Program's requirements will be made by independent, competent companies, with the objective of verifying the consistency and performance of good agricultural practices and social-environmental treatment by the participating rural properties.



In this way, ABIOVE reiterates its conviction that Brazilian production, one of the most efficient in the world, can respect the environment. By proposing an inclusive process that is open to players interested in stimulating sustainable development, the sector believes in a purposeful contribution that leads to a strengthened and respected agribusiness.

May 13, 2010, ABIOVE – Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries