



SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN COCOA PRODUCTION

A turn around in the fortunes of farmers hit by Witches' Broom Disease.

Farmers are moving rapidly towards sustainability by taking part in The Phoenix Project, which is aimed at professionalizing **the cocoa growing sector** in Southern Bahia in Brazil.

The region experienced a significant drop in cocoa production due mainly to the fungal infection Witches' Broom. The inability of farmers to reinvest to improve crops has led to further reductions in production. Lack of knowledge and access to information has made the situation worse. Research has shown that technical solutions to the disease exist, but that they must be applied rigorously and with discipline.

Witches' Broom Disease of cocoa is caused by a fungus. It is a serious disease with yield losses of up to 90 percent or more. The fungus is native to the Amazon and is now present in most of the cocoa growing regions in the Americas and the Caribbean. Symptoms include the formation of multiple small shoots from flower clusters and branches (called "witches' brooms"). These result in the early death of cells and tissue. Pods can become infected up to about 12 weeks of age. They are destroyed, or they ripen prematurely resulting in smaller or no beans.

The project introduced a new technology package by adopting a step-by-step approach:

- Creation of a think-tank of representatives from AIPC, (Cocoa Processing Industry Association).
- Training of administrators and technical staff in all areas of the project.
- Selection of farmers and field plots.
- Setting up of contracts.
- Training of farmers on the use of the technology package.
- Supply of inputs and equipment.
- Ongoing coaching and monitoring during field activities.

THE TECHNOLOGY PACKAGE
Establishment of the area perimeter, use of fertilizer (N), counting of plants, creation of greenhouses, soil analysis, leaf analysis, soil correction - lime to regulate pH and gypsum to deepen the roots, herbicide and insecticide application. Establishment of a plantation, banana tree planting to create shade for seedlings, use of soil fertilizer (NPK) - macro-nutrients and leaf fertilizer - micro-nutrients & fungicide, shade correction, formation and maintenance pruning, grafting of old and unproductive trees.

Significant outcomes have already been seen although the project is only half way through its four year term. In some cases productivity has increased by 70%, resulting in some farmers already making a profit. These results were achieved with existing trees. Replacement of old trees with resistant varieties and higher density planting will significantly increase production in the future.



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The success of the project has been as a result of the seriousness of the participants, the constant monitoring and the fact the goods rather than money was given. Farmers were expected to pay 15% of input costs. The success of the new technology package has been a natural motivation.

It is the intention to produce training materials and practical guidelines as part of an impact study at the end of the project in 2012.

Edvaldo Sampaio's book 'Realizacoes de um cacauicultor', details the technology package and practices. These form the methodology on which the project is based. The book is available in Portuguese.

AIPC has already promoted two regional events and the project intends to organize regular local meetings with farmers, including visits to demonstration plots, in order to replicate the project faster.

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