



Science For A Better Life

Better quality
through continuous
improvement



food chain partnership



How it all started

Most Brazilian melons are grown in the northeastern states of Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará. Compared to the total area of 18,800 ha under cultivation in Brazil, these two states account for 16,300 ha. Melons are an important factor in the economy of the northeast, accounting directly or indirectly for thousands of jobs, and generating annual revenues of 307 million Reais (nearly 150 million USD). Melons are grown for both domestic consumption and export. Those melons exported to the EU need to fulfill strict quality, traceability, and coloration standards. Their cultivation has to comply with good agricultural practices to ensure that no residue exceed-

ance, waste, or safety issues occur. Simultaneously, the demands of international certification schemes such as GLOBALG.A.P. and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) also have to be met.

As a supplier of innovative solutions to Mata Fresca, Bayer CropScience proposed in 2007 to start out a project in order to improve the quality of melons offered on the domestic market. The two companies jointly developed the plan for Bayer CropScience's program called "More Quality Program" to support the local fresh fruit producers.



Who is involved

Mata Fresca Ltda., a 3,500 ha fresh fruit producer in this region of Brazil, was growing melons on around 1,000 ha of its land in 2012. Half of the crop was destined for export and half for the domestic market. The owner of the Mata Fresca farm, Paulo José O'Grady Cabral, and dedicated field, quality, and commercial staff are directly involved in the More Quality program, to be trained in depth in order to put it into practice in their operations.

Ceagesp, a Brazilian hub for the wholesale of fruits and vegetables to the domestic market supplying all the states in the country, has also played an important role in the program, in particular through monitoring the fruit, conducting analyses, and issuing reports on the cargo when it arrives at its respective destination.

Bayer CropScience Brazil has provided differentiated technical assistance to raise quality standards, helped in monitoring cargoes to increase the transparency of producer-wholesaler relations, offered fruit-sealing advice to ensure product identification and traceability, and helped to promote the sealed fruit through media activities and tasting sessions at points of sale with its "More Quality Program." Bayer CropScience's seed business, commercializing seeds under the Nunhems® brand, has supplied the variety Amaregal, which fits the needs of the producers.



What we aimed to achieve

Through the optimization of the application program, the most important goals of this project are to ensure that the melons reach the desired sugar content (°Brix) and fulfill the quality and sanitary standards laid down by the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture. These requirements are based on providing fruits that are free from pests and diseases, and with the minimum residue amount and level possible. The commercial goals include an increased market share, higher supplier penetration of loyalty, and increased association of the Mata Fresca name with high-quality fruit.

The comprehensive solution

Customized work proposals were drawn up on the basis of market expectations and the reality of work on the farm. Thus Bayer CropScience, responsible for the optimization of the application program, monitors its efficacy and the sanity of the crop in the field, provides market information to support the grower in the decision-making process of selling the crops, and trains the professionals within the partner's team, monitors the quality of the fruit before it is sold at Ceagesp, and communicates the program and its quality fruit at retail stores. Mata Fresca's responsibilities focus on following the seedling and application program agreed in order to offer high-quality fruit to the market.

A spraying plan was developed jointly to control the pests and diseases affecting melons in this region of Brazil. In the main, the use of the crop protection products Evidence®, Oberon®, Nativo®, and Connect® against mainly *Sphaerotheca fuliginea*, white fly and *Liriomyza trifolii* were applied. In addition, Bayer CropScience organized training sessions on agrochemical application technology, the safe use of agrochemicals, maintenance and calibration of spraying equipment, fruit packaging and standardization (of color, size, and further characteristics of the fruit), good practices in agriculture, and the commercialization of fresh fruit.

Particular emphasis was placed on sustainability measures, such as reducing water usage and drift during agrochemical application, compliance with statutory and other requirements, as well as occupational health and ethics. Last but not least, sugar content measurements and fruit health analyses were carried out and traceability guaranteed through the use of field books. With the number printed on the program's seal on the boxes the consumer can access online the information about when and how the fresh fruit was grown.



What we achieved

There has been a noticeable and measured improvement in the quality and taste of the marketed melons, as evidenced by the growing number of approved and sealed cargoes (20% increase from 2010 to 2011). The success achieved in sealing the fruit encouraged Mata Fresca to create a special brand for higher-quality fruit, which is nowadays recognized and demanded by the consumer markets throughout the country. A second crop has already been marketed under this brand label, which sells at much higher prices. The success of the project was based on excellent interaction between all those involved – from the melon grower to the retailers.

Next steps

This ongoing project is producing better results every year – both in the fruit approval index and in more hectares of melons planted by Mata Fresca. Besides this expansion in the cultivated area, there are plans to extend the program to other crops, such as watermelons.



left:
Antonio Domingos Duarte,
Sales Manager of Bayer CropScience Brazil

right:
Paulo José O'Grady Cabral,
Director of Mata Fresca

food chain partnership



Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for healthy nutrition. Food Chain Partnerships help to supply consumers with high-quality fresh produce, which forms the basis of a healthy diet. But such partnerships can only succeed if they involve every player in the food chain – from the farmer and processor to the exporter or importer and retailer. Bayer CropScience has the global experience and cutting-edge expertise to create a successful partnership at every level.



Bayer CropScience

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