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“Technological and Institutional Innovations
for Sustainable Rural Development”

Redesigning Public Agricultural Research and Development in Brazil

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Abstract

Agricultural research and development (R&D) has played an important and increasing role in the course of agricultural development all over the world. In Brazil public agricultural R&D was started with the creation of Embrapa at the beginning of the 1970s. Since then, Embrapa's contribution to agricultural R&D for tropical regions became well known worldwide. However, in the last decade, Embrapa's R&D focused mainly on agribusiness, neglecting the fact that other groups of rural society, like family farmers and peasants, who are responsible for a significant part of food production, would have different demands than that of large-scale commercial production units. The governmental change which took place January 2003 represents a reorientation of the whole economy: from a neoclassical model to a social market economy. After decades of R&D on the development on the “Green Revolution-Model” now Embrapa is challenged to open the focus of its work to give answers for demands coming from all groups of the Brazilian society involved in agricultural production, like tenants, peasants, family farmers and large scale commercial farms as well as to provide solutions to increase the workability of whole production chains of agricultural products. Therefore Embrapa's R&D agenda is being redesigned to match better the upcoming challenges, and will concentrate on ten priorities: 1) to prioritize technology transfer to family farms; 2) to consider more environmental questions in research; 3) to support the social programs of the government; 4) to assimilate the concept of multi-functionality of rural areas; 5) to contribute to improve the Brazilian agribusiness; 6) to improve capillarity and social control of R&D activities; 7) to build up institutional arrangements to support spatial development; 8) to develop and to validate practices of organic farming and agroecology; 9) to generate information and scientific results on impacts of genetic modified organisms on environment and human health; and 10) to consolidate the actuation of Embrapa as an ‘arm’ of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply together with the Ministries of Agrarian Development, Science and Technology, Environment, and specially, with the Extraordinary Ministry of Food Security and the Fight Against Hunger.

Keywords: Agricultural research policy, Brazil, EMBRAPA

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