

Some Assembly Required

Editor's Note: Next in a series from Iowa farmer Tyler Bruch whose family farms 10,500 acres in Bahia, Brazil.

Planting season is underway – we started with the popcorn on Oct. 28 and finished it a few days later. Only 13 days after planting it has already reached V-3. We're just starting to topdress it with urea and KCL, a process we will repeat two more times.

We started on the soybeans Nov. 7 and have planted about 750 acres in the last couple of days. The first beans are going on newer, less fertile soil, so we're putting on the fertilizer with the planter, which slows down our efficiency. We're putting on 90 units of phosphorus, and will come back and topdress the potash in a couple of weeks.

A week ago our planter and sprayer showed up from port. I was planning on having them to the farm about a month ago, but my definition of urgent and that of the fine people at customs in Brazil differ just a tad. The planter was just a bare frame, and we had to put the axels, carriages and tires on it so we could then unfold it and start assembly. It took us a week from start to finish and I pray that I never have to do another one.

It was a challenge to figure out how to run all the shafts, chains, bearings, etc. I would have given my left arm for some air wrenches. Now that we have it in the field we can average about 1,000-1,150 acres every 24 hours with it, another 5 days and we will have the beans finished.

The biggest problem we're running into is keeping ahead with the soybean seed. We're treating all of the seed with three different fungicides/insecticides, and the simplest way to do that down here is with a cement mixer. Two people, 100 kilos of seed every 3.5 minutes – a slow but effective way to get great coverage.

For the past year many have speculated that Brazil would have a 10-20% reduction in soybean acreage due to the tough financial shape many Brazilian producers are in. Now many say that the rise in commodity prices will bring more of those acres back into production. But you have to realize that the

planting season started in southern Brazil Oct. 1.

Making last-minute decisions to plant more soybeans or cotton due to the prices is not an easy task. Brazil doesn't have the support or organization to meet producers' last-minute needs in situations like this.

For example, this year all companies are telling producers that they will only be able to deliver 30% of the glyphosate ordered due to fabrication problems in the south. Most of the fertilizer companies are behind in deliveries and many producers have not received an ounce yet.

As commodity prices continue to rise, the basis continues to expand, severely hampering any opportunities to make a profit. The basis on beans is around \$2.40/bu. off Chicago in Mato Grosso.

My prediction is Brazil will have a 5-10% reduction of acres in soybeans across the board, but will have 10-15% reduction in final tons produced since many producers are planting this year without the proper inputs to produce maximum yields. ■

Tyler Bruch is president of Global Ag Investments and can be reached via e-mail at info@globalaginvestments.com

Our planter arrived one month late, in pieces. Then it took a week to add the axels, carriages and tires to the bare frame. I would have given my left arm for some air wrenches.



PHOTO: TYLER BRUCH