

## Big Jump In Our Acreage

*Editor's Note: Next in a series from Iowa farmer Tyler Bruch whose family farms 32,000 acres in Bahia, Brazil.*

The last time I wrote about Brazil was nearly five months ago, and a lot has changed and happened since then. Soybean harvest here finished up around the end of April; we had perfect weather at harvesttime, and only a few days of rain kept us out of the field.

The great harvest weather helped us get our beans out on time, and we hit about 10% above our production goals, pushing our yield just north of 49 bu./acre. It is normal to have a lot of hit or miss days while cutting beans in Bahia – since we're still in the wet season – but this year harvest was a breeze.

The flip side to the equation of a good soybean harvest is that the later-planted cotton in the region needed a couple of those good, late rains to help it completely fill the bolls. Lucky for us, those couple of rain days during soybean harvest provided the proper moisture to reach maturity. Our cotton harvest started on May 25 and finished around July 24.

**Cotton harvest is** in the heart of the dry season so rain delays don't exist, but repairs do. We actually had two custom cotton harvesters manage to crash into each other this year. That's hard to believe when the field they were in was 1,050 acres.

Last April I talked about the opportunities to expand and our intentions for growth. We have taken a rather large jump in acreage, and have been busy prepping new farms

for the 2007-2008 growing season. Last year, we planted around 10,500 acres and this year we'll plant around 32,000 acres. It is a large jump to take on that kind of area in one year, and the planning and organization of the increase will be crucial to our future success.

Our planting intentions will be roughly 21,800 acres of soybeans, 8,000 acres of cotton, 1,600 acres of field corn, and 600 acres of popcorn. We should be able to harvest our corn and popcorn in February, allowing us to double-crop with sorghum or edible beans.

Determining what to plant and how much of each crop is based on several key issues. Cotton can only be grown on soils with better fertility compared to growing corn or soybeans. It takes a much more balanced soil, whereas soybeans and corn can grow on more mediocre soils. Cotton is by far the biggest cash-generating crop of the three, however it costs

double the price of corn and three times the cost of soybeans to plant. With no crop insurance or federal crop subsidies, there's no room for mismanagement at any time.

**Many in the** ag world claim Brazil is going to increase soybean acres to the hilt, but rough ground is expensive to clear, and it doesn't yield that well for the first few years. I don't see any major moves for increased acres this year.

Fortunately, we were successful in hiring a U.S. agronomist to work with us full time here to help keep the wheels moving.

With luck we should be able to get the corn and popcorn planted in mid-October, that is if we can catch a few early rains and get it planted fast.

Beans will follow the corn planting and then we will finish with cotton. Our goal is to have everything planted by December 10.

I wrote my first article for the magazine about 14 months ago, but it seems like yesterday. Hard to believe, but here we go again. ■

We hope to have all 32,000 acres planted by December 10: 21,800 acres of beans, 8,000 acres cotton, 1,600 corn and 600 acres popcorn.



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