

The Vegetable Crops Agribusiness in Brazil: Current Status and Future Trends

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Agribusiness has a major importance for the Brazilian economy. In 2010, 22% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 36% of job opportunities and around 40% of total exports came from agriculture and associated activities. These results are mainly due to a well-organized research, development and innovation system, known as the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), comprising universities, extension services, private companies and public and private research institutes. NARS is led by the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa). With approximately 800,000 hectares in area and a revenue of US\$ 10 billion in 2010, the availability of vegetable crops in Brazil is around 100 kg . inhab⁻¹ . year⁻¹, although the consumption is still below World Health Organization recommendations. In the last decade a significant increase in the production and yield of vegetable crops was observed. As a matter of fact, whereas the area increased around 4% during the mentioned period, the production and yield increased 68 and 62%, respectively, indicating that new technologies, products and services were incorporated in the different production chains. Potato, tomato, onion, carrot, sweet potato, and watermelon are the most important vegetables crops grown in different parts of the country. Although many advances were achieved through innovation, different hurdles still pose significant challenges for the vegetable crops sector in the country. Breeding and the development of adapted production systems for vegetable crops in lower latitudes, also known as "tropicalization", the development of new solutions for protected cultivation, and the battle against postharvest losses, among others, are in the R&D agenda of different institutions in the country. Providing solutions for these and other important challenges that are still to be unraveled is of paramount importance for the continued success of the vegetable crops agribusiness in Brazil.