Use of certified seed reaches record percentage in the Brazilian crop; Mato Grosso ranks first with 85% on that score.
2009/10 season.

Nobody could have dreamed of such percentages back in 2005, when Brazil's National Technical committee on Biosafety (CNTBio) regulated and allowed the use of transgenic varieties for commercial crops, altering the genetic material scenario across the entire country. Mato Grosso ranks first in Brazil, with 85% of transgenic seed, followed by Paraná, with 75%. Rio Grande do Sul is lagging far behind all other states, with only 40%. The step forward is hailed by the president of Abrasem, Narciso Barison Neto. "It is very good from a sanitary, profound, management and profitability viewpoint", he observes.

He recalls that, 10 years ago, in South Brazil pirated transgenic soy was cultivated, smuggled into the country from Argentina. This greatly affected the production of seed in Rio Grande do Sul, but forced our legislators to come up with specific legislation, open up to technology and modernize the market of this input. "With the legal, genetically modified varieties (GMs), well adapted to the national conditions, the use of this genetic material has been constantly soaring", he explains.

Over a period of 6 years, about 350 commercial varieties were registered in Brazil utilizing the Roundup Ready (RR) technology, controlled by Monsanto, with a gene tolerant to the Glyphosate herbicide. From January to July 2011, Brazil launched 62 varieties, including transgenic and conventional, adapted to the different soil and climate conditions, with resistance to diseases and insects and other specific traits in line with different cultivation conditions and production systems. Three transgenic cultivars, resistant to herbicides and/or insects, are now undergoing their final tests.

It is important to recall that, in the past, 120 kgs of seed were needed for seeding one hectare. Now it is 50 kgs per hectare, thanks to the evolution of the technology used in the production of cultivars. Barison Neto maintains that the lower use of seed reflects the acknowledgement of the benefits brought about by quality seeds. He recalls that at the peak of the use of GM soy, not registered in Rio Grande do Sul, he cultivated only 5% with legally acquired genetically modified cultivars. "Now the producer fully understands that the seed makes a difference", he warns.

Aware of this reality, Rio Grande do Sul has been making gradual progress in the use of certified materials, which is expected to reach 45% in 2011/12. "The target is to use over 65% of conventional seed, like in 1999", says the president of Abrasem. Currently, more than 98% of the fields in the state use GM cultivars.