

Science and the Global Economy

Country Profiles



Strategic Priority 5 – promotion of UK interests in an open and expanding global economy

Country Profiles set out how the Science & Innovation Network has contributed towards SP5 under the 4 themes of activity – Science Policy, Science for Wealth Creation, Science Collaboration and Science for Public Diplomacy.



Country Profile

The Brazilian government has taken important science policy decisions in the past year. These include the approval of limited scientific research and therapy using embryonic stem cells and the cultivation and sale of GM crops. This indicates an awakened interest within government in scientific research.

Biotechnology continues to grow in this country, which has the largest bio-diversity on the planet. Another area of increasing importance is biofuels, where Brazil has been a front-runner since the 1970's. UKTI colleagues are looking at areas of possible co-operation between UK and Brazilian scientists in this sector. Brazil is a world leader in agribusiness research –

Brazilian scientists sequenced the coffee genome in 2004. This country also excels in cancer genome research. A satellite programme, developed with China, has allowed Brazil to enter the market of satellite imaging.

Science Policy

UN discussions on human cloning prompted lobbying of the Brazilian government to secure support for the UK's position in favour of therapeutic cloning, or at least for them to adopt a neutral position. As Brazil was discussing stem cell research in Congress, the government was at first reluctant to commit itself internationally. Active lobbying by the Embassy led to Brazil's support for the UK position.

Science for

Wealth Creation

Biodiesel is raising interest in commercial and R&D sectors. Brazil has increased production of this clean source of energy and recently passed a law allowing the addition of 2% biodiesel to conventional fuel. As a result, we commissioned a mapping exercise with the UKTI sector manager for energy to review the status of biofuels in Brazil to provide a clearer idea of commercial and scientific opportunities for the UK.

Together with the UKTI sector manager for Information and Communications Technology (ICT), we are organising a visit to the UK from the university spin-off CESAR, a

non-profit centre for information technology, research, development, and innovation in ICT. The aim of the visit is to establish R&D links, and set up partnerships for developing technologies and products.

Science Collaboration

Our work often involves responding to requests for information in areas where Brazil adds value. During the last year, our reactive reports covered plant genomics for the European Research Area, surplus human tissue, use of pesticides, space science and cancer genetics. Proactive reporting covered Brazilian science policy issues and events, such as the sequencing of the coffee plant and subsequent creation of a gene database.

In January 2004, the European Community and Brazil signed a scientific and technological co-operation agreement. Since then, Brazilian institutions such as FINEP (Innovation Agency) and the Ministry for Science and Technology, in partnership with the European Commission office in Brazil, have hosted a series of events to promote multilateral research partnerships. We have monitored these, looking out for opportunities involving Brazil and the UK.

In June 2004, the UK Embassy in Brazil invited Dr Sergio Rezende, president of FINEP, to spend 3 days in Cambridge and London visiting university research centres and agencies working to transfer technology to firms and innovation to business.

As a result of the visit, FINEP is now exploring specific areas of co-operation with the DTI.

Science for Public Diplomacy

In June 2004, Sir John Sulston, leader of the UK part of the Human Genome Project, visited Brazil. He gave a presentation on the ethical issues linked with

genomics. This was followed by a debate with two leading Brazilians, which attracted significant and positive press coverage, given the Brazilian debate on regulation of stem cell research and therapeutic cloning.

In April 2005 we took part in the 4th Science Centre World Congress, in collaboration with the British Council.

We produced a joint folder on science partnerships between the UK and Brazil, hosted a UK information booth with computer access to *Culture Lab*, and sponsored four UK speakers. It was our first participation in a big public diplomacy event.



Sir John Sulston (Nobel Prize Laureate 2002) visited Brazil in June 2004, and gave a lecture entitled "Genome: Ethics and Intellectual Property in Research" at the Brazilian British Centre in São Paulo.