

## Brazil announces plan to become world's granary

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has announced an initiative, involving an investment of 78 billion reais (\$49 billion), to make Brazil the "granary of the world", Spain's EFE news agency reported Thursday.

'What for others is a crisis, Brazil has to face as an opportunity to truly transform ourselves into the granary of the world,' Lula told a gathering Wednesday in the southern city of Curitiba.

Lula said the crisis over food shortages not only opens up opportunities for Brazil but also for other South American and African countries.

He added that to help those countries increase their agricultural production, Brazil set up offices of its agricultural research service Embrapa in Ghana and Venezuela.

'Embrapa, which made Brazil the main technological experts in the area of tropical agriculture, also can convert the country into a great exporter of agricultural technology,' he said.

According to the agriculture ministry, the plan, announced Wednesday, is aimed at increasing the 2007-2008 harvest by five percent from 144.3 million tonnes, according to official figures.

The last harvest was 8.4 percent larger than the one for the 2006-2007 season, which had been the largest in the country's history.

'At this time of food (price) inflation all over the world, we have to increase productivity and create conditions so that farmers know that what happened before is not going to happen, when they planted and wound up selling their harvest at very low prices,' he said.

Brazil, which is already the world's largest exporter of products such as beef, chicken, soy, sugar, coffee and orange juice, is one of the few countries that can significantly increase its cultivated area.

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