

Frost nips Brazilian coffee crop in bud

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Recent frosts in major Brazilian coffee growing states could reduce Brazil's total 1982-83 coffee production potential by 40 percent to 45 percent, from 27 to 30.5 million 60-kilogram bags to 15 to 18 million bags, according to a field survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

For the 1981-82 crop, Brazil's production currently is estimated at 32 million bags, or about a third of total world production.

The U.S. agricultural counselor in Brasilia reported the frosts in Minas Gerais—Brazil's largest coffee growing state—have reduced that state's 1982-83 coffee production potential by about one-third. This, coupled with previous reports of frost reduced production potentials for the states of Parana and Sao Paulo, form the basis for the latest estimate. According to this survey, next year's coffee crop potential in Minas Gerais has been reduced from an estimated 6.5 to 7.5 million bags to 4.5 to 5 million bags.

For the 1981-82 crop, Minas Gerais is estimated to have harvested a record 10 to 10.5 million bags, accounting for about one-third of Brazil's total production. Owing to the normal biennial cycle of coffee yields, the pre-frost production potential estimate for

next year's crop was expected to be down about one-quarter from the excellent yields achieved in 1981-82. Now, next year's crop is expected to be down by about one-half from the preceding year.

The USDA survey in Minas Gerais showed about one-third of the approximately 1 billion coffee trees in the state were damaged by frost that struck the area July 20-22. Frost damage was concentrated in southwestern Minas Gerais where three-fourths of the state's coffee trees are located.

About 45 percent of the 750 million trees in this region were affected by the frost in varying degrees. No frost damage was evident in southeastern Minas Gerais where the remaining one-fourth of the state's coffee tree population is located.

In the frost affected southwest Minas Gerais, 10 percent of the coffee trees were moderately damaged by the freeze. These trees will require about three years to fully recover. Thirty-five percent were lightly damaged and will require two years for full recovery. In contrast to survey results for the states of Parana and Sao Paulo (reported by USDA on Aug. 12 and 19), no trees in Minas Gerais were killed or severely damaged by the frost.

The 1982-83 Brazilian coffee crop

will soon enter the critical flowering stage of its development (Sept.-Dec.). Growing conditions during this period could further influence flowering and fruit set and thereby modify the production potential somewhat.

To accurately gauge the crop's development and level of cultural practices, the office of the agricultural counselor in Brasilia will conduct extensive field surveys in January, 1982 after flowering and fruit set and again in April, 1982 before harvest.

Despite the significant losses to the 1982-83 crop's production potential as well as the reduced potential over the next several seasons due to damaged trees, it is evident that Brazil's coffee tree replanting program following the devastating frost of 1975 has better prepared the world's largest coffee economy to cope with frost. Government sponsored replantings over the last several years have focused on a northward shift in coffee production out of Parana and into areas considered

relatively frost free.

When the July, 1981 frost struck, Parana accounted for only a quarter of Brazil's total 1981-82 output. In the past, Parana's coffee production represented 50 to 60 percent of annual output. In

contrast, Minas Gerais — where the bulk of new plantings have taken place — produced a record crop accounting for about one-third of Brazil's coffee production this year. This compared with only 9 percent in 1975.

Conservation tillage program

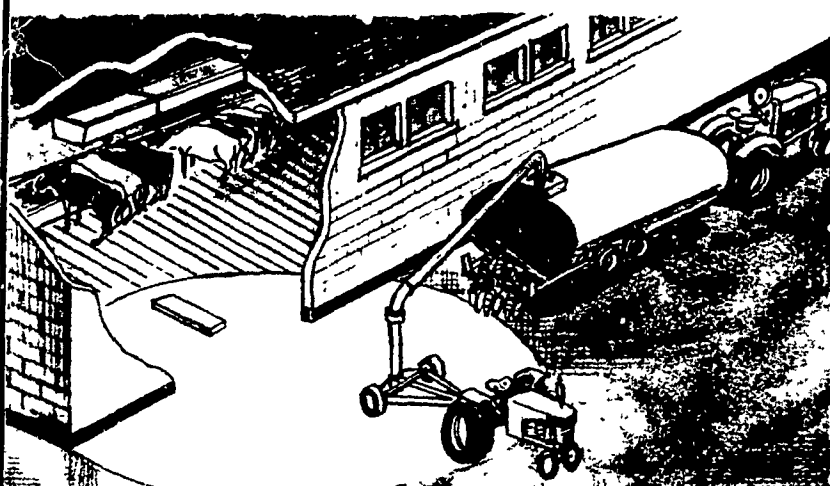
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