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Sustainable Soy production: What is the Dutch industry doing?

The aim of this information

This information has been prepared by the Dutch Task Force Sustainable Soy. This is an initiative of a group of Dutch companies involved in the soy chain that wish to make a contribution to the sustainable production of soy¹. This factsheet describes the activities of the Dutch Task Force and contains statistical information.

What is soy?

Soy is an annual crop that produces an edible bean with a high content of protein (40-50 percent) and oil (20 percent). Due to this high protein content and the favourable amino acid composition, soy is a good source of protein for human consumption (for example, in the form of tofu and tempeh). Soybean oil is one of the world's most consumed vegetable oils. The majority of the world's soy is used as cattle feed.

What is the problem?

In the past few years, the cultivation of soy beans in South America has increased considerably. In doing this, the South Americans are taking advantage of the rapidly rising global demand for soy for food, cattle feed and bio-energy purposes. However, civil society organisations and the business sector have increasing concerns about the ecological and social consequences of the expansion of soy cultivation. Important themes include the effects of increased soy cultivation on biodiversity (deforestation), the social consequences for the indigenous population and the sustainability of the cultivation itself (the use of pesticides, susceptibility to erosion, etc.).

The European Union: An important importer of South American soy

Ten years ago, approximately half of the EU soy came from South America and the other half from the United States. Now almost 85 percent of EU soy imports come from South America. Almost half of Argentina's exports go to Europe and this figure is almost 60 percent for Brazil. With the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the Netherlands occupies a special position in the import of soy in Europe. The country is responsible for 30 percent of EU imports of soy beans and 20 percent of EU imports of soybean meal.

¹ Participants in the Task Force are: ADM, Ahold, Bunge, Campina, Cargill, Cefetra, Cehave Landbouwbelaang, Friesland Foods, Nutreco, Plukon, Unilever, VION, Nevedi and the Product Board for Margarine, Fats and Oils (MVO). The Task Force is working closely with European sector organisations Fediol and Fefac. The Product Board MVO and Nevedi are jointly responsible for the secretariat.



Goal of the Task Force

A number of Dutch companies and organisations in the animal feed, dairy, meat and margarine, fats and oils sectors have acknowledged the need to arrive at more sustainable soy cultivation. To achieve this, they set up the **Task Force Sustainable Soy**.

The Task Force wants to play an active and initiating role in making soy production more sustainable. To find out how this can best be achieved the Task Force regularly consults with Dutch civil society organisations, producer associations and the Dutch government.

In consultation with civil society organisations such as Solidaridad, Cordaid, the World Wildlife Fund and IUCN Nederland (the World Conservation Union), the Task Force has decided that with a view to the international dimension of the soy bean trade an international approach to the bulk flow is the most effective way of realising the sustainable production of soy. The Task Force believes that the international Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) is the most suitable platform for this. Therefore, the Task Force aims to provide the RTRS with content-related and financial support.

Round Table on Responsible Soy

The Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) is an international platform in which producers, trade, industry, financial institutions and civil society organisations are working together to develop and implement sustainability criteria for soy cultivation. The RTRS is taking an international approach, one that is also being used for other agricultural bulk products such as palm oil, cotton and sugar cane. The number of members and therefore the support base for the RTRS is growing steadily.



EXAMPLES OF MEMBERS OF THE ROUND TABLE on RESPONSIBLE SOY as of March 2008

AAPRESID	ABIOVE
ABN AMRO	Ahold
Aprosoja	Bunge
Carrefour	Cehave Landbouwbelang
Cefetra	Fediol
Coop	Fefac
Friesland Foods	Fosfa
Fundapaz	Fundacion Vida Silvestre Argentina (FVSA)
Glencore Grain	Guyrá Paraguay
International Finance Corporation (IFC)	Grupo André Maggi
Imcopa	IPAM
Moore Foundation	Neste Oil
Nevedi	Nutreco
Product Board MVO	Rabobank
Solidaridad	Unilever
WWF	VION
Observers:	
American Soybean Association	US Soybean Export Council



Results until now

- At the 2006 Round Table conference in Paraguay, producers, companies and NGOs reached an agreement on the themes for which sustainability criteria must be developed for soy cultivation.

Sustainability criteria must be drawn up for the following themes:

Social themes:

- Employee rights
- Land rights
- Respect for small-scale and traditional land use
- Welfare of the indigenous population

Ecological themes:

- Protection biodiversity
- Use of water
- Soil fertility
- Use of herbicides, pesticides
- Impact on infrastructure

- In 2007 a Working Group has been formed to further develop the Principles and Criteria for Responsible Soy Production.
- In February 2008 the working group has reached agreement on two documents that can go out for public consultation: a first overview of principles and criteria and preliminary thoughts on a verification system.
- By March 2008 76 organisations and companies have decided to join the RTRS. It is expected that the number of members will further rise during the coming months.

Ambitions

It is the RTRS ambition to have criteria for Responsible Soy production, including a mechanism for verification thereof, ready by the end of the year 2008. Members of the Task Force want to play an active role in achieving this and ensuring the implementation thereof.

More information

- For more information about the Task Force Sustainable Soy, please visit <http://www.taskforcesustainablesoy.org> or contact:

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www.nevedi.com

- For more information on the Round Table on Responsible Soy, including the latest overview of members, please visit: www.responsiblesoy.org.

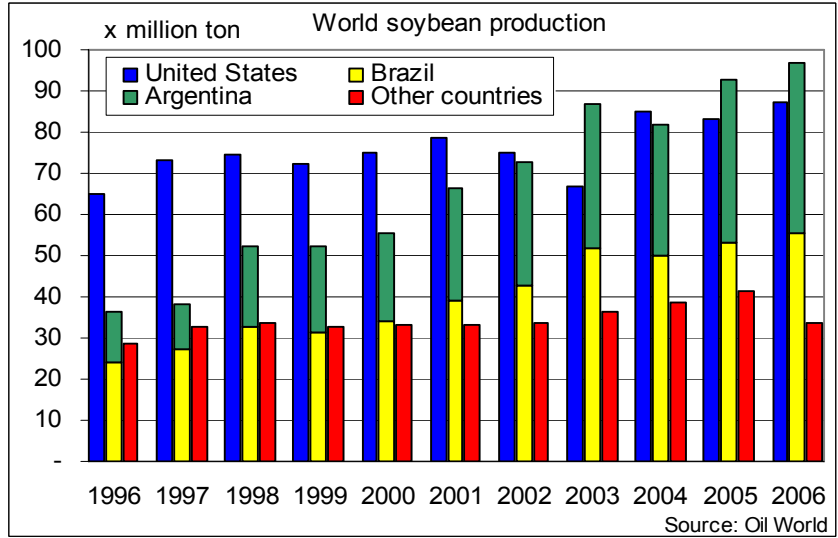
This information was compiled on 16 March 2008.



Annex Facts and Figures Soy Production and Consumption

World production

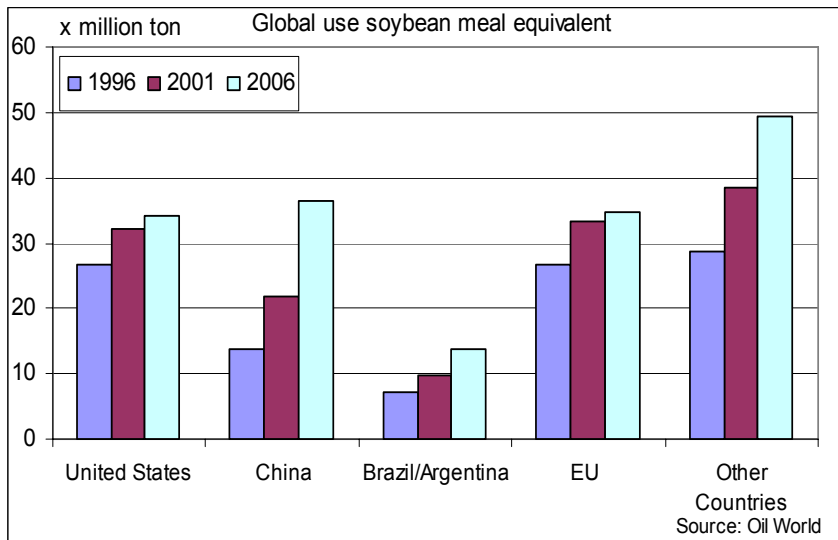
The most important producers of soybeans are the United States, Brazil and Argentina.



World consumption soybean meal

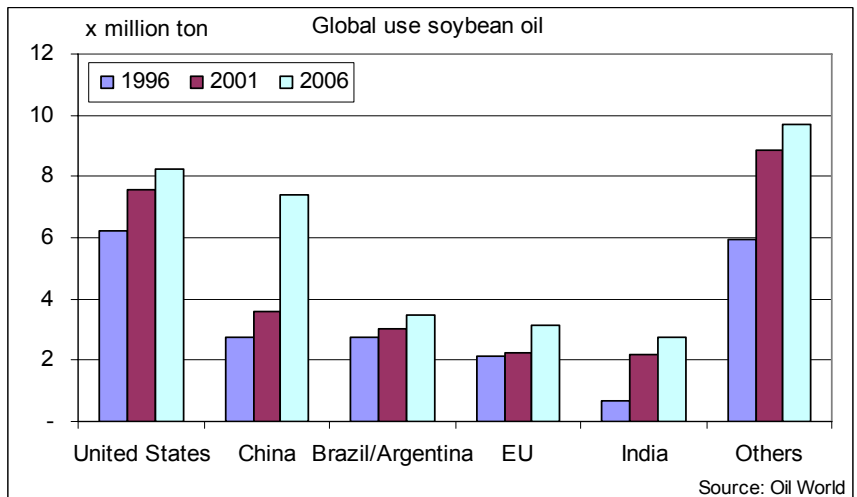
The most important consumers of soybean meal equivalent are the United States, the European Union and China.

The consumption of soy products is expressed in soybean meal equivalent. This allows the addition of beans and meal. The soybean meal equivalent consists of the amount of soybean meal and 80 % of the quantity of beans.



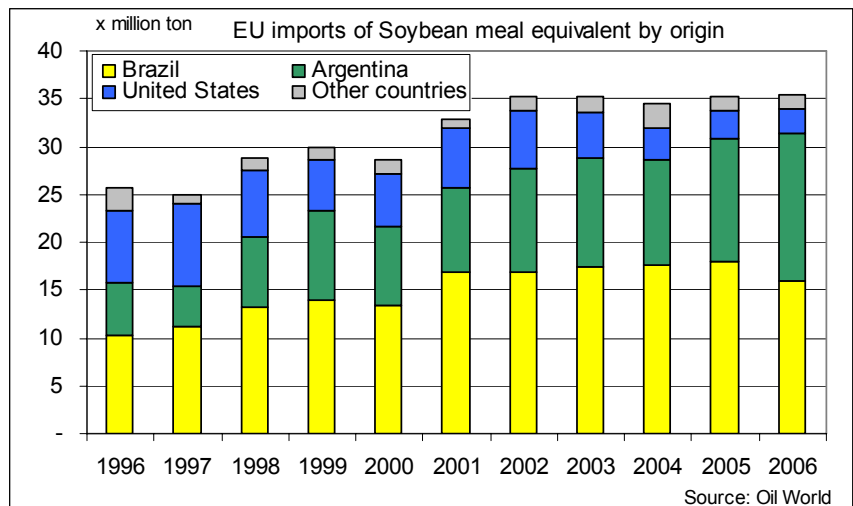
World consumption soybean oil

The biggest global users of soybean oil are the United States and China. The demand is growing fastest in China.



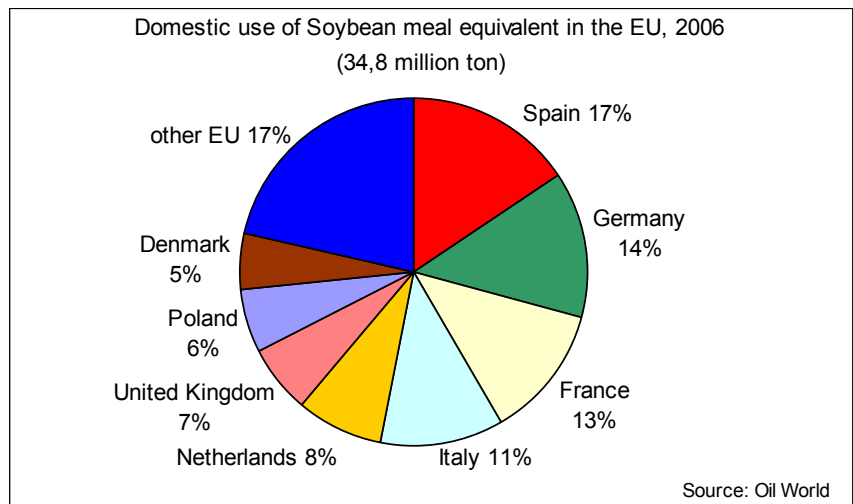
The origin of European soybean meal imports

Soy that is consumed in Europe is mainly imported from Brazil and Argentina.



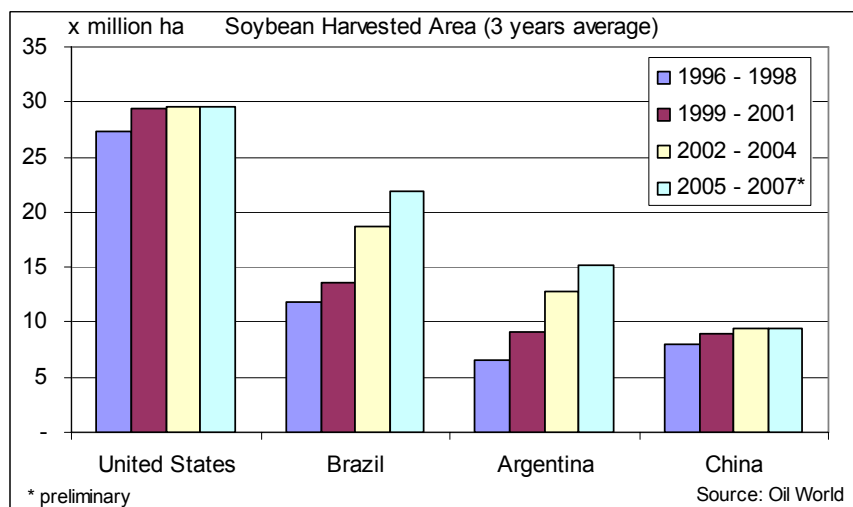
Role of The Netherlands

In 2006 The Netherlands imported 29 % of the total EU imports of soybeans and 18% of the total EU imports of soybean meal. However, only 8 % of the soybean meal equivalent imported in The Netherlands is destined for use in The Netherlands.



Acreage

The expansion of the acreage destined for soybean production mainly takes place in Brazil and Argentina.



More facts and figures on soy production and consumption can be found on the website of the Dutch Task Force Sustainable Soy: <http://www.taskforcesustainablesoy.org>

