

# brazil

Vilimar Bissoni  
Gaúcha do Norte  
Mato Grosso, Brazil



## Beyond the garden

Thirty years ago, “we referred to farming as working in the ‘garden,’” says Vilimar Bissoni. The work was manually intensive and equipment pulled by animals was generally the only mechanisation visible.

Bissoni, a 57-year old farmer from Gaúcha do Norte, Mato Grosso, Brazil, remembers how little his father’s farm produced – just enough food to feed each member of the family and maybe a little extra to trade for goods or farm animals.

The farm that Bissoni manages today is huge in comparison to the tiny garden plots of his father. “Today our farm produces enough food for two to three thousand people,” says Bissoni. This kind of growth over a relatively short period of time didn’t occur by chance. Bissoni and his brothers put plenty of hard

work into the farm and they embraced new agricultural technologies that increased productivity. Examples include using mechanised equipment, incorporating fertilizers and crop protection products, and planting better seed varieties.

New seed varieties that are better adapted to the local growing conditions have more than doubled yield. “We were cultivating soybean varieties that produced 25 to 30 bags per hectare, which we thought were excellent yields,” says Bissoni. “Now, we plant varieties that yield approximately 70 bags per hectare.”



Bissoni's maize crop has also benefitted from advanced hybrids created through biotechnology. The farm has planted Bt hybrids for the past three years and Bissoni wouldn't be surprised if in the near term 80-100% of their maize crop is planted with biotech varieties.

"There is no doubt it is easier to cultivate and it offers more security because you can choose the varieties that work best under specific weather or soil conditions," says Bissoni.

Bissoni understands the importance of being a steward of the land. Nutrient-rich, productive soils are essential to his success and to the success of future generations on the farm. Conservation tillage is widely used on the farm, which helps reduce soil erosion and maintain nutrients in the soil. "We talk a lot about preserving the soil," he says. "More and more, we hear agronomists talking about making sure rain stays where it lands, making sure that near rivers and bodies of water, there is at least 200 to 500 metres of vegetation so that the soil acts as a sponge and doesn't run."

Bissoni has certainly moved his farm beyond the garden. He attributes much of his success to the new technologies that have increased his land's productive capacity while helping to protect his land for future generations. As he looks over his land he concludes, "This is all due to improvements in technology."



**"We were cultivating soybean varieties that produced 25 to 30 bags per hectare. Now, we plant varieties that yield approximately 70 bags per hectare."**

improvements



**"We talk a lot about preserving the soil."**