

THE PRIME MINISTER IN BRAZIL: NEW APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN RESEARCH

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The Prime Minister's visit to Brazil in March 2009 included the announcement of important activity in the areas of science and innovation. The joint declaration with President Lula includes statements such as:

"The President and Prime Minister welcomed the excellent outcomes from the UK/Brazil Year of Science & Innovation in 2007/2008, which had led to a step change in scientific collaboration. They looked forward to the launch in 2011 of Brazil's Amazonia-1 satellite containing a British camera for deforestation monitoring and deeper collaboration on agricultural sciences with the opening of a Brazilian research laboratory in the UK. They emphasised the importance of continuing to build scientific collaboration to find ways to address global challenges and the need to support UK and Brazilian companies in their efforts to commercialise the results of their innovative research."

The fact that collaboration in science was highlighted in such fashion and in the context of overall UK-Brazil strategic partnership shows that UK scientific expertise can be successfully used to assist overall UK interests overseas. As the statement makes clear,

collaboration in science played a pivotal role in enhancing UK-Brazil collaboration in food, space and energy.

The establishment of a solid partnership in research with Brazil faced multiple challenges. First, the status of Brazil as a leading and emerging scientific power is not always clear in the UK. Yet, recent bibliometric research shows that the Brazilian science base was the fastest-growing in the world throughout 2007-8, as the number of Brazilian publications in indexed journals increased by 50% in this period. This is the most dramatic increase in the history of Brazilian science. These recent developments mean that Brazil now produces 2.12% of world publications. Last year's performance means that Brazil has overtaken Russia and the Netherlands in terms of research production, and is now the world's thirteenth largest producer of publications (up from fifteenth last year). If current trends continue, Brazil may gain one more position next year.

Importantly, the Prime Minister made reference to the need of using collaboration in science and innovation as a means of facing global economic challenges. Implicit in the statement is the idea that a solution to the global economic meltdown has to be export-led, and that innovation plays a crucial role in initiating an export-led recovery.



The UK-Brazil partnership in science and innovation has demonstrated that collaboration often generates opportunities for high-tech companies in both countries across the two markets.

Innovation activities in Brazil have focused on four priority areas: best practice in innovation management, the licensing of Brazilian technology through the UK, the licensing of UK technology through Brazil and support for UK spin-out companies wishing to enter the Brazilian market on the bases of shared IP. The exchange of best practice has allowed Universities, science parks and incubators in both countries to form networks in which commercial and research opportunities are circulated. The licensing of Brazilian technology through the

UK means that UK stakeholders now have preferential access to patents that were previously unknown and which were not adequately exposed to the international market. Meanwhile, solid collaboration in science and innovation has paved the way for UK spin-out companies to enter the Brazilian market through the formation of joint ventures.

Apart from outlining the overall status of UK-Brazil scientific relations, the Prime Minister and President Lula also announced a new collaboration programme on second generation biofuels. The programme will enable up to 15 Brazilian scientists to do research in UK Universities and laboratories on micro-organisms, plant genomics and enzymes.