

A sampling of the vegetarian delights at the 2005 World Vegetarian congress in Brazil. Photos by Adrian Abdool.

Interested in attending?

The next Congress will be held in the sunny seaside destination of Goa, India, September 10 to 16, 2006. For more information, visit the International Vegetarian Union's website at ivu.org.

- Cattle ranching, assisted by generous government subsidies, is the greatest single factor in Brazil contributing to deforestation (a 38 to 73 percent contribution to "altered forest area").

- Area of deforestation rose from 41.5 million hectares in 1990 to 58.7 million in 2000. During this time, Brazil has lost an area of forest twice the size of Portugal.

Demand for Brazilian beef has increased because it has a lower risk of mad cow disease, or Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). (Many countries banned beef imports from Canada and the United States after several cases of BSE were discovered in 2003.)

Even logging and crop production come nowhere near the damaging effects of beef production. Factors such as the elimination of foot-and-mouth disease, currency devaluation, and huge government subsidies have sent production and sales through the roof. But at what cost? Unless urgent action is taken, reports the Center for International Forestry Research, the Amazon region will probably lose an additional area the size of Denmark over the next 18 months.

Often we forget that eating plant foods is more than just a healthful diet and an animal-friendly lifestyle. Our dietary habits have a huge impact on the environment and this is where we can all make a difference. With these new environmental threats, Brazilians are beginning to sit up and take notice of the need to protect their precious natural resources.

Until recently, Latin America had little involvement with the IVU; however, the Vegetarian Union of Latin America was launched during the Brazil Congress and is already planning another meeting in Bolivia next year. Perhaps organized vegetarianism can wield some influence for environmental change in the region. **a**

Nutritionist and best-selling author Sally Errey presented at the 2004 WVC in Brazil. She wrote *Staying Alive! Cookbook for Cancer Free Living* (Hushion House, 2004) and *Rooibos Revolution* (Belissimo Books, 2005). myhappytummy.com.

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