Agroideal is a territorial intelligence system that helps leaders of organizations make strategic decisions and is one of the instruments used by Bunge in the company’s business planning. Since September 2017, Agroideal has helped improve the socio-environmental risk analysis of the company’s operation, an important aspect of aiding Bunge to achieve its sustainable expansion objectives in Brazil.

“At Bunge, Agroideal has never been a system restricted to the Sustainability department. From the outset, it has been a useful tool for many business areas, including those that manage the grain-sourcing plan and evaluate the company’s long-term strategy,” explains Pamela Moreira, Bunge’s Business Planning Manager.

She says that using the system has strengthened analyses and even changed the team’s vocabulary in some situations.

“We now use concepts such as ‘go zone’ and ‘no go zone’ and ‘areas open to production.’ I think it’s interesting that these terms were adopted so quickly by our team,” Pamela says. “That is a reflection of the opportunities that Agroideal made possible regarding socio-environmental risk,” she adds.

Qualified information helps Bunge carry out its strategy

For Bunge, one of the main innovations brought by Agroideal was the integration of production and environmental information into a single platform. The territorial-intelligence system made it easier to cross-reference information on the potential increase of soybean volume in different regions with maps that show which areas are covered by forest or have degraded pastures. That helps Bunge find out if the estimated expansion can occur sustainably. Agroideal helps the company in three types of analysis:

- **Annual** – The tool is part of the reviews and evaluations of the coming year’s business plan.
- **Master Plan** – The same analyses as those for the annual plan but considering a ten-year scenario.
- **New acquisitions** – Mapping of areas where companies and businesses are available for mergers and acquisitions so it can help identify socio-environmental risks before closing deals.

At all levels of planning, Bunge employees examine maps that integrate information such as the productive characteristics of a region under analysis - soybean and degraded pasture areas and the proximity of transport infrastructure - with environmental data such as an index of deforestation in the municipality and proximity to Indigenous Lands. The territorial analysis then complements the study of individual rural properties, a practice that was already part of Bunge’s Sustainability policies. Looking at different properties serves to identify business partners who are up to date with their social and environmental obligations, and the regional analyses help define where and how to allocate resources.
The path for Agroideal to become a reality and be incorporated into the set of tools already used by Bunge was a long one. In 2013, the company participated for the first time in a project with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) meant to define the go/no go zones and identify more environmentally suitable regions for intensification of production. That initiative brought results, but it also showed that there was a need to go further. The two organizations started a new collaboration and worked to create a system that would allow for more dynamic analysis and a more integrated approach to conservation and business. Agroideal was a result of that effort. The tool also had the support of the Collaboration for Forests and Agriculture (CFA), an initiative of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to eliminate deforestation in the beef and soy production chains, in the Brazilian Amazon, in the Cerrado, and the Paraguayan and Argentinean Chaco. The environmental organizations National Wildlife Federation (NWF), TNC and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) are part of the CFA along with several other local organizations that have been thought partners in Agroideal development.

For the system to expand its scope and have broad market validation, it was clear from the beginning that Agroideal should be offered to the entire industry, be free, and available online. The main soy and beef companies, banks, and NGOs were invited to participate in building the system from the start and contributed to the development of the tool (more information see side bar). That has made the initiative a sectoral solution to a challenge that all companies face: expanding sustainably by having territorial intelligence as an ally. Bunge supported Agroideal from the beginning and became one of the first companies to incorporate the tool into its procedures.

“Our goal goes beyond the growth of the company; our focus is on doing that sustainably. Therefore, we use a variety of tools and create procedures to contribute to the development of increasingly efficient agriculture that can expand in harmony with the conservation of the environment and with social responsibility. And Agroideal helped us on that journey,” reinforces Diego Fernandes, vice-president of Agri-business at Bunge in Brazil.

How Agroideal became a solution for the sector

The Nature Conservancy and Bunge invited representatives of 18 institutions to be part of the Agroideal Working Group (GT in Portuguese) as a way to include the entire soybean value chain in developing the tool and generating a collective commitment. More than 50 professionals discussed the development of Agroideal over a year and a half of conversations in eight meetings. Among the topics addressed were the risks and opportunities of sustainable expansion and the socio-environmental commitments of companies. The GT also helped define system requirements and indicate the economic, social, agronomic, and environmental information that the tool should include. Finally, the GT actively evaluated the Proof of Concept and the system’s version 1.0.

As a result of this collaboration, Agroideal was launched in September 2017 in São Paulo at an event attended by representatives from the entire sector. In 2018, Agroideal’s version 2.0 came online, covering more territory and including additional features based on suggestions from the GT. Since then, the system updates vital information regularly as new data becomes available.

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How Bunge uses Agroideal

The company participated in the development of the system from the start and was one of the first to use the tool to perfect its strategic-planning process.

The sector has a different role in the conservation of biomes

Helping bring science to the center of corporate decision-making is as the case with Agroideal is one of the most relevant ways to strengthen sustainability in agricultural production. The unpublished data and the geo-referenced maps that the tool offers make companies more secure that they are making the right choices, from both a business and a socio-environmental perspective.

In the Cerrado and the Amazon, agribusiness is one of the engines of economic growth and brings opportunities. However, the use of natural resources needs to be planned. Leading sector companies can contribute to sustainable development by acting as influencers to the entire production chain. By joining Agroideal, companies expand their capacity to meet increasingly broad social and environmental commitments, bringing the sector to a new level of responsibility.

The Amazon and the Cerrado are fundamental to the conservation of biodiversity on the planet. They also play a crucial role in climate regulation on a global scale. Several scientific studies have shown that the protection of forests and savannas is one of the critical factors for success in the effort to mitigate climate change. Also, the rains and rivers that supply the water indispensable for crop and livestock farming depend directly on the existence of standing vegetation.

Finally, the conservation of these biomes is essential for the well-being of the population of the north and central-west regions of Brazil. The Amazon region alone has nearly 180 ethnic Indigenous Peoples and around 14 million urban and rural families. A considerable portion of this group depends on activities such as fishing, hunting, and extractivism to sustain and maintain their culture. Contributing to conservation in these areas means fostering the economic, social, and environmental development of the country.

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