

Green gold

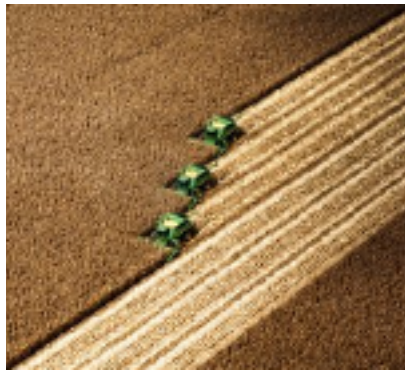
Brazil

The far-west Brazilian state of Mato Grosso equates to “the sticks” for most people in Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo. But those sticks in the hinterland hold a lot of promise for biofuels produced from oil seeds, such as soybeans, castor beans and sunflowers.

Brazil is already the world leader when it comes to producing ethanol from sugar cane, but the country’s ambitious biodiesel programme is only just beginning to capture the outside world’s attention. If everything goes to plan, Brazil will grow 2 per cent of its biodiesel fuel by 2008 and 5 per cent by 2010. In 2012, the nation’s biodiesel market will be worth \$1.8bn (€1.3bn), according to market researcher Frost & Sullivan.

Rondonópolis, in the heart of soybean country, is the epicentre of biofuel country. US agribusiness giant ADM will fire up a \$30m (€22.5m) biodiesel plant there later this summer. Air Minas has started a scheduled service from São Paulo to Rondonópolis for the first time. In Alto Araguaia, 200km further south, Dutch-owned Grupo Agreco and Japanese Marubeni Corporation are investing \$84m (€63m) in a third biodiesel plant.

“We have a boom going on,” says Alexandre Golemo, who works for Mato Grosso’s research agency FAPEMAT. His office has tallied up one biodiesel plant in operation, five under construction, and 15 awaiting permission. The state is looking at healthy annual growth, partly driven by the biodiesel investment surge of more than R\$830m (€338m). The government mandate, and tax breaks for farmers and



refiners, will boost Mato Grosso’s biodiesel production from its current 58 million litres to roughly 1.2 billion a year.

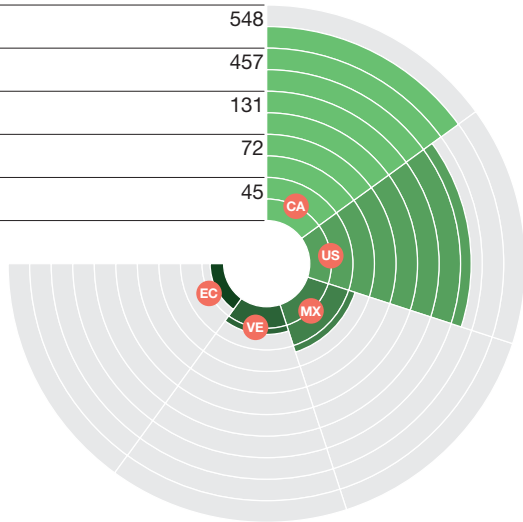
Energy researcher and former technical director of national oil agency ANP, Luiz Nogueira Horta calls it a “biofuels gold rush”, but wonders how sustainable the boom can be. Will there be enough land without farmers resorting to slash and burn to clear rainforest in return for subsidies? With 90 million hectares of arable land left in Brazil, it seems further deforestation might be avoidable. Grazing land can be turned into soy plantations and there are tax breaks for family farms that grow oil seeds.

More important, though, is the infrastructure to transport all that biodiesel from the sticks to the cities and, eventually, overseas. The missing link will be closed this summer, when the Ferronorte railway, one of the world’s largest civil-engineering projects reaches Rondonópolis, doubling freight capacity between the Amazon Basin and Port of Santos, near São Paulo. — SH

CA	Canada	548
US	United States	457
MX	Mexico	131
VE	Venezuela	72
EC	Ecuador	45

Americas car ownership per 1,000 head of pop

On our charts, the US scores relatively low marks. The reason for this is because large numbers of Americans travel in trucks and commercial vehicles rather than cars.



STYLE LEADERS: NO. 3

Loud and proud

Argentina

Preface

In the third of our series decoding power dressing, we look at the style of Argentina’s First Lady, and potential presidential candidate, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who rejects advice about her image as stubbornly as she does media criticism of her politics.

Argentina’s First Lady, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, is the wife of President Néstor Kirchner. She is also an early favourite to win the country’s presidential election in October, when many analysts believe her husband will step aside (and then, the theory goes, she would do the same for him, four years later, thus preventing either becoming lame ducks).

At 54, this outspoken, politically ambitious lawyer and senator, has been compared to Hillary Clinton. But Kirchner’s fashion sense is nothing like the conservatively dressed Clinton’s. Even in Argentina, where an estimated one in 30 women undergoes plastic surgery, Kirchner is no shrinking violet. In colourful leather jackets, clattering heels, industrial-weight jewellery, gaudy belts and raccoon-like eye make-up, her style is politically, sartorially and audibly loud.

During her leftist student days, Kirchner was known for clicking down the law-school’s hallways in high boots, a miniskirt, long hair and overdone make-up – more Nancy Sinatra than Leon Trotsky. A member of Argentina’s Justicialista, or Peronist, party, she dresses with a theatrical flair expected in Argentina and has been known to jet to Paris and New York and engage in high-priced shopping trips and impassioned speeches about the dignity of the working man while dressed in haute couture. In Argentina, sex and politics are not a contradiction, and running for president on a working-class party platform while carrying a Birkin bag is just good style.

Today, Kirchner rarely appears in the same outfit twice – and almost never in trousers. She has a weakness for leather

Hair

Her hair ranges from chestnut brown to Malbec purple and is cut by celebrity stylist Alberto Sanders. Her locks are perhaps the only constant in her style repertoire – it is always worn long and wild.

Make-up

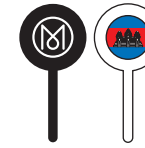
Her mascara is badger-like in its thickness. Kirchner never leaves the house without plenty on.

Jewellery

Sort of Zsa Zsa Gabor gone hippie, Kirchner wears all her accessories at once, including rings, a heavy necklace and clinking silver Thai bracelets. Her accessories add to her aggressive, gesticulatory oratory style.

jackets and brightly-coloured handbags from Argentine designer Peter Kent and high-heeled shoes and boots by Claude Benard. While her wardrobe leans towards shades of brown, her look is anything but subdued. But it is Kirchner’s blaring accessories that mark her out: she seems to wear them all at once – multiple rings, a heavy necklace, wide belts and brash, clinking silver Thai bracelets.

She has no image consultant, in a country where most politicians do, but Kirchner receives plenty of unheeded advice from the fashion demimonde. Designer Laurencio Adot once suggested she switch her flashy Rolex for something more discrete. “A Cartier Tank would look a hundred times more elegant,” he said. Fashion consultant Fabián Medina Flores says Kirchner’s look shows “excesses of bad taste” and she should tone down her hair, which is long and wild – in colours ranging from chestnut brown to Malbec purple – and is cut (or extended) by celebrity stylist Alberto Sanders. But her hair is perhaps the only constant in her repertoire, besides her mascara.



Ride on

Mexico City is forcing employees to come to work by bicycle on the first Monday of every month. One problem: the city has some of the worst traffic in the world. Nice try.



ILLUSTRATOR: MARTIN MÖRCK. IMAGE: GETTY