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MAPA Regulation fuels surge in Brazilâ??s agri-drone industry

11 June 2025 | News

The agricultural drone sector in Brazil, primarily used for aerial spraying, saw a major breakthrough in 2021 following the publication of Ordinance No. 298 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAPA), which officially regulated their use. That year, sales were estimated at 3,000 units. Fast forward to today, and the number has soared to an estimated 35,000 drones in operationâ??a clear sign of how regulatory clarity can unlock rapid technological adoption in agriculture

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Brazilâ??s agricultural drone market is experiencing rapid expansion, driven in large part by regulatory clarity introduced through MAPAâ??s Ordinance No. 298 in 2021, which legalized and structured the commercial use of drones for aerial spraying. Since then, the market has taken offâ??from an estimated 3,000 drones in 2021 to around 35,000 units in operation today.

This data was presented by consultant EugÃªnio Schroder during Droneshow, a key agri-tech trade fair held at Expo Center Norte in SÃ£o Paulo, focused on agricultural drone service providers.

At the same event, MAPA announced that new regulatory updates are on the way, including a new decree and ordinance aimed at modernizing legislation to match technological advancements. â??Drones have evolved, and the legislation needs to keep up,â?• said UÃ©llen Colatto, head of the ministryâ??s Agricultural Aviation Division. Two public hearings have already been held, and the proposed decree is being sent to the Civil House. Once signed by the President, MAPA will publish new ordinances with more specific and updated rules.

Among the upcoming changes is the transition from the Sipeagro system to SDA Digitalâ??a modern platform that will streamline the accreditation of training institutions and the certification of technical personnel in agricultural aviation.

Despite the boom, challenges remain. A key issue is the use of unregistered drones. While Ordinance 298 mandates registration and training for drone operators, only 2,618 drones have been officially registered for spraying so far, highlighting a gap in enforcement and compliance.

Schroder emphasized the accessibility of drones, describing them as â??democraticâ? tools that are viable for farms of all sizes. Service provider AndrÃ© Veiga underlined the marketâ??s untapped potential, estimating that 50,000 drones would be needed to meet demand across all Brazilian crops. He also advised new entrants to keep backup equipment and batteries, noting, â??If you have one, you donâ??t have any.â?

The event also featured key figures from MAPA, including Estanislau Steck, the ministryâ??s superintendent in SÃ£o Paulo, and Lucas Fernandes de Souza, an agricultural engineer who discussed regulatory developments in agricultural aviation.

As Brazil moves forward, the combination of strong demand, advancing technology, and updated policy is setting the stage for a more structured and expansive agricultural drone ecosystem.