



Family Agriculture: A Hope for the Northeast Agricultura Familiar

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Abstract

Agriculture is one of the main Brazilian economic activities. There are several types of agriculture being practiced in the country, from the most rudimentary to the most technological. In this paper, some aspects related to family agriculture and its production in Brazilian regions will be presented in general. However, this work will have a special focus on the Northeast region, highlighting the difficulties and the way to overcome them. This region is characterized mainly by the semi-arid climate, predominant in the northeastern backlands, whose high temperatures cause long periods of drought and bring suffering to the population living in the region. Primitive cultivation practices limit their production, however in recent years, the implementation of public policies and, consequently, change of mind, seek to overcome years of delay, aiming at the creation of opportunities and possibilities for economic development.

Keywords: Family Agriculture; Northeast; Agricultural Production; Public Policies

Introduction

Brazil is a country that has one of a greatest biodiversity in the world. Still, it has geoclimatic factors that favor a wide agricultural production. These facts corroborated for agriculture to become one of the main national activities. Among the various types of agriculture practiced in the country, this paper will focus on family agriculture, practiced specifically in the Northeast Brazil, and the challenges faced by farmers.

The Agricultural Census conducted by Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE/Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) in 2017 pointed out that 77% of the country's agricultural properties were classified as family agriculture [1]. In this context, 67% of farmers are working in family agriculture, which gives about 10.1million people, being the regions: North 15.4%, Northeast 46.6%, Southeast16.5%, South 16% and Midwest 5.5%. Brazilian states of Pernambuco, Ceara and Acre have the largest proportions of area occupied by family agriculture in Brazil [2].

According to the same Agricultural Census, family agriculture is the main economic activity of 90% of the municipalities with up to 20 thousand inhabitants. About 87% of cassava, 70% of beans, 58% of milk, 50% of poultry, 59% of pork, 46% of corn, 38% of coffee and 34% of rice consumed by Brazilians comes from family agriculture. The rest comes from employer agriculture, which is geared towards export [3].

The Brazilian Federal Law 11,326/2006 defines as guidelines for the National Family Agriculture Policy and the criteria for identifying this public [4]. This law provides that in family agriculture, property management is shared by a family and the main source of income is agricultural production.

Development

Family agriculture is so called because it is developed on small rural properties carried out by family groups. According to data from the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária/EMBRAPA),

this type of agriculture is more effective in Northeast Brazil [5].

The late arrival of incentives for the modernization and development of agriculture in the Northeast Region left its mark on both the change in the traditional farmer's mentality and the devaluation of this working class. Family agriculture in the Northeast has long been summarized in subsistence agriculture, in which traditional rudimentary methods of cultivation were used, thus leaving the farmer at the mercy of natural events.

The Northeast suffered and still suffers from periodic droughts and this fact, associated with rudimentary cultivation techniques, does not favor farming, as it harms several crops and forces the farmer to abandon his lands in search of better living conditions, causing, therefore, the rural exodus.

Rudimentary cultivation practices limit and damage agricultural production over time by causing soil wear and impoverishment. Considering the inadequate exploitation of the soil for long periods, to improve the harvest, a change of mentality regarding the incorporation of modern cultivation practices is necessary. To change this reality, governmental and non-governmental bodies promoted courses in soil handling and livestock aimed at farmers and children of farmers in order to improve and optimize production.

Conclusion

Public policies applied to family agriculture are fundamental to the development of agricultural production, as they bring possibilities for the farmer to overcome periodic droughts, soil impoverishment and the lack of effective techniques. Among the measures taken by these public policies, there are: training, plowing of land, seeds for planting, cisterns for capturing water and food purchase programs. All of these programs are intended to stimulate agricultural production among small producers and to

reduce rural exodus and, thus, generate opportunities for farmers to obtain their income on their property, regardless of its size.

The success of family agriculture, especially in the Northeast Region, which has climatic and historical factors that conditioned its development, is linked to the opportunities that small farmers need to have to increase their production.

Among the factors that favor this increase, we highlight the investment of technical knowledge on the property in relation to soil studies, crop management, as well as the availability of water reservoirs, which will make the crop, not depend all on the water of the rain. Actions like these generate income, as well as their proper management can generate surplus for exports [6].

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