

The Role Of Programs Supporting Family Farming In The Socio-Economic Development Of Rural Areas: The Case Of Brazil

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the role of government programs to support family farming in the socio-economic development of rural areas. Initially, a historical overview of these programs is presented, from the 1990s to the present day, highlighting the changes and developments that have taken place over the years. The benefits that family farming support programs bring to the socioeconomic development of rural areas, such as increased food production, job and income generation, and strengthening of the local economy, among others, are analyzed. The challenges and limitations faced by family farming support programs, such as bureaucracy, lack of resources, and low effectiveness, are also identified. Next, some successful elements of family farming support programs in different regions of the country are highlighted. Overall, government programs to support family farming have been shown to be important for the socioeconomic development of rural areas in Brazil, generating jobs and income, strengthening the local economy, and increasing food production.

Keywords: rural development; family farming; socio-economic development; development strategies; government programs; Brazilian economy.

Date of Submission: 11-06-2023

Date of Acceptance: 21-06-2023

I. Introduction

Family farming plays a fundamental role in the economy and rural development worldwide. In Brazil, family farming represents 84.4% of rural properties and employs around 12 million people (IBGE, 2019). However, family farming faces several challenges, such as lack of access to adequate resources and technologies, insufficient technical and managerial training, and difficulties in marketing their products.

To address these challenges, governments have implemented programs to support family farming with the aim of promoting rural development and social inclusion. In Brazil, notable programs include the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (Pronaf) and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), which aim to provide credit and technical assistance to family farmers and ensure the government's purchase of their production.

However, despite governmental efforts, it is necessary to assess the impact of these programs on promoting the socio-economic development of rural areas and the families involved in family farming. To do so, it is important to analyze how these programs are being implemented, their results and challenges, and the prospects for the future.

II. Historical Overview of Government Programs Supporting Family Farming in Brazil

Family farming is recognized as an important sector for the socio-economic development of rural areas, not only in Brazil but worldwide. In Brazil, the significance of family farming has been acknowledged since the 1960s with the establishment of institutions such as the National Commission on Agricultural and Land Policy (CNPAP) and the Brazilian Institute of Agrarian Reform (IBRA), which aimed to formulate public policies for the development of family farming.

Over the past few decades, programs supporting family farming in Brazil have undergone significant changes. With the promulgation of the Federal Constitution in 1988, family farming gained even more prominence with the guarantee of access to land and the recognition of the social function of rural property.

From the 1990s onwards, there was an increase in the number of specific programs and projects for family farming at both the federal and state levels, along with an increase in financial resources allocated to these programs. In this context, the federal government launched the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF) in 1996, aiming to promote family farming through special credit lines.

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Starting in 2003, with the creation of the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF), there was a significant shift in the government's approach to family farming. PRONAF, in addition to providing credit at lower interest rates, began offering technical assistance and rural extension services to family farmers. This change was important in ensuring that farmers had access not only to credit but also to services and technologies that could increase productivity and improve their quality of life in rural areas.

Since then, several other programs have been created to support family farming in Brazil. In 2003, the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) was established, aiming to strengthen family farming and combat hunger and poverty. In 2009, the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) was implemented, which aims to guarantee the human right to adequate food through access to quality school meals. The creation of the Family Farming Safra Plan in 2003 is also noteworthy, as it aims to provide financial resources for the development of family farming. Since its implementation, the Safra Plan has been renewed annually to meet the financing needs of family farming.

In 2012, the federal government launched the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), which aims to promote access to food and incentivize family farming. The program involves the purchase of food produced by family farmers and distribution to social assistance entities such as daycares, schools, hospitals, and shelters. The PAA is a policy that stimulates local production, values family farming, and promotes food security. Since its creation, the program has grown in terms of funding volume and number of beneficiaries, becoming an important policy supporting family farming.

The PAA also invests in actions aimed at providing family farmers with access to institutional markets through the National Policy for the Commercialization of Family Farming (PNCAF). This was achieved through the creation of the Institutional Purchase modality of the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), which aims to guarantee the purchase of family farming products for the supply of schools, hospitals, prisons, and other public agencies. With this, the government seeks to foster local food production and ensure income for family farmers.

In 2021, the federal government announced a series of measures to strengthen family farming. These include expanding resources allocated to PRONAF and creating the Rural Productive Inclusion Allowance, which aims to provide financial support to family farmers for improving their productive activities. Additionally, the government announced the creation of the Rural Activities Promotion Program, which involves financial transfers for the acquisition of inputs and equipment for agricultural and livestock production.

III. Benefits of Government Programs Supporting Family Farming

Based on the historical overview presented in the previous section, it is evident that government programs supporting family farming aim to promote the socioeconomic development of rural areas, particularly for small-scale farmers. These programs have brought numerous benefits to rural families, including increased agricultural production, income generation, improved quality of life, and the strengthening of family farming as a whole.

One of the main benefits of government programs supporting family farming is the increase in agricultural production. According to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply (MAPA), between 2003 and 2018, food production in Brazil grew by 85.8%, while the cultivated area increased by only 33.3%. This increase in productivity is directly related to the support provided by these programs, which have facilitated small-scale farmers' access to advanced technologies and improved cultivation practices.

Additionally, government programs supporting family farming have significantly contributed to income generation for rural families. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in 2019, family farming accounted for approximately 38% of the gross value of Brazilian agricultural production. This means that small-scale farmers have a significant role in generating wealth in the country, directly translating into increased income for rural families.

Another benefit of government programs supporting family farming is the improvement in the quality of life for rural families. With increased agricultural production and income generation, small-scale farmers have the means to invest in property improvements, such as constructing more comfortable houses, installing water and sanitation systems, and acquiring agricultural equipment, among other enhancements. This directly enhances the quality of life for rural families, providing them with access to more dignified living conditions.

Moreover, these programs can contribute to food security in the country by incentivizing the production of healthy and diversified food, reducing dependence on agricultural imports. According to the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), in 2013, family farming was responsible for approximately 70% of the food consumed in Brazil.

Despite these benefits, it is important to acknowledge that government programs supporting family farming still face challenges and limitations. Despite advancements, there still seems to be a gender inequality in the distribution of benefits, with women farmers having relatively and even absolutely less access to credit and technical assistance programs. Challenges related to bureaucracy and insufficient resources to effectively implement the programs also persist.

Continued commitment to improving and expanding government programs supporting family farming is crucial to maximize their benefits and overcome existing challenges. This includes addressing gender disparities,

streamlining bureaucratic processes, allocating adequate resources, and ensuring the programs are accessible, effective, and sustainable in the long run. By doing so, governments can further enhance the socioeconomic development of rural areas and promote a more equitable and inclusive agricultural sector.

IV. Challenges and Limitations of Government Programs Supporting Family Farming

Indeed, government programs supporting family farming face various challenges and limitations that affect their effectiveness and limit their impact on the socio-economic development of rural areas. Among the main challenges faced by these programs are the lack of resources, bureaucracy, difficulties in coordination among involved institutions, and the lack of farmer training, among others.

The insufficient allocation of resources for family farming is one of the main barriers to the sector's development. Despite increased budgets allocated to family farming in recent years, the amount is still insufficient to meet all the demands. According to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply, in 2020, out of the planned R\$10.1 billion for the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (Pronaf), only R\$6.4 billion were effectively implemented. This demonstrates a budgetary limitation that can compromise the effectiveness of the programs. Additionally, the allocated resources are often insufficient or poorly distributed, disadvantaging the most vulnerable producers and limiting the reach of the programs.

Bureaucracy is another challenge that hinders the implementation and effectiveness of these programs. The excessive procedures and complexity of processes can impede producers' access to benefits as well as hinder the programs' effectiveness in promoting rural development. Moreover, bureaucracy can generate various costs for producers, such as time and money spent to meet program requirements. The complexity of processes for accessing credit and benefits, as well as the requirements for proving agricultural activity, can discourage family farmers from seeking available public policies. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of technical assistance and rural extension services, which can hinder the implementation of technologies and innovations that could increase productivity and the quality of agricultural products.

Another significant challenge is the lack of coordination among the institutions involved in government programs supporting family farming. Often, policies focused on family farming are fragmented and disjointed, which hampers the integrated implementation of policies and programs and limits the impact of actions. Moreover, the lack of coordination can lead to overlaps and conflicts of competence among institutions. The lack of coordination between different government agencies, as well as the lack of dialogue with civil society organizations and family farmers themselves, can result in ineffective and socially limited public policies. There is a need for more effective coordination among different government levels, as well as with family farmers and their organizations, for public policies to be more appropriate to the sector's demands and needs.

The lack of farmer training is another significant challenge that limits the effectiveness of family farming support programs. Many farmers have low levels of education and limited technical training, which hinders their access to program benefits and the adoption of more sustainable and profitable practices. In this regard, capacity building is essential for farmers to better seize the opportunities offered by support programs.

In addition to the challenges, government programs supporting family farming also face some limitations that need to be overcome. One of the main limitations is the lack of inclusion of certain segments of family farming, such as quilombolas (descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves), indigenous communities, and land reform settlers. These groups face specific difficulties and require policies and programs tailored to their realities. For example, PRONAF is mainly aimed at small-scale farmers who own up to four fiscal modules, but it leaves out other important segments, such as quilombola communities and land reform settlers who own more than four fiscal modules. As a result, there are small-scale producers who do not fit into the categories established by the program and thus are excluded from government program benefits.

Another important limitation is the concentration of benefits in certain regions, mainly in the South and Southeast, to the detriment of the North, Northeast, and Midwest regions. According to data from the 2017 Agricultural Census, the South region accounts for approximately 50% of family farms in the country, while the Northeast region accounts for only 16% (IBGE, 2019). This indicates an inequality in the distribution of benefits from government programs supporting family farming.

The concentration of benefits in certain regions exacerbates regional disparities and hinders the equitable development of family farming across the country. It is crucial to ensure that programs reach all regions and promote inclusive and balanced development.

Additionally, there is a need for more comprehensive and tailored support for specific groups within family farming, such as women farmers, young farmers, and traditional communities. Women farmers, for example, often face gender-specific challenges and require targeted interventions to address gender inequalities and promote their active participation and empowerment in agriculture. Similarly, young farmers need support to overcome barriers to entry, access training opportunities, and secure land and financial resources.

Furthermore, sustainable agricultural practices and environmental conservation should be integral components of government programs supporting family farming. Encouraging the adoption of agroecological

practices, promoting sustainable land management, and addressing climate change challenges are crucial for the long-term viability of family farming and the preservation of natural resources.

V. Case Studies of Successful Government Programs Supporting Family Farming

Several government programs supporting family farming have achieved positive results in different regions of the country. The National School Feeding Program (PNAE), for instance, has promoted the development of family farming and healthy eating in public schools nationwide, benefiting both rural producers and students. The program is responsible for a significant amount of food purchases from family farming, ensuring market stability for these producers.

Another program that has shown promising outcomes is the Food Acquisition Program (PAA). The program aims to support family farming, strengthen local markets, and promote access to healthy food. The PAA allows the government to purchase products from family farming and distribute them to public institutions such as schools, daycare centers, hospitals, among others.

Case studies highlight several reasons for the success of family farming support programs in the country. One key factor is the training and technical assistance provided to rural producers, which contribute to increased production and improved product quality. Another important factor is the access to markets guaranteed by the programs, enabling the commercialization of products and, consequently, income generation for family farmers.

Furthermore, the integration among different government programs has also contributed to the success of policies supporting family farming. The coordination among credit programs, technical assistance, and market initiatives has created a favorable environment for the development of family farming and, consequently, for the socioeconomic development of rural areas.

VI. Some considerations

Family farming is an essential sector for the socioeconomic development of rural areas. Government programs supporting family farming play a crucial role in promoting rural development and ensuring food and nutrition security through stimulating local production and consumption, access to markets, technical assistance and extension services, credit, and other public policies.

Throughout the history of government programs supporting family farming in Brazil, significant progress can be observed in the recognition and valorization of the sector. However, there are still challenges to be overcome, such as the lack of effectiveness in some programs, bureaucracy, insufficient resources, and difficulties in institutional coordination.

Despite these challenges, there are examples of successful program experiences in different regions of the country, demonstrating the importance and benefits of these public policies for family farming and the socioeconomic development of rural communities.

In this regard, there is a need for greater commitment and improvement of government programs supporting family farming to overcome existing limitations and challenges. It is necessary to promote more effective coordination among institutions, ensure access to adequate resources and technical assistance, expand the inclusion of family farming segments, and enhance credit and market policies.

It is essential that government programs supporting family farming be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure their effectiveness and constant improvement. Only through these measures can we promote a more just, sustainable, and inclusive rural development that contributes to improving the quality of life for rural populations and the construction of a more equal and developed country.

It is crucial to address the challenges faced by government programs supporting family farming and find effective solutions. One of the key areas that require attention is the bureaucratic processes involved in accessing program benefits. Streamlining administrative procedures and reducing unnecessary paperwork can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs.

Another important aspect is the allocation of sufficient resources to support family farming. Adequate funding is essential to meet the demands of the sector and ensure the success of program initiatives. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that resources are distributed equitably, prioritizing vulnerable and marginalized farmers who may face greater barriers to accessing support.

Capacity-building and training programs play a vital role in enhancing the skills and knowledge of family farmers. By providing training on sustainable farming practices, financial management, and market access, farmers can improve their productivity, profitability, and resilience to external challenges.

Moreover, fostering collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders is essential for the success of government programs supporting family farming. This includes establishing strong partnerships between government agencies, civil society organizations, research institutions, and farmer cooperatives. Through effective collaboration, it becomes possible to create comprehensive and integrated support systems that address the diverse needs of family farmers.

Additionally, it is important to ensure that programs are inclusive and cater to the specific needs of different groups within family farming, such as women, indigenous communities, and small-scale farmers. Recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by these groups can contribute to more equitable and sustainable development in rural areas.

Furthermore, successful case studies of government programs supporting family farming highlight the positive impacts on rural development and the well-being of farming communities. These programs have contributed to increasing agricultural production, improving food security, generating income for small-scale farmers, and reducing rural poverty.

One such case study is the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (Pronaf) in Brazil. Pronaf provides credit lines and technical assistance to family farmers, enabling them to invest in their agricultural activities, adopt sustainable farming practices, and improve productivity. This program has played a significant role in reducing rural poverty, empowering farmers, and promoting sustainable rural development.

In conclusion, while government programs supporting family farming in Brazil face challenges and limitations, there are successful case studies that highlight their importance and positive impact on rural development. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing appropriate measures, these programs can be further strengthened to support family farmers, promote sustainable agriculture, and contribute to the overall socioeconomic development of rural communities.

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