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AGRO-INDUSTRIAL FAMILY COOPERATIVES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to Cooperatives are cooperative societies that aim to promote goods and services to society through economic activities. However, they play an important role despite the practices surrounding sustainable rural development, acting directly in promoting actions that expand better opportunities for farmer.

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INTRODUCTION

This scientific article aims to analyze the importance of cooperatives for sustainable rural development. At first, cooperatives are seen as an organization made up of people who are part of groups, which aims to promote common benefits related to specific activities. For example, voluntary actions. In other words, cooperatives constitute themselves as a society that has the purpose of promoting actions, through the exercise of an economic activity. Therefore, cooperatives play a fundamental role in relation to sustainable rural development. However, to understand the importance of its action in this, it is essential to understand which actions rural development promotes beneficial to society. Rural development is related to activities

initiatives that aim to improve the quality of life of non-urban communities. In the meantime, rural development seeks to solve relevant issues so that it can develop a more sustainable society. That is, it carries out agricultural production exercises focused on sustainability to ensure that society can have access to food, and at the same time, provide production, cultural services, among others. However, cooperatives are regarded as agents of sustainable development, and their role is indispensable for the food agricultural system. An example is Cooperfam, a cooperative that operates directly in family agricultural activities. Therefore, the research to be developed below will have as main focus to understand how cooperatives have an important influence for sustainable rural development.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The Agroecological Cooperative and Family Industry - COOPERFAM, is located on the Souza Naves Line, rural area of the municipality of Quatro Pontes - Paraná. It was founded on September 26, 2006. In this period the production was based on grape juice, fig jams and some fruit sweets. As in this period the cooperative did not count on its structured agroindustry, the production process took place in an artisanal way in an old shed, and totally outside the basic norms of sanitary surveillance, on the property of one of the cooperative members. With the vision of growth the cooperative sought partnerships, and in 2011 were invested around R\$ 200,000.00 (two hundred thousand reais) for the construction and structuring of the agroindustry. Funds received in funds lost by ITAIPU Binacional and Municipality of Quatro Pontes - PR. It also occurred, the donation of the land by the main administrator of the agroindustry, and in 2012 it was inaugurated thus starting its production. The cooperative emerged with twenty-two associated families from ten municipalities in the microregion: Quatro Pontes, Marechal Cândido Rondon, PatoBragado, Entre Rios do Oeste, Guaira, Terra Roxa, Mercedes, Nova Santa Rosa and Toledo. Currently the company has one hundred and thirty-two families of cooperative members, from thirteen municipalities of Paraná, which are: Quatro Pontes, Marechal Cândido Rondon, PatoBragado, Entre Rios do Oeste, Diamante do Oeste, São José das Palmeiras, Guaira, Terra Roxa, Mercedes, Maripá, Nova Santa Rosa, Toledo, Altônia. Since the beginning of the cooperative to date, there have been three changes in the statute, because in the first it only allowed members living in the Region of the Paraná Basin 3, and contemplated only twenty-eight municipalities, without the permission of inclusion of farmers from other localities. But with the emergence of new producers with potential and residents in other regions, the change was made for the inhabitants of western Paraná. With the expansion of the business, more suppliers were needed to produce raw materials different from those used so far, and with production aiming at sustainability, the permission to introduce producers from any locality was changed.

In addition to the production of grape juice, jams, and various types of fruit sweets, the agroindustry has a screening center, referring to the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), where the cooperative supplies the food produced in the agroindustry and in partnership, with the cooperative farmers who produce on their own properties, for one hundred and thirty-eight schools and colleges in Paraná. At the end of 2013 the cooperative COOPERFAM, closed with approximately one million reais of turnover, and for the year 2014 the goal is to double to two million reais and still desired, the structuring of a place proper to the center of screening, and the installation of a pasta factory. But the year 2015 was marked by several mishaps, all the dreams desired by the institution needed to be left aside by a major financial crisis faced by the cooperative, due to school feeding projects and payments from the state of Paraná not being released, indebted to the cooperative, which stopped paying many of its producers. In 2016 the cooperative again signed contracts that so far are managing to restructure the institution. According to coperfam's president, with the contracts in place and the partnerships signed, especially with the municipality of Quatro Pontes and ITAIPU, they are being able to pay suppliers and investing again in the industry. A positive factor that agroindustry has is its philosophy related to agroecology and sustainability. It is perceived that a large part of the population is beginning to worry daily about environmental issues as well as the consumption of products without pesticides, aiming at the prevention of diseases (GUERRA; ICHIKAWA, 2013, p. 05).

ACTIVITY AND PRODUCTS

At the beginning, the use of the land was used for the planting of grape and fig. Subsequently, the commercialization of organic grape began. Nevertheless, over time the cooperative started in the production of sweets, so that they could obtain the best use of the raw material they had so far. With partnerships with other companies, COOPERFAM currently has a more developed candy factory, in addition to a cassava peeling factory. Following the development, the

cooperative currently produces and offers various types of products, among them are vegetables, 17 varieties of legumes, such as lettuce, cabbage, pepper, 4 to 5 varieties of green smell, 9 varieties of tubers, in addition to the making of breads, cuckoos, and the growth in the production of sweets and fruit pulps. With the current problem we are experiencing, the COVID-19 pandemic, the cooperative has managed to triple the delivery of its products. Currently they deliver products to school lunches in the region. In this way, they deliver the so-called "kits". These are characterized by baskets of products, being 2kg of fruits (1kg of each fruit), 1/2 kg of sweet potato, while another kit has 1kg of frozen cassava and 1kg of frozen chopped pumpkin. Analyzing the development of the cooperative over the years, we sought the best use of the products used in productions. Thus, the grape, which is one of the products produced by that company, just does not have its stem used. The production structure in relation to said fruit is based on the production of juice, separation of grains, which are later redirected to the manufacture of cosmetics, and the mass that over all this procedure, is used for the production of sweet. It is important to note that COOPERFAM currently has the following order of products with higher output and value: fruit pulp, sweet, bakery, the fruit itself and finally, the vegetables.

RESOURCES

In an interview with the President of the Cooperative, it was possible to perceive the relevance that the same is for the historical part and also of the cooperative's resources. We know that a cooperative is made for the interest of associates, that it is economically organized, where its members seek to participate respecting their rights and duties in a non-profit way. Aiming at the future, and with the expectation that it will continue to work, Coperfam values the resources it receives from projects and cooperatives, because they are the means that they have to be able to produce and make the cooperative remain with the deliveries of school meals. The more resources a company has at its fingertips, the better its operation and results, in the same way with cooperatives, which also rely on climate resources to offer their products. Over time, the cooperative's material resources grew, as it was previously an association, with only 22 (twenty-two) members in the microregion and with few records until 2006. After this date your documentation has been regulated in the board of trade. The material resources that the Cooperative has today are reasons of great pride and dedication on the part of the President, that in order to get the "shed" where coperfam is today, he has given a certain 100 hectares of land, so that the city could assist in the structure. They also have 2 trucks and a Kombi, which they managed, one through the project with Itaipu, and the other with seab - Secretary of Agriculture and Supply, these trucks make the delivery in the worlds of the region. With this Itaipu project, the cooperative was also able to acquire machinery to assist in production and labor. It helps in sustainability, because it makes the most of cassava fruit and leaves little residue, this used in the crop or in the feeding of animals. The cooperative's human resources are considered few, today it has the President of the Cooperative (which is maintained economically by Coperfam), a Manager, a Secretary and an agronomist (which are maintained by the partnership it has with Itaipu). For the production of cassava, which Coperfam is implementing, they have 5 employees, who also assist in the delivery of school meals. It is already possible to realize that in a short time they will have to hire more people for the administrative part of the office, because they have several projects to increase their production. Related to financial and market resources, the cooperative is still not seeing profits, because in 2015, there were large debts, due to droughts, strikes and lack of government stimulus. This crisis, made that several times was discussed the possibility of closing the cooperative, but they chose to continue and its members understand that this financial issue is due to the reflections of the year 2015. Currently the Cooperative has 132 members, and this number is growing during the pandemic. Emphasizing that in order to be related to the cooperative, the producer must fit as a microproducer. With these associates, their weekly production and current deliveries are 15,000 pounds of products per week. These 15,000 kilos of food are subdivided into: 5,000 kilos for the State Schools of the microregion,

5,000 kilos for the Emergency PAA (Food Acquisition Program) and 5,000 kilos in Kits that are delivered to families in this pandemic season. These kits are formed with: 2 kilos of fruits (2 different types of fruits), half a kilo of sweet potatoes, 1 kilo of frozen cassava and 1 kilo of frozen zucchini, provided by Coperfam, this kit is still incremented with other products that comes from CAPA (Support Center and Promotion of Agroecology) and other organizations. The administrative part of the Cooperative is generated based on projects, both with Itaipú, and with municipalities in the microregion and thus, they can organize, plan and control their activities. We know that the lack of one of these resources makes the cooperative's production and services process unfeasible, as well as all business resources. However, it is worth mentioning the commitment and dedication that the President of the Cooperative dedicates, and also the family involvement, where even with all the difficulties that passed for the Cooperative to work, would not measure efforts to do again, and realizes its evolution as a small producer. With all its productions and objectives, we have seen that Coperfam seeks to bring food to all and is concerned with producing sustainable agriculture, this makes it fit with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are part of a global agenda, where there are 17 objectives and 169 goals aimed at building a fairer world, sustainable and egalitarian by 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015, forming a historic decision by UN member countries to join forces towards a World Sustainable Development Agenda, which must be fulfilled by the year 2030.

Coperfam fits at least 3 of these objectives, they are:

- Objective number 2: Zero Hunger and Family Farming;
- Objective number 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure;
- Objective number 12: Consumption and responsible production.

These objectives are important because they strengthen social and environmental culture in a sustainable way in governments and companies. As part of the corporate world, the SDOs help you make business and make it more accountable, efficient and competitive.

COOPERATION AND CHANGES IN TIMES OF COVID-19 AT COPERFAM

Coperfam emerged from the intention of its members to achieve common objectives, increasing opportunities and enabling the development of rural production by all members, which would be achieved through cooperation. As far as the concept of cooperation is concerned, it is linked to joint action in order to seek a common good. In this sense:

To cooperate is to act together with the other, or to interact with the achievement of a common purpose. Success in achieving this common objective depends on certain conditions that cooperation entails, such as a consensus on the objectives to be achieved, the existence of common interests, the mutual trust of the actors, the joint development of a set of rules, an agreement on the way actions are coordinated, the active participation of all elements. (Dictionary of International Relations, 2005). The success of the cooperation occurs due to the conditions of the situation, which occurred with Coperfam, because the joint work, trust and participation of the cooperative members in the processes caused the cooperative to go through numerous mishaps and overcome all adversities. For Coperfam members effectively "cooperation means working together" (SATO, 2010, p. 46), because many gave up receiving the amounts they were entitled to, others lent money out of their own pocket to settle the cooperative's debts at a time of crisis experienced between 2014 and 2015. According to coperfam's president, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the expectations were that cooperation would be necessary for the maintenance of the cooperative, because they envisioned a scenario of little sale in view of the closing of schools and the concern was greater because the number of members is higher than in 2014 and 2015. However, the situation was much better than expected in view that, during the pandemic, deliveries/sales were tripled, as reported by coperfam's president. At the time before the

pandemic Coperfam was participating in the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) and soon after the beginning of the pandemic were inserted in basket shopping programs by the municipalities of the Region acquire to distribute to needy families in their emergency plans and began participation in a Bank of Brazil Project to serve needy entities in which baskets are provided to those in need. In this project of Banco do Brasil are delivered 700 kits with vegetables, vegetables and fruits every 15 days and in other projects is according to demand, because the food that would be destined for school meals are being destined to the needy families of the contracting municipalities. Deliveries became fortnightly, but with larger amounts than in normality. In May, participation in an emergency project in the State of Paraná began, in which the same amount that was being supplied to the PNAE will be provided for a period of 3 months, that is, it is only emergency. And there are even more projects in which they are signing up to provide food at this emergency time, which will require increased production. At the moment, cooperation is to increase productivity to ensure participation in all emergency projects in force, in order to enable the increase in the income of coperfam's cooperative families, all of them family farming. In the case of the entire economy, for Coperfam the productivity has increased and is ensuring an increase in the quality of life of families, but without neglecting the environment, which generates sustainable development.

And why would this characterize sustainable development?

Because, according to Boff (2015, p. 43), "to be sustainable, development must be economically viable, socially fair and environmentally correct", which shapes coperfam's situation. In this sense, sustainable development in the rural sphere aims to improve the well-being of rural populations, with the ultimate objective of this development. (SCHEIDER, 2004, p. 88). This situation is clear in coperfam's case because the activity is being exploited in order to ensure socially fair distribution among the cooperative members and growth of all, who are developing economically and respecting the environment with their practices, such as the use of cisternto reuse rainwater, process of using cassava bark for animal tract and organic fertilizer with waste produced. And why would this characterize sustainable development? Because, according to Boff (2015, p. 43), "to be sustainable, development must be economically viable, socially fair and environmentally correct", which shapes coperfam's situation. In this sense, sustainable development in the rural sphere aims to improve the well-being of rural populations, with the ultimate objective of this development. (SCHEIDER, 2004, p. 88). This situation is clear in coperfam's case because the activity is being exploited in order to ensure socially fair distribution among the cooperative members and growth of all, who are developing economically and respecting the environment with their practices, such as the use of cisternto reuse rainwater, process of using cassava bark for animal tract and organic fertilizer with waste produced.

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