

Limits and potentialities of the national school food program in the perception of regional social actors¹

Limites e potencialidades do programa nacional de alimentação escolar na percepção de atores sociais regionais

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to discuss the limits and potential of the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) in the city of Passo Fundo-RS. In addition to a brief bibliographic review, the methodological procedures emphasize the perception of the social actors directly and indirectly linked to the execution of this Program at the local/regional level. It is an explanatory research, with a qualitative approach to the data collected through field and documentary research. The results indicated that the making of individual public calls for each state school constitutes the main limiting factor in the development of the PNAE. Social actors perceive PNAE as a Program that contributes to income generation in rural areas, benefiting family farmers in this institutional market. It is concluded that the development of PNAE in Passo Fundo-RS, despite being a process under construction, has been stimulating family farming at the local and regional level.

Keywords: Family farming. PNAE. School feeding. Institutional markets.

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir os limites e as potencialidades do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (PNAE) no município de Passo Fundo-RS. Além de uma breve revisão bibliográfica, os procedimentos metodológicos enfatizam a percepção dos atores sociais vinculados direta e indiretamente na execução desse Programa em âmbito local/regional. Trata-se de uma pesquisa explicativa, com abordagem qualitativa dos dados coletados por meio de pesquisa de campo e documental. Os resultados indicaram que a realização de Chamadas Públicas individuais para cada escola estadual se constitui no principal fator limitador do desenvolvimento do PNAE. Os atores sociais percebem o PNAE como um Programa que contribui para a geração de renda no meio rural, beneficiando os agricultores familiares nesse mercado institucional. Conclui-se que o desenvolvimento do PNAE em Passo Fundo - RS, apesar de se constituir em um processo em construção, vem estimulando a agricultura familiar em nível local e regional.

Palavras-chave: Agricultura familiar. PNAE. Alimentação escolar. Mercados institucionais.

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1 INTRODUCTION

School meals are an important instrument for sustainable local development (SONNINO; SPAYDE; ASHE, 2016) and the formulation of policies and programs that promote and offer healthy food in schools generates an institutional demand for fresh and culturally appropriate foods, opening space for the marketing of products from family farmers. In this process, the State plays an important role in establishing a legal apparatus that promotes the participation of family farming in this market, so that it is not fully occupied by the traditional industry (FAO; OPAS, 2017).

The incentive for the public purchases to be made from family farmers allows the growth of jobs in rural areas, the reduction of rural exodus, the reduction of rural and urban poverty and the encouragement of sustainable consumption (TRICHES; SCHNEIDER; SIMÕES, 2013). By promoting the stimulation of sustainable family farming, it has been reducing vulnerabilities resulting from massive hegemonic production, and promoting greater ecological and social resilience.

In the Brazilian context, the school feeding policy guideline is regulated through the National School Feeding Program - PNAE. As from Law 11,947/2009, which provides for a minimum percentage of purchases of products from family farming for school meals. This social category has been given a guarantee of commercialization of their production and the possibility of access to other markets (FERNANDES; SCHNEIDER; TRICHES, 2016).

With Law No. 11,947/2009, the government brought family farming closer to school feeding, however many barriers were faced in the scope of program management, as the direct purchase of family farming products in some municipalities occurred without the proper preparation of rural producers to meet the

needs of schools (TERRA E SILVA; NATIVIDADE; JOAQUIM, 2016).

The municipalities carry out the operationalization of the PNAE resources in different ways, according to their structure and local specificities. Institutional purchasing policies for family farming foods for school meals require a strategy and local consultation for their viability (BALEM, 2015). Such strategies must be built taking into account the reality of the municipality and guided by the involvement of the different actors that make the program operational, not by the logic of the market that is based on the demand and supply of products. It is the local level that will make the federal legislation of the PNAE effective or not, depending on the awareness and leadership of managers, technical professionals and the participation of civil society (TRICHES; BACCARIN, 2016).

Some authors (TRICHES; SCHNEIDER, 2010; BALEM, 2015; AMARAL, 2016; BELIK, 2016a; 2016b; KROTH et al., 2019) have sought to dimension the institutional market for school meals, analyzing the participation of family farming, the limits and the potential of this social category as a food supplier for institutional purchasing programs. Without departing from the more general objectives that guide these research and, with the purpose of providing analytical elements for the improvement of the PNAE at the local level, this work aims to identify the limits and potential of PNAE in the municipality of Passo Fundo, taking into consideration the perception of regional social actors directly and indirectly linked to the operationalization of the Program at the regional level.

The municipality of Passo Fundo is located in the north of the state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) and has 109 public schools, of which 39 are state schools and 70 are municipal schools, receiving approximately 33,281 students per day,

according to the field research data. The importance of this study is also linked to the fact that the municipality of Passo Fundo is the largest town in the north of the state of RS, with an estimated 203,275 inhabitants (IBGE, 2019). From these data, it is important to verify the reality of the operationalization of the PNAE in this municipality.

This article is organized into five sections, starting with this introduction. Section two addresses conceptual issues about family farming and institutional markets. The third section presents the methodological designs, followed by the fourth part, which exposes and analyzes the research results. Finally, the final remarks.

2 FAMILY AGRICULTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL MARKETS

Family farming consists of a recognized and legitimate social form, existing in a significant portion of the countries that have an agrarian structure composed of an expressive number of farms, where the work by family members is not only prevalent, but also has decision-making power (SCHNEIDER, 2003). The family farming category is understood as that in which the family owns the means of production and takes over the work in the productive establishment, with different combinations between property and work (WANDERLEY, 1999). This is not an element of diversity, but it contains all diversity in it and its dimension does not determine its nature, but its internal and external relationships (LAMARCHE, 1993).

In order to build a general definition, which can encompass all the diversity of historical and socioeconomic situations and also of economic types, Motta (2010) highlights that family farming is understood

as forms of organization of production, where the family has the means of production and, at the same time, performs productive activities.

For Schneider and Cassol (2013), family farming has recently been recognized in Brazil. The authors point out that such recognition is mainly due to three factors: 1) with the end of the military dictatorship (1965-1985) there was a resumption of the union movement in the country; 2) in the academic sphere, the debate on the role of family farming in Brazil was intensified in the early 1990s, mainly by social scientists; and, 3) the creation of the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (Pronaf) in 1996 marked the recognition of family agriculture by the Brazilian State.

Diversified family farming offers opportunities for establishing productive and commercial relationships, at the regional level, aimed at the production, distribution and consumption of quality foods. In this sense, Maluf (2004) points out that it is important to develop public actions aimed at promoting the production and consumption of quality regional foods, in the form of government programs and projects involving non-governmental organizations and entities representing farmers and consumers.

As of 2003, public policies for family farming were built and institutionalized in Brazil based on building markets for food security and sustainability (GRISA; SCHNEIDER, 2015). Among the public policies for family farming, it is worth mentioning the Food Acquisition Program (PAA¹), linked to the policy to fight hunger, and the PNAE, the object of study in this article, which is linked to the Brazilian educational policy.

IBGE data (2017) show that family farming contributes to the agriculture and livestock of the country corresponding to

¹ The PAA, created by article 19 of Law No. 10,696/2003, is a program where the federal government buys food from family farming producers and distributes it free of charge to people who do not have access to adequate food and to social assistance institutions, to the public and philanthropic education system and distributes also public equipment for food and nutritional security (MINISTÉRIO DA CIDADANIA, 2020).

23% of all agricultural production. In addition, it represents 77% of Brazilian agricultural establishments and occupies 80.9 million hectares of area, representing 23% of the total rural establishments in the country. The relative magnitude of participation of this social category in the context of establishments and in Brazilian agriculture reveals its importance, deserving government incentives that guarantee its persistence and productive viability. However, family farmers face several challenges in accessing markets, such as: difficulties in transportation/logistics, difficulties in knowing prices and in identifying consumer preferences. Markets are controlled by actors who have a monopoly on transport, price formation, the access to consumers and, in this context, family farmers are disadvantaged (SCHNEIDER, 2017).

For Schneider (2016), there are four types of markets that family farmers access, which differ: by the type or profile of family farmers, by the locus and / or spatial reach, by the nature or characteristics of the markets, by the existing forms of regulation and marketing channels that are used. In this perspective, public and institutional markets have been increasingly occupied by family farmers in Brazil and also in other countries, with the State or a public body as the main agent. In these markets, the prices charged tend to be higher than the prices of conventional markets, arousing great interest on the part of family farmers, in addition to a greater guarantee of being paid for the products sold (SCHNEIDER, 2016). This is the case of the market created by the PNAE in 2009, which made it possible to insert products from family farmers with the guarantee of a minimum percentage in purchases in this social category, as expressed in the legislation:

Of the total of the financial resources transferred by the FNDE, within the

scope of the PNAE, at least 30% (thirty percent) should be used in the acquisition of foodstuffs directly from family farming producers or their organizations, prioritizing the land reform settlements, traditional indigenous communities and quilombola communities (BRASIL, 2009).

The State plays an important role in food supply and food security policies and can operate in sectors where markets face difficulties (SCHNEIDER, 2017). Therefore, the Brazilian government, when implementing the Law No. 11,947/2009, used public procurement to benefit the allocation of local family farmers to institutional school food markets (TRICHES, 2015). There are still operational, structural, political and economic barriers that must be faced in the construction and management of this market, but it should be noted that the action and relationship between the social actors involved in the public procurement process is one of the fundamental aspects for the legislation to be effective or not.

3 METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

In methodological terms, this study favors the explanatory research and includes a qualitative approach to the data obtained through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews with key people linked to institutional purchases. Specifically, explanatory content based on primary information is presented, although using secondary data and theoretical elements to qualitatively subsidize the analysis. Such procedures are in accordance with the methodologies used in research of this nature (GIL, 2016; MINAYO, 2016).

Open or in-depth² interviews were conducted, in accordance with previously prepared Interview Scripts³. Twenty-five

² For Minayo (2016), open or in-depth interviews are those where the informant is invited to speak freely about a topic and in which the questions aim to provide depth for the reflections.

³ Such scripts were developed by the researchers from the scripts validated by Triches (2010) and Balem (2015), adapting the questions to the particularities of the present study.

key informants from six schools (four state schools and two municipal schools), from the School Nutrition Coordination (CNE), from the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company of the State of Rio

Grande do Sul (Emater/RS⁴) and representatives of cooperatives of family farmers and family farmers as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - List of respondents

Institution	Key-informant	Nº of respondents
Schools (State and Municipal)	Principals, Secretaries and Teachers	12
School Nutrition Coordination (CNE)	School Nutrition Coordination	1
Emater (Municipal and Regional Office of Passo Fundo and Cooperative Unit - UCP of Erechim)	Extension Workers	5
Representatives of Cooperatives of Family Farmers and family farmers	Representatives	7
Total of respondents:		25

Source: The authors.

It is worth mentioning that the interviews were carried out primarily with informants working in schools, where the school feeding process takes place, and in entities that interact directly with family farmers (Emater, cooperatives, school nutrition coordination), suppliers of products of local/regional origin contemplated by Law 11,947/ 2009.

More state schools were selected for the interviews in comparison to municipal ones, because this type of PNAE management occurs in different ways. In state schools, each school makes its purchases from family farming producers for school meals through a purchasing instrument called *Chamada Pública*¹ (Public Announcement), which is done individually for each state school, a modality known as school-based management.

In the municipal schools, there is a body called School Nutrition Coordination (CNE), which purchases food for all

municipal schools, a type of management known as “municipalized management”. School-based management, therefore, presents a diversity of situations according to the specificities of each school, while in municipal management there is a standardized process to meet the demands of all schools, under the command of a responsible entity.

The interviews were conducted from March to November 2017, in the municipality of Passo Fundo/RS; only one of the interviews conducted with the Cooperative Unit of Emater (UCP) took place in the municipality of Erechim/RS.

The method of analysis and interpretation of the data occurred through the “Analysis of Development Situations²” (ADS), which is based on the research carried out by Silva Neto (2007) and Basso (2012), which, in turn, are epistemologically based on the contributions of Bhaskar’s critical realism (2008) and on the historical and dialectical

⁴ In the municipality of Passo Fundo, Emater has a Regional Office that covers 40 municipalities and a Municipal Office, which aims to serve local farmers. In addition to these two Emater units, the Emater UCP located in the town of Erechim, Rio \Grande do Sul, also operates in the institutional PNAE market in Passo Fundo.

¹ In purchases of family farming products for the PNAE, the traditional bidding process (Law No. 8666/1993) can be waived and purchases can be made through the purchase instrument called Public Announcement, provided that the constitutional requirements of legality, impersonality, morality, advertising and efficiency are met and prices are in line with the average prices practiced in the local market (AMARAL, 2016).

² According to Basso (2012), this analysis methodology arose from the study method called “Analysis-Diagnosis of Agricultural Systems” (ADSA) which was developed by the discipline of Comparative Agriculture and Development of the National Institute of Agronomy in Paris-Grignon.

materialism (SILVA NETO, 2016) and operationally based on the Analysis-Diagnosis of Agrarian Systems (ADAS) (DUFUMIER, 2007; MAZOYER & ROUDART, 2010).

To carry out this type of analysis, the researcher must prioritize the direct contact with reality to understand what they propose to study (BASSO, 2012). Each level of study must be analyzed separately and progressively, through observations and speeches from individuals selected *a priori*, so that the most relevant questions of each stage are answered. When the main questions of each level are answered, then a synthesis of that level must be carried out, seeking to identify the relevant questions for the next level. The focus should be on information with greater explanatory power, so that there is greater explanatory power for the object of study (SILVA NETO, 2007).

These procedures were used to understand the PNAE in public schools in Passo Fundo from the perception of regional social actors.

4 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this section, the data collected on the PNAE in the municipality of Passo Fundo are presented and analyzed. Initially, some data from the PNAE in Passo Fundo and local agricultural production are

presented. Then, the organization of family farming suppliers for PNAE in this municipality is addressed. In the third subsection, the limits and potential of the PNAE are discussed from the perspective of regional social actors directly or indirectly linked to the Program.

4.1 PNAE IN PASSO FUNDO AND THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

In the municipality of Passo Fundo, the public benefiting from school meals in 2017 was of approximately 33 thousand students distributed in 109 public schools, including the state, municipal and philanthropic schools.

With Law No. 11.947/2009 it was determined that at least 30% of the funds transferred by the FNDE to schools for the purchase of foodstuffs must be used to purchase products from family farmers (FNDE, 2016). Based on that legislation, a market was created for this social category in Passo Fundo.

Although Passo Fundo is a municipality with an agricultural space characterized by modern agriculture, the presence of family farming producers is significant (TEDESCO, 2006), as shown in Table 1 prepared from data from the Agricultural Census of IBGE (2017).

Table 1- Number of agricultural establishments and Area of establishments by groups of total area in the municipality of Passo Fundo - RS, 2017.

Groups of total area (hectares-ha)	Number of establishments	%	Area of establishments	%
From 0 to 20 ha	487	54.1	3.605	7
From 20 to less than 50 ha	171	19	5.414	10.5
From 50 to less than 100 ha	103	11.5	6.913	13.4
From 100 to less than 500 ha	117	13	25.155	48.9
From 500 ha and more	22	2.4	10.383	20.2
TOTAL	900	100	51.470	100

Source: IBGE (2017).

Most establishments with less than 100 ha are predominantly occupied by family farmers, but those involved in institutional markets are certainly in the stratum of less than 20 ha. More than 50% of the farmers in Passo Fundo are in this area, but they use only 7% of the total area devoted to agriculture in this municipality. The concentration of land is remarkable in the agriculture of Passo Fundo. On the one hand, about 73% of the establishments have less than 50 hectares and together have approximately 17% of the total area, while 15.4% of the establishments have more than 100 hectares and hold about 70% of the total area.

Based on the Law No. 11,947/2009, the Association of Small Farmers of Passo Fundo (Agropasso) was created and, subsequently, some family farmers joined together through the Passo Fundo Milk Producers Cooperative (Agroleite), which absorbed the majority of the market share generated by the PNAE, both in state and municipal schools until the year 2012.

In 2013, Emater started to act as an articulator of family farming to the institutional market for school meals in Passo Fundo and, according to the reports of the extension workers interviewed, management problems were identified in the organizations of family farmers. Agropasso and Agroleite had their activities suspended because of irregularities found in their operation and family farmers in Passo Fundo who are PNAE suppliers and associated with these institutions, were afraid to establish new links with other associations or cooperatives with productive potential to participate in this Program.

Data from the field research with Emater extension workers, family farmers and the school nutrition coordinator indicate that school meals in Passo Fundo are mostly provided by cooperatives based in other municipalities, whose average distance is 86 km, as shown in Figure 1 in the next subsection. What happened to Agropasso, which had little effective

participation by its members, especially in its decision-making and management processes, resulted in a type of cooperative that ended up fragmenting, and no longer serving the interests and trust of its traditional members.

Emater, through its municipal office, has been acting individually on the properties of family farmers in the municipality of Passo Fundo, in different spheres that comprehend the extension processes. Such incursions are carried out, especially on farms where, not infrequently, the logistics and the lack of technical knowledge undermine the good cultivation practices required for supplying food to schools.

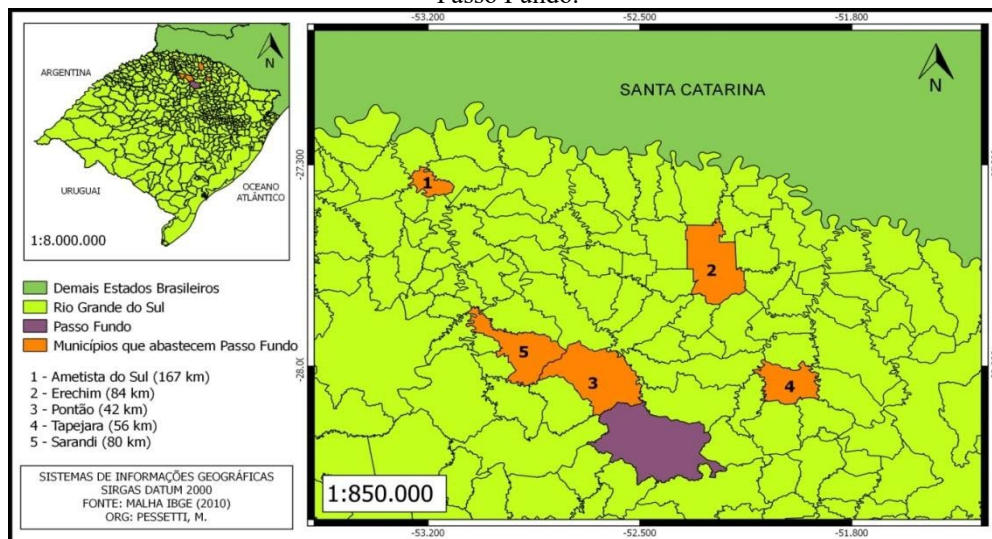
4.2 THE ORGANIZATION OF SUPPLIERS FOR THE PNAE IN PASSO FUNDO

Family farming suppliers for the PNAE in Passo Fundo are mostly organized into cooperatives of family farmers, seven of which have been identified as being the main ones in the interviews: the Agricultural Production Cooperative *Terra e Vida Ltda* (Coopervita), located in the municipality of Tapejara; the Central Cooperative for the Commercialization of Family Farming products of Solidarity Economy (Cecafes), from the municipality of Erechim; the Agricultural Production Cooperative *Casata Ltda* (Cooptar) and the Agricultural and Dairy Cooperative *Pontão Ltda* (Cooperlat), both from the municipality of Pontão; the Alternative Work Mixed Cooperative Ltda (Coonalter), located in Passo Fundo; the Cooperative of Producers of Grapes and Byproducts from Ametista do Sul (Cooperametista), located in Ametista do Sul and the Production Cooperative for Family Farmers in Sarandi and Region (Coopafs), from the municipality of Sarandi.

Figure 1 highlights the geographical location of the main supply cooperatives for school meals in Passo Fundo, as well as

their distance from the municipality of Passo Fundo.

Figure 1 - Geographic location of the main cooperatives of family farmers that supply products to the PNAE in Passo Fundo.



Source: created using data from IBGE (2010).

Figure 1 shows the five different municipalities where the cooperatives are located, with their respective distances from the municipality of Passo Fundo. It is worth highlighting the case of Coopervita, because despite having its headquarters in the municipality of Tapejara, it has among its members family farmers residing in Passo Fundo. Coopervita does not fit into the group of local suppliers or in the same rural territory, according to the order of priority established in the Resolution No. 4/2015¹. The municipality of Passo Fundo integrates the rural territory *Produção-RS*; Tapejara, on the other hand, is the municipality in which this cooperative is headquartered and is part of the rural territory *Nordeste-RS*, according to the classification of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA, 2017). However, this cooperative is located in the vicinity of Passo Fundo and also provides food from

associated farmers who reside in the municipality, as previously mentioned.

Horticulture products are purchased by state and municipal schools, mostly from Cecafes from the municipality of Erechim. Although there are potential producers in Passo Fundo to supply school needs, they instead direct their efforts to supply the most general urban demands with sales at local fairs, restaurants and private sector companies, not participating in the school food market.

The extension workers of Emater interviewed understand that there is a local productive potential for supplying schools, and for this purpose they work to expand the process of awareness of these farmers. In addition, these subjects point out one of the main difficulties for local farmers: logistics for delivering products. This results from the requirement for adequate storage of food vis-à-vis their peculiar perishability. There are 39 state schools and 70 municipal

¹According to Resolution No. 4, of April 2, 2015, in relation to the groups of suppliers it is established that the sales projects enabled to the PNAE must prioritize, in the following order for selection: I - The group of projects of local suppliers will have priority

over the other groups; II - The group of projects of rural suppliers will have priority over that of the state and the country ones; III - The group of projects of rural suppliers in the state will have priority over the country one (FNDE, 2015).

schools, distributed in different locations in the municipality of Passo Fundo.

Thus, in view of the difficulties faced by producers, on the one hand, the crisis of local cooperativism and logistical difficulties end up acting in a way that they seem to be “choices” oriented towards a differentiated productive and commercial emphasis. The research findings indicate

that, for a significant part of the local family farmers, the fairs held in the municipality are more attractive, since the payment for the products sold is immediate, and besides, this market requires lower logistics expenses.

Table 2 shows the different Cooperatives that supply the state and municipal schools in Passo Fundo - RS.

Table 2 - Main Cooperatives of Family Farmers that supply the PNAE in Passo Fundo

Cooperative	Headquarter	No. of family farmers affiliated	Types of products provided	Supplies for Schools
Coonalter	Passo Fundo	140	Lettuce, spices, kale, broccoli, beets, carrots and oranges.	Municipal and State
Coopervita	Tapejara	880	Fruit and milk sweets, powdered milk, cassava, bread, cakes, pasta, garlic, onion, beet, strawberry, cabbage, grape and orange juices.	Municipal and State
Cecafes ¹	Erechim	10743	Fruits and vegetables, dairy products, rice, beans and baked goods.	Municipal and State
Cooperlat	Pontão	419	Dairy beverages, cheese, beans, organic rice, fruits and vegetables.	Municipal and State
Coopafs	Sarandi	389	Vegetables and farm products, natural juices, cereals, minimally processed.	Municipal
Cooperametista	Ametista do Sul	48	Whole orange and grape juice.	Municipal
Cooptar	Pontão	15	Diced beef, diced pork, ground beef (Prime and Choice) and sausage.	State

Source: Research data.

The most evident information in Table 2, concerns the discrepancy between the number of members in the different Cooperatives and the diversity of products offered. Of the cooperatives listed, Coonalter is the only one with headquarters in the municipality of Passo Fundo, however the family farmers affiliated are mostly from other municipalities. The cooperative has been operating for 25 years and its main focus is the Passo Fundo Ecological Fair¹, selling products such as vegetables, fruits and baked goods.

For the cooperative representative, the demand for school meals in Passo Fundo is quite significant, especially in the municipal system, and the logistical issue of school delivery is a difficulty for Coonalter. This is because this cooperative focuses on organic or agroecological production, and the priority is on product quality and not on quantity. There is a diversified production on the part of the members, but the amount produced by them does not have the potential to supply the PNAE demand in this municipality.

Coopervita has among its members some family farmers from Passo Fundo. This cooperative is headquartered in Tapejara and serves both the municipal school system and the

¹ Cecafes is a distribution center, which has 19 cooperatives of affiliated family farmers, from different cities in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina.

¹ The Passo Fundo Ecological Fair has been held since 1998 and is part of a set of ecological fairs that

are held in the cities of Porto Alegre, Caxias do Sul, Pelotas, Santa Cruz do Sul and Antônio Prado, in addition to other municipalities. It is held weekly at Praça da Mãe Preta, in the city center of Passo Fundo (TEDESCO, 2006).

state school system. According to its representative, the cooperative was founded in 1998 with 27 members and currently has 900 members, of which only 20 are not family farmers. Since 2010, the cooperative has been supplying products for school meals in Passo Fundo, but since 2013 it has had greater emphasis on this market. 27 state schools and the entire municipal system of Passo Fundo are served and this market represents to the Cooperative 40% of the revenue related to the PNAE, taking into account that schools in other municipalities are also served.

Considering the reports of the representatives of the cooperatives and the information from the interviews conducted at schools and at the CNE, it is clear that Coopervita has been making substantial efforts to meet the requirements of schools. To this end, it emphasizes technological processes capable of allowing not only better product quality, but, above all, greater standardization, in addition to meeting deadlines and regularizing documentation, which are requirements for the participation in the competitive processes of selling food to schools. This is corroborated by the report of the Coopervita representative, who highlights the importance of the PNAE for the cooperative in Passo Fundo:

It is a very important market, it represents 40% of the revenue related to school meals, considering that we serve other municipalities in the region, in addition to integrating some family farmers and agro-industries in Passo Fundo in the commercialization. (Coopervita representative)

Cecafes, which is known in the region as the Family Farming Marketing Center of Solidarity Economy, is a cooperative legally formalized in 2012, and headquartered in the municipality of Erechim/RS. This cooperative has 19 associated cooperatives, with a total of 10,743 farmers. Cecafes has been marketing products for school meals in Passo Fundo since 2014, both for the state and municipal systems.

Cooperametista is a cooperative of producers of grapes and byproducts and produces juices and wines, so it supplies only whole grape and orange juice for school meals, having been participating in this market since 2016, only in municipal schools.

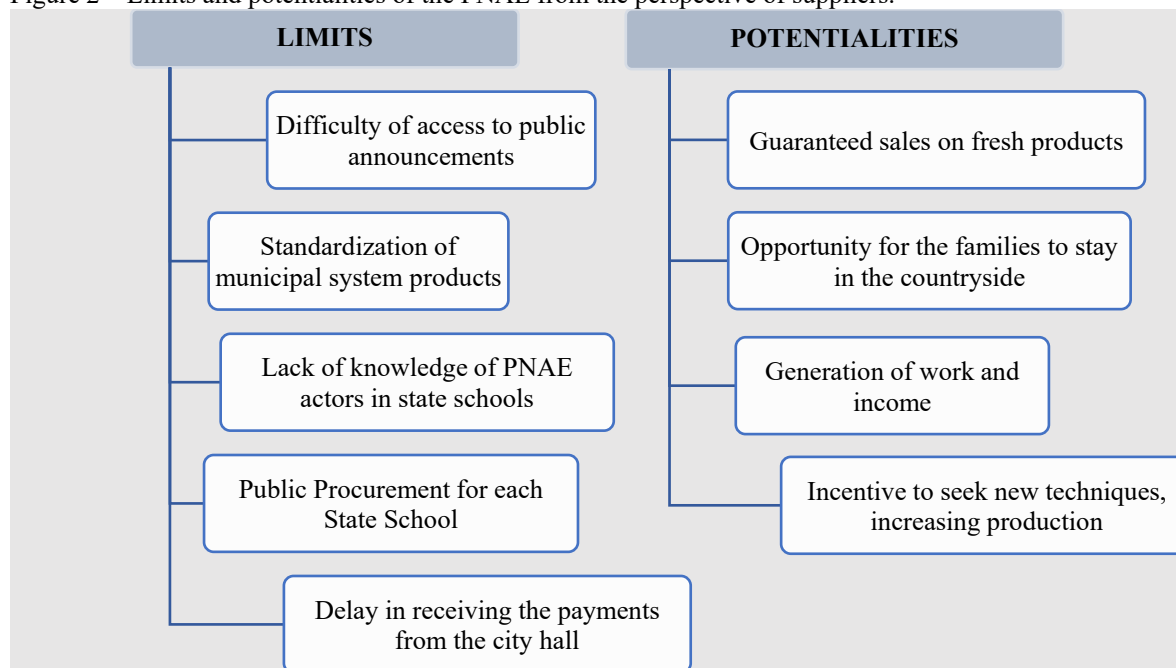
Cooperlat is located in the municipality of Pontão. It has 419 members, 15 of these members deliver products for school meals. This cooperative has been a PNAE supplier in Passo Fundo since 2015, both for the municipal system and for some state schools. For the Cooperlat representative, the institutional market for school meals in Passo Fundo is important, as it has been acting as a stimulus for the diversification and increase of production, and consequently, of the income for its members.

Cooptar is located in the interior of Pontão-RS. In the Allotment Settlement *16 de Março*, it has 15 associated families that reside and plant foodstuffs in the settlement, in addition to breeding dairy and beef cattle. This cooperative supplies only the state schools of Passo Fundo (approximately 20 schools).

4.3 LIMITS AND POTENTIALITIES OF THE PNAE FOR SUPPLIERS

The PNAE has functioned for more than a decade in its new format (Law No. 11.947/2009), and it is important to address the limits and potentialities of this Program in the local context. Thus, Figure 2 was created from the perceptions of some of the PNAE suppliers (farmers and representatives of cooperatives of family farmers), about the supply of food to public schools, and the potentialities generated by the existence of this institutional market.

Figure 2 – Limits and potentialities of the PNAE from the perspective of suppliers.



Source: Research Data.

From what is shown in Figure 2, it is worth highlighting some of the situations considered as limiting and others as potentialities for the execution of the PNAE in Passo Fundo, from the perspective of the suppliers.

One of the aspects highlighted by the representatives of the cooperatives refers to the lack of knowledge involving institutional purchases by the PNAE actors in state schools. Most of those who are responsible for purchases in these schools are the teachers or principals themselves, assigned to these activities without having specific training to deal with the bureaucratic processes institutional purchases involve.

The Individual Public Announcement of each state school is identified as the main limiting factor in the institutional purchasing process, not only because it generates difficulties in measuring the total demand for food, but also due to the excess of bureaucratic procedures, such as the submission of documents in each school, by a professional who does not work exclusively in this activity.

It is noted that the central reason for recognizing the individual Public

Announcement as a limiting factor in the process of selling products to state schools, stems from the previous existence of a particular situation. In the state education system of Passo Fundo, a joint purchasing instrument, called Unified Public Announcement was used, whereby the 7th Regional Education Coordination (CRE), together with UCP-Erechim, were responsible for the purchasing process of family farming products for all state schools in this municipality. The Unified Public Announcement was carried out from the second semester of 2014 until the first semester of 2016. After the second semester of 2016, by decision of the State Government, each school returned to make its purchases from family farming products individually. For the Cooperlat representative:

It was a faster way of dealing with all the red tape of Public Announcements, now we need to make several trips to Passo Fundo to take and sign contracts from state schools. (Cooperlat representative)

Still about the Unified Public Announcement, it is worth mentioning the speech of the Cecafes representative:

The Unified Public Announcement made the process much easier, reduced paper costs and notarizations, as it was a single envelope for qualification, it was a single budget. Its termination added higher expenses to the participation in Public Announcements, adding a higher cost to projects and sometimes making participation unfeasible. (Field research)

It is noteworthy that the research data collected from the regional social actors linked to the PNAE in Passo Fundo, in addition to family farmers and representatives of cooperatives, indicate that the experience of the Unified Public Announcement process enabled advances and improvements in the operationalization of the Program in this municipality, and the decision for the non-continuity of this type of purchase for state schools is understood by these subjects as a step backwards in relation to the activities developed until then.

In order to investigate the importance attributed to the cooperatives of family farmers selected regarding the school food market in the municipality of Passo Fundo, their representatives were asked about the potentialities perceived with this institutional market. For the Coopervita representative, who is also a family farmer associated with the cooperative enterprise:

It is an important opportunity for marketing and for the fixation of family farmers in the field, as it provides the generation of work and income, in addition to creating perspectives for the children to make their family succession on the property. (Field research)

The importance attributed to the permanence of families in the field seems consensual at various moments during the interviews, and is also corroborated with the speech of the representative of Cooperametista:

The sale of juices for school meals in Passo Fundo and other municipalities in the region represents the guarantee of selling fresh goods produced on

family farms, thus contributing to the permanence of the family unit in the countryside. (Field research).

The main regional actors involved in institutional purchases as suppliers to the PNAE, clearly recognize that it has been contributing to the **permanence of the farmers in the field through income generation**. For Maluf (2007, p. 32), family farming “enables the occupation of the agrarian space and favors the appreciation of the social, environmental and cultural dimensions of agri-food production”. At the same time that small-scale agri-food activities generate employment and income for rural families, these families, for the most part, are also in poverty, with difficulties in accessing food (MALUF, 2007).

From a more general point of view, the participation of family farmers in institutional markets, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and PNAE, Stropasolas (2017, p. 451) explains that:

The number of family farmers participating in the PAA and PNAE is still very small, and the amount of public resources for these policies is still very low. On the other hand, family farmers, especially the ones from the excluded sectors, do not have enough products and are not prepared to supply these institutional policies. More precisely, the volume of government purchases is still low and does not influence the total tradable volume, either in terms of the price practiced or in terms of availability of credit. Some factors are raised to justify the insufficiency and little scope of these policies, among which it is verified that neither the PAA nor the PNAE use the system of advancing resources (purchasing in advance) for the producer. At the same time, there are difficulties in terms of paperwork, logistics for serving large cities, and besides, the quality standards set by many city halls hinder greater insertion of family farmers.

The difficulties faced by the group of family farmers described by Stropasolas (2017) are similar to the reality observed in the institutional purchasing processes of the

PNAE in Passo Fundo. In addition, it should be noted that for farmers to participate in this institutional market there is an initial investment, formalization of documentation, regular quality standard, adequacy of packaging, records and certificates up to date, these being requirements to be implemented that cannot do without the support and technical assistance from other intervening institutions.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of this article was to identify the limits and potentialities of the PNAE in the municipality of Passo Fundo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, based on the perception of regional social actors directly and indirectly linked to the Program in the local context. Despite the limiting factors, in general, this Program has contributed to the supply of healthy food, and has stimulated family farming and the sustainability of the agri-food sector at the local level.

It is reiterated that, from Law No. 11,947/2009, an Association and a Cooperative were created in the municipality of Passo Fundo with the central objective of meeting the demand of the PNAE, however, due to the limiting factors of this process, explained in section 4, they have been hampering the participation of family farmers in this institutional market. It can be seen that the largest portion of the PNAE demand in Passo Fundo (municipal and state schools) is served by cooperatives of family farmers headquartered in other municipalities.

Among the main cooperatives that supply PNAE in this municipality, Coonalter is the only one that has its headquarters in Passo Fundo, however the family farmers associated with this cooperative are established in other municipalities. It was also found that, contradictorily, Coopervita, headquartered in the municipality of Tapejara, Rio Grande

do Sul, has several family farmers from Passo Fundo as members, and the main foodstuffs from this cooperative are marketed in the municipality of Tapejara.

It is important to highlight that the individual Public Announcement for state schools is considered by the regional social actors interviewed as the main limiting factor of the PNAE in Passo Fundo and that caused setbacks in relation to the advances that had been made through unified purchases.

The field research indicates that the PNAE is perceived by regional social actors as a Program with the potential to contribute to the permanence of family farmers in rural areas through income generation. It is also considered that the trade with this institutional market tends to improve the consumption habits of the families of the farmers themselves. In fact, the entire place can be transformed through the sustainability processes and the offer of healthy foods that can also be sold in other markets, in addition to the institutional market.

This article contributes through theoretical and empirical elements to the wide debate that involves healthy eating and the trajectory of struggle for sustainable agro-food development, discussing the reality of a school feeding program at the local level. The particularities that involve the operationalization of the PNAE in Passo Fundo, because of the history of changes in the actions involving institutional purchases, can contribute to promote the improvement or partial changes in order to achieve the results expected from the implementation of Law No. 11,947/2009 in this Program.

Based on the case of Coopervita, the importance of other research to investigate which factors led the farmers of Passo Fundo to join this Cooperative, which is located in a neighboring town and has been able to absorb a significant part of the institutional market for school meals from Passo Fundo, is emphasized.

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