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## **PRONAF AND THE PROCESS OF (DE)TERRITORIALIZATION OF FAMILY AGRICULTURE OF NOVA PALMA AND PINHAL GRANDE (RS)**

## **O PRONAF E O PROCESSO DE (DES)TERRITORIALIZAÇÃO DA AGRICULTURA FAMILIAR DE NOVA PALMA E PINHAL GRANDE (RS)**

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### **Abstract**

Public policies are capable of influencing territorial dynamics under different dimensions. In this sense, this research sought to evaluate, from the perspective of development agents, how PRONAF has influenced the process of (de)territorialization of family farming in the cities of Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande (RS). The study is characterized as qualitative and applied different data collection techniques, namely: bibliographic research, secondary data and semi-structured interviews with nine development agents, carried out between the months of October and November 2020. It was observed that PRONAF has contributed both to the territorialization of family farming and to its deterritorialization. The program has led to the expansion of the planted area and to the increase of productivity and enabled the improvement of the infrastructure of agricultural establishments and the acquisition of machinery, reducing the labor burden. Moreover, PRONAF has contributed to the increase of family farmers' income by raising agricultural productivity. Albeit PRONAF has assisted in the territorialization of grain production aimed at commercialization, both diversified and self-consumption production are present. Through expanding access to PRONAF, the participation of women in agricultural activities has also expanded. However, there has been a reduction in cooperation among farmers.

**Keywords:** Development. Public Policy. Territory.

### **Resumo**

As políticas públicas são capazes de influenciar as dinâmicas territoriais sob diferentes dimensões. Nesse sentido, esta pesquisa buscou avaliar, na perspectiva dos agentes de desenvolvimento, como

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o PRONAF influenciou o processo de (des)territorialização da agricultura familiar nos municípios de Nova Palma e Pinhal Grande (RS). O estudo caracteriza-se como qualitativo e aplicou diferentes técnicas de coleta de dados, a saber: pesquisa bibliográfica, dados secundários e entrevistas semiestruturadas com nove agentes de desenvolvimento, realizadas entre os meses de outubro e novembro de 2020. Observou-se que o PRONAF tem contribuído tanto para a territorialização da agricultura familiar e à sua desterritorialização. O programa levou à expansão da área plantada e ao aumento da produtividade e possibilitou a melhoria da infraestrutura dos estabelecimentos agropecuários e a aquisição de máquinas, reduzindo a carga de trabalho. Além disso, o PRONAF tem contribuído para o aumento da renda dos agricultores familiares ao elevar a produtividade agrícola. Embora o PRONAF tenha auxiliado na territorialização da produção de grãos visando à comercialização, tanto a produção diversificada quanto a produção para autoconsumo estão presentes. Com a ampliação do acesso ao PRONAF, ampliou-se também a participação das mulheres nas atividades agrícolas. No entanto, houve uma redução na cooperação entre os agricultores.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento. Políticas públicas. Território.

## Introduction

Since its establishment in 1996, the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture (PRONAF) has conditioned the expansion of access to rural credit with differentiated conditions for family farmers. The program stands as a milestone in the recognition of a social category and the offer of public policies to promote rural development.

Throughout recent decades, there has been an increase in the amount of resources distributed to finance productive activities, as well as in the number of beneficiaries (RESENDE; MAFRA, 2016). Advances were also seen in the reduction of interest rates, improvement of payment conditions, diversification of the beneficiary public, and simplification of access conditions (GRISA; WESZ JUNIOR; BUCHWEITZ, 2014). In short, PRONAF has collaborated to enhance production conditions, strengthening the inclusion of technologies in rural activity, encouraging farmers to stay in the countryside, and increasing food supply and productivity (GAZOLLA; SCHNEIDER, 2013).

The 2020/2021 Crop Plan forecasts the allocation of more than R\$ 39 billion to financings carried out by PRONAF, of which R\$ 21.74 billion are destined to funding and commercialization and R\$ 17.6 billion to investments. Family farmers can access rural credit with subsidized interest and extended payment terms (MAPA, 2021).

Despite the positive results, PRONAF has encountered difficulties in its mission to mitigate inequality in rural areas. By financing the production of commodities and more capitalized farmers in the South, Southeast, and Midwest regions in Brazil, this public policy has contributed to expanding the socioeconomic issues in the countryside (GRISA; WESZ JUNIOR; BUCHWEITZ, 2014).

Thus, this research highlights the need to understand the effects of PRONAF in the territories in which it is operating. Its reflexes on the processes of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization (SAQUET, 2013) must be multidimensionally investigated, contemplating analyses on the interactions between public policy and the economic, cultural, and natural scopes of the territory. Therefore, the present study seeks to evaluate, under the perspective of development agents, how PRONAF has influenced the process of (de)territorialization of family agriculture in the cities of Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande (RS). The towns are located in the Fourth Colony of Italian Immigration of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and have agricultural production as the basis of its economy. The activities linked to rural areas have a strong family influence and carry colonial traits (FERNANDES, FELIN, MARCHESAN, 2012).

The study is structured into five sections, which include this introduction. Then, the interfaces between territory and public policies are discussed. Subsequently, the methodological procedures and main results of the collection of secondary and primary data are presented. Finally, the research conclusions are described, followed by the bibliographic references.

## Interfaces between territory and public policies

Reflections on development processes gained notoriety at the end of the Second World War, and territorial approaches have been privileging the debate on local dynamics and the interrelationships between social, economic, and institutional actors that operate in this space (DALLABRIDA, 2016). By considering that the territory is a product of the territorial labor division; it is a politically controlled space and a product of symbolic appropriation/valorization, Saquet (2005) proposes that analyses on the territory must be multidimensional. In this sense, its understanding should include the observation of economic, political, cultural, and nature aspects (SAQUET, 2005).

Above all, it is argued that “the territory is a condition of territorial development processes. It is nature and society manifesting itself in a specific way in different places” (SAQUET, 2013, p. 113). Furthermore, its configuration is represented through the processes of (de)territorialization. According to Chelotti (2013, p. 5), “the creation of territories would be represented by territorialization, its destruction (even if temporary) by deterritorialization, and its recreation by the processes of reterritorialization.” In this sense, territorialization refers to the act of appropriating a space and turning it into a territory, deterritorialization is the loss of these territories, while reterritorialization is the creation of new territories.

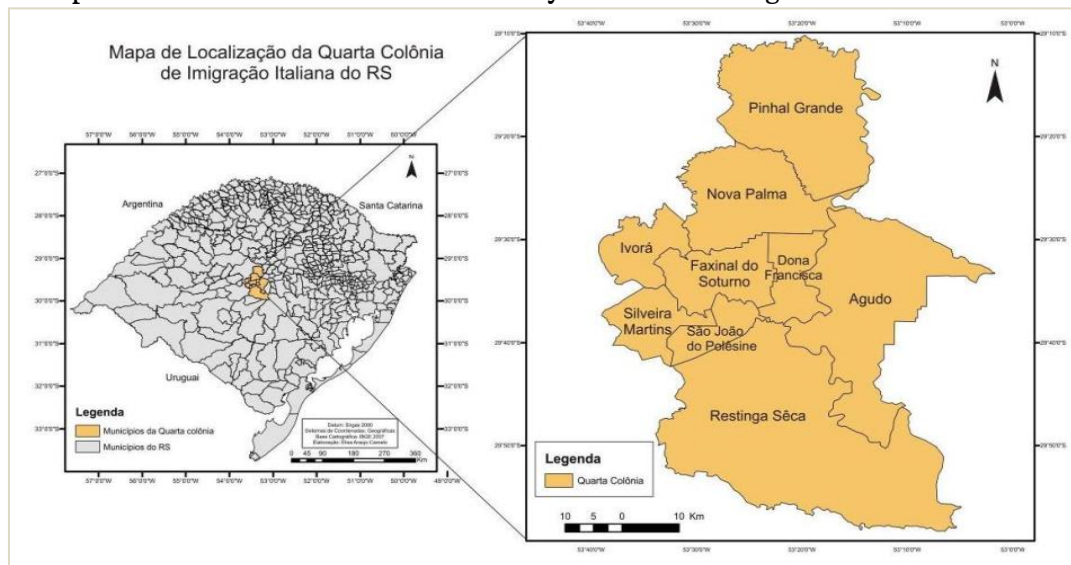
Chelotti (2013) highlights that the processes of (de)territorialization are not stagnant, but rather dynamic processes linked to society itself. For this reason, it is assumed that government interventions focus on territorial scales, so that public policies can be territorially interpreted. Likewise, as Dias and Seixas (2019, p. 51) clarify, the concept of territorialization “suggests that the territory has become an important dimension for governmental action, as central bodies become more sensitive to the specificity of territories, allowing local/regional actors to participate in the formulation and implementation of public policies.” Thus, public policies both impact and are impacted by the territory.

As they are “expressive of the power exercised by various actors in the production of space, let it be through the practice of powers, politics, strategic programs, or through the impression of new uses for the territory” (RIBEIRO, 2015, p. 408), it is crucial to evaluate the impacts of public policies on the territory. In particular, the present research adapts Saquet’s (2013) definition of territory to understand how PRONAF has influenced the process of (de)territorialization of family farming in Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande (RS). The towns aforementioned share a strong agricultural tradition, with 88% of Nova Palma’s agricultural establishments and 92% of Pinhal Grande’s establishments being from family agriculture (IBGE, 2019).

PRONAF was chosen for analysis, since it is one of the major policies focused on promoting family farming in Brazil. However, recent studies reveal contradicting policy results in different territories. For instance, Silva (2010) and Silva and Alves Filho (2009) concluded that the program has positive impacts on the macroeconomic variables of the towns located in the territories of Vale do Mucuri (MG) and Médio Jequitinhonha (MG). On the other hand, Dias and Aguiar (2016) noted negative impacts of PRONAF on territorial development, as did Coelho and Paula (2018), who analyzed the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture and its impacts on the Cantuquipiriguaçu (PR) territory. Next, the methodological procedures used to assess PRONAF’s impacts on the territorial dynamics of the central region of Rio Grande do Sul will be explored.

## Methodological procedures

This research is characterized as qualitative and has used several data collection techniques, such as secondary data collection and the application of semi-structured interviews guided by a previously written script. The secondary data gathering enabled the characterization of the Quarta Colônia (Fourth Colony) territory, where the towns of Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande are located (as seen in Figure 1). Predominantly Italian and highly influenced by German colonization, the towns situated in the geographical center of Rio Grande do Sul stand out for the socioeconomic relations established with/in the countryside.

**Figure 1: Map of the Location of the Fourth Colony of Italian Immigration in RS**

Source: Figueiredo (2014, p. 163).

Information from the last Demographic Census carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2021) indicates that, in both Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande, the majority of the population lives in rural areas. In particular, most rural properties settled in the territory are family farms, which can be explained by two reasons: i) due to the soil constitution and the relief, which are predominantly difficult to produce for its high slopes; and ii) due to cultural questions and rural lot division among property heirs (SCAPIN, 2021; MANFIO; PIEROZAN, 2017).

The collection and analysis of primary data constituted an important part of this study, as the interviews focused on analyzing the interrelations of PRONAF and the transformation process of the territory of the towns of Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande. The analyses acknowledged the territory's economic, cultural, and natural dimensions. For the economic dimension of the territory, questions were raised regarding changes in production, structure of agricultural establishments, income generation capacity, and the production's commercialization method. Concerning the cultural dimension, there were questions regarding changes in traditional relationships, identities, the way of doing things, and the relations with the community.

The interviews were conducted from October and November 2020, with four Nova Palma development agents and five Pinhal Grande development agents. The development agents interviewed in both towns were: the president and secretary of the Rural Workers Union, agronomists and technicians from Emater, Banco do Brasil managers, and staff responsible for establishing PRONAF projects, one being the collaborator of an agricultural cooperative and the other of a private agricultural company.

Following the collection and transcription of the interviews, a data analysis was carried out through the content analysis technique (BARDIN, 2011). The analysis categories were established *a posteriori*, from the grouping of the interviewee's speeches. It is important to highlight that, in order to preserve the identity of the interviewees, names were used according to the order in which the interviews were conducted. It is worth mentioning that the present study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Pampa under registration number CAAE 35613420.7.0000.5323.

### **PRONAF and the territorial development dynamics in Quarta Colônia (RS)**

This section presents and reflects on the Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande development agents' perceptions of the changes caused by PRONAF in the transformation process of its territory. The main results, categorized *face a face* regarding the economic, cultural, and natural dimensions, are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Transformations in the territory of Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande through PRONAF: development agents' perception

ECONOMIC DIMENSION	Changes in production	Increase in productivity Planted area expansion Benefits the small producer/ gives voice to family farming
	Changes in the structure of the agricultural establishment	Acquisition of agricultural machinery and equipment Improvement in the infrastructure of agricultural establishments Reduction of labor burden
	Changes in diversification	Funding of different cultures Strengthening of soy monoculture Expansion of agribusiness
	Changes in income generation capacity	Production strengthening Increase in productivity Acquisition of machinery Benefits the small producer/ more resources Resource misuse Lack of technical assistance
	Changes in the production's commercialization method	Directed sales in cooperatives Lack of organization in the commercialization Absence of fairs
CULTURAL DIMENSION	Changes in traditional relationships	Increase in women participation Stimulation of dairy activity
	Changes in identities	Crop expansion Improvement in the infrastructure of agricultural establishments Acquisition of machinery Soy monoculture
	Changes in the way of doing things	Inclusion of technology Commercialization-oriented production Soy monoculture Need to increase income Reduction of labor burden Loss of knowledge of parents and ancestors
	Changes in the relations with the community	Labor individualization Reduction in cooperation Autonomy
NATURAL DIMENSION	Concentrating, degrading and polluting changes	Use of lost areas for farming Increase in the use of pesticides Reduction of labor burden
	Changes in soil management	Increase in soil correction practices

Source: Field research (2020).

Regarding the territory's economic dimension, all interviewees considered that PRONAF has contributed to the increase and expansion of the planted area and the increase in productivity in the towns. As highlighted by Agent 1:

[...] it favored the farmers, who now have a resource to increase production in their property. For instance, it can finance limestone to improve production, it can pay for the crops so it'll be more productive and thus have technical assistance, which is faulty on the part of the government, but the cooperatives provide this assistance (Agent 1, PG).



Two interviewees agree that PRONAF **benefits the small producer and gives voice to the family farming category**. As mentioned by an interviewee:

[...] and then when PRONAF arises, it gives voice to a category: the family agriculture. This public credit policy did not recognize this public, so the medium and large producers were always the ones to obtain the resources to modernize. From PRONAF along with Mais Alimentos and several other projects, this policy begins to be structured. Nowadays, if you go to the properties, they have tractors and a set of improvements they did not have before. Therefore, PRONAF was extremely important (Agent 5, PG).

Concerning the **changes in the structure of agricultural establishments**, nine interviewees answered positively. For five of the development agents interviewed, PRONAF assists in the **acquisition of agricultural machinery and equipment**.

For sure, both in machinery and property improvement. [...] To the extent that the small producer has access to improvements, to the financing of new machinery and home improvements, not only the house itself but everything else. With all these improvements, he is able to produce more and store more, so he has more productivity (Agent 3, PG).

Moreover, it is worth noting that, for two interviewees, PRONAF has contributed to the **reduction of labor burden in the countryside**. In this sense, PRONAF Mais Alimentos stands out, as the program enables the purchase of agricultural machinery and equipment, in addition to better productivity technologies, thus decreasing labor burden and filling the shortage of labor. Furthermore, the fact that the program enables the reduction of labor burden also contributes to the family succession issue, encouraging the offspring to continue in rural areas (CAMARA et al., 2020).

Due to the fact that **it finances different cultures**, the program contributes to productive diversification in agricultural establishments. As mentioned by the interviewee: “[...] *in family farming, where PRONAF operates, we noticed diversification, milk production, agro-industries, grain production, fruitculture. In sum, it has expanded*” (Agent 1, NP).

[...] diversification is usually associated with investment. Therefore, people often have an initial fear of investing because of the resources. PRONAF has helped people access these resources more easily in favor of this diversification, this change, or an activity change, or an improvement in that activity. Once one has this resource, one can start working in this activity in a short period of time (Agent 4, NP).

However, for three interviewees, the program, while contributing to diversification, is also limited to a few crops, reinforcing monoculture, especially soybean, as mentioned by the interviewee: “*much of the mechanized area was individualized to soybean and more soybean*” (Agent 1, PG). One interviewee argues that an increase in diversification was possible, but farmers tend to limit the crops to what they are used to producing.

In fact, Grisa, Wesz, and Buchweitz (2014) had already pointed out the productivist bias of the contracts carried out by PRONAF. According to the authors, there is a concentration of contracts made by commodity producers, especially corn, soybean, and coffee. Furthermore, to Menezes and David (2015), soy production is the result of a set of relations established by the producer with several agents (the State, bank agencies, cooperatives, companies etc) that are directly or indirectly involved in the production and significantly contribute to the territorialization of the oilseed.

Gazolla and Schneider (2013) reinforce that PRONAF has a dual logic: on one hand, it finances the usual productive activities of farmers, such as grains and commodities, mainly corn and

soybean. As a result, there is an increase in the productive specialization of agricultural establishments, in the families' social vulnerability, in the processes of social and economic commercialization, and in the purchase of inputs and external technologies. On the other hand, the program also boosts the process of economic diversification of the productive activities, such as small farms, crops, and basic food for family consumption, which assist in the food and nutritional security of the family group.

As for **changes in income generation capacity**, the development agents were asked if PRONAF has contributed to raise farmers' income and increase default among farmers. Regarding the former, eight interviewees believed that PRONAF contributes to the raise in income:

Once the producer has financing for investment and funding, his income increases for his regular production income (cattle, soy, corn). There are also other PRONAF branches, like PRONAF Women, to contemplate small business initiatives and so on. (Agent 3, NP).

For two of the development agents interviewed, PRONAF contributes to raise family farmers' income due to the increase in **productivity**. Moreover, for an interviewee, the program **benefits the small producer**, as it is mentioned: "[...] *I believe that a portion of farmers who did not have access to those things now do, so they were able to make improvements, acquire implements, cars. Some people built facilities, made improvements in the property*" (Agent 4, PG). On the other hand, another interviewee believes PRONAF may not contribute to raise income due to **indebtedness**:

[...] the issue of indebtedness is very serious. Over time, you access a credit that gives you, for instance, ten years to pay, and you have to think in advance that this investment must give you the expected return so you can pay it. However, this often does not happen, especially with machinery. People are usually taking this credit due to how easy it is to get, but the income and the production are not increasing, and so you are not able to pay the debts (Agent 4, NP).

Additionally, four interviewees believe that the program has contributed to increasing the default of farmers. Of these, two interviewees suppose that the default is caused by the **misuse of the resource**, as said: "*what increases default is, in addition to some unforeseen occasion, the misuse of the resource*" (Agent 3, PG). Other interviewees assume that it is the result of the **lack of management and technical assistance**.

Furthermore, PRONAF's changes in the production's **commercialization method** are linked to the sales in cooperatives and the lack of local organization. For four interviewees, commercialization after PRONAF was directed towards **sales in cooperatives**, mainly due to the fact that most of the production is grain. However, there is still a gap in the commercialization of production, since two interviewees believe there is a lack of organization in the commercialization, as mentioned: "*Our town is very precarious in terms of commercialization. People end up doing it on their own, each person organizes its commercialization, I do not see organization in this sense*" (Agent 2, PG).

In the cultural dimension, regarding **changes in traditional relationships**, development agents were questioned about the participation of the offspring and women in the management of agricultural establishments. When asked if the offspring showed interest and started participating in the management of agricultural establishments, five interviewees answered that it depends a lot on each case. Two interviewees believe that the improvement in the establishments' infrastructure and the acquisition of machinery are one of the reasons why the offspring stays in rural areas, continuing in their parents' agricultural establishments. For one interviewee, the access to PRONAF facilitated credit, which ended up contributing to the offspring's permanence in rural areas, as mentioned by an interviewee: "*I did several projects like this to young people. Farmers' kids, with the purpose of encouraging them to stay in agriculture, and PRONAF has helped because it facilitated credit to the youth*" (Agent 2, PG).

In an analysis on rural dynamics, Castro (2016) notes that one of the main factors that influence rural youth to stay/leave the countryside is the existence/absence of specific public policies to this public. According to his assessment, the existing public policies directed to the youth need to be readjusted, incorporating the participation of young people as social actors in the formulation of policies, not only as a target population<sup>4</sup>.

Six interviewees believe that PRONAF has helped **increase the participation of women in management**. Moreover, for two interviewees, this is due to the **program's bureaucratic issues**. The progress and organization of agricultural establishments where women aid in management are noticeable, since they are more **meticulous** and organized, as an interviewee states:

[...] we have noticed that when women assist in management, the property reaches another level. There is a greater control, and therefore the result is greater as well, [...] everything, planning, expense control. Women are much more meticulous, so when a woman helps in management, everything works better: the men in the operation, working on the crops, and the women managing, controlling payments and the costs. They are more attentive, take care of details, it works better this way (Agent 3, NP).

It is worth mentioning that, in family farming, patriarchy is present, and men are considered the main workers, heads of the family and responsible for the agricultural establishments. Women, on the other hand, are assigned to domestic work, caring for the family and performing unpaid work, often occupying a position as a farmer's helper and/or wife. That is, even if performing the same or even more activities than men, their work is not recognized (BUENO; SILVA, 2020). In this sense, PRONAF has helped to change this logic, according to the development agents interviewed.

Regarding the **changes in identity**, the interviewees were questioned if PRONAF has contributed to the transformation of the town's landscape. Eight out of the nine interviewees affirmatively responded. For four interviewees, the landscape transformation happened due to the **expansion of the crops**, as reported by an interviewee:

Production itself has changed the landscapes, mostly PRONAF. I am not sure if it is for the best or worse. A lot of areas that were native became crop fields. (Agent 3, PG).

For two interviewees, another change in the landscape was due to the **acquisition of machinery**, as menti by the interviewee: *"PRONAF transformed the rural environment. Nowadays, family farming has results, in terms of money, mechanization, and quality of life. So in this sense, yes"* (Agente 5, PG). Likewise, the landscape has changed mainly due to **soybean monoculture**.

[...] today we have a clear example of the soybean issue. Not long ago, we had fields and cattle. Nowadays, swamps are drained, fields are plowed. Tops of hills, where corn and beans used to be planted are now abandoned, because machines cannot go up there. So this is a negative change in the landscape, it is much more negative than positive, biodiversity of fauna and flora has highly decreased. Small bush fields no longer exist because the grain, the soybean, are taking over the space. Anywhere machines can go is turned into a crop, it is a productive area (Agent 4, NP).

Regarding the **changes in the way of doing things**, the development agents were questioned if, after the operation of PRONAF, experiences and habits in the method of planting and harvesting

<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy the existence, among one of the lines of rural credit, of PRONAF Youth, which provides financing to family farmers and rural producers (individual entity), for investment in production activities, to beneficiaries over the age of 16 and under the age of 29 (MAPA, 2021).



were left aside and if the production became focused on commercialization, reducing self-consumption production. In relation to the **experiences and habits in the method of planting and harvesting**, seven of the development agents interviewed believed that the access to PRONAF led to the dismissal of experiences and habits. For four development agents, this process is the result of the **insertion of technologies and mechanization**, as stated:

Back then, you had a much lower production, but the costs were also very low, you planted your own seed, organic matter was greatly used, and the area was small. Nowadays, it is machines and machines and machines. [...] It surely facilitated credit and the improvement of machinery and equipment, but the cultural issue of planting and harvesting has totally changed (Agent 4, NP).

Furthermore, it is evaluated that mechanization in family farming has positive and negative points. As positive points, production and productivity growth can be pointed out (TONNEAU; AQUINO; TEIXEIRA, 2005). For Alves, Mantovani, and Oliveira (2005), despite the many criticisms towards mechanization in family agriculture, it is undeniable that the use of agricultural machinery and implements is crucial to the accomplishment of services within the deadline and in accordance with quality and climate requirements. Mechanization has also contributed to a reduction in the physical effort of workers and production costs. However, mechanization can lead to social exclusion and high environmental costs (TONNEAU; AQUINO; TEIXEIRA, 2005). Balsan (2006) points out some impacts caused by the modernization of agriculture, such as rural exodus, structural differences, specialization process, land concentration, income concentration, and labor exploitation.

An interviewee believes that the inclusion of technologies and mechanization is not totally negative, since it **reduced labor burden in the countryside**: “[...] *something has changed indeed, but this is another issue that should be well-thought out. These technologies have brought more comfort to farmers, we are talking about the mechanization part of field technification*” (Agent 5, PG). Moreover, technologies and mechanization seek to supply the **lack of labor in family farming**. However, an interviewee acknowledges that the insertion of machinery and technologies caused the **loss of knowledge from parents and ancestors**, as stated:

It was left behind, for sure, because [...] our cultural knowledge, which came from our parents and grandparents' wisdom, was lost. We have entered into a mechanized era where these insights are not being exercised. The production of grains, soybeans, corn, stuff related to commercialization, has been applied more, instead of feeding (Agent 1, PG).

Farmers began planting grains, aimed at marketing, leaving food production aside. For seven of the nine interviewees, PRONAF was responsible for the reduction of food production for subsistence. Three development agents agree that **the production has become marketing-oriented**:

Yes, you can say that almost all commercialization, all production ends up being focused on trading. People end up producing very little for subsistence, consumption. And so there is no diversification. They produce 2 or 3 cultures and buy other products with the income from these cultures. (Agent 2, PG).

It is evident that self-consumption production is important in several aspects, among them, the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation within families. In this sense, it is an important instrument for families and rural areas' socialization (GAZOLLA; SCHNEIDER, 2007). Its suppression can negatively affect the food and nutritional security and food sovereignty of rural families (GRIGOL et al., 2022).

Despite the decline in self-consumption production, two interviewees believe that the access to PRONAF did not lead to the loss of experiences and habits, since the **improvement/adaptation of habits and knowledge** is perceived. This can be observed in an interviewee's statement: "[...] *this sure happened, but it was not because of PRONAF. It is the natural evolution. No one plants with the plow anymore, everything is done in no-till*" (Agent 3, PG).

Regarding the **changes in the relations with the community**, the interviewees were questioned whether PRONAF has changed the cooperation between neighbors/society. For five out of the nine interviewees, PRONAF boosted **labor individualization**, and farmers began to work on their own and for themselves. For four interviewees, individualization is linked to the acquisition of agricultural machinery and equipment:

It has changed. That habit of collective efforts, families helping one another, is no longer, because the implements and the machinery are there to help, so you can do things in less time. So the custom of helping neighbors, producers helping each other, has been greatly lost in favor of individualism (Agent 1, NP).

Concerning the environmental dimension, the development agents were asked if PRONAF helped increase deforestation. Five interviewees answered negatively, and three of them believe that what happened after the establishment PRONAF was the **use of lost areas for farming**. When questioned whether the use of chemicals/pesticides had increased in the territory, eight interviewees claimed that it is related to the access to PRONAF. In sum, the increase in the use of pesticides due to PRONAF is linked to the **technological package** that induced farmers to adjust to the production model, as stated by an interviewee:

[...] it is, unfortunately, the 21st century agriculture. It is the technological package. If you are going to fund, for example, a crop, you are forced to have a technical project, and this project demands you to have the seed, fertilizer, the entire technological project in short. So, because you want to produce, you will automatically use it, sometimes even when there is no need. And this is why the costs are so high, because of exaggerated, uncontrolled, unnecessary use. So it has increased (Agent 4, NP).

Souza Filho et al. (2011) clarify that the use of so-called "technological packages" in agriculture has contributed to the increase in productivity, yet this process did not happen uniformly. Consequently, the aggravation of socioeconomic problems was observed, as well as the environmental and cultural degradation of farmers (COSTA, 2013).

When the development agents were questioned if PRONAF contributed to the reduction of the area of environmental preservation, seven responded negatively. For two interviewees, what happened upon the establishment of PRONAF was the **exploration of already deforested areas**, as mentioned by an interviewee: "*I do not think the forest had reduced, it is preserved [...] what I mean to say is that PRONAF has helped explore deforested areas, once they were already unusable*" (Agent 1, NP). Furthermore, two interviewees believe that the **areas were recomposed** because the population in rural areas has decreased, as stated: "*there are cases in which some parts have reduced, but in other cases the areas were recomposed, because many producers ended up leaving the countryside, heading to the cities and, therefore, many areas became vegetated*" (Agent 2, PG).

Regarding the **changes in soil management**, questions on crop rotation and soil correction were addressed. Eight interviewees believe that crop rotation did not increase due to PRONAF, but soil correction practices did. For three interviewees, this occurred because of the **program's requirements**. For two interviewees, upon the establishment of PRONAF, farmers began to carry out no-till planting, which contributes to soil preservation, as said by an interviewee: "[...] *nowadays, only no-till planting is used, a new way of managing the soil has emerged, so this strengthens and contributes to the production*" (Agent 1, NP). Another interviewee argues that the **advancement of technology** is another reason that led farmers to take better care of the soil.

In view of the above, PRONAF's limits and potentialities in the analyzed territory are perceived. The program has contributed to the territorialization of a mechanized family agriculture and with better infrastructure available to agricultural establishments. Mechanization helped reduce labor burden and speed up production processes, in which planting, watching the plantation, and harvesting became a faster process. Furthermore, the mechanization of family farming enabled the autonomy of family farmers, that is, they now own their means of production. However, the insertion of technology and machinery in family agriculture also provokes deterritorialization, such as the decrease in relations and socialization, especially the decline in cooperation between farmers.

Another issue remarked in the towns was the territorialization of soybeans, highly linked to PRONAF. Soy production has altered the territory landscape and modified the structures of establishments. It became, in several cases, the main source of income for agricultural establishments. Likewise, it is argued that the territorialization of this oilseed presents both negative and positive aspects. Among the negative aspects, the dependency developed by farmers to bank agencies is mentioned, also the use of technologies for production, the high investments demanded by the crops and due to the reduction of diversification in the establishments, promoting productive specialization.

On the other hand, soy production has been able to influence the decisions of the rural youth, holding young people in the countryside and reducing rural exodus. The youth feel more motivated by the reduction of labor burden and the social acceptance of being technological, driving tractors and harvesters. Elderly family farmers, in turn, plant soy because it is a crop that does not require physical effort, since machinery is used for its cultivation. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, due to PRONAF, reterritorialization aspects are perceived, such as a greater and more active participation of women in agricultural establishments' activities, let it be in productive activities, in management, driving tractors, as well in participating in appointments with bank agencies.

## Final considerations

The National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture, over its more than 20 years of operation, has granted resources for funding and investing, with a goal of promoting family agriculture and improving the living conditions of the rural population. This research sought to verify how PRONAF has influenced the process of deterritorialization of family farming in Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande through the perception of local development agents. It was observed that PRONAF has contributed to both the territorialization of family farming and its deterritorialization, including a potential reterritorialization. Territorial dynamics are defined by the way in which credit is used and the profile of farmers' decision-making.

Based on the questions made to the development agents, it appears that the changes in the economic dimension of the Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande territory due to PRONAF were the increase of the agricultural productivity's planted area. The program enabled the improvement of infrastructure in agricultural establishments and the acquisition of machinery, reducing labor burden in the countryside. In the analyzed area, PRONAF contributes to the increase of family farmers' income, as it has boosted agricultural production. Moreover, it is noted that PRONAF, whilst enabling the financing of different crops and activities (such as milk production and agro-industries), has also strengthened monoculture, mainly soy.

In the cultural dimension, the major changes occurred were: the increase of women participation in the management of agricultural establishment, transformations in the landscape, such as crop expansion, improvements in the infrastructure of agricultural establishments, the loss of experiences and habits in the way of planting and harvesting due to the insertion of technology and mechanization. As for the environmental dimension of the Nova Palma and Pinhal Grande territory, among the main changes observed as a result of PRONAF, an increase in the use of pesticides and an increase in soil corrective practices are noted.

In conclusion, an analysis on PRONAF through the lens of development agents reinforced previous research results on the subject. The program is an important – perhaps the most significant – public policy aimed at family agriculture. However, in order to fulfill its initial purpose, it needs to face adjustments and changes so that more farmers, especially the less capitalized, are able to access it, and that the production of food, not agricultural commodities, is promoted.

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