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Markets and marketing strategies in settlements in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre

Mercados e estratégias de comercialização em assentamentos da região metropolitana de Porto Alegre

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ABSTRACT This study was carried out in the settlements of the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre (RMPA). This region has 17 MST settlements that stand out for their production of fruit and vegetables and agroecological rice. The objectives of the article are to analyze the process of building markets for products from RMPA settlements and identify the types of markets accessed and the characteristics of these markets. The theoretical perspective used for the analysis states that resistance to the dominant food regime and multinational agribusiness corporations involves the construction of markets and alternative food production and consumption networks. Which rescue social, political, and environmental values and which, according to the typification presented by Schneider (2016), are present mainly in proximity markets, in territorial markets and, in some cases, in institutional markets. Interviews and questionnaires were carried out with families settled in negotiation processes. It was identified that (a) local and territorial markets predominate, that (b) there is a good diversification of marketing channels used by families; (c) that these channels allow families to have good conditions for negotiating prices and delivery conditions and also (d) the importance of agroecological food production in the construction of markets and in the conditions of autonomy and management of families over markets.

Keywords: MST; marketing; agroecology.

RESUMO Este estudo foi realizado nos assentamentos da Região Metropolitana de Porto Alegre (RMPA). Esta região possui 17 assentamentos do MST, que se destacam pela produção de hortifrutigranjeiros e de arroz agroecológico. Os objetivos do artigo são analisar o processo de construção de mercados para produtos dos assentamentos da RMPA e identificar os tipos de mercados acessados e as características destes mercados. A perspectiva teórica utilizada para a análise afirma que a resistência ao regime alimentar dominante e às corporações multinacionais do agronegócio passam pela construção de mercados e de redes alternativas de produção e consumo de alimentos, que resgatem valores sociais, políticos e ambientais e que, de acordo com a tipificação apresentada por Schneider (2016), estes valores estão presentes principalmente em mercados de proximidade, em mercados territoriais e, em alguns casos, em mercados institucionais. Foram realizadas entrevistas e aplicação de questionários com famílias assentadas envolvidas em processos de comercialização. Identificou-se que (a) predominam os mercados de proximidade e territoriais, que (b) há uma boa diversificação de canais de comercialização utilizados pelas famílias, (c) que nestes canais as famílias possuem boas condições de negociações de preços e condições de entrega e (d) a importância da produção de alimentos agroecológicos na construção dos mercados e nas condições de autonomia e gerenciamentos das famílias sobre os mercados.

Palavras-chaves: MST; comercialização; agroecologia.

1. Introduction

This article deals with the case of the social construction of markets by land reform settlers in the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre (RMPA). As a social movement fighting for land, the MST initially sought alternatives for the economic and social viability of agrarian reform settlements, including the structuring of agricultural production and agro-industrialization. These processes and their positive results led, from the 2000s onwards, to a growing discussion on the subject of marketing and the MST's role in accessing markets for settlement products.

Muñoz (2019) identified the existence of different conceptions within the MST's discussions on the subject of marketing: on the one hand, the author identifies the strong influence of Marxist ideas, which harshly criticize the development of economic alternatives related to capitalist markets; on the other, the efforts of the settlers and their organizations to build and consolidate practices for accessing alternative markets and for differentiated products.

Alternative markets, or alternative networks for the production and consumption of agroecological food, oppose the corporate regime in the food sector, and have as their horizon the social construction of markets that value social, environmental, economic and cultural aspects and that are in line with political flags such as food sovereignty and agroecology (Guzmán, 2012; Marques, Conterato; Schneider, 2016; Martins, 2017; Gazolla & Schneider, 2017).

This second position has been strengthened since 2014, when the MST took on the project of an agrarian reform popular[1], whose central element is the production of healthy food that is accessible to

[1] From its creation to the present day, the Movement has gone through various struggles and conflicts for agrarian reform and has made some progress. The agendas of the struggle have changed over the years according to the context experienced at each moment of the struggle for land. Since the 2000s, with the expansion of agribusiness in Brazil and the growth of exports, the complexity of the agrarian question has increased. With the incorporation of the slogan "For a popular agrarian reform", the MST began to propose a new agrarian program to society, with the goal of agricultural production based on agroecology (MST, 2013).

the population through agroecological production. Within the framework of a popular agrarian reform, the consolidation of agro-ecological production has been, and still is, the challenge of having someone to sell the food produced to, which means identifying existing channels and/or building new sales channels, implementing transportation and delivery systems, providing storage facilities, setting up agro-industries and, above all, making sure that all this results in financial returns and remains within the objective of offering quality food to the population in general, and not just to those who access niche markets.

For the settlements located in the RMPA, the construction of alternative markets in this region has found favorable conditions, due to a number of aspects. The first refers to its proximity to a region with a population of 4.4 million; the second refers to the history of building alternative markets in this region, especially for agroecological food, especially agroecological fairs and the Colmeia Cooperative, which was an important organization of agroecological food producers and consumers set up in the late 1970s and which existed until the early 2000s (Cruz, 2019).

According to Schneider (2016), the interest of rural social scientists in the inclusion of family farmers in markets corresponds to the emergence of a new definition of markets in which they are seen as a social construction. The approach of the social construction of markets centrally opposes the understanding of markets as an ordering social principle and takes up the Polanyan idea that markets are social institutions that result from processes of interaction between agents who exchange and barter for different reasons, be they economic, social or cultural. From this perspective, rural studies, more specifically those dealing with family farming, have come to accept that family farmers can be in capitalist markets without being totally subordinated to market exchange relations, without totally submitting their reproduction strategies to markets and, in this way, have become interested in analyzing how relations between farmers and markets can be constructed in such a way as to favor or restrict the social reproduction of family forms of production in rural areas (Ploeg, 2008; Conterato *et al*., 2011).

Using as a reference the theoretical proposal that markets are social constructions and that, in the case of family farming, the historical and social processes of market formation lead to the predominance, in marketing processes, of some types of markets to the detriment of others, Schneider (2016) presents a typology of markets in family farming. These are: proximity markets, territorial markets, conventional markets and institutional markets. The typology proposed by the author shows a gradient in the importance of social, political and cultural relations as institutions that guide exchange relations.

From the perspective that resistance to the dominant food regime and to multinational agribusiness corporations involves building alternative food production and consumption markets and networks that rescue social, political and environmental values, and that these values are mainly present in local or proximity markets, in territorial markets and in some types of institutional markets, in this article our objectives are to analyze the process of building markets for products from agrarian reform settlements in the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre (RMPA) and to identify the types of markets accessed and the characteristics of these markets.

To this end, field research was carried out to collect data. Data was collected through documentary research (gathering information from spreadsheets, reports and documents from the RMPA's settler cooperatives) and by applying a questionnaire to every 50 settler families in the RMPA (20 questionnaires were applied). The questionnaire was based on the questionnaire used by the project "The dynamics of agri-food markets in Rio Grande do Sul - mapping and socio-economic analysis", which was adapted according to the objectives of this research and the reality of the interviewees. The questionnaires were administered between March and May 2022, in person or via video call on the WhatsApp app, depending on the interviewee's choice. The time frame used to collect information was the four years prior to the time of the interviews (2019 to 2022).

In this context, this article is organized as follows: after this introduction, the second section deals with the process of building markets for agrarian reform products in the RMPA. Section three deals with the identification, typification and characterization of the markets built and accessed. Finally, we present the article's final considerations.

2. Some theoretical elements for analyzing the social construction of markets by the MST in the RMPA

Among the different analytical approaches to the recent transformations in the globalized agri-food system are the Food Regimes approach, initially proposed by Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael (1989) to think about […] the role of agriculture in the development of the capitalist world economy, and the trajectory of the *State system* (Friedmann & Mcmichael, 1989). According to the authors, food regimes are represented by a succession of regulatory structures that organize the relations of production and circulation of food and raw materials. For McMichael (2016), the third and current regime is defined as the corporate food regime, which expresses a new moment in the political history of capital, which can be conceptualized as the project of neoliberal globalization (Mcmichael, 2016b), capable of providing the global circulation of commodities on an ever faster and larger scale. Its dynamics are based on the deregulation of markets, the privatization of common resources and the concentration of power in multinational agribusiness corporations and financial capital (Niederle & Wesz, 2018).

Among the consequences of the concentration of power in multinational food companies, Wilkinson (2008) highlights the intense weakening of the participation of small producers and their traditional organizations (cooperatives) in the markets. Reactions to this dynamic are basically led by agrarian social movements (Martins, 2017; Niederle & Wesz, 2018) acting on a transnational scale, such as Via Campesina, considered by McMichael (2016b) to be the main expression of resistance to the advance of food corporations.

Examples of counter-movements to the expansion of the corporate regime in the food sector include the alternative agroecological food production and consumption networks that have been created by agroecological family farmers and land reform settlers. It should be emphasized that these networks do not aim to create markets within the capitalist logic, but rather the social construction of markets that value social, environmental, economic and cultural aspects and are in line with political flags such as food sovereignty and agroecology

(Guzmán, 2012; Schneider, 2016; Marques, Conterato, Schneider, 2016; Martins, 2017; Gazolla & Schneider, 2017).

According to Schneider (2016), the interest of rural social scientists in the insertion of family farmers into markets corresponds to the emergence of a new definition of markets, in which they are seen as a social construction that centrally opposes the understanding of markets as an ordering social principle and takes up the Polanyan idea that markets are social institutions that result from processes of interaction between agents who exchange and barter for different reasons, be they economic, social or cultural[2].

Thus, the sociological study of markets has become a field of research that focuses on analyzing the social and cultural bases that interfere in economic interactions and exchanges, and shows that the existence of monetized exchange relationships, which imply payment in currency or another form of general equivalent, does not eliminate the possibility of exchanges taking place based on other structuring principles, such as reciprocity or solidarity.

In this same line of argument, Abramovay (2004) states that in the 19th century, there was no change. XX contemporary social sciences are undergoing a "cognitive turn", which consists precisely of questioning the conception of ahistorical and, in a way, associative markets. For the author, contemporary economic sociology has precisely this characteristic of conceiving markets as the result of specific forms, socially rooted and determined by social interaction (Abramovay, 2014).

From this perspective, rural studies, more specifically those dealing with family farming, have come to accept that family farmers can be in capitalist markets without being totally subordinated to market exchange relations, without totally submitting their reproduction strategies to markets and, in this way, have become interested in analyzing how relations between farmers and markets can be constructed in such a way as to favor or restrict the social reproduction of family forms of production in rural areas (Ploeg, 2008; Conterato *et al*., 2011).

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In *proximity or local markets*, according to Schneider (2016), individuals get to know each other and make decisions based on trust and good reputation in exchanges. Farmers who mobilize this market tend to have greater autonomy in setting prices and sales conditions, which stems both from the resources they have and the nature of the relationships established. The *territorial markets* are a kind of transition between proximity markets and conventional markets. Despite the presence of intermediaries between farmers and consumers,

[2] According to Schneider (2016), Polanyi's initial contribution and the subsequent work of Granovetter and Bourdieu in the second half of the 20th century, as well as more recent studies by Fligstein, Bagnasco, Di Magio, Swedberg, Beckert, Steiner, Zelizer and others, formed the field of economic sociology that underpins this approach to markets.

relationships of reciprocity and trust are maintained. Other control and regulation mechanisms that can be present are product certificates and differentiated prices according to the regularity of supply.

Conventional markets are those that trade agricultural commodities. The majority of this market is dominated by private agents who do business at various levels and in various ways, both in the sale and purchase of products. In these types of markets, large agro-industrial companies control the marketing chains and family farmers have little autonomy and a lot of commercial dependence, since the rules and regulations are dictated by social actors with more power.

Finally, the *public and institutional markets* are spaces of exchange that function with the intermediation of an institution with a public interest, which can be an international organization, a non-governmental public organization or the state. In public markets, commercial relations are formalized through public contracts, governed by current legislation and/or international rules. In these markets, the intermediary agent can modify the rules for regulating exchanges by incorporating social and environmental values into purchasing processes. Examples in Brazil include the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the School Feeding Program (PNAE), as amended by Law No. 11,947/2009. Among the guidelines promoted by this law is the requirement that all subnational entities involved spend at least 30% of federal transfers on the purchase of food products directly from family farming, with preference given to local producers[3].

3. Construction of agri-food markets by agrarian reform settlements in the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre/RS

In Rio Grande do Sul there are 345 settlements with 12,220 families settled on approximately 295,000 hectares (INCRA, 2022). In the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre (RMPA) there are 844 families settled in 17 settlements (INCRA, 2022). The region is made up of 34 municipalities and has agrarian reform settlements in 8 of them: Capela de Santana, Charqueadas, Eldorado do Sul, Guaíba, Montenegro, São Jerônimo, Viamão and Nova Santa Rita (Lindner & Medeiros, 2015).

Agrarian reform settlements in the RMPA began in the late 1980s[4], and the first marketing initiatives began in the early 1990s. According to one of the interviewees, in this region the priority of the settlements has always been to organize the production of the families as well as the marketing of the products and, for this reason, the organization of marketing began in the early years with the setting up of fairs, or stalls at fairs in Porto Alegre and

[3] In the specific case of public food purchases (CPA), to meet the demand of hospitals, schools, barracks and prisons, the regulation system includes other particular factors, as they need to guarantee that the products purchased meet basic requirements, such as compliance with health regulations, regularity of delivery and quality standards. More recently, public authorities have included some criteria in the institutional arrangement of the CPAs to achieve other objectives, such as encouraging sustainable production models, healthier diets, promoting regional development by generating income for certain sections of the population, or even to achieve international goals and agreements, such as the Sustainable Development Goals - SDG2(Sambuichi & Silva, 2023).

[4] The first settlements were São Pedro, in 1986, and the Padre Josimo Settlement, in 1987, both in Eldorado do Sul, and the Itapuí Settlement, in 1988, in the municipality of Nova Santa Rita.

other municipalities in the RMPA[5]. During this period, important actions were carried out to bring the settlements closer to the population of Porto Alegre. One of the interviewees highlighted the meetings that were held with neighborhood associations in Porto Alegre, in which COOCEARGS (*Cooperativa Central dos Assentamentos do RS* - Central Cooperative of RS Settlements) coordinated the actions and promoted consumer visits to the settlements. The aim of these visits was not only to publicize the settlements and the food produced, but also to create bonds and build trust and proximity with consumers, characteristics of local and territorial markets, according to Schneider's typology (2016).

COCEARGS, based in Porto Alegre, was created in January 1990 and was the MST's first central cooperative. At the time, it brought together several of the Movement's cooperatives, some of which are still active today. According to one of the interviewees, COCEARGS began its work by promoting collective purchases of inputs, with the aim of bargaining input prices and reducing production costs. As far as marketing actions are concerned, COCEARGS' first initiative, apart from supporting the fairs, was to set up the Agrarian Reform Shop in the Porto Alegre Public Market in 2002[6]. The store, according to its typology, can be classified as a territorial market.

Later, during the first Lula administration, the actions of the Zero Hunger Program and the public procurement policies for family farming, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA - *Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos*) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE - *Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar*), led to an expansion of the MST's marketing activities in the RMPA. According to one of the interviewees (…) *during this period the challenge was launched for the MST cooperatives in the RMPA to carry out at least one PAA project, starting the exercise of selling to the institutional market* (Interviewee 1).

The Movement's cooperatives, some of which already existed and others which were organized at the time, played a key role in accessing public procurement policies. In the RMPA, the interviewees mentioned COOPTEC, Cooperativa Terra Livre and COOPTAP. COOPTEC is a service cooperative (Cooperativa de Prestação de Serviços Técnicos) which, through ATER (Technical Assistance and Rural Extension) public policies, has worked to improve agricultural production, animate women's groups and implement public policies[7]. The Terra Livre Cooperative (Cooperativa de Assentados da Reforma Agrária e Agricultores Familiares), based in Nova Santa Rita, was founded in October 2008 to sell organic rice for the PAA-CONAB public calls for stocks and simultaneous donations, as well as sales to the PNAE.

The interviewees pointed out that, while many of the Movement's cooperatives have become professionalized in production and industrialization and have left the issue of marketing unattended, Terra

[5] During this period, the MST in RS decided that all municipalities with land reform settlements should have a fair, with the aim of marketing production and establishing a relationship/articulation with local society (Interviewee 4).

[6] The Agrarian Reform Store recently became Armazém do Campo and is located in the Cidade Baixa neighborhood of Porto Alegre.

[7] COOPTEC, based in Nova Santa Rita, in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, has already been responsible for providing technical assistance to 5,500 settled families in the state, developing social, environmental and technological actions. It is a member of the Cooperativa Central dos Assentamentos do Rio Grande do Sul - COCEARGS. (MST, 2022). It is still active, but less so in rural extension.

Livre was founded to act only in sales and access to markets, becoming an important tool for the settlers to market their products on the institutional market. Also in the RMPA, COOTAP (*Cooperativa dos Trabalhadores Assentados da Região de Porto Alegre* - Cooperative of Settled Workers in the Porto Alegre Region) had its statute changed and began to focus on sales to public procurement programs[8].

Access to public procurement programs and the organization of MST cooperatives, focused on the marketing of products from the settlements, has generated positive consequences, including the expansion of organic rice production areas in the RMPA, especially since 2011, when public procurement resources were increased. Another positive impact of sales to institutional programs has been the organization of new production groups in the settlements with a view to diversifying the range of products on offer, especially vegetables. Interviewee 3 mentions that […] *those years (around 2010) were a period of consolidation for production management groups, such as for fruit and vegetables, when 22 vegetable garden management groups were organized in the region's settlements, many of which are still active.*

Since 2014, the reduction in demand from public procurement programs has had an impact on marketing and new alternative markets have had to be organized. In this context, the production management groups mobilized and started selling at new fairs in municipalities in the RMPA. Another market alternative developed during this period was the export of MST food to Venezuela, which was possible due to the presence of MST cooperatives able to operate in food export operations, as stated in the following quote: *with the cooperatives structured and organized, they become a tool for export. During this period, COOTAP carried out three food exports and three seed exports from BIONATUR*[9] (Interviewee 2).

During this period, the marketing initiatives of the agrarian reform settlements in the RMPA began to be reinforced by the new ideas and proposals of the popular agrarian reform project, especially with regard to the centrality of agroecological production and marketing through alternative channels. According to the following account, agroecological production was a fundamental element for the MST, at national level, to consider the importance of acting on marketing in an organized way and towards non-conventional marketing channels.

> *The issue of food production, of producing food based on the principles of agroecology, is a central issue and is part of the principle of popular agrarian reform. When the Movement begins to understand the following: in order to organize agroecological production, marketing needs to be organized, there needs to be someone to sell to, there needs to be logistics, there needs to be a transport system, there needs to be storage, there needs to be industry, if possible, and there needs to be a minimally remunerative price for buying from farmers and reselling. Without these elements, a food production chain cannot be organized and they are therefore fundamental to the consolidation of agroecology.*
>
> (Interviewee 1)

[8] Until then, COOTAP was a regional cooperative that provided services to settled farmers, such as loans for machinery, the purchase of inputs, etc.

[9] BIONATUR is an agroecological seed network and a brand of the National Agroecological Cooperative Terra e Vida Ltda - COONATERRA. It has been producing and selling agroecological seeds since 1997.

According to data from the MST (2022), the Movement currently organizes its production through 160 cooperatives, 120 agro-industries and 1,900 associations. In addition to this broader organization at Movement level, the settlers are also articulated in local and regional cooperatives, which help in the production and marketing processes[10].

In an attempt to show the historical construction of markets and the predominant types, we have seen that in the RMPA, the agrarian reform settlements, since they were set up in the 1990s, have opted to organize not only production, but also the marketing of products, starting in those years to sell through local and proximity markets. Later on, the possibility of selling to public procurement programs, especially the PAA and PNAE, stimulated the organization of cooperatives of settlers able to sell through institutional channels, which became decisively important in reorganizing and expanding production in the settlements. With the reduction in demand for public purchases from 2014 onwards, and the implementation of the MST's popular agrarian reform project at national level, which is based on the importance of agroecological production and the population's access to healthy food, the settlers and their organizations reorganized themselves towards sales in the settlements themselves, new fairs in the RMPA and sales of larger volumes to supermarkets and small agroindustrial companies (territorial markets), through the movement's cooperatives in the region.

In this movement to build markets, we can see that agroecology, or the supply of agroecological food in the settlements, was a key element in the need to seek out and implement unconventional marketing channels. As one of the interviewees said […] *in agroecological production, the market isn't ready and doesn't look for your product at home, but on the contrary, you have to go in search of it* (Interviewee 3). From this process of searching for markets for agroecological products, marketing was developed and the channels were diversified.

4. Identification, typification and characterization of the markets accessed by RMPA settlers

According to the theoretical references in this article, resistance to the dominant food regime and multinational agribusiness corporations involves building alternative food production and consumption markets and networks that rescue social, political and environmental values. In the typification presented by Schneider (2016), these values are mainly present in local or proximity markets and in territorial markets. In some cases, such as Brazil, public procurement programs can also present these values.

In this section we intend to show the types of markets in which RMPA settlers sell their products, describe the characteristics of these markets and

[10] At the national level, the MST has a national office in São Paulo, which is responsible for centralizing the processes of monitoring, planning and evaluating economic actions. At the regional level, each state has an office for coordinating the state's economic activities, which is linked to the activities of the national office. The offices are coordinated by the leadership (at each level) and work together with the other sectors of the Movement. The Production, Cooperation and Environment Sector is made up of five lines of action: Agroindustry Front; Cooperation Front; Agroecology Front; Training Front; and Commercialization Front. The marketing front is organized into five other subsections to meet the needs of the settlers: institutional sales; sales on the conventional market; field warehouses (retail outlets); fairs and consumer groups; and exports (Muñoz, 2019).

assess whether they are in line with the theoretical proposition we have presented.

4.1. On the profile of the families and production units analyzed

The field research that gave rise to the data in this article was carried out with 20 families of settlers from the RMPA. Most of these families are made up of 3 to 5 members and the level of education of the family members and the head is low to medium, with few cases of access to higher education.

Farming is the main activity, but there are also students and retired people in the families. Regarding the formation of family income, it was found that in addition to agricultural income, which is the main income, income from salaried work and retirement income stand out among the interviewees.

The average area of the properties of the settlers interviewed is 17.5 hectares[11]. In the majority of cases (52.38%) the production units are located no more than 10 km from the seat of the municipality to which they belong, or between 10.1 and 30 km (42.86%). Although the distance between the settlements and the municipality's headquarters is considered small or medium, especially when the settlers consider settlements in other regions of RS, such as those on the western border, a negative factor pointed out by all those interviewed was the trafficability of the roads, which are generally in very poor condition, especially the internal roads of the settlements. As for the distance from the settlements' headquarters to Porto Alegre, it can be seen that the settlements are relatively close to the capital (around 40km), which facilitates access to markets and the transportation of production.

In addition to geographical distance, another increasingly relevant aspect, especially considering the growth of *online* sales, concerns access to information and communication technologies. It can be seen that 100% of those interviewed have access to a cell phone and the internet.

4.2. Characterization of marketing

Figure 1 shows the main products marketed by the families surveyed, mainly: fruit and vegetables, organic rice and beef cattle, followed by conventional rice and dairy cattle. The settled families also produce baked goods, fish and raise pigs.

Figure 2 shows that farmers use 15 different marketing channels and that direct sales on the farm are the channel used by all the interviewees. The regional open market comes next, used by 13 families. This is followed by sales for school meals - PNAE (9 families) and sales through small family farming cooperatives (8 families), which in this case is COOTAP - Cooperativa dos Trabalhadores Assentados da Região de Porto Alegre LTDA, a cooperative that sells the products of the region's settlers.

Products are also sold through the PAA (5 families), local supermarkets (5 families), large private agro-industries (5 families) and food basket deliveries (4 families).

[11] According to the sum of the areas, with a total of 368.4 hectares, divided by the total of 21 interviewees, an average of 17.5 hectares per family was obtained.

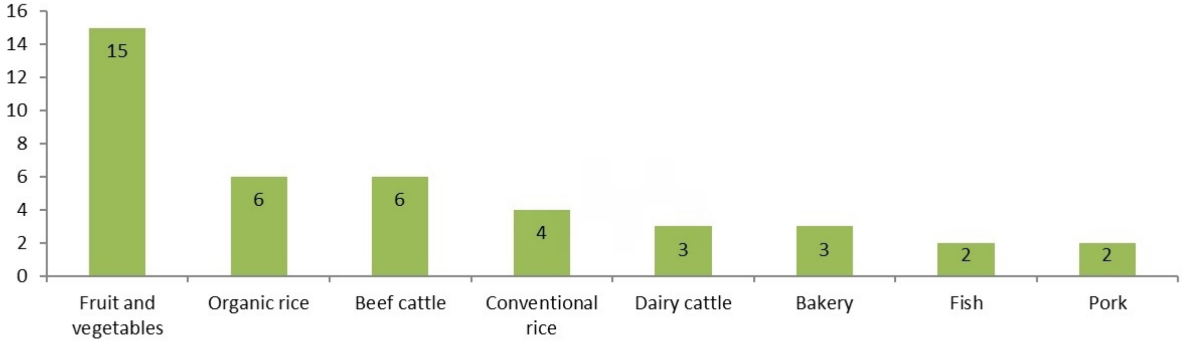

FIGURE 1 - Main products sold by the families surveyed in the RMPA.
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

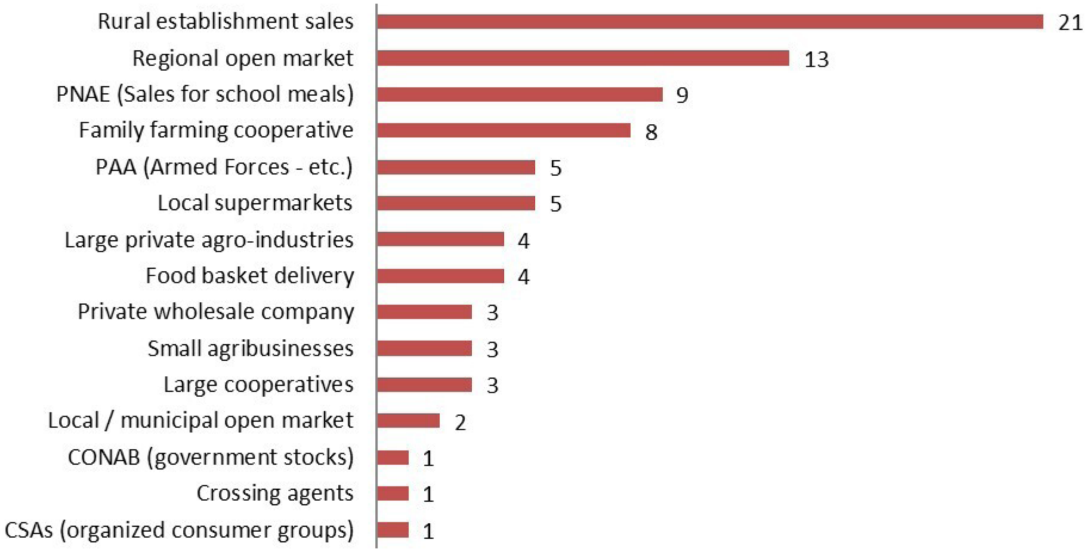

FIGURE 2 - Number of families selling through different marketing channels in the RMPA.
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

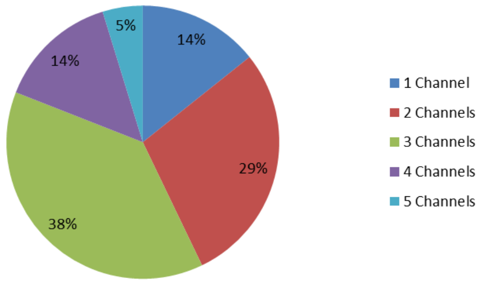

FIGURE 3 - Percentage of families according to the number of marketing channels used.

SOURCE: field research, 2022.

TABLE 1 - Percentage of households with variations in marketing channels as of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022).

Variation due to the pandemic	Percentage
Yes	79.17%
No	20.83%

SOURCE: field research, 2022.

Figure 3 shows the number of marketing channels used by each family interviewed. It can be seen that most families use 2 to 3 marketing channels (67% of families), followed by families that use 1 channel (14% of families) or 4 channels (also 14% of families).

If we classify the farms in terms of exclusive channel (only 1), diversified (2-3 channels) or very diversified (4 or more), we find that the majority of families sell through diversified channels or very diversified, but that the condition of exclusive channel, or dependence on a single channel, reaches 14% of families. This condition is probably related to the fact that markets are channels that many families access, and in this research we are considering markets as a single channel, even if the family sells at more than one market.

In the case of the families surveyed, it can be seen (Table 1) that there was a large percentage of variation in marketing channels during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020 and only showed signs of control in 2022. Almost 80% of families highlighted a change in marketing channels from 2020 onwards due to the pandemic.

The reasons for this variation in marketing channels were the reduction in sales to institutional markets (PAA and PNAE) and the reduction in sales at fairs. As an alternative, baskets were delivered directly to customers' homes[12]. This alternative, however, was not effective for some families who pointed to a lack of infrastructure (adequate transportation) and insufficient manpower to carry out home deliveries.

As for the infrastructure conditions for marketing, it can be seen that although the families don't have individual structures, the cooperatives provide the necessary equipment and means of transportation.

Organic certification is the most used differentiation factor, with 73.08% of the cases declaring that they use organic certification for their products.

[12] The expansion of home sales proved to be a good alternative during the pandemic, but the interviewees already identified, at the time of the fieldwork (first half of 2022), a reduction in demand in this channel.

Of those production units that have certification, the majority, 94.74%, have participatory certification and 5.26% audit certification, which is only present in rice production. An interesting fact about certification is that 77% of families say they receive a higher price for certified products.

4.3. Type of marketing channels used

The following Figure 4 shows the types of markets and the number of times the type of market was mentioned by the interviewees (a total of 81 marketing channels were mentioned). All types were mentioned, but there was a predominance of territorial markets, with 27 mentions, followed by proximity markets, with 25 mentions. In addition to these, institutional markets were mentioned by interviewees 14 times and institutional markets 15 times.

If you look at the types of channels that predominate in the different types of markets, you can see in Figure 5 that in the proximity markets type, direct sales on the farm predominate (72% of sales in proximity markets). The delivery of baskets directly to consumers' homes comes next with 16%, a phenomenon that has taken on great importance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Less representative are local fairs (8%) and CSAs (4%), which are groups of consumers organized into associations, a recent movement as an alternative marketing channel.

In territorial markets (Figure 6), there is a predominance of regional fairs (46% of sales to territorial markets), a phenomenon explained by the proximity of the production units to the state capital, Porto Alegre, which has several agroecological fairs. Small family cooperatives came next, followed by supermarkets and local stores (18%) and small agro-industries (11%).

With regard to institutional markets, according to Figure 7, the channel with the most sales is the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) with 63% of mentions in this category, followed by the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) with 31%.

As far as conventional markets are concerned (Figure 8), sales to large agro-industries (29%) and large cooperatives (22%) predominate in the RMPA, especially in the marketing of conventional rice. Private companies and regional supermarkets, both with 21%, buy both rice and vegetables.

4.4. Identification and characterization of the main marketing channel accessed by the families

The majority channel is understood to be the one to which households make the largest volume of their sales, considering the values over the course of the year. The majority of channels include: regional street markets, family cooperatives, private companies, regional supermarkets, local supermarkets, PNAE, PAA, large cooperatives and direct delivery baskets.

As can be seen in figure 9, street markets are the main channel for 41% of families. This is followed by small cooperatives, which are family cooperatives for 15% of families. This is followed by sales to private companies (wholesalers) and regional supermarkets (regional supermarket chains).

Analysis of the diversification of majority channels shows that 86% of respondents have diversified or very diversified majority channels.

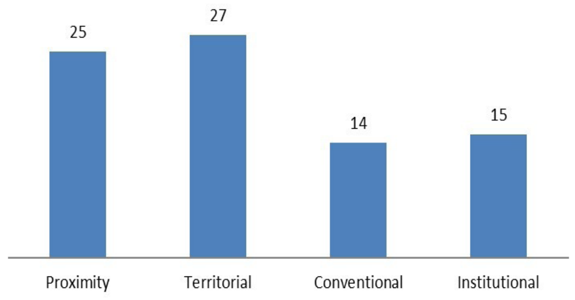

FIGURE 4 - Count of questionnaires by type of market (number of times the channel was mentioned).
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

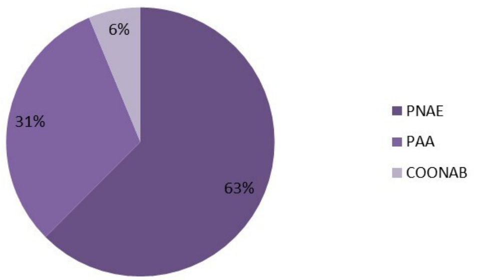

FIGURE 7 - Main marketing channels in institutional markets (percentage of sales).
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

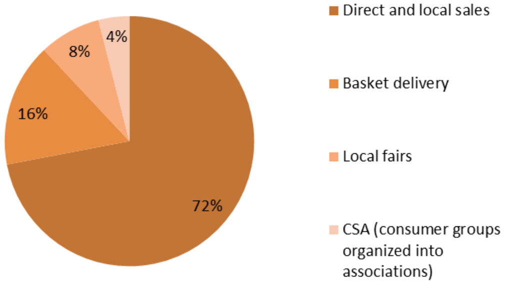

FIGURE 5 - Main sales channels in proximity markets (percentage of sales).
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

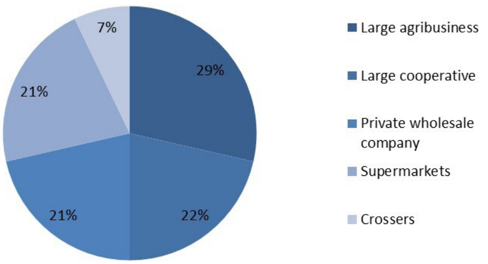

FIGURE 8 - Main sales channels in conventional markets (percentage of sales).
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

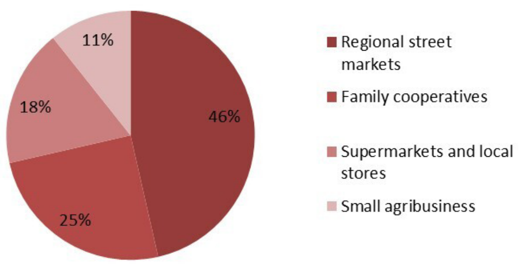

FIGURE 6 - Main sales channels in territorial markets (percentage of sales).
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

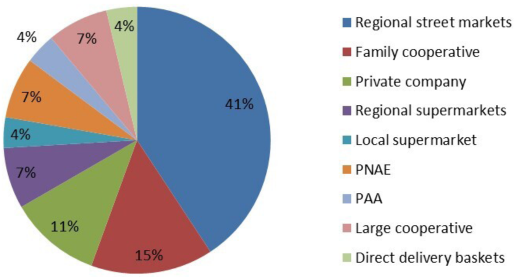

FIGURE 9 - Majority channel among families (percentage of sales).
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

The condition of exclusive channel, or dependence on a single majority channel, affects only 14% of families.

When we analyze the forms of access to the majority marketing channels (i.e. which person or entity facilitated or promoted the farmers' contact with the sales channel), we can see that the predominant forms of access involved the intermediation of the group or association. The intermediation of acquaintances, the search for the buyer himself and the intermediation of technical assistance, in this case EMATER, were also important.

When mentioning the reasons for selling through the majority channels, personal relationships and trust were the most cited. Prices and the volume marketed were also pointed out as relevant motivations, as well as the guarantee of sales for participating in a certain marketing channel.

The transportation of products to the point of sale is mainly carried out by the farmers themselves, accounting for 58.06% of cases, followed by third-party services (19.35%) and services offered by associations/cooperatives (12.90%). With regard to the problems faced in transportation and storage, more than a third of those interviewed said they did not face any problems related to transportation to the point of sale of the majority channel (41.38%). In the event of problems, the most commonly cited were the road conditions and the lack of means of transportation available for deliveries, since many have only one vehicle for all the family's activities. Among the other factors cited is the high price of fuel, which affects the financial conditions for delivering production.

When it comes to the conditions under which products are delivered to the majority channel, it can be seen that the majority of farmers are actively involved and that delivery conditions are variable and flexible and are adjusted on a case-by-case basis (both questions received 32.14% of responses). In addition to these conditions, there are also negotiations and agreements between buyers and sellers (17.86%). For 14.29%, the contracts govern the delivery rules.

When it comes to price formation, in the case of fruit and vegetables, which are mainly sold at fairs, prices are determined by the collective of farmers at the fair (e.g. the fair committee). In the case of rice, whose main marketing channel is private companies or cooperatives (large or small), the price of the product is determined by the stock exchange or international quotations (24.24% of responses). In the case of organic rice, 20% to 30% is added to the price of this reference.

These aspects coincide with the characteristics of the main types of markets accessed by the interviewees, which, as we will see in the next section, are mainly classified as territorial, which are those in which the nature of the relationships established still allows farmers to negotiate the conditions of supply, deliveries and prices and, as a consequence, some control over power asymmetries.

Regarding the degree of satisfaction of families with the prices they received when selling, the majority were satisfied (46.43%). Another significant proportion were dissatisfied with the prices (32.14%), saying that they could be better, or as some said: "it could always be better". It should be noted, however, that there were no responses of total dissatisfaction, frustration or discontent with the prices received for the product.

With regard to the importance of using digital means of communication, it was found that the telephone and WhatsApp application account for

TABLE 2 - Diversification of the majority channels in the different types of markets (percentage of families).

	Markets Territories	Markets Proximity	Markets Conventional	Markets Institutional
Exclusive	32.00%	6.25%	55.56%	11.11%
Diversified	52.00%	75.00%	33.33%	55.56%
Very diverse	16.00%	18.75%	11.11%	33.33%

SOURCE: field research, 2022.

54.72% of contact with consumers of the majority channel, while 30.19% is made via personal contact.

4.5. Type of majority channel

Returning to the typology discussed earlier, with only the majority channel used by families in mind, Figure 10 shows. Territorial markets predominate, accounting for 57% of cases. Conventional markets predominate next, with 23%, due to the importance of rice production and the volumes traded. Institutional and proximity markets come next.

With regard to the main majority channels, Figure 11 shows that:

(a) in regional markets, the regional open market (35%) and the small cooperative (19%) predominate;

(b) in conventional markets, large private agribusinesses (16%) and large cooperatives (6%) predominate;

(c) the institutional market is dominated by sales through channels such as the PAA and PNAE, which together account for 12%; and

(d) in the proximity market, basket sales and local supermarkets appear, but both have a low representation among the majority channels.

Table 2 shows the relationship between market typology and diversification of the majority channels. It can be seen that the territorial markets are mostly diversified, with 52% of families selling through 2 or 3 main channels. However, 32% of households in which the majority channels are territorial sell through an exclusive channel. With regard to proximity markets, the degree of diversification is greater, as 93.75% of the cases where sales in proximity markets take place through diversified or very diversified channels.

In conventional markets, exclusive sales to a single channel predominate (55.56%), followed by 33.33% of sales to 2 or 3 channels. Institutional markets also have a greater diversification of marketing channels, with 55.56% using 2 or 3 channels and 33.33% using more than 4 delivery channels.

5. Final considerations

In this work, our objectives were to analyze the process of building markets for products from agrarian reform settlements in the RMPA and to identify the types of markets accessed and the characteristics of these markets.

In general, it can be said that the settlers interviewed use a large number of different channels

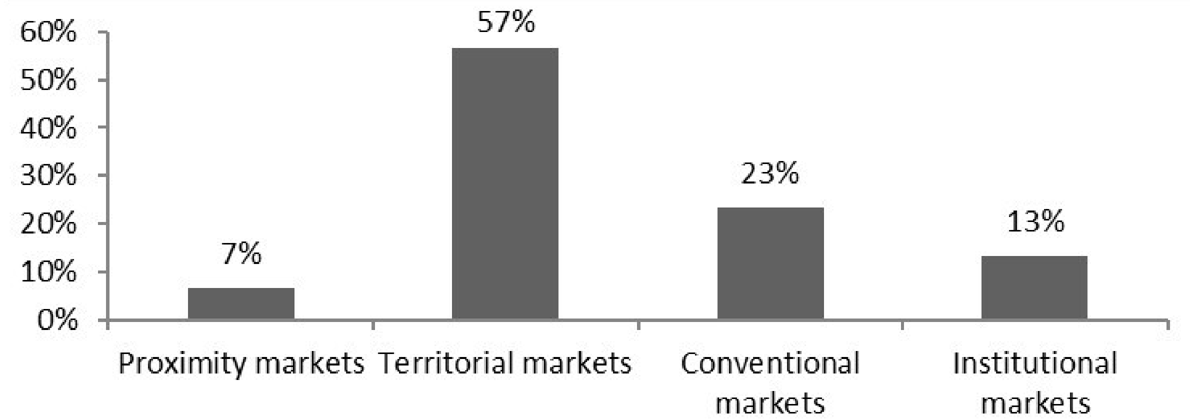

FIGURE 10 - Typology of majority channels.
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

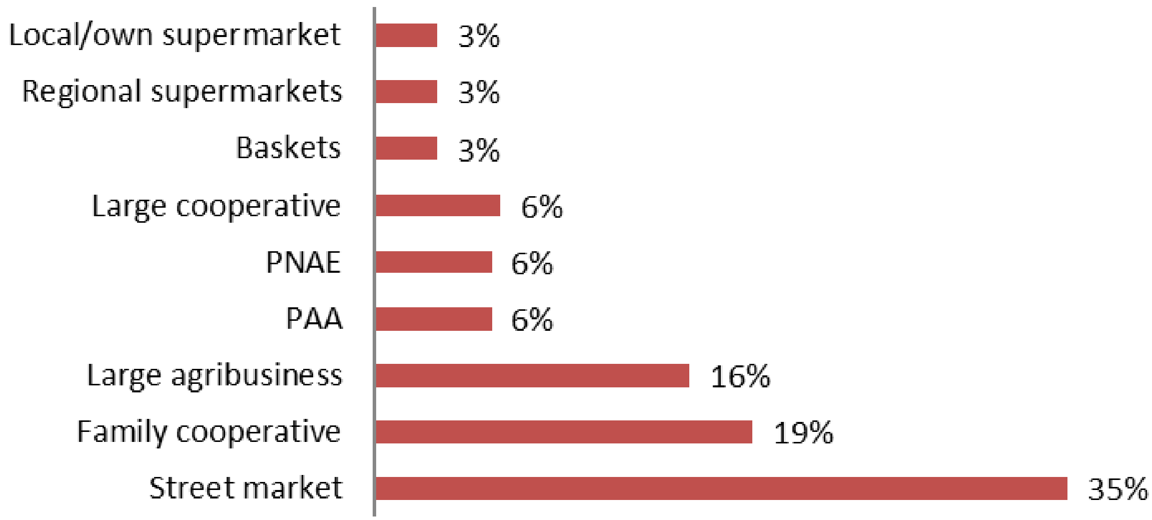

FIGURE 11 - Majority channels (percentage of sales).
SOURCE: field research, 2022.

to sell their products, with direct sales on the farm (a channel used by all the interviewees) and the regional open market being the most frequently used channels. This is followed by sales for school meals (PNAE) and sales through small family farming cooperatives, which in this case is COOTAP - Cooperativa dos Trabalhadores Assentados da Região de Porto Alegre LTDA.

The cooperatives responsible for processing organic rice production mainly access institutional markets such as PAA and PNAE. Conventional rice is sold in conventional markets (agro-industries and large cooperatives). Private companies and regional supermarkets, also classified as conventional markets, buy both conventional rice and vegetables. In all cases, the MST cooperatives in the region act as intermediaries.

In terms of analyzing the main channel, the most important were regional open-air markets (41% of families), followed by small family cooperatives (15% of families), both of which are territorial channels. The diversification of channels continues in the case of the analysis of the majority channel (86% of respondents with more than 2 majority channels). The most cited reasons for selling through the majority channels were personal relationships and trust, prices and the volume sold through the channels.

When analyzing the management capacity and autonomy of families in the face of markets, the two indicators used, which are the definition of delivery conditions and the formation of product prices, allow us to affirm good conditions of autonomy and management on the part of families, since delivery conditions and product prices are, in most cases, defined by producers or negotiated. It also emerged that the settlers are generally satisfied with the prices they receive.

It can be seen that building markets was a decision taken by MST leaders in the RMPA, who opted for strategies to seek out and build alternative markets to conventional ones. In the early years, local markets predominated, then the MST took advantage of sales opportunities in institutional markets and later expanded its strategy to territorial markets. The factors that led to these choices include:

(a) the location of the settlements in a metropolitan region and the consumer potential it offers;
(b) the existence of existing examples in the RMPA of channels considered alternative for the marketing of agroecological food; and
(c) the choice of agro-ecological production in the region's settlements.

One of the interviewees said that it wasn't enough to produce in an alternative way, but that it was also necessary to sell in an alternative way. Later on, in 2014, this strategy was reinforced by the proposal for popular agrarian reform and the link it proposes between healthy food, agroecology and marketing.

Based on this data, it can be concluded that the MST's efforts to build markets in the RMPA have been able to promote commercialization in channels and types of markets that bring producers and consumers closer together and revive social, political and environmental values in exchange relationships. The set of channels and practices used seem to be forming a marketing network with some capacity to resist the dominant food regime and multinational agribusiness corporations.

The trajectory of building alternative markets for agroecological food produced in agrarian reform settlements in the RMPA, and the results achieved, seem to be in line with the theoretical proposition that agrarian social movements are, or should be, the main expression of resistance to the advance of food corporations through the construction of alternative networks for the production and consumption of agroecological food, networks that bring producers and consumers together and rescue social, political and environmental values in exchange relationships.

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