



PROJETO
DOM HELDER
CÂMARA

TECHNICAL FILE
FIELD EXPERIENCES
AREA: QUIXADÁ (CE)



PROJETO
MONITORA



Technical file field experiences: area Quixadá (CE) - Alcione

Projeto Dom Hélder Câmara (PDHC II)

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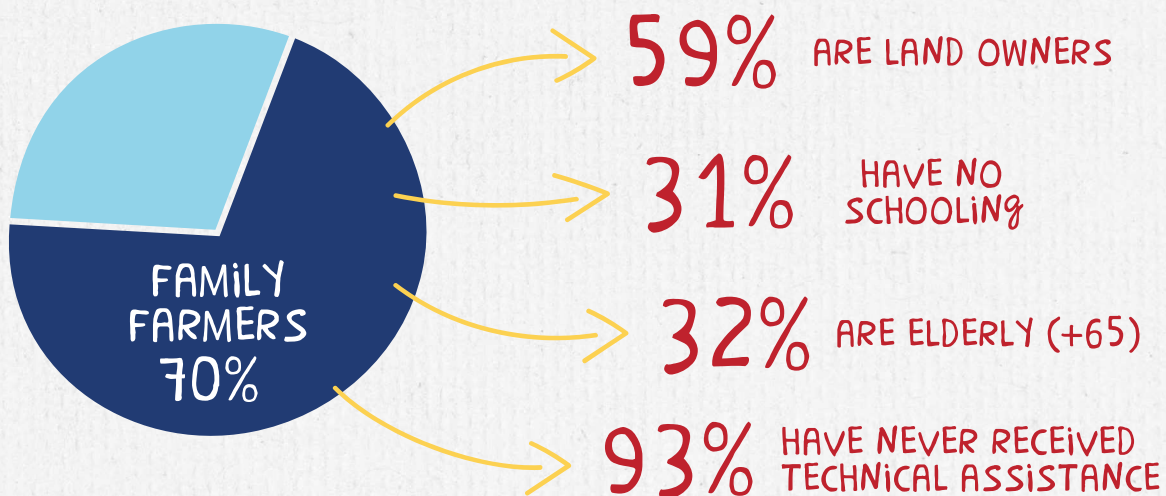
AREA: QUIXADÁ (CE)



Context of the experience

The central region of Ceará's sertão is home to a population of over 250,000 inhabitants (2010 Censo, IBGE). The municipalities of Quixadá and Quixeramobim account for more than half of the population.

In Quixadá, 70% of the establishments are owned by family farmers, however only 59% of them own their land (Censo Agro, 2017). Of these, 31% do not have any schooling, 32% are elderly (over 65 years old) and 93% of them have never received technical assistance.



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KEYWORDS

Gender, food security, productive backyards, marketing and markets, socio-technical innovation, technical assistance with an agroecological network perspective, resilience, adaptive strategy

MS. ALCIONE: GOOD MOOD AND FOOD SECURITY IN FAVOR OF PRODUCTIVITY

Lunch under the mango tree awaited us on that afternoon that announced rain and brought hope to the eyes of the young woman who looked 45 to 50 years old. On her t-shirt, the message "Weaving stories of resistance" already indicated part of the challenges faced in the Café Campestre community in Quixadá, Ceará.

Most of the lunch menu was locally grown: gherkin, free-range chicken, kale, corn porridge, pumpkin, beans, and a delicious umbu juice. From the grocery store, only rice and salt, told us the host, proudly. For dessert, fruits harvested in her agroecological backyard, as Ms. Alcione showed us herself.

Ms Alcione's unit has different production structures: masonry works that were designed to last a long time without needing maintenance such as the center of an agroecological system of poultry farming integrated with vegetables, as well as a small shed for sheep and pigs, which, unfortunately, no longer houses the animals.



"DURING THE PANDEMIC, WE HAD TO REDUCE PRODUCTION, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO WAY TO SELL. WE DONATED THE VEGETABLES WE HAD TO THOSE WHO NEEDED IT MORE THAN US."

On her small farm, in addition to her and her partner, her son lives with his wife, a baby, and another woman whom she identifies as the other mother of her son. "My son is leaving the army and coming back to live here permanently" celebrates the farmer on her son's decision to join her in day to day work.

"The vegetable garden is what I like the most. I wake up in the morning and stay in the backyard until it's time to prepare lunch. It takes a lot of time, because you have to take care of everything, and do the things that they (the technicians from CETRA, organization of ATER services) guide me to do. We have to organize the production for commercialization. Once a month our group goes to Fortaleza to sell at the fair. I take fruit, flour, mango, and all the diversity I have here. Before them, all I had was parsley, lemongrass and cashew. I plant my corn right here. I store the seeds in the tubes and use them the

following year. The technicians want us to make all the seeds we can right here."

"I CAN'T LIVE IN A LAND LIKE THIS AND GO INTO TOWN TO BUY FOOD. I PRODUCE REAL FOOD HERE AND THE INCOME COMES FROM THAT."

A great share of the knowledge acquired by Alcione on income was optimized by the agroecological notebooks. "They help me understand everything I do. This notebook showed me the meaning of my work. Today I don't even think of myself as a farmer, but as this great businesswoman." Ms. Alcione has fun with her wide repertoire of humor, activities and responsibilities.



Family farming within reach

Commercialization in the municipality of Quixadá is carried out in a group chat conceived by the technical assistance for the agroecological fairs.

Initially, it was made to organize logistics and production planning, but with the pandemic it became necessary to help those in need with solidarity baskets and deliveries to consumers. Today, this communication tool is the main form of production flow.

"People make their order and every fortnight we go to the city to deliver the products. I tell the groupchat what is available and people place their orders. The internet and alternative payment methods have helped a lot" highlights the agroecological farmer.

CETRA's technical assistance

Ms Alci's experience, as she identifies herself, is widely diversified, agroecological and strongly market-oriented, but without losing sight of the food security of her family.

She has the technical assistance of Cetra - Center for Labor Studies and Assistance to Workers, an organization with more than 40 years of experience in the territory of Ceará. The center stood out in the area of legal advice for workers and their organizations. Since the year 2000, they've initiated their works in technical assistance to family farmers.

CETRA



Associated with the Brazilian Semi-Arid Articulation (BSA), the ATER Northeastern Network, the National Human Rights Movement and the Women's Movement, the Center for Studies and Assistance to Workers (CETRA) is an organization that has known the Dom Helder Câmara Project since its first movements in the 2000s. Currently, the center is responsible for eight municipalities and about 900 beneficiaries.

The experience of the Dom Helder Câmara Project

Agroecology and living with the semi-arid are basic principles of Cetra's work, as Ms. Alci's experience revealed, as well as the affection and care expressed in the relations with the farmers, a commitment favored by the DHCP, that ensured the presence of technicians alongside the families before, during and after the pandemic.

The experience of virtual fairs, revolving solidarity funds and combinations of agroecological technical innovations accumulated by the assistance program were fundamental for the farmer to guarantee food for the family, exchange inputs with her neighbors to provide for solidarity baskets and still maintain her sales at fairs.



Different realities

The capability for resilience and adaptation is another element present in the experience. In the original production project designed by assistance and farmer together, the goal was to increase sheep production. After the pandemic, the strategies were reformulated. The focus became the guarantee of the family's food security and income with sanitary security in the commercialization, points recognized and reported by the technicians and by Ms. Alcione.

The experience in numbers

The combination of economic, political and health crises has caused a huge reduction in food security throughout Brazil. Data pointed out by the National Survey on Food Insecurity (FI) in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Brazil, a study produced by the Penssan Network, indicates that in recent years the country has returned to the levels of 2004.

In addition to finding that rural areas are more severely food insecure than urban areas, the study reveals the relationship between water security and food security. The proportion of households classified as having severe FI doubles when there is no adequate availability of water for food production (from 21.1% to 44.2%) and almost doubles when there is not enough water for the animals to consume (from 24% to 42%).

SITUATION iA

LACK OF WATER –
FOOD PRODUCTION

21,1%

44,2%

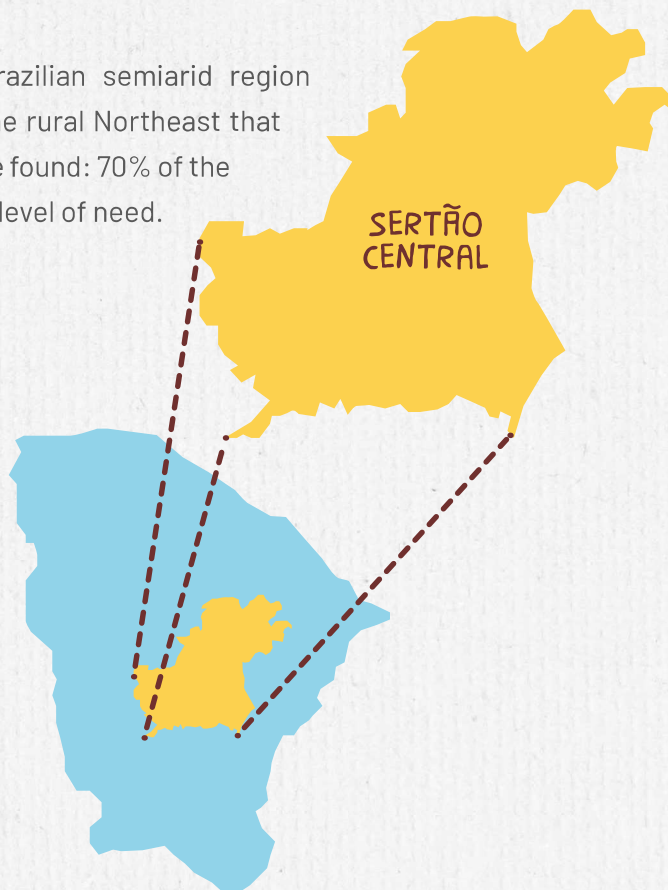
LACK OF WATER –
ANIMAL FEED

24%

42%

Considering this context, the combination of technical assistance, collaborative knowledge networks and innovative interventions in productive, market and management processes idealized in projects such as the DHCP can promote access to markets and ensure productive inclusion as a way out for millions of people living at or below the poverty line.

This is the challenge that the Brazilian semi-arid region knows it has to overcome. It is in the rural Northeast that alarming levels of food insecurity are found: 70% of the population find themselves in some level of need.



LEARNINGS

1. DHCP'S OPERATING TERRITORY

If hunger targets specific addresses, races, gender, schooling level (or lack thereof), the success in serving an audience below the poverty line, of women with low levels of schooling and located in semi-arid regions, made possible that experiences such as those of Ms Alcione could be told weightlessly.

2. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WITH TERRITORIAL IDENTITY

The DHCP challenge in this context was to provide quality advice, with strong ties of belonging and identity with the territory. Most of the technicians selected by Cetrá were residents of these two cities, coming from agrarian reform settlements or rural communities that faced the same problems as the beneficiaries. These actors were also responsible for ensuring adaptation and resilience in the face of the pandemic difficulties faced by farmers.

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