From resistance to reaction: 
styless of farming and rural livelihood of family farms in the South of Brazil

Sergio Schneider
Paulo André Niederle

Abstract

The discussion on the heterogeneity of agriculture in regions vastly integrated into the logics of the global markets of agricultural commodities is a thematic example for the increasingly more current challenge of understanding the distinct trajectories followed by rural development. The study, aiming at contributing to this debate, analyses different productive processes of family farmers in the south of Brazil. This region reveals the most characteristic effects of the project of agricultural modernization, in which the commoditisation and externalisation processes of productive units were associated to the deep technical changes of the last four decades. In this period, the strong performance of the State sought to submit the development of local agriculture to the rules of globalisation, by consolidating the monocultivation of soy and intensive mechanisation. In the last decade, this model has presented signs of crisis revealed by the stagnation in the levels of production and productivity, price instability, the effects of environmental degradation and by an increase of the economic precariousness and social vulnerability of farmers. In response to this crisis, the farmers themselves have created some diversification strategies (internalisation of resources, pluriactivity, de-commoditisation, agroindustry, alternative markets, etc.), which emphasize the materialisation of different styles of farming. The first section of the article sets the conceptual framework for this reference. The second presents the processes of local rural development post-seventies, mentioning the consolidation of the productivist model and its present crisis. Subsequently, data are presented, which relate to a research carried out from 2003 to 2006 in the Northwest of the State of Rio Grande do Sul that intends to capture the styles of farming that have emerged next to different strategies of familiar farmers.

Key words: Commoditisation, Strategies, Rural Development.

1 The authors would like to thank the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq/Brazil) for having financed the research that resulted in this study.
2 Sociologist. CNPq/Brazil Researcher. Visiting Academic at ICPR – Cardiff School of City and Regional Planning - Cardiff University-Wales/UK. Professor of the Post-Degree Programs in Rural Development and Sociology, UFRGS. Visiting Academic at ICPR – Cardiff School of City and Regional Planning - Cardiff University-Wales/UK. E-mail: schneide@ufrgs.br and SchneiderS@cardiff.ac.uk
3 Agronomist, MSc in Rural Development by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil). E-mail: pauloufpel@yahoo.com.br.
1. Introduction

The current sociological debate around the economic phenomena that characterise contemporary societies has been proficuous for the deconstruction of most of the argumentation that has, for a long time, based our understanding on the meaning of markets. In this sense, the development of the new economic sociology and the recovery of the concepts of the social construction of markets and embeddedness have proved to be essential to the contestation of the rationality of the homo economicus supported by the neoclassic economy. At the same time, the rise of theories that conceive markets as double structures, continuously transformed by the action of social actors, questions the foundations of structuralism which supported a general perception of markets as structures leading economic and social processes alike and according to a linear conception of the development of the social capitalist relations.

In the scope of rural sociology, the commoditisation debate, fought during the seventies and eighties, precisely reflects the predominance of a perspective defending that farmers were at the mercy of a progressive and unidirectional process of commoditisation of agriculture, which would make them completely dependent on the “logics of the market”. This perspective has been increasingly more contested by the recognition that markets do not represent totalitarian structures with their own logics of functioning independent from social actors and, therefore, that commoditisation does not take place solely as a result of the pressure these structures put on social actors, or that the latter are not skilled enough to interfere in this process. Thus, new perspectives have been constituted in order to re-discuss the commoditisation of agriculture without the determinisms and linearities that have characterised former discussions, specially revealing that farmers possess the power of agency in the course of this process, turning commoditisation into a partial and multifaceted phenomenon.

In this article, this is performed bearing in mind a case study carried out in the region of the Missões, in the South of Brazil. This region represents one of the Brazilian rural areas most intensely affected by the changes in the technical basis of production which occurred since the seventies. Influenced by the state policies of modernisation of agriculture under the premises of the so-called “green-revolution”, the technical transformations in this period consolidated the skilfulness of local farmers in the cultivation of soy and their growing dependence on the resources controlled by agroindustrial companies, banks and agricultural cooperatives. This resulted in a
gradual loss of control over the economic, social and cultural reproduction of their family units by farmers, and in the consolidation of a development process with an exogenous emphasis, widely dependent on the behaviour of the global markets of agricultural commodities.

During the period in which this model proved to be apt for accomplishing the task of ensuring production, productivity and income to rural families, it seemed to be able to reach even the most remote places imposing its productive dynamism and creating the social atmosphere it nourished from. However, from the nineties on, some signs of crisis started showing more and more clearly and, since then, new alternatives have arisen, actively created by farmers themselves, in response to the increasing social and economic vulnerability that affects most rural families. Farmers have revealed agency capacity on the course of the social transformations they are in and they have also revealed skilfulness in the designing of projects that made possible the reproduction of their production units in distinct ways, finding room for manoeuvre to stay apart from the markets or to build new forms of integration, less dependent on the control of other actors. A wide diversity of styles of farming that reject the homogeneity tendency fomented by modernisation was then constituted based on these emerging strategies.

The data presented in this article concern the municipality of Salvador das Missões. This empirical domain represents a total of 608 rural establishments, of which 98,2 percent are classified as family production units (INCRA/SADE, 2004), and of these 98,7 percent possess an area inferior to 50 hectares. Therefore, this is a unique domain where the “modern soy agribusiness” has developed, sustained by a diversity of family forms of production.

Besides this first introductory section, the article possesses four more sections. The second section is dedicated to the discussion on commoditisation and diversity in family farming. The third section presents an historical overview of the development of local agriculture. The subsequent section brings forward the main results of the case study, focusing on some of the strategies carried out by family farmers, with emphasis on the conversion of soy farming areas to dairy production, the recovery of production towards self-consumption, the growth of agroindustry initiatives and the emergence of

---

4 Quantitative data extracted from the project “Family Agriculture, Local Development and Pluriactivity in the South of Brazil” (AFDLP, 2003), developed in partnership by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and the Federal University of Pelotas. They refer to the submission of structured questionnaires to a sample of 58 family production units constituted through a systematic sampling by community and with information related to the agricultural year starting in September 2001 and ending in August 2002. Qualitative data extracted from 23 semi-open interviews submitted to farmers during September 2006.
pluriactivity. Retaking the main conclusions of the study, the last section argues, at the same time, its main advances and limitations regarding the commoditisation debate and the diversity in agriculture.

2. Comoditisation, emerging strategies and styles of farming

In contradiction to what some perceived as a residual and temporary element, diversity is the central foundation of the contemporary rural world, reflecting the presence of different family forms of production co-inhabiting rural areas and, mostly, of multiple strategies developed by farmers in order to guarantee their social, economic and cultural reproduction.

This diversity also reflects the distinctive way in which the transformations of the rural world develop, fomented by the growing integration of farmers into markets. Comoditisation, which extends to a wide group of spheres of the economic and social life by attributing market value to the human and material interactions that happen in these spheres, is increasingly determining the parameters by which farmers articulate their practice and discourse. Meanwhile, this does not mean that this process occurs homogeneously. Contrary to some perspectives that defend the existence of a complete, one-way process of agricultural commoditisation (see Bernstein, 1979), it is necessary to recognise that the integration of farmers in markets is facilitated by social relations that makes this process extremely varied in its forms and consequences. Therefore, the perception of a total subordination by farmers is very remote, as well as the constitution of commoditisation as the result of a narrow process of development of the social relations of the capitalist production.

Nevertheless, the heterogeneity of relations between farmers and markets can only be understood when they cease to be perceived as explanans or external forces that “encapsulate the lives of people” (Long e Ploeg, 1994), and start being seen as social constructions resulting from the multiple networks established among a series of social actors. And since the formation of these networks involves a wide set of material and symbolic dimensions, commoditization becomes a process that invades different social spheres, affecting the entire reproductive process of family units (Marsden, 1995).

The different paths of this process derive from the dispute occurring among capital, State and farmers for the control of the resources mobilised in these social networks. The expressive asymmetry of power prevailing in this dispute allows, frequently
associated to commoditisation, a wide process of externalisation of production units to subsist, this process being responsible for the increase in the level of dependency of farmers on resources controlled by other social actors, enabling these actors to influence directly the constitution of projects and strategies by farmers.

Several authors have emphasized the effect of this dependence in terms of a reconfiguration of the working and production relations within production units (Ploeg, 1992, 1990; Kageyama et al., 1990; Arnalte Alegre, 1989). In fact, in these situations, commoditisation has been responsible for a gradual loss of control by farmers over decision-making processes that determine the course of the productive unit. An attempt to uniform from the outside is then designed by the imposition of resources and discourses controlled by the State, agroindustrial companies, agricultural cooperatives, banks, technicians, etc.

Meanwhile, despite the pressures by the socio-technical relations sustained by modernisation, farmers have proved to be able to articulate a set of strategies that allow them to modify, neutralise or resist to this kind of commoditisation; moreover, to develop different forms of relationships with the markets through the constitution of differentiated market circuits. According to Long (2001, p. 16), this derives from the agency capacity these farmers possess under the course of social transformations, i. e., the “capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion”. Thus, it is important to understand that commoditisation reflects the pressure markets impose upon social actors but, on the other hand, it can also represent a deliberate strategy from the actors themselves.

Again, it is necessary to recognise that, as social arenas, markets represent the result of the conflict of rationalities, values, norms and codes from the same actors who place themselves as interface. In this way, if actors incorporate the ‘impersonalised logic of the market’, it is not less true that markets are filled with distinctive logic, personalised social relationships which involve feelings and intimacies (Zelizer, 2003), and with elements from a “moral economy” (Scott, 1976). Therefore, the integration in markets does not bear in itself consequences to be presumed a priori. Largely, they depend on the type of market and on the importance the different agents performing in it assume. It is precisely for this reason that, in the same way that commoditisation can mean radical changes in the productive processes and in social life, it can also result in the reproduction of traditionalism, as the works of Martins (1990, 1975) and Woortmann (1990) notably emphasize; or yet, in a relationship of complementarity with the
mechanisms coordinating the reciprocity relations between different social actors (Sabourin, 2006).

The contrasting way in which the relations between farmers and markets process, turning commoditisation into a partial phenomenon, nonlinear and versatile, is due to an enormous variety of factors, some of which deserve being highlighted, even if briefly. Firstly, it relates to what Scott (1987) denominated as “peasant resistance”, which refers to the farmers’ capacity for opposing the structuring principles that guide agricultural changes and the changes in the rural world in the post-war period.

Secondly, it is related to the new development opportunities generated by the restructuring capitalist process in course in agriculture, many of which enable that farmers articulate alternative means of reproduction, thereby integrating in emerging activities in the “new” commoditised rural environment. In this case, the resort to pluriactivity has been one of the most recurrent means in Brazil and in the whole world and, since it includes a particular way of commoditisation happening at the level of the labour market, it has different implications from those revealed by a subordinate integration in production factors and input markets (Schneider, 2006).

Thirdly, it is recognised that, even with the transformations in the rural world associated to the growing commoditisation, the centrality of the family is kept as a unifying entity in the set of strategies created to allow the social reproduction of the group. In this sense, the dynamics within the family is especially important to understand the relations it establishes with external institutions (including the market) and to format different strategies carried out individually or collectively by its members.

Finally, it is essential to understand that there are social institutions community shared which establish limits and possibilities to the advancement in commoditisation. Polanyi’s notion of embeddedness (1980), re-explained by the new economic sociology, notably stresses the idea that economic action is still facilitated by social institutions which inform behavioural patterns and allow the logics of the agents of relating to markets not to be reduced to a so-called “economically rational” conduct.

These and other factors, most of which are forgotten or denied by those who predicted a complete commoditisation able to annul the “problem” of the agricultural heterogeneity, are, on the contrary, responsible for the partial and multifaceted way in which the commoditisation process occurs, which makes its implications also partially
responsible for the emergence of what Ploeg (1994; 2003) calls distinctive “styles of farming”\(^5\).

Styles of farming result from the multiple strategies farmers adopt and, in fact, they exist as a set of strategies for agriculture or courses of action to survive. Nevertheless, these strategies are associated to a logics conditioned by particular social, cultural and economic relations, which put several kinds of pressure over family units. These conditions are determined by the complex social networks connecting actors and, therefore, the comprehension of the strategies is conditioned by the understanding of the dynamics of these structures (Granovetter, 1985).

In consequence, recognising that the actors are conscientious in the formulation of their projects does not mean adopting a stance close to utilitarianism defended by theorists of the rational choice and the methodological individualism. It means to recognise that the actors’ rationality is covered by a strategic sense, but not by a strictly calculating meaning. So, strategies and styles are defined according to the possibilities and constrictions determined by the social structures which result from their own actions (Giddens, 1989).

Since markets represent structures of this kind, it is then possible to acquire the bonds they possess with the construction of distinctive styles of farming. In this sense, Vanclay and collaborators (2006, p. 63) maintain that “the styles are created, not only through socio-cultural dynamics, but also as a response to structural forces - different styles exist for different market situations of different farmers”. However, markets do not determine the development of different styles that simply. It is in this sense that Long and Ploeg (1994, p. 76) defend that

Although clear interrelations between styles of farming and specific sets of social relations of production can be discerned, it is nevertheless impossible to construct unilinear causal patterns in which these styles emerge as the direct ‘effects’ of particular ‘causes’. (...) The development of highly commoditized farms is not only conditioned by market relations, but also emerges right away as apparently determined by these relations. That is specific styles are indeed grounded in a market logic. But does this imply that the market is to be understood as the cause of these specific styles? And are these styles to be understood as unilinear products of those markets? Evidently this is not the case […]

\(^5\) Despite the fact that the notion of “styles of farming” is mentioned in different ways in Ploeg’s studies, we sustain three basic dimensions that have been repeatedly mentioned by the author in delimiting the concept: a) a set of strategical notions, values and perceptions a particular group of farmers uses to organise their production unit towards a specific path; b) a specific structuring of agricultural practice corresponding to the strategical notion of cultural repertoire and; c) a specific set of interrelations between the agricultural enterprise and the markets. About the concept of “styles of farming” see Ploeg (1994, 1995, 2003), Howden e Vanclay (2000), Vanclay et. al. (2006) and Niederle (2007).
To continue the discussion on the way in which a relationship between commoditisation and the conformity of different styles of farming is established, without being excessively deductive, it seems more adequate to plunge into the analysis itself of the social domain of the investigation. As will be mentioned, Salvador das Missões represents a unique context for this appreciation. There, commoditisation has been intimately associated to the integration of agricultural commodities in global markets, which relentlessly sought to subordinate family production units to the predominant rules of socio-technical relations. Nevertheless, a decade ago, the most evident phenomena arising were the new and multiple ways farmers found to diversify exchange circuits, in an attempt to create room for manoeuvre, which, to some extent, allows them to counterpoise to this kind of globalisation.

Therefore, as Ploeg (2003, p. 115) explains, new styles of farming have emerged from the resistance capacity within family farming, where “farmers use the malleability of the process of production and the room for manoeuvre contained in markets and technology to construct new congruent responses to the dominant modernization project”.

However, if, on the one hand, some styles of farming have represented a distancing towards the modernisation project, on the other hand, there are styles reflecting its reproduction. What determines if a family production unit is walking towards one path or another is the set of strategies it articulates. The strategies are related to changes in the labour processes, capital investments, productive cycle, reproduction of the family group and even to the universe of priority social relations, generating alternatives which result in an increase or decrease of the degree of dependence on markets.

On the one hand stands a process of integration in the predominant production regime, supported by the modernisation paradigm. In this case, the productive specialisation funded by external resources is emphasized, as well as the dependence on the fluctuations in international prices and on production and transaction costs. As will be mentioned forward, this is the case of some farmers who have invested in the specialisation of soy cultivation. On the other hand, it is possible to start a search process for autonomy, where farmers seek freedom from the obligations imposed by banks, tradesmen, agroindustries and so on, in order to organise their property and the working process according to their own possibilities and needs. In this sense, some strategies of internalisation of productive resources and de-commoditisation associated to the raising of dairy cattle and to the extension of production for family consumption
will be highlighted; and also alternatives for a differentiated integration in markets through agroindustrialisation for direct sale to the consumer, and through pluriactivity.

It is understandable that many of these strategies transcend the strictly productive dimension and, as Ellis (2000; 1998) demonstrates, they become *rural livelihood diversification strategies*, i.e., means of generating actives and capital (physical, natural, social and human) which allow these units to diversify their conditions for reproduction. Strategies organised towards the reproduction of the family group that can either represent a reaction to the economic needs for survival, or a choice revealed as a voluntary process towards a decrease of uncertainties in the family facing risks and external shocks.

3. **Commoditisation of agriculture in the Missões region**

The main ethnic and cultural heritage of the farmers of Salvador das Missões derives from the agricultural system developed by the German immigrants that occupied and colonised the region in the beginning of the last century. Immigrants from the first German colonies, who established in the neighbouring regions of the town of São Leopoldo from 1824 on, consolidated a system of policultivation-livestock farming based on family work and on a set of relatively diversified livelihood products.

In this period, commercial relations were fundamentally restricted to the sale of agricultural surplus at local markets. Corn, soy and cassava, the main products of the so-called “colonial agriculture”, had a crucial role in the human and animal diets, and only its surplus was sold. The prices of the sugar cane, black beans and tobacco were the best in the regional market, consisting of the main vegetable products for sale. On the other hand, swine farming for the sale of lard represented the highest commercial income of the production unit, and soy was merely cultivated to feed these animals (Roche, 1969; Wenzel, 1997).

From the 1940s on, the depletion of the natural fertility of the soil due to agricultural practices, the sudden fall in production and in the prices of agricultural products and the abrupt reduction of the size of properties due to the system of hereditary succession of lands by the total sharing of a parcel of land among the heirs, constitute a serious crisis in this system.
The microregion of study

The study area

Figure 1 – The study area.

In the sixties and seventies, the essential transformations following this crisis are connected to interventions from the State and from external financing in order to foment production and productivity. The search for a new agricultural pattern was based on a modernisation project that has been responsible for tracing a path towards a productive specialisation in the production of soy for the international market, in the increase in mechanisation and chemical use, in the decrease in agricultural and rural labour and in a growing “institutional incorporation” of farmers (Long, 2001). A dynamics of an agroindustrial development turned to exports, widely dependent on the primary sector and clearly dependent on cash crops, was consolidated.

These socio-technical transformations promoted substantial changes in the family forms of production. The relatively abrupt process of technical-based transformations associated with the growing integration of farmers into the “world of markets”, led to a gradual metamorphosis of the peasant-based agriculture in a distinctive way, more

---

6 Detailed data on this and other questions which would certainly deserve further attention can be found in Niederle (2007), available at www.ufrgs.br/pgdr.

7 According to 2002 data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), agriculture and cattle raising correspond to 46.52 percent of the total Gross Value Added of Salvador das Missões, while industry and services represent, respectively, 25.57 and 27.91 percent.
identified with what Brazilian scholars presently define as family agriculture (Abramovay, 1998).

In the same way, these transformations were responsible for an increase in the level of externalisation of production units, what can be perceived by the increment in the Intermediary Consumption (Kageyama, et. al., 1990). Only during the seventies, period in which the action of the State revealed itself to be more expressive in terms of technical changes, the increase in intermediary consumption\(^8\) in local agriculture showed a variation of more than 470 percent, having its proportional relation to the Gross Value of Product (GVP) risen from 12.43 percent to 28.28 percent, data which are even more surprising if we consider that the GVP also doubled in this period (Niederle, 2007).

Other references can be made in this sense regarding the growing externalization of the productive activity represented by the contracting of human, animal and mechanical labour. According to census data from the municipality of Cerro Largo\(^9\), in 1970 this phenomenon occurred in 23 percent of the agricultural establishments and, in 1985, it reached 63.54 percent.

The expressive increase in expenses in relation to the product value reveals what is denominated as growing “squeeze” of modern agriculture by Ploeg and collaborators (2000), which can be summarised in terms of increments in production costs concomitant with a decrease in output. The continuing importance assumed by this squeeze revealed itself to be even more dramatic due to the difficulties felt by the production units in avoiding the technological treadmill represented by the need of a continuing search for innovations and technologies externally generated.

This process equally established, definitively, that family work mainly needed to turn to obtaining money, which made monetisation another side of commoditisation. The need for money contributed to alter the productive logic of the units, which began organising towards the increase in the capacity for generating trade values and, essentially, towards those values that would enable the greatest immediate financial income, as it was the case of soy.

Nevertheless, since the cuts in state subsidies to agriculture erased the possibilities of maintaining the profitability levels of the first years of modernisation, this situation

\(^8\) In this sense, we consider that the expenditures include the renting of lands, fertilisers and correctives, seeds and seedlings, crop protection products, feed and medicaments for animals, rental of machinery and equipment and the payment of seasonal services.

\(^9\) Of which Salvador das Missões was part until 1992.
eliminated the re-financing of the productive structure of many establishments, which were forced to produce on an increasingly more deteriorated technological basis. This way, from the nineties on, and at the same time as the social, economic and environmental effects of the changes inflicted by modernisation aggravate, the construction of several strategies is in progress, which open possibilities for different logics of development of family units and reveal the consolidation of a wide diversity of styles of farming.

These strategies include, for example, alternatives for the diversification of agricultural and livestock breeding activities, having farmers from Salvador das Missões turned to the cultivation of alfafa, sunflowers, cassava, beans and sugar-cane. In this case, though, the alternative most widely used has been the reorientation of space and labour occupied in the cultivation of soy to dairy production. This conversion has inflict
d an increase in the annual dairy production, which more than doubled between 1994 and 2004 and, mainly, it caused an increment in productivity, which rose from 1,439 to 2,732 litters per milked cow in the same period.

Following this same diversification logic, the recent dynamics shows an increment of agricultural and non-agricultural occupations inside and outside the property which reveal the exercise of pluriactivity, and also, with a less precipitous growth, but equally important, the development of activities that aggregate value to agricultural and livestock breeding products and the creation of new markets circuits, expressed in the emerging family agroindustries that sell directly to consumers.

4. The emerging strategies among family farmers

The purpose of this section is to analyse the main elements associated to the emergence of the strategies presently carried out by the farmers of Salvador das Missões and which are being responsible for the materialisation of multiple styles of farming. It is not relevant for the present matter to identify the dynamics of the production units, rather the fundamental components of the strategies these units develop. Moreover, it is important to clarify that there is no correspondence between each family unit and a single strategy. Each unit may present a diversified set of strategies, in that case being the differentiated connection among the different strategies of each unit not the direct scope of our attention either.
Since the focus lies in the answers by the farmers to the prevailing regime, the emphasized strategies are fundamentally those that have represented some distance towards this model, i.e., the growth of the dairy cattle, of the production for selfconsumption, of agroindustrialisation and of pluriactivity. Distinctively, however, the first topic intentionally emphasizes the productive specialisation in the cultivation of soy as a strategy adopted by those styles of farming that have decided to reproduce the paradigm of modernisation.

4.1 *Productive specialisation in the cultivation of soy*

Only 13.7 percent of the family production units of Salvador das Missões have not produced soy in the agricultural year of 2001-2002. In fact, soy continues to represent the main cultivation system in local farming. Meanwhile, it is not possible to maintain that there is a predominance of soy monocultivation, which can be propagated to common sense when talking about one of the Brazilian regions most widely known by the development of this commodity. For example, if we analyse the specialisation level of the production units in terms of the proportion soy represents in the total gross product produced (monetarily speaking), we will see that, in reality, this proportion only exceeds the 60 percent limit in 10 percent of the cases studied.

However, it is undeniable that for many farmers the specialisation in soy has been the main (re)productive strategy. Still, it is carried out through different perspectives. One may generally say that two different styles of farming are associated to this strategy. On the one hand there are units characterised by relatively high externalisation, capitalisation and technification levels, and which maintain high levels of production and productivity due to a greater technical efficiency and production scale. These are the farmers Ploeg (2006) includes in the “entrepreneurial mode” of family farming, whose discourse converges to the economic efficiency and to the need of “cutting expenses”. These are also the farmers most attached to a structure of machinery and productive facilities which can only hardly be converted for other activities. Moreover, they represent units highly vulnerable to price oscillations and climate instability, which has turned this kind of strategy into a high-risk alternative, frequently resulting in growing indebtedness. Although they don’t represent production

---

10 “With all this machinery I don’t see how I can change. I can slowly incorporate other things, but it is not possible for me to say: tomorrow I will only plant this. I need to try and cut expenses and costs, because I’m structured in this sector for many years”. (Informant 09)
units with great extension areas, these farmers’ discourse is identified with that of the “big farmers”.

The big farmer yes. What will he do? He doesn’t have other resources. For someone who suddenly plants a hundred hectares, he has to plant soy (Informant 03).

The big farmer who produces a lot, even if he doesn’t profit much, but if he harvests five or six thousand bags of soy, even if he only gets one Real\(^{11}\) per bag as profit, but he gets five, six thousand Reais (Informant 11).

On the other hand, there cases demonstrate that this kind of productive specialisation is not necessarily accompanied by high levels of production, available capital or intermediary consumption. There is a set of productive units, among the poorest found in the municipality, structurally incapable of accumulating capital, but which remain dependent on the monocultivation of soy due to the need for immediate financial income in order to assure the survival of the family group, which is only possible with the quickest economic return of soy due to its productive cycle of four months approximately. According to the explanation of one of the farmers interviewed:

The thing is that the nature of soy, even if it doesn’t yield much, is a quick investment. How many investments you see around here that yield in four or five months. And, more specifically, I’m not talking about medium and big producers, but about those small farms, where maybe it wouldn’t make sense to produce soy because of the value it yields, but with soy you invest and in four months you have a return and the certainty that you will sell it, be it 60 kilos, be it the whole production, commerce is guaranteed. (…) So, this makes a lot of farmers to go against the schedule, but it is the only thing they have. So they remain in the soy and corn because, for the better or for the worse, that is what pays off the quickest (Informant 12).

Unlike the “big farmers”, the expressive dependence of these establishments on markets derives precisely from the unavailability of resources, which leads to little room for manoeuvre for altering their productive systems and reducing their dependence and vulnerability. Besides, these are units that, despite presenting a relatively low intermediary consumption, are characterised by the externalization of production decurrently from the need of machinery services for preparing the land, planting and harvesting.

\(^{11}\) The Brazilian Real (Pl. Reais) is the currency in Brazil. One Real is worth approximately 0.36 € (exchange rate on April 30, 2007 from The IMF, online: http://coinmill.com/BRL_calculator.html).
4.2 Internalisation of resources, de-commoditisation and co-production: dairy farming

Following a different path from the one mentioned above, several farmers opt for strategies of internalisation of resources and de-commoditisation, mostly intending to reduce monetary costs through the use of inputs produced in their own production unit. Ploeg (2006) associates this strategy to the constitution of a kind of farming economically. According to the author, the constitution of a base of resources relatively autonomous, integrated and of multiple use, allows an enlarged re-foundation of the base of resources for agriculture and the re-introduction of nature in productive processes (co-production), being the main advantage the distance from the input and production factors markets. In the researched domain, the most widely used example of this kind of strategy is represented by the growth of dairy cattle farming.

The development of this kind of strategy is connected to the conversion carried out by some farmers in areas previously destined to soy production into pastures for bovine feeding. From the 58 units studied, only two did not possess a cow and 55.2 percent maintained areas of sown pasture. Explanations for this conversion can be partially deduced through Table 1. The establishments were subdivided according to the proportion represented by the gross product of milk in relation to the gross product sold, with the purpose of observing the effects produced by a greater or lesser specialisation in the farming of dairy cattle. In the first group we can see 33 units where this proportion is below 50 percent and, in the second one, 23 units where it equals or exceeds this percentage.

At first, it is possible to understand that those units that are most specialised (Group 2) present higher levels of production and productivity, as well as a greater average number of animals per establishment. Nevertheless, this specialisation is not reverted into extensification in terms of useful agricultural area, which is, in average, inferior to the one presented in Group 1. Similarly, the expenses with animal production inputs and the total Intermediary Consumption also reveal to be inferior in the second group, which reveals that the development of this production system has not been connected to a raise in externalisation. Therefore, it is possible to infer that, in general, the increment of the

---

12 It is necessary to recognise that the development of dairy cattle farming may go by pathways very different from this one. Norder's (2006) work, for example, demonstrates the existence of intensive-exogenous models which reproduce that productivist logic with a high level of externalisation derived from the consumption of industrial feeds and pharmaceutical products.
dairy activity, which has revealed a significant increase in production, has been connected to intensification strategies regarding the use of self-resources.

Table 1 – Specific characteristics of family production units in Salvador das Missões according to the level of specialisation in dairy production in the agricultural year of 2001-2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1 GP milk &lt; 50% of TGP sale</th>
<th>Group 2 GP milk = 50% of TGP sale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of establishments</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful agricultural area (ha)</td>
<td>18,80</td>
<td>14,45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cows</td>
<td>8,21</td>
<td>13,70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of milk produced (litters)</td>
<td>18,984,77</td>
<td>38,549,87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of milk sold (litters)</td>
<td>17,020,30</td>
<td>37,708,70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of milk for family consumption (litters)</td>
<td>2,122,36</td>
<td>870,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average production of milk by cow per year (litters)</td>
<td>1,835,96</td>
<td>2,713,87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses with animal production inputs (R$)</td>
<td>2,467,49</td>
<td>2,355,54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total intermediary consumption (R$)</td>
<td>13,095,56</td>
<td>8,210,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hired WLU</td>
<td>0,11</td>
<td>0,09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family WLU</td>
<td>2,43</td>
<td>2,69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus, we can conclude the importance of the quantity and quality of family work in this kind of strategy, which is revealingly and basically based on the work by family members, since the most specialised units reveal a lesser dependence on hired labour (Hired WLU) and greater availability of family labour (Family WLU). Associated to this, there is also an important articulation of elements where aspects like the commitment to the work, the practical knowledge, the know-how and the expertise of farmers are involved, which conforms with what Ploeg (1990) once denominated as craftsmanship.

Farmers use their own pastures with several varieties of grass, and their own intensive family labour in the feeding, milking and maintenance of facilities. Some opt for smaller and less productive animals which require lesser costs in feeding and possess greater biological resistance. Besides that, many farmers create an integration of productive systems, for example, in order to use animal excreta for pastures and crops. In this way, a kind of co-production grows establishing a union of agricultural practices, nature and the farmers’ knowledge.
Again, the great advantage seems to be connected to the significant reduction of dependence on the external input supply mobilised at markets. In fact, this seems to be the main reason for the re-conversion of soy into milk:

The machinery maintenance is very expensive, so soy doesn’t yield as much as it used to, while cows, with them the expenses are in buying ingredients for the feeding, something a little better, and mineral salt, the rest we have here. Plant some corn or get feed for the trough and the pastures and you don’t need anything else (Informant 01).

In the same way as it allows a strategic distancing from input markets, this kind of farming is attractive due to the lower probability of placing the reproduction of the family group at risk in moments in which the group faces external shocks, like the one caused by a prolonged drought:

It is less risky, because milk, during the drought, decreases in pastures, but when it rains, in twenty, thirty days you have a new pasture already. You don’t need to prepare the soil, buying seeds, you don’t have such high costs. It is a lower risk and a lower cost, so some people are already following this line, many people are altering the productive matrix of the farm (Informant 10).

Moreover, this autonomy is also connected to food consumption. Milk production has a strategic contribution for food security, being milk and milk products widely used for family self-consumption.

Another fundamental reason for the development of this production system is connected to the certainty of a monthly income, which allows greater financial stability and covers a set of growing monthly expenses (electricity, telephone, etc.).

Finally, it is important to mention the fact that this strategy has reactivated some reciprocity networks among family farmers that were losing their structure due to the growing specialisation in soy cultivation, such as the swap of work according to the need of extra-family labour in activities such as the production of silage and hay.

4.3 Production for self-consumption

As mentioned above, the historical development of local agriculture was characterised by the conversion of areas reserved for multiple lines of production turned to family consumption into fields of soy monocultivation turned to commodity markets. Incited by the need for “making money”, farmers undertook a reorientation of their units for the production of merchandise, “they took out the orchard and the kitchen garden, reduced the barn, keeping two or three cows, in order to sow soy and barley and
planted all the way through the house door entry” (Informant 01). The consequences of this forced re-conversion were multiple, in general resulting in an increase in the farmers’ vulnerability to market oscillations.

More recently, a recovery of the production destined to self-consumption has been taking place, which is, in part, revealed by the existence of kitchen gardens in 93.1 percent and of orchards in 91.4 percent of the establishments analysed; being the quantity produced in 75.9 percent of the cases of kitchen gardens and in 69.8 percent of orchards considered by farmers as sufficient for the demand of these foodstuffs by family consumption.

This is so clear that, as one of the interviewed farmers revealed, “many are going back to the old system”. However, the return to this practice does not necessarily include the same logic expressed by “colonial agriculture”. If then the production for self-consumption was more pronounced than the one for selling, which was connected to the structure of a surplus economy, at present the logic of production units is “to plant in order to get the money for the general livelihood, but leaving an area for planting for subsistence, even if it is a smaller area” (Informant 01). The main explanation for this recovery of what local farmers call “producing for used” (produzir para o gasto) is fundamentally associated to the fact (also verified in dairy farming) that the increment in this activity represents a development strategy of an economical style of farming, of which the essence is the internalisation of resources, the maximisation of those resources available in the family unit and the co-production associated to the craftsmanship of family work (Ploeg, 2006a).

The internalisation of resources can be done in two ways. The first way refers to the possibilities this kind of production favours, in general, when performed on a small scale, of using inputs internally produced. The second way concerns the fact that the produced food itself constitutes an important resource for the reproduction of the household. In this case, we can also identify a de-commoditisation of food consumption. An important part of the family diet is no longer mobilised in markets, rather is it produced in the establishment itself, corresponding to what Lovisolo (1989) calls an “economisation” strategy.

In fact, it is precisely from the need to cut the spending that self-consumption stems as a current alternative for guaranteeing stability in the family reproduction facing increasingly more unstable contexts. In this sense, the importance of this production is
revealed, for example, by the proportion that self-consumption production represents in relation to the total annual income of the families, on average 16.73 percent.

We also observed that the production for family consumption has greater expression, in terms of absolute values, in the highest income strata, which makes the argument that this strategy is for decadent units absolutely remote (Table 2). On the other hand, this strategy is present in every income strata. Simultaneously, the farmers themselves have, not rarely, identified this strategy as eminently associated to “small farmers”, to those incapable of earning enough income to buy all the food necessary to maintain a family; while for the “big farmers” this strategy is an option related to the several non-economic reasons that make them produce what is possible (and recommendable, according to the farmer below mentioned) to buy in the market:

Those who have enough crops, the big farmers, they don’t produce that anymore. For them I don’t think it’s worth it. It’s better to go to the supermarket to buy it. But for us here, we the small farmers, we have to plant, we have to plant what we can harvest, because we can’t buy everything. If we do, then the money won’t be enough (Informant 08).

This perception can be partially understood in so that the data referring to self-consumption are separated according to different total income strata. Table 2 shows that in the minor income stratum (up to 10 thousand Reais) self-consumption corresponds to nothing less than 40.83 percent of the amount of family income, therefore constituting an absolutely fundamental strategy for the reproduction of these units. Participation decays as we move from one stratum to another. In the highest total income stratum (above 30 thousand Reais), this value falls to 13.90 percent, revealing the expressively minor role of self-consumption as an essential component of family income. According to Ellis’s (2000) classification, we can say that, in the first case (the “small ones”), there is a reactive strategy derived from necessity in facing the economic vulnerability of family units, while in the second case (the “big farmers”), there is a strategy based on the choice and adaptation expressed as a voluntary process by more stable units, pro-diversification of livelihoods.
Table 2 – Self-consumption gross product according to total income strata in the production family units of Salvador das Missões (agricultural year of 2001/2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Income Strata (R$)</th>
<th>% of Stability</th>
<th>Selfconsumption Gross Product (R$)</th>
<th>GP of selfconsumption / Total Income (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower than 10.000</td>
<td>31,03</td>
<td>2.702,35</td>
<td>40,83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.001 to 20.000</td>
<td>34,48</td>
<td>3.816,62</td>
<td>28,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.001 to 30.000</td>
<td>25,86</td>
<td>6.026,36</td>
<td>23,90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher than 30.001</td>
<td>08,62</td>
<td>7.314,69</td>
<td>13,90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Another important reason for the increment of self-consumption is the possibility of taking advantage of idle time and labour in the family unit. Hence, we firstly noticed that more technified units present higher levels in the Self-consumption Gross Product, precisely because mechanisation enables some spare time for taking care of kitchen gardens, orchards, a few animals, etc. Secondly, we confirmed the validity of some Chayanovian postulates regarding the family composition and the demographical cycle, showing that in units where this production is more expressive there is a greater number of consumers and workers, and that, in terms of inner-family differentiation of the work, the people involved with this production are usually women and also frequently elderly.

Nevertheless, the increment in self-consumption production seems to be essentially associated to the search by farmers for autonomy towards the control of (re)productive processes. As one of the interviewees mentioned:

Someone who has everything in the property, if they produce meat, milk, lard, all the family consumption, they have much more autonomy, because they always produce something for commerce, milk, soy, corn, canola or sunflower, they will always have this or that product they will sell, so if they have enough for consumption, they will have much more autonomy, much more security (Informant 10).

However, besides autonomy, this strategically oriented reconversion for the complementarity among soy, corn, milk and the multiple production lines for self-consumption, may still contribute to other transformations. That is the case (again similarly to what was mentioned about the revival of swaps of work in dairy farming) of the reactivity of food exchange relations among neighbours, which suffered the impact of the reduction of products that typically circulated in these reciprocity
networks due to the specialisation in soy, and which now, or later, may re-emerge (see Grisa, 2007).

4.4 Agroindustrialisation

The development of “rural family agroindustry” is another strategy that has become evident among local farmers. Although this activity is inherited by the colonial tradition of food transformation, this kind of agroindustry stems from a set of transformations that occurred in the last ten to fifteen years in networks of vertical integration among farmers and agroindustrial companies, and in the institutional setting of family farming, since state resources for this kind of entrepreneurship suffered a growth.

Similarly, it is evident that the growth of this activity is intimately connected to the advancement of commoditisation in rural areas. As Mior (2005, p. 274) demonstrates, the formation of these agroindustries is characterised by a “transformation of the activity with value of use (conservation of processed foodstuffs for subsistence) into an activity with value of exchange (commercialisation)” in which you start with an artisanal way of producing food for family self-consumption to go to a new form of commoditisation activity.

From the set of establishments researched in Salvador das Missões, 32.8 percent presented some kind of food transformation carried out in the family unit, and which generated commercialisation during the agricultural year of 2001-2002. From the commercialised products lard (12.07%), jellies (8.62%), cheeses (5.17%), sugar cane products (5.17%), pastes (3.45%) and wines (1.72%) are the most relevant.

In each case, products derived from homemade transformation are directly sold to consumers, door to door, contrarily to plant and animal products, both predominantly commercialised in other ways, mostly through agricultural cooperatives. So, besides aggregating value to the product through industrialisation, this kind of activity has allowed an important added value to income due to the various ways of selling products.

This direct relationship with consumers is only possible because, contrarily to the big companies in the field, family agroindustries articulate firmly with local areas, mobilising several commercialisation networks operated through family bonds, friendship and trust. These networks work by reactivating social ties and building differentiated markets. Therefore, instead of breaking with reciprocity networks, this
specific form of commoditisation has been based on them, and has tried to strengthen them too.

This case is a model for understanding a social construction dynamics of new markets that has been emerging in the region. The formation of “alternative networks” for commercialisation is an integration strategy in market circuits that are being built through cooperative relationships among local actors. Moreover, reflecting a deliberate strategy for market integration by farmers themselves, this process demonstrates how they are capable of, in specific situations, turn commoditisation into a convenient alternative to the reproduction of the family unit.

Nevertheless, this also involves a change in the way farmers face integration in markets and in the business sphere. In this sense, Mior (2005) also demonstrates that the development of these commercialisation networks is directly connected to a change in the cultural repertoire of farmers who, not such a long time ago, saw the tendency for commerce as a negative aspect of the exercise of their profession as farmers, since it prioritised business to the detriment of work (see also Woortmann, 1990).

In great part, this change is owed to a growing skilfulness by farmers who are most specialised in this activity, which stems from the investment that has been undertaken, in partnership among rural extensionists and the farmers themselves, through technical meetings, training courses and field days for capacity building and learning new practices of artisanal transformation of food and value aggregation.

At last, it is important to stress the effects of this process in terms of transformations in the family working relations. Differently form what happens regarding ploughing, both in the fabrication and commercialisation of food, the women and children’s work is no longer understood as aid to an essentially masculine activity; on the contrary, their work became essential in this activity, enabling the reintegration of the woman in non-domestic occupations of the rural estate, something that had often been lost due to the wide mechanisation of the agricultural work.

4.5 Pluriactivity

Similarly to agroindustrialisation, the development of pluriactivity arises as a single phenomenon within the notion that market integration may represent an alternative, actively built by farmers themselves and, with very different effects form those deriving from the dependence created on input and agricultural technology markets, i., e., when
high levels of externalisation of productive resources are associated to commoditisation. In other words, pluriactivity involves some kind of commoditisation taking place in association to a new stage of integration, which occurs via the labour market, allowing it not to lead to autonomy loss like other forms of market integration.

In southern Brazil, this phenomenon emerged simultaneously with the effects of the transformations caused by technical-based modernisation, fundamentally concerning the availability of family labour caused by the intensive mechanisation of productive processes and the tertiarisation that then proceeded, besides the farmers’ need to get complementary income due to the fall in agricultural yields originated by the price deterioration of agricultural commodities and by the rise in production costs. More recently, however, its dissemination has also been connected with the raise in incentives promoted by policies of support to diversification in rural areas and with the changes in the non-agricultural labour market caused by an industrial decentralisation process (Schneider, 2006).

Considering pluriactivity as situations in which agricultural activities combine within and outside the production unit or as a combine of the agricultural activity within the production unit with a non-agricultural activity in industry, commerce and/or services, then 46.4 percent of the family units in Salvador das Missões classify as “pluriactive”.

Due to their predominantly agricultural trajectory, which enabled the constitution of a wide market of third-sector services (usually associated with precariousness and informality in working relations), the most relevant occupations in the municipality are related to the development of an “agrarian-based pluriactivity”, that is, situations combining agricultural activities within and outside the production unit (Schneider, 2006). In this sense, from a set of occupations characterising the exercise of pluriactivity, 18.9 percent are associated to the tertiarisation of agricultural chores.

Nevertheless, even if the regional economic dynamics hasn’t promoted a significant development in the industrial, commercial and urban services sectors, which blocked the growth of intersectorial pluriactivity, a significant part of occupations has come from the following fields: public services (11.3%), industry (11.3%), personal services –

---

13 The development of multiple occupations has shown to be increasingly more recurrent among family farmers of the three states of the southern regions of Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina e Paraná). According to data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), between 2001 and 2005, there was a 4.3 percent growth in the economically active population living in rural areas engaged in non-agricultural activities in this region.
carpenters, painters, construction workers, etc. – (9.4%), commerce (7.5%), transportations (5.7%) and civil construction (1.9%).

Besides the determinant effect caused by the historical course of the local economy, this phenomenon is recognisably influenced by a series of inherent factors to the dynamics of the family unit, which determine the existence of pluriactivity and the multifaceted way in which it evolves. In previous studies we have demonstrated that, on average, the pluriactive establishments of Salvador das Missões present a total area and a useful agricultural surface inferior to those present in exclusively agricultural or monoactive establishments, but, on the other hand, they present a higher number of residents and workers and a higher education level. In the same way, we demonstrated that, regarding the place individuals who undertake the activities identified as pluriactivity take in the family, there is a predominance of sons (35%), followed by the responsible/chief of the establishment (27%), wife (18%), daughters (8%) and other relatives (12%) (Niederle, 2007; Schneider, et. al., 2006).

In turn, the importance of this strategy is directly connected to its potential for facing the need of rural families to find new income sources. In this sense, Kinsela and collaborators (2000) present pluriactivity as a rural livelihood diversification strategy. Diversification, in this case, can be understood as Ellis (1998, p. 4) originally defined it, as a “process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standards of living”. In these terms, pluriactivity constitutes a strategy that allows the family and individuals to access “assets” – namely income – conferring them a greater autonomy in facing the economically unstable environment and, mainly, a bigger room for manoeuvre facing crises and external shocks.

In order to study this issue, the information in Table 3 allows an analysis of the differences between pluriactivity and monoactivity regarding the distinctive sources of income during the agricultural year of 2001/2002\textsuperscript{14}. At first, one can perceive that the Agricultural Income is substantially higher in monoactive establishments (R$ 11.633,60) vis-à-vis pluriactive ones (R$ 7.506,51). However, as regards the average Total Income of these groups, a small inversion is notable, presenting pluriactive

\textsuperscript{14} The Income was divided in the following way: \textit{Agricultural Income}: derives from agricultural and livestock raising activities within the production unit; \textit{Non-Agricultural Income}: derives from non-agricultural activities and can be earned inside or outside the production unit, as employee, employer or self-employed; \textit{Other Work-Related Income}: necessarily obtained outside the production unit and from activities inherent to the agricultural sector; \textit{Other Source Income}: renting, interest, applications, leasing, donations, etc.; \textit{Social Transfer Income}: retirement pensions, pensions, assistance programmes, etc.
establishments, on average, with higher income than monoactive ones (R$ 15,582,48 and R$ 14,882,96, respectively). This inversion is essentially owed to the exercise of pluriactivity, in view of the amounts in Non-Agricultural Income (related to intersectorial pluriactivity) and Other Work-Related Income (related to agrarian-base pluriactivity) earned by pluriactive establishments. Before this, no doubts remain about the relevance of pluriactivity in the economic reproduction of these units.

Table 3 – Average Income according to mode and kind of establishment in the municipality of Salvador das Missões (agricultural year of 2001/2002).

| Kind of Establishment | Agricultural Income | | | Non-Agricultural Income | | | Other Work-Related Income | | | Social Transfer Income | | | Other Source Income | | | Total Income | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                       | V       | %     | V       | %     | V       | %     | V       | %     | V       | %     | V       | %     | V       | %     | V       | %     |
| Monoactive            | 11,633,60 | 78,2 | -       | -     | 3,198,33 | 21,5 | 51,03 | 0,4 | 14,882,96 | 100 |
| Pluriactive           | 7,506,51 | 48,2 | 5,187,61 | 33,3 | 589,28 | 3,8 | 2,203,08 | 14,1 | 96,00 | 0,6 | 15,582,48 | 100 |


In fact, 71 percent of the pluriactive establishments mentioned the need to raise family income as their main reason for searching other occupations. In 74.7 percent of the pluriactive units, the money from these incomes was effectively spent on family expenses, and 38.1 percent of the establishments, spent the most part of the resources on food for the family; 32.8 percent, on personal expenses (clothing, medicines, etc.); 19.0 percent on productive investments and; in equal proportion, on investments in the farm estate and in domestic comfort.

5. Conclusions

The heterogeneity of styles of farming present in the contemporary rural world is the result, in great part, of the multifaceted way in which farmers relate to different markets. Transversally extended over the whole text, this idea intended to demonstrate, even if without the profundness that many questions demand, how the commoditisation of agriculture constitutes a multifaceted process affecting in very

15 The other reasons were: the “precariousness of the conditions in agriculture” (9%), which in some way relates to income; the “fondness for the activity” (15%), and “other various reasons” (5%).
different and peculiar ways the design of strategies that family farmers undertook in order to survive.

This undertaking was only possible because the understanding of the commoditisation of agriculture as the result of a structural determination performed by a static and totalitarian market was abandoned, and replaced by the notion of commoditisation as a wide social process in which markets are presented as emerging structures dynamically related to the different configurations of multiple networks of social relations.

The article emphasized at all times the active role of farmers, demonstrating their different capacities for resistance and for finding answers congruently to the pressures undertook by external actors and to the reproduction needs of the family group, through the construction of different livelihood diversification strategies. On the one hand, it revealed the way in which farmers, by counterpoising an integration subordinate to global markets of agricultural commodities, find room for manoeuvre to articulate strategies of de-commoditisation and internalisation of resources that intend to increase their autonomy vis-à-vis input markets and production factors. On the other hand, it revealed how these same farmers are capable of creating alternative means of reproduction, promoting integration in new markets, whether through alternative commercialisation networks or new occupations and productive activities.

Understanding the emerging strategies among farmers, how they are being created in the midst of the present transformations in rural areas and how they result in the constitution of different styles of farming, is fundamental for the discussion of the several levels and dimensions involved in the genesis of a sustainable model of rural development, but which undoubtly implies the recognition that farmers possess an active role in this process.
References


