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The Quality of the Brazilian Agrarian Reform Settlement Projects

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Abstract

An extensive field survey was conducted during the second semester of 2002, interviewing 14,414 persons in 4,430 agrarian reform settlement projects, established during 1985 and 2001 in the entire Brazilian territory. These settlements cover an area of 241,980 km² where 458,483 people are living, and nearly represent the totality of the reformed area of this period. The objective of this survey was to establish indexes representing the efficiency of land reorganization (IF), standard of living (QV), relations and social organization (IS), governments' operational action (AO), environment quality (QA), and the income of the settlement projects. The settlement projects were also compared to several external databases (soil, climate, accessibility, agricultural income and cash flow, market potential) to position them in relation to the amount of available resources on a regional and national scale. All these combined reflect the quality of the Brazilian agrarian reform process. Part of these information was organized in a book “The quality of the settlements of the Brazilian agrarian reform” available in Portuguese (printed and electronic version) and English (electronic version). As main conclusions, in a simplified way, agrarian reform can consider only the reversion of the established land tenure condition (unproductive latifundia) in family agriculture based small farms (minifundia) as the main or only parameter to evaluate the results. Under this very narrow perspective, the Brazilian agrarian reform can be considered as a successful program. Extending the definition, and consequently including other parameters to evaluate results, several problems were identified related to life quality conditions, environmental impacts, social organization and governments' action. These problems can be in most part explained and understood based on the historical development of the agrarian reform and regional conditions. The research also includes recommendations to improve the settlement quality and tables comparing single variables (e.g. education, health care, housing conditions, deforestation, productive systems) organized on state, regional and national levels.

Keywords: Agrarian Reform, Brazil, quality of settlement