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Socioeconomic Contrasts of Colonisation and Utilisation of the Brazilian Cerrado

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Abstract

The Brazilian central region has an agricultural potential of more than 40 million hectares. This potential is concentrated in the Cerrado. During 2003 crop season, considerable amounts of agricultural products came from this region. The produced amounts reached 27.15 million tons of soybeans (48.1%), 13.81 million tons of maize (27.5%), 2.03 million tons of rice (19.6%), 0.83 million tons of beans (28.2%), 2.40 million tons of cassava (10.9%) in 2003 seasons. Additionally, there were stocks of 7.51 million of cattle (3.8%), and there were produced 44.3 million liters of cow milk (33.7%). The percentages in parentheses represent the participation in national production. This development of production in the region was obtained with the adoption of technology adapted to the region and brought benefits like the development of the Cerrado. However, in its course there occurred some undesirable effects like increasing in land prices and coming up of social conflicts and environmental imprudences. Secondary data on rice production and cultivation area for 1990 to 2003 in the municipalities located in the Brazilian Cerrado were obtained from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics and statistically analyzed. In this study three different situations were identified: **(a)** areas of strong agriculture enterprises, with higher production density and high yield levels; **(b)** areas with traditional agriculture, which is getting under pressure of the strong agricultural enterprises; and **(c)** less developed areas, where extensive ranching and cropping at low technological level are being practised. A zoning of these three situations was done with geographic information system tool MapInfo Professional. Finally, the study points out some social and environmental threats and present proposals and challenges for agricultural research and public policies to seek for a more equilibrated development for the Brazilian Cerrado region.

Keywords: Brazilian savannah, development policies