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Geographical Indications in Brazil: Possibilities for Small Farmers in the APA of Ibirapuitã

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Abstract

Agribusiness is an important sector to contribute the Brazilian trade surplus. The European Union and the United States are among the main destinations of agrofood products, taking part in 29.5% and 13.7% out of the exportations, respectively. The consumers, especially the Europeans, have presented themselves more demanding in what concerns farming products for human consumption, due to the nature of these products and the frequent food crisis. Thus, market segmentation based on information about the origin of the product and production process for differentiation and price attribution has become important, due to the fact that farming systems which are scale-based and linked to the production of commodities have become weakened beyond such markets. In this context, an alternative for development for certain regions is to consider regional/local specificities as factors that determine their identity, based on the concept of geographical indications. This scenario presents an opportunity for the small farmers located in the APA of Ibirapuitã. Historically, the region is linked to animal production, due to the fact that the natural pastures there found provide a good support for this activity, which has marked the tradition, history and culture of the Gaúcho. The natural environment, therefore, characterises certain intrinsically specific attributes for the products that are originated from it, being that an important aspect in Geographical Indications. Thus, the geographical origin system is an alternative of development through the territorial perspective. This approach allows the origin of a product and/or its production processes to be valued, and to convert them into a differentiation and value aggregation factor, besides guaranteeing the products identified according to pre-established parameters in what refers mainly to environmental, social and sanitary issues, as an alternative to the new barriers present in today's economical negotiations.

Keywords: Conservation areas, geographical indication, geographical origin, protected area, protected designations of origin

Introduction

Agribusiness is an important sector to contribute the Brazilian trade surplus. The European Union and the United States are among the main destinations of agrofood products, taking part in 29.5% and 13.7% out of the exportations, respectively. Despite the results, most of this

production is directly linked to the market of commodities, being that it is important to include products with higher aggregated value, mainly those that do not obtain advantages related to scale-based production.

The consumers, especially the Europeans, have presented themselves more demanding in what concerns farming products for human consumption, due to the nature of these products and the frequent food crisis. Thus, market segmentation based on information about the origin of the product and production process for differentiation and price attribution has become important, due to the fact that farming systems which are scale-based and linked to the production of commodities have become weakened beyond such markets. In this context, an alternative for development for certain regions is to consider regional/local specificities as factors that determine their identity, based on the concept of geographical indications.

The information that consumers receive through these denominations often include emotional content, which interferes in the perception of the value of the product that includes benefits (unreachable) in its consumption, thus being able to propitiate not only product fidelity, but also of the origin or of the various products that have the same denomination. This valuation of the product itself, highlighting its original-natural characteristics, through its origin or production process, may make it unique and transcend traditional market segmentations (PEREIRA, 2001).

It is important to mention that the most significant development related to technical and juridical aspects of this type of regulation related to origin denomination comes from Europe, being that the use of this strategy of territory valuation is already widespread in countries of the European Union. The official quality seals of the European foods, mentions and specific logos that are placed on the product were defined by public powers as identification, differentiation and valuation tools of food products (BRABET & PALLET, 2005). Thus, the main idea is to supply guarantee regarding quality, production process or origin of the foods through an impartial, independent and efficient system of quality control, attested in a public specifications report.

The Environmental Protection Area (APA) of Ibirapuitã is located in the region of the Western borders of Rio Grande do Sul. The predominance of natural pasture indicates that the regional economical farming model, here associated to the quality of the soil, influenced decisively in the historical process of land occupation and the use of the fractions of land that compose the APA do Ibirapuitã. The economy is based mainly on the primary sector. Extensive cattle and sheep production farming are biologically sustainable and culturally inserted activities in this region. However, irrigated rice production, the second main product, is highly mechanized. The tertiary sector is greatly dependant on the primary sector, which is a characteristic of economies that are not inserted in metropolitan and/or well industrialized regions. This production model, in the last few years, is becoming considered outdated and overdue. According to what has been presented, the main factor of the production process existent in the region is connected to the land, being the economy of the four counties that constitute the APA essentially dependant on the primary sector, with the land as a main production factor (IBAMA, 2007).

This scenario presents an opportunity for the small farmers located in the APA of Ibirapuitã. Historically, the region is linked to animal production, due to the fact that the natural pastures there found provide a good support for this activity, which has marked the tradition, history and culture of the Gaúcho. The natural environment, therefore, characterises certain intrinsically specific attributes for the products that are originated from it, being that an important aspect in Geographical Indications. Thus, the geographical origin system is an alternative of development through the territorial perspective.

Material and Methods

The APA of Ibirapuitã is a conservation area with IBAMA supervision and direct use by farmers, situated in the Southern region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the counties of Alegrete, Quaraí, Santana do Livramento and Rosário do Sul, between coordinates 55°29'W to

55°53'W and 29°05'S to 30°51'S, with a total of 318,767.07 hectares. The research was made with 34 farmers from the Rincão do 28 region, in the county of Alegrete (which represents 2.48% of the total area of the APA with 7,914.17 ha.). A quanti-qualitative approach was used, through surveys and direct observation with groups of farmers.

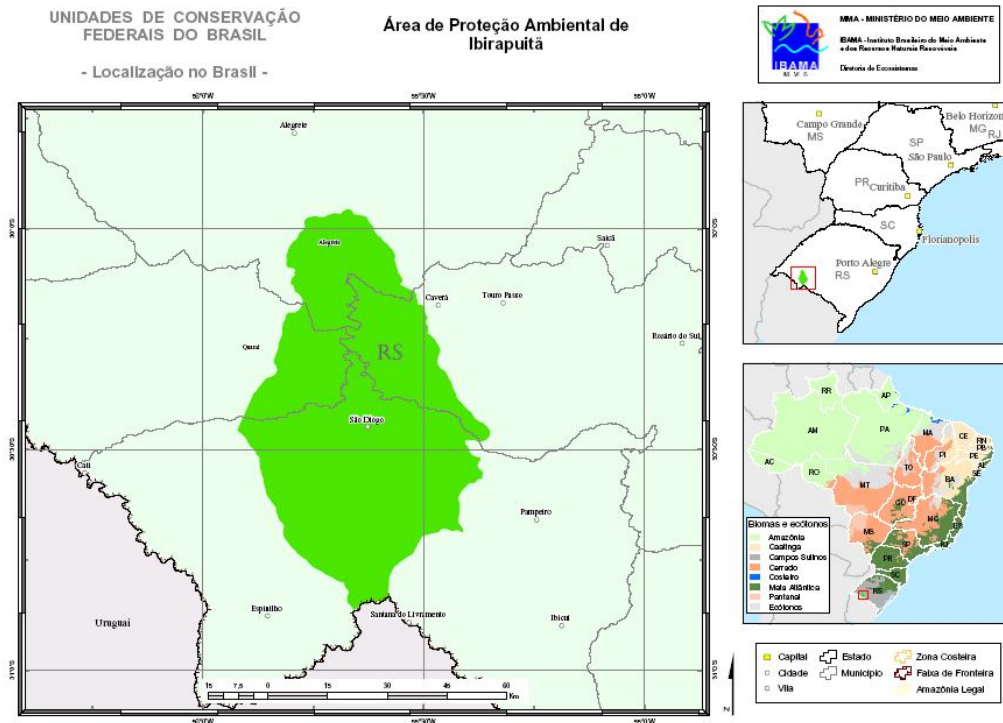


Figure 1. Localization of APA do Ibirapuitã.

Results and Discussions

The results of the data analysis demonstrate that there is a need to increase income, since 73.53% of the farmers surveyed have other forms of income besides farming, mainly including income from retired family members. Another important socio-economical factor is related to the perspective of next generation in farming. Although 29.41% of the interviewees did not give this information, 32.35% said that the children expect to work in cities, while 38.24% expect that the children continue to stay in the country. The non-permanence of the children in farming is due to little perspective, mainly economical, of the activities developed today.

The geographical name is mainly related to the traditional character and acknowledgement of the product, that is, its tradition (history and know-how) in relation to the region where it is produced. In the specific case of the region studied in the APA do Ibirapuitã, the geographical name can be associated to the historical tradition of the gaúcho culture linked to extensive farming. The data analysed about the production activities developed in the group of farmers interviewed confirm, as previously stated, that the region has its productive matrix essentially based in the primary activities related to meat production (beef and sheep), since 85.29% of the interviewees declared this as their only or main activity.

More than 63.70% of farms has less than 100 ha (20.59% less than 10 ha, 29.41% between 10 and 50 ha and 13.70% between 51 and 100 ha), thus the farmers lack conditions to establish scale of production. On the other hand, the predominance of extensive meat production farming as a production activity is directly connected to the gaúcho tradition present in this region and represents the historic-cultural specificities of the geographical environment, due to the fact that it

is considered the traditional form of production, which can be considered as a potential factor in determining geographical indications.

The traditional aspect is due to the historical conjecture resultant from the occupation of this region by the Jesuit priests during the Spanish colonization, responsible for the introduction of cattle farming since 1626, due to the creation of indigenous reduction areas in land which today belongs to the Rio Grande do Sul state, to feed the priests and Indians in the pre-established reduction areas. In addition, Quevedo (1986) emphasizes the climate and environmental factors, such as water availability and the quality of the pasture, which characterize the Pampa biome (where the APA do Ibirapuitã is inserted) and its great areas of natural pasture with superior nutritional quality (GIRARDI-DEIRO, et al. 2006, SILVEIRA et al. 2006, SILVEIRA et al. 2005), support the evolution of extensive cattle farming in this region.

The APA do Ibirapuitã, due to being a federal conservation unit, is already legally delimited. Based on the georeferenced data available in the database, it can be observed that all farmers researched (sample) are located inside the delimitations. There were no cases of farmers from the sample with areas near the limits of the referenced conservation area, where there could be the possibility of part of the area of a single farmer being outside the limits of the preservation area.

Conclusions

This approach allows the origin of a product and/or its production processes to be valued, and to convert them into a differentiation and value aggregation factor, besides guaranteeing the products identified according to pre-established parameters in what refers mainly to environmental, social and sanitary issues, as an alternative to the new barriers present in today's economical negotiations.

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