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Strengthening value chains of products from the Amazon: Lessons from and to the “*Gosto da Amazônia*” Project

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Abstract

Guaranteeing food supply for Brazil’s traditional peoples and communities is a challenge in economic, political, environmental, and logistical terms. Indigenous communities and traditional peoples in the Amazon are vulnerable since they make a living in remote areas, with few opportunities for access to conventional markets, hardly considered in public policies, and generally do not have jobs or stable sources of income. However, these communities possess millennial knowledge that, combined with technical knowledge of sustainable management of plant and animal species, offers great opportunities for developing food security and income generation strategies based on biodiversity conservation. The “*Gosto da Amazônia*” Project is an example in this sense. It is the result of an institutional partnership between national and international stakeholders, including Brazilian, American, and German partners(*) that aimed to contribute to improving the quality of life of the communities involved in the management of *Arapaima gigas* (*pirarucu*), one of the largest freshwater fish in Brazil. This is an endangered species whose sustainable management is only possible under authorisation from the environmental authorities. In addition, the sustainably managed value chain competes in the market with the illegally harvested chain. The project’s impacts cover the social, economic, environmental, and cultural spheres. The present work proposes a system of baseline indicators to evaluate the scope of the impacts regarding income generation, employment, food security, product positioning, consumer acceptance and choice, cultural influence, size of the stakeholders’ network, conservation impacts, and potential for the continuity of the project’s effects over time. Among other results, the relevance of strengthening value chains, as well as the permanent work of business management and reinvestment for project sustainability were highlighted as essential factors for the success of this and other initiatives that propose the transformation of current food systems.

Keywords: Amazon, food security, pirarucu, sustainable management, value chains