The family agriculture as an agent of resilience to the regional development: the case of West Santa Catarina – Brazil

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Abstract

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the south of Brazil received a large migration of European farmers, mainly from the countries of Germany and Italy. These farmers and their descendants formed the social and economic basis of the west region of Santa Catarina that housed one of the largest and most dynamic agro-industrial complex in Brazil and Latin America, in recent decades. The region is currently a major supplier of poultry and pigs to all continents. However, the decades dedicated to promoting regional competitiveness created a cyclic scenario of crises that hindered or prevented the effective improvement of the population life quality and the environment. Among the evidences in relation to the model limits, it is possible to mention the rural exodus, population aging and environmental quality commitment. They reveal that the economic success obtained does not eliminate the social exclusion processes and physical resources exhaustion. The family farmers and their organizations have responded to this socioeconomic environment of uncertainty with strategies of adaptation and transformation like the pluriactivity increase, emergence and consolidation of family agribusinesses, agro-ecological production, and especially, the productive diversification with particular emphasis on dairy production. These strategies serve not only as a means for social reproduction of family farmers, but also to defend and renew the regional dynamics. Thus, the study aims to analyze the family farmers’ contribution to the development process as agents of regional resilience.

Keywords: regional resilience, family farming, productive diversification, adaptability

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