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Perspectives of quilombola family farmers on the supply of food products for school feeding

Perspectivas de agricultores familiares quilombolas sobre o fornecimento de produtos para a alimentação escolar

Abstract

Objective: To analyze the perceptions of a quilombola community located on the coast of Santa Catarina State, Brazil, on the supply of food products for school feeding. **Methods:** An ethnographic approach was adopted to study the quilombola community of Morro do Fortunato. Data were collected by participant observation and semi-structured informal interviews with quilombola farmers, residents, and community representatives. The data were transcribed and analyzed using Geertz's hermeneutics. **Results:** In Morro do Fortunato, the sale of foods from family farms through *Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar* (PNAE, National School Feeding Program) has enabled the gradual reestablishment of agricultural production as an economic alternative to low-valued and low-paid occupations. The dynamics involved in this process indicate the guarantee of autonomy, dignity, and citizenship, particularly among women. However, some setbacks were identified, such as payment delays, problems with physical infrastructure, difficulties in meeting demands, and off-season periods. **Conclusions:** The impacts of food sales through PNAE go beyond the economic dimension and, from this perspective, are difficult to translate into numbers, revealing the empowerment, agency, and protagonism of quilombola men and women.

Keywords: Ethnic and Racial Minorities. School. Feeding. Public Policy. Food Security. Agricultural Cultivation.

Resumo

Objetivo: Analisar as percepções de uma comunidade quilombola, situada no litoral do estado de Santa Catarina/Brasil, sobre o fornecimento de alimentos para a alimentação escolar. **Métodos:** Abordagem etnográfica realizada na Comunidade Quilombola do Morro do Fortunato. Baseou-se em observação participante e aplicação de entrevistas semiestruturadas e informais com produtores quilombolas; moradores e representantes da comunidade. Os dados foram transcritos e analisados a partir da hermenêutica de Geertz. **Resultados:** No Morro do Fortunato, a compra pública de alimentos da agricultura familiar para o PNAE tem permitido um retorno gradual da agricultura como alternativa econômica a ocupações pouco valorizadas e mal

remuneradas. As dinâmicas envolvidas nesse processo apontam garantia de autonomia, dignidade e cidadania, principalmente entre as mulheres. No entanto, há impasses, como atrasos no pagamento, problemas com espaço físico, dificuldades no atendimento da demanda e entressafras. **Conclusões:** Os impactos do fornecimento para o PNAE superam a dimensão estritamente econômica e são, nesta perspectiva, dificilmente traduzíveis em números, revelando o empoderamento de homens e mulheres quilombolas, sua agência e protagonismo.

Palavras-chave: Minorias Étnicas e Raciais. Alimentação Escolar. Política Pública. Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. Cultivos Agrícolas.

INTRODUCTION

Brazil enslaved more Black people than any other country in the Americas, having received about 4 million kidnapped Africans between 1500 and 1822.¹ Many Black individuals who fled or were freed from slavery formed their own communities, known as quilombos. Some of these settlements have resisted to the present day and are now officially called the remnant quilombo communities, with their residents being known as quilombolas.

With the abolition of slavery, quilombola communities were overlooked for over a century. This panorama began to change with the 1988 Brazilian Constitution,² which assigned the Brazilian State the responsibility of issuing land titles to quilombolas.³ However, it was only in 2003 that this process was officially regulated, although numerous bureaucratic barriers remained.^{4,5}

According to the 2022 demographic census, the quilombola population in the country amounts to 1,320,000 people. Of this total, only 106,202 live in officially delimited territories, equivalent to 12.6% of the quilombola population. An even smaller proportion (4.3%) resides in titled territories. Such figures reflect the serious obstacles faced by quilombolas in securing their territories.⁶

In Brazil, Black people experience inequalities that go beyond the socioeconomic sphere. These socially and historically constructed disadvantages lead to unequal access to goods and services. As a consequence, health and nutrition indicators for this group are significantly worse than those for the general Brazilian population.^{7,8} Health and nutrition surveys showed that food and nutrition insecurity is common among remnant quilombo communities. The 2011 study "Evaluation of the Food and Nutrition Security Situation in Titled Quilombola Communities," conducted an in-depth investigation of quilombola communities throughout the country, representing a milestone in the field. Food and nutrition insecurity was observed in 56% of households, but the prevalence was as high as 86.3% in the Lower Amazon.⁹

In a recent study performed with a quilombola community in Maranhão State, all families were found to experience some degree of food insecurity.¹⁰ Quilombola communities are particularly vulnerable compared to non-quilombola rural populations in the same region.¹¹ However, the available data provide a rather incomplete picture. The scarcity of information leads to a damaging demographic and epidemiological invisibility, which extends to other ethnic and population minorities and actively contributes to the reproduction and maintenance of ethnic/racial inequalities in the country.¹²

Quilombola communities are typically located in rural areas, where residents rely on small-scale agricultural production and sporadic trades for subsistence.¹³ Although scattered throughout different regions of the country, these communities share a condition of social and economic vulnerability, reflected in poor socioeconomic and health indicators compared to other segments of the Brazilian population.¹⁴ Quilombolas also have low employment prospects outside their communities, which limits their access to income.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that 98.2% of quilombola communities are threatened by infrastructure projects, mining requests, and overlaps with private property.¹⁶

Ensuring access to public policies is essential to reduce inequalities. The *Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar* (PNAE, National School Feeding Program) is a prominent initiative in this regard. It subsidizes the daily feeding of approximately 40 million students enrolled in 150,000 public schools, non-profit schools, and community entities.¹⁷ PNAE stands as the longest-running food and nutrition security program in the country and is considered one of the largest and most comprehensive school feeding programs in the world.¹⁸

Law nº 11,947/2009 determines that at least 30% of federal funds allocated to PNAE must be used for purchasing family farming products, with priority given to products from agrarian reform settlements, Indigenous communities, and Quilombola communities.¹⁹ Products must be acquired through public procurement calls, precluding the need for bidding processes.¹⁹ Thus, selling to PNAE represents an alternative strategy for income generation for these farmers, fostering the promotion of basic rights.²⁰

Despite these legal provisions, food purchase from quilombola farmers through PNAE has not been implemented in all Brazilian municipalities, and various obstacles stand in the way of its execution.²¹ Important barriers include a lack of adequate physical structure for product storage, the remote location of many quilombola communities, lack of transportation vehicles, and limited or no access to financing or technical support.²²⁻²⁴ Quilombola communities reported difficulties in participating in public calls due to the complexity of documentation and requirements to modify their production processes.²⁵

The purchase of local products from family farms within the scope of PNAE has been examined and discussed in the literature under various approaches.^{26,27} However, the perspectives of farmers and community members have often been overlooked in research, despite their indisputable importance and centrality in community dynamics and social processes. In the case of quilombola farmers, the situation is again characterized by a scarcity of information, which hinders the monitoring and evaluation of the program's dynamics and impacts on a particularly vulnerable segment. Although the number of studies on the subject is increasing, the picture remains largely incomplete concerning quilombola populations working with PNAE. It is important and timely to shed light on these themes. In view of the foregoing, this study aimed to examine the perceptions of members of a quilombola community on the coast of Santa Catarina State, Brazil, regarding the supply of food products for school feeding.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is an ethnographic study, according to the symbolic or hermeneutic dimension of Anthropology. The investigation was conducted in the quilombola community of Morro do Fortunato, located about 8 km from the center of Garopaba and approximately 78 km from Florianópolis, capital of Santa Catarina State, Brazil.^{28,29}

Data were collected by participant observation. One of the researchers stayed in the field during the research period, visiting, monitoring, and participating in food production activities related to PNAE. Data collection also included semi-structured and informal interviews with quilombola family farmers, residents, and community representatives. The fieldwork lasted 45 days, from February to April 2019. The researcher was hosted in the home of a community resident who produced and supplied jams to PNAE.

The information was recorded in a field diary. Documents related to PNAE acquisition processes were analyzed whenever necessary. Interviews and field observations were transcribed and analyzed using Geertz's hermeneutics.³⁰ Interviewees' names were kept confidential. Interview excerpts are identified by the letter "I," representing the word "interviewee," followed by a numbered code, next to which is specified the group of social actors and the individual's age.

Prior to data collection, consent to conduct the research was obtained from the Quilombola Community Association of Morro do Fortunato and the Garopaba Municipal Department of Education. The research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC, Federal University of Santa Catarina, CEPESH protocol no. 3,007,492)*. During the fieldwork, all necessary clarifications

about the study were provided to the subjects, who were free to decide whether to participate or not in the research. All participants signed an informed consent form.

RESULTS

The Morro do Fortunato community was founded at the end of the 18th century on a strip of land donated by a landowner, where it remains to the present day. At the time of data collection, the community comprised 182 residents and 46 households, 10 of which supplied products to PNAE. All 46 houses in the community are made of masonry and have electric power. Waste collection is provided by the municipal government. Piped water is collected directly from a nearby source, without any treatment. *Fundação Cultural Palmares* (Palmares Cultural Foundation) recognized the community as a quilombola community in 2006. Since 2007, for 17 years, the territory's titling process has been ongoing with *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* (INCRA, National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform).

PNAE and family farming in Morro do Fortunato

Groups of family farmers began to organize themselves to sell to PNAE with the support of *Empresa de Pesquisa Agropecuária e Extensão Rural de Santa Catarina* (EPAGRI, Santa Catarina Agricultural Research and Rural Extension Enterprise), a public company linked to the state government. At the time, EPAGRI offered training in the production of jams and cookies. In 2006, it supported the commercial production of vegetables by providing seeds and assisting with the setup of an irrigation system for the community garden. The Garopaba municipal government provided tractors for the initial preparation of land.

In 2008, the community received support from the Federal Government to invest in food production, which encompassed the manufacture of banana jam and cookies, which helped expand the commercial cultivation of banana crops. More recently, in 2018, one of the families began producing passion fruit pulp with the aim of selling it to PNAE. That same year, with the social support of the Unified Black Movement, the community started producing homemade bread to enter public calls from Santa Catarina schools. Since then, both passion fruit pulp and bread have been supplied to PNAE.

Farmers began to see agriculture as a viable source of income only after schools started purchasing their products through PNAE. The farmers' words clearly reflect this perspective:

Now with school feeding, they are getting interested in planting. . . They only planted for themselves, but now they have an interest for school meals, as they know they can sell. (I1, female farmer, 52 years).

In the old days, we made our living off the land. . . then the younger ones started finding work outside, and the older ones ended up abandoning the land because they were old. . . Now it has changed, some things have become better, we have an easier time offering things. . . Passion fruit is offered in school meals. Last year, I sold 300 kg to the municipal government, and this year they asked for 600 kg. (I2, male farmer, 54 years).

[...] the school meal, every week there is a delivery day, we already know that food will be sold. (I3, female farmer, 41 years)

At the time of data collection, family farmers in Morro do Fortunato were divided into six subgroups of food products produced and supplied to PNAE: banana jam, banana jam and homemade cookies, organic

banana, organic vegetables, organic passion fruit pulp, and homemade bread. There are no cooperatives in the community. Participation in public calls depends on external technical support, provided by dietitians from the Municipal Department of Education and eventual supporters from outside the community.

Much more than income: commercialization through PNAE and quilombola women's work

In Morro do Fortunato, the life stories of older women bear a stark resemblance: between 11 and 15 years of age, they commonly left their families to work as housemaids and nannies in the homes of White families, usually in Florianópolis. Their reports provide some insight into these work dynamics:

[...] I worked as a housekeeper. I was not [yet] 14 years old. I took care of two children, the house, and cooked. (I1, female farmer, 52 years).

I missed my family. And Dad even knew the day I got paid to help with the house. There was no way I could keep the money to buy clothes because they were almost starving. (I4, female farmer, 44 years).

From these interview excerpts, it is understood that these women felt the need to work outside the community to contribute to their families' income, as they were very poor.

[...] my mother went through a lot of hardship. We were five sisters and four brothers. You see, four of them were born with some form of retardation and one had a disability in the eye, I believe because she [the mother] went hungry during pregnancy. She said she shared a boiled egg with four children. (I1, female farmer, 52 years).

[...] when I was young, I ate only fish. Meat and chicken I started eating well later, I think, because I could not buy them. (I5, female community resident, 44 years).

Garopaba is a coastal city in Santa Catarina State. It is a popular tourist destination, with demands for temporary workers in commerce and hospitality during the summer. However, the residents of Morro do Fortunato reported suffering discrimination in selection processes, never being able to secure the job positions offered:

If you go to the stores in Garopaba, you won't see a Black saleswoman. I have a niece who has done several interviews but hasn't been hired. Then the person appears saying that he needs an employee on "Facebook." Here, Blacks don't have a chance. (I5, female community resident, 44 years).

They say, "We'll evaluate and then call." They want a Black to clean the floor, stay hidden, not appear on the front desk. (I3, female farmer, 41 years).

Thus, to have a paid occupation, women were left with the option of informal and devalued domestic work. For many women of the community, however, family farming is beginning to represent a real alternative, as for men who have left their salaried jobs and informal activities.

[...] when I worked outside, I would always say that I was going to leave everything and work in agriculture. In the bakery, I had no life; I slept very early to wake up early. I couldn't go out, I couldn't do anything, I worked on the weekends. I left the bakery when I saw that the

vegetable garden began to yield some money. . . Now, agriculture is my main source of income. (I6, male farmer, 29 years).

[...] they [daughters and nephew] are always going by, working. . . and I want to, because they always worked outside; now they work here, they don't have to work for others, working the stove for others. (I7, male farmer, 67 years).

Furthermore, many women had to go to Garopaba to work at school ages, which interfered with the completion of studies. Many members reported that girls stopped going to school and did not resume their studies. Even after returning to live in Garopaba, they continued working as domestic workers for many years and did not finish their education. While younger people have some access to university due to affirmative policies, such as the racial quota system and *Programa de Bolsa Permanência* (Permanence Scholarship Program),^a illiteracy is still a reality for many residents over the age of 60 years.

Challenges faced by quilombola farmers supplying to PNAE

Family farmers mentioned difficulties in meeting the demands of PNAE, constituting an obstacle to the adhesion of more families. Such difficulties include logistical aspects, the scheduling of product supply, and payment, among other factors. The production of jams, biscuits, and bread is currently constrained by the limited physical infrastructure, restricted to the kitchen of the Morro do Fortunato Community Association. The facility is shared by multiple groups of farmers and women artisans. Moreover, school meals for Youth and Adult Education (EJA) are also produced in the community kitchen.

There is a lot of difficulty with the kitchen. . . we don't have much time to do our job. Before, the two groups were divided, but now there is class [EJA]. . . I don't know how we're going to produce and deliver. (I14, female farmer, 48 years).

Added to this issue is the lack of vehicles and the large distances from the community to delivery sites. Delivery schedules represent another obstacle to the adhesion of more farmers. Demands of high volumes in unfeasible deadlines are not uncommon. Furthermore, farmers are affected by the off-season of agricultural products, hindering their compliance with the demands of PNAE. The absence of orders during school holidays exacerbates financial instability, particularly for those whose production is directed exclusively toward the program. While some farmers diversify by selling their products through alternative channels, the volume does not equate to that sold to PNAE.

The primary challenge faced by farmers is the delayed payment for their products. This issue has significant adverse effects, as farmers must cover upfront costs for raw materials, packaging, and, in some cases, cooking gas. The livelihoods of some farmers depend exclusively on supplying to PNAE. The following excerpts illustrate this situation:

[...] we have been providing since January 29th, and so far [April], we haven't received anything. We have to pay the expenses of the delivered products, in addition to what will still be spent. (I8, female farmer, 30 years).

^a The Permanence Scholarship Program aims to contribute to the permanence and graduation of quilombola, indigenous and socioeconomically vulnerable students, enrolled in federal institutions of higher education. To this end, it grants a monthly amount of R\$900.00 for indigenous and quilombola students and R\$400.00 for the others registered.³⁴

[...] We buy everything upfront, and we need products to prepare the recipes. Of everything we've delivered this year for school meals, we haven't been paid yet. (I1, female farmer, 52 years).

Participation in public procurements and calls requires familiarity with technical aspects involved in the formulation of proposals and minimal technological infrastructure (computers, printers, and internet). In the case of the Morro do Fortunato community, the support of external individuals and organizations has been fundamental, such as the Unified Black Movement and dietitians working in the Garopaba Municipal Department of Education. The community association provided the necessary facilities to enable participation in public procurement.

Another challenge is the ongoing titling process of the quilombola territory of Morro do Fortunato, which has been under review by INCRA since 2007. According to municipal managers in Garopaba, the community's family farmers were only able to obtain the Aptitude Declaration of *Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar* (PRONAF, National Program for Strengthening Family Farming) (DAP) because of the INCRA document confirming that the land was undergoing recognition for titling.

Prospects in Morro do Fortunato: family farming in the long term

Family farming has positively influenced the personal and professional lives of quilombola producers, fostering optimistic individual and collective outlooks for the future. Farmers hope to sell more in the coming years and work solely on their business. Some groups intend to employ community residents.

[...] look, I intend to work for ourselves from now on, and if it is necessary, we'll hire local residents, because I think the demand will increase. Generate jobs for those who live here, you know? (I14, female farmer, 48 years).

Groups that produce jellies, banana jam, cookies, and breads plan to have their own kitchens. One of the quilombola farmers is pursuing an undergraduate degree in nutrition, and views the products as a potential job after graduation, according to their report:

I imagine we'll have a place of our own; I'm going to try that this year. The hall is a communal place, beginning with cleaning. The issue of organization is complicated, because everything happens there, you know? Mothers' group, lunch, coffee. . . and I like to work with sales, I like to produce; to have a different jelly and with a label signed by me, it's something else, right? (I15, female farmer and university student, 30 years).

DISCUSSION

Several case studies on the implementation of PNAE in quilombola communities have shown that, despite the advances and indisputable importance of the program, recognized as a worldwide reference,³¹⁻³³ much remains to be done to achieve the program's full potential, particularly in addressing the needs of its vulnerable target audience. In addition to the obstacles associated with participation in public procurements, farmers supplying to PNAE reported facing other challenges, such as the nutritional and cultural inadequacy of food provided to schoolchildren, with undifferentiated menus frequently containing ultra-processed foods.³¹⁻³⁴

The Morro do Fortunato community is an example of the potential of public policies to strengthen family farming. By participating in PNAE, farmers produce goods with the assurance of sales, leading to positive impacts on local economic development. The support and strengthening of family farming are crucial, as they enable farmers to remain in rural areas, create employment, foster local development, and improve income.^{20,35} The benefits are multiple and often supported by local leaders.³⁶

The reports of farmers indicate an optimistic perspective about the future of family farming. Participation in PNAE has played a preponderant role. Farmers intend, in the long term, to expand production and sales and improve the physical structure needed for the manufacture of artisanal products.

Despite the positive impacts of working with PNAE, important challenges persist in the daily lives of quilombola producers. Specific reformulations of the program are needed to address these issues. The delays in payment and interruption in food orders during school holidays make quilombola farmers economically vulnerable. Measures are needed to guarantee payment on a regular basis and promote articulation with other market niches to fill the gaps in orders during school holidays.

These problems are not limited to quilombola farmers. Late payment is so frequent in this and similar programs that it is considered one of the main obstacles to the adherence of family farmers to *Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* (FNDE, National Fund for the Development of Education).³⁷ However, the impacts of late payment are particularly expressive among quilombola farmers, who traditionally experience inequality and social vulnerability. Among all the difficulties associated with supplying to PNAE, delayed payment is largely avoidable and unnecessary, given that municipalities and states receive monthly financial resources for the purchase of foodstuffs through PNAE, part of which is destined to purchases from family agriculture.²²

Obstacles to the participation of traditional peoples and communities in school feeding programs, such as documentation and health regulatory requirements, have been the subject of long-standing debates and initiatives. As of June 2022, the DAP can be replaced by *Cadastro Nacional da Agricultura Família* (CAF, National Register of Family Agriculture),³⁸ although DAPs issued before this date remain valid.

In 2016, the *Ministério Público Federal* (MPF, Federal Public Ministry) office visited the Yanomami Indigenous territory, leading to the creation of *Comissão de Alimentos Tradicionais dos Povos no Amazonas* (CATRAPOA, Commission of Traditional Foods of the Amazon Peoples). The objective was to promote the sale of traditional items produced by Indigenous peoples through public procurement programs, such as *Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos* (PAA, Food Acquisition Program), PNAE, and *Programa de Regionalização da Merenda Escolar* (PREME, Program for the Regionalization of School Meals), among others.³⁹

The initiative and the articulations that followed resulted in the publication of a series of technical notes from the MPF and FNDE, as well as a set of manuals and guidelines for farmers and managers.⁴⁰ The success and implications of the initiative led to its expansion at the national level, with the establishment of the permanent dialogue table Catrapovos Brasil by the *Câmara de Populações Indígenas e Comunidades Tradicionais* (Chamber of Indigenous Populations and Traditional Communities) of the MPF in 2021. The objective was to deepen the discussions about obstacles and solutions to the commercialization of items produced by Indigenous and traditional communities through PNAE.⁴¹

Regarding documentation, an important advance was the technical note revised in 2023, which increased the flexibility of requirements for DAP or CAF by *Coordenação Geral do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar* (CGPAE, General Coordination of the National School Feeding Program). With this change, entities could register farmers using their social identification number (NIS) and guide them in updating their records.⁴²

In a scenario where access to income depends on economic activities that are frequently informal and afford low remuneration — as is the case of the Morro do Fortunato Community — the sale of local products through PNAE is a favorable alternative. The impacts of public procurement on traditional peoples and communities extend beyond economic aspects. They also include the preservation of traditional ways of life, the provision of food that more closely resembles local practices (such as fresh, varied, organic, and sustainable foods), reduction in environmental impact, and promotion of food and nutrition security and food sovereignty.⁴³ An important aspect often highlighted in the discourse of quilombola communities but not yet addressed in studies concerns the role of women in these dynamics, which is permeated by vulnerability and protagonism.

Given that the purchase of family farming products from the Morro do Fortunato quilombola community has promoted this activity as an alternative to low-valued and low-paid occupations, the social outcomes have extended beyond income. For women, articulation with PNAE may afford meaningful social impacts, in addition to economic ones. This is particularly significant in a scenario marked by social inequalities, such as that experienced by the Morro do Fortunato community and other quilombola communities distributed throughout the country.

In Brazil, in 2009, the average income of Black women was 40% that of White men, whereas that of White women represented 68%. These numbers demonstrate the impacts of both racism and sexism in the labor market.⁴⁴ According to a survey by *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* (IPEA, Institute for Applied Economic Research), the percentage of domestic child labor (10 to 15 years old) has decreased over the years. However, the proportion of Black girls subjected to such labor (21.8%) remains high compared to that of White girls (12.6%). This finding reflects the continued existence of racial inequality as a structuring factor of the Brazilian reality.⁴⁵

In 2015, the number of Black women working as domestic workers (18%) was nearly twice that of White women (10%).⁴⁶ This fact is largely due to the roles historically occupied by Black individuals in the labor market, including menial or low-skilled jobs that are poorly paid and lack labor rights. Such a situation translates into unstable, informal, low-paid jobs.^{47,48}

Female protagonism is evident in the Morro do Fortunato community, with women taking on prominent positions across various productive activities. Economically, the sale of locally produced items through PNAE is a viable and promising alternative, ensuring a secure market for their goods, enabling farmers to remain on their land, and fostering autonomy. This situation contrasts with the broader national scenario, where Black individuals predominantly occupy subordinate, low-paid, informal jobs with little or no labor protection. As highlighted in the testimonies of quilombola women, the implications of this process are not limited to economic benefits. The dynamics reveal social transformations that transcend income, reshaping individual and collective trajectories while promoting autonomy, dignity, and citizenship.

Finally, the official recognition of the uniqueness of the historical trajectory of quilombos, their relationship with the territory, and their right to land constitute central aspects of the struggle for social rights of quilombo remnants in Garopaba and throughout the country. This recognition and the titling of lands may guarantee access to various social policies and programs, which include support for quilombola family farmers and programs such as PNAE. The slow pace of legal processes for recognizing this uniqueness serves as compelling evidence of the systematic denial of rights to this segment of the Brazilian population.

This is a clear expression of institutional racism, in which policies, practices, and structures perpetuate the exclusion and marginalization of quilombola communities.¹⁰ Changing this panorama is crucial to ensuring the sovereignty and food and nutritional security of these collectives.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the study confirmed the importance of PNAE, similar programs, and public policies for ensuring the fundamental rights of quilombola communities. More specifically, it underscored the positive impacts of the participation of quilombola family farmers in Morro do Fortunato as suppliers of PNAE, as well as the persistent challenges encountered by such farmers. In a trajectory that has been unfolding and expanding for more than a decade, the narratives of quilombola farmers also underscore the fundamental role of key actors in the community who sought support from external institutions and social movements, such as the Unified Black Movement. According to the farmers, the impacts of the program are not limited to the economic dimension; the outcomes have extended to various realms of life, empowering men and especially women, who are central to the process. The findings revealed the agency and protagonism of quilombola women.

Although the economic impacts of participation in PNAE can be quantified, the social development, autonomy, agency, and protagonism fostered by this economic activity carry an immeasurable value, as highlighted in the narratives of quilombola farmers. These effects are particularly significant in contemporary Brazil, where policies related to food and nutrition security and the social rights of ethnic and population minorities, including those of quilombola territories, have been systematically dismantled by the Brazilian State since 2016. Nevertheless, only recently have there been signs of reversal, with the gradual reinstatement of social policies and programs.

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Contributors

Zanlourensi CB participated in study design; data collection, analysis, and interpretation; and writing and final revision of the manuscript. Martinelli SS and Gabriel CG participated in the design, writing, and final revision of the manuscript. Soar C and Florintino CS participated in the writing and final revision of the manuscript. Leite MS and Neves J participated in study design, data analysis and interpretation, and writing and final revision of the manuscript.

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