

Commodity Factory or Food Farms an Irrational Dilemma: Reflections on the Brazilian Scenario

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Abstract : At what socio-economic costs can the food industry offer products at low prices? This research seeks to understand and to explore how we attribute competence and meaning, what enables the outcomes of agriculture and what institutions provides validation regarding food production. This study objective is to explain and interpret conditions of the present state of agriculture in Brazil centring on two distinct segments, agribusiness and family farming, as the Brazilian, rapidly changing political environment unfolds. The approach is grounded in multidisciplinary literature drawing from the politics of development, the sociology of food, the sustainability framework and the conceptual differences between agribusiness and family farming regarding the innate purpose of the two segments. In addition, a quantitative portion of the research includes secondary data analysis from statistical measurements, economic indicators, federal budget information, and census data to compare the two segments, conveying a general snapshot of the conditions investigated. The results raised questions about the perceived image of the success of agribusiness, against some contradicting economic checks and balances. Analyzing how public funds are invested in agriculture shed light on what can enable or undermine the development of food systems in Brazil. It also revealed how politics, ideology, and corporations might influence the Brazilian Federal. In the 2000-2018 observed timeline of annual federal spending on agriculture in Brazil, there is variation in the amount invested in family farming that seems to 'coincide' with the ideological direction of the federal government in power. It was also observed that significant changes in the institutional framework and financial support either promoted or purposely undermined family farming importance using public institutions to validate support for agribusiness.

Keywords : food politics, sustainability, family farming, food system, public budget

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