

Agriculture and Forests: A Perception of Farmers on Sustainable Agro-Ecological Practices

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Abstract : The use of environmental indicators is today an important strategy for analyzing the sustainability of agricultural systems. Despite of the considerable importance of family agriculture for Brazilian economy, sustainable agricultural practices are still weakly known, and the known ones, underused. Currently, economic aspects of the relationship between man and nature lead to the destruction of natural ecosystems, which justifies the urgent need for dissemination and usage of new sustainable production techniques. The study shows the agro-social and social-cultural trajectory of the farmers and hypothesis are advanced on what would imply the adoption of agroforestry systems in family agriculture. This study aimed to investigate aspects related to the perception of sustainable agriculture, especially on agroforestry systems in farms of farmers from Distrito Federal-Brazil. Agro-social characteristics of farmers were systematized considering their perceptions about agroforestry systems for the preparation of proposal for a program of Environmental Services Payment, intended for families who are involved in the various activities of home gardens. This study used qualitative methodological approaches of quantitative research, using descriptive exploratory research. To get the necessary elements for the intended analysis, interviews were conducted at 40 heads of households of which 15 were men and 25 women. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, having been considered in the analysis the frequency, consistency, coherence and originality of responses. It was found that the lack of financial resources and lack of technical assistance are limiting factors for the dissemination and use of sustainable agricultural practices. Considering the great number of species found for the main categories of use, it can be inferred that the home gardens play important functions for the interviewed families, contributing for the food and medicine production destined for the consumption by the families themselves, and also playing an important esthetic function thanks to the variety of their ornamental plants. The wealth of these home gardens may be related to the rural origin and to the culture of the owners, who still keep a cultivation tradition. It was found that the products obtained from the home gardens contributed for the diet's variety of the informants, representing a promising potential for the improvement of the population alimentation. The study reached the conclusion over the need to motivate the interest of these farmers to seek information and resources to enable the implementation of Agroforestry projects, including the recovery of areas in their properties, even those distinct from their backyards. The study shows the agro-social and social-cultural trajectory of the farmers and hypothesis are advanced on what would imply the adoption of agroforestry systems in family agriculture.

Keywords : agro-biodiversity, natural conservation, silviculture, urban agriculture

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