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Organic products policy in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Considering the environmental and social importance of organic food production and increased supply and demand for organic products in the world and in Brazil, the Brazilian Federal Government began a process of regulation of organic agriculture from 1999. In this sense, this article recovers the history of institutionalization of federal regulations pertaining to *organic systems of agricultural production* in the country, indicating relevant aspects and some changes during 17 years of evolution of this regulatory process. The methodology used was based on the analysis of 30 regulations regarding the organic production in Brazil, highlighting the four most relevant statutes (Normative Instruction 07 of 1999; Law 10,831 of 2003; Decree 6323 of 2007 and Decree 7792 of 2012). Papers were also used to discuss the relevance and the fundamentals of organic agriculture and agroecology; the Brazilian contradictions concerning agribusiness and sustainable agriculture; conflicts in the governmental sphere – highlighting positions of Ministry of Agriculture (MAPA) and Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and in the relationships established between different actors and institutions, focusing on Brazilian literature. The results indicate that these rules have contributed to the institutional strengthening of organic agriculture and agroecology in Brazil. Nevertheless, the budgetary resources destined to this type of public policy are pitiful compared to those destined for conventional agriculture. Its indicates that although some important advances on organic agriculture and agroecology public policies, the Brazilian government continues prioritizing agribusiness, featured pesticides and GMO uses.

1. Introduction

The growth of social and environmental impacts during the twentieth century intensified the questioning of the agricultural modernization or the current conventional farming model, which started with agricultural chemistry at the end of Nineteenth Century (Petersen, 2013) and dominated world agriculture after the Second World War with the so-called Green Revolution. Based on the implementation of a standardized technology package, consisting an intensive use of modified seeds and machinery, chemical products and new technologies at all stages of production (planting, harvesting and processing), the Green Revolution was responsible for the expansion of capitalist relations in world agriculture by seeking to increase productivity and maximize profits.

The perception of society about the harmful consequences of the Green Revolution (Ehlers, 1999; Santos, 2008; Candiotto et al., 2008) was strengthened from the very theoretical and conceptual evolution of environmentalism, which questions the productivist and current economistic model, indicating the need for sweeping social changes, modifying the relationship between society and nature (Leff, 1994, 2001, 2002; Rodríguez, 2012; Porto-Gonçalves, 2006).

Among the changes required is the search for a more harmonious relationship between food production and environmental conservation. In this context, there are alternative forms of agriculture such as organic farming, natural agriculture, biodynamic agriculture, among others encompassed by the term *ecologically-based agriculture* (Candiotto and Meira, 2014). These alternatives allow broaden the debate about Agroecology, which more than an alternative agriculture, has been crafted as a new paradigm toward sustainable agriculture (Caporal, 2008), because besides the scientific dimension, adds other dimensions, such as political-ideological and pedagogical. Wezel et al. (2009), discuss three important dimensions of agroecology: as science, as practice and as a social movement.

The offer of pesticide-free food for the population may contribute to the generation of income for rural families, strengthen family agriculture, providing food quality for people and reducing environmental impacts from agriculture.

Considering the environmental and social importance of organic food production and increased supply and demand for organic products in the world and in Brazil, the Brazilian Federal Government and

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institutions involved with organic agriculture began debates about a process of regulation of organic agriculture from 1990's, resulting in the first norm (IN 07/99) publicized in 1999.

In this sense, this article aims to recover the history of institutionalization of federal policies pertaining to organic systems of agricultural production in the country, indicating relevant aspects and some changes during 17 years of evolution of this regulatory process. However, it's important to consider that legal apparatuses is characterized by a complex set of disputes between two models of agriculture (agribusiness and sustainable agriculture, mainly agroecology), that grounded an intensive debate involving social movements, class entities and governments institutions.

The methodology used was based on the reading and interpretation of 30 regulations related to organic production in Brazil as well as on other works discussing the relevance and the fundamentals of organic agriculture and agroecology (Caporal and Costabeber, 2004; Petersen, 2013; Candiotto and Meira, 2014); the Brazilian contradictions concerning agribusiness and sustainable agriculture; conflicts in the governmental sphere – highlighting positions of Ministry of Agriculture (MAPA) and Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and in the relationships established between different actors and institutions (Nierdele and Almeida, 2013; Schmitt et al., 2017; Costa et al., 2017).

As the standards institutionalized by the State (countries) are part of the public policy of a government, the article discusses superficially the matter of public policy and, specifically legislation/regulation. Subsequently the rules regarding organic products are presented, involving several elements such as production, processing, certification, marketing, labeling, transportation, storage, among others. Among the 30 standards taken in consideration were highlighted and discussed the four most relevant regulations.

The analysis of the legal framework relating to organic production in Brazil indicates that the federal government, pressured by institutions and companies operating in the organic area, whether linked to family farming or a "green" agribusiness (farmers and institutions who produces in the organic agriculture perspective limited to environmental dimension), is seeking to regulate these types of products, which can be very important to: 1) better use (conservation) of natural resources, especially land, water and forests; 2) reduction of pesticide use in Brazil; 3) food security and sovereignty; 4) strengthening of family farming; and 5) availability of organic food for the consumer population.

2. Public policies

Public policies correspond to a set of state actions aimed at meeting the needs of society, which are conceived, regulated and enforced by public sector institutions at the federal, state and municipal levels. Through public policies, the government sets standards and actions in various sectors.

Public policies are related to the government, which determines the guidelines and priority actions of the various sectors (economic, social, political and environmental), also directing how public resources will be used for the benefit of citizens (Meksenas, 2002). They are characterized by two dimensions that complement each other: the technical-administrative and political (Fernandes, 2007).

Regarding the political dimension of organic agriculture and agroecology, it indicates different goals or *intentionalities* (Santos, 1996) from collective actors, like social movements, farmer organizations, public and private research and extension institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), politicians and government organisms. Although the existence of conflicts, public policies needs to be defined through debates between these actors (Nierdele and Almeida, 2013) that seeks to reduce this conflicts and promote some consensus.

Public policies are guiding instruments of the process of planning and intervention by the State through three modalities: participation; induction and control (Cruz, 2002). The *participation* occurs when the state exercises some economic activity in the sector, such as programs related to the purchase of food. The *induction,* takes place when the state guides the behavior of market actors, through financial and fiscal incentives (such as direct support actions for the development of organic agriculture – planting, management). The *control,* regards to regulation by the government, on the way in which the private sector can explore certain economic activity.

In the case of organic production systems, control occurs through rules governing activities such as transition, production (permitted and prohibited inputs), certification (seals, certifiers), among others.

Public policies are State tools to manage public goods. It is considered the State as a whole apparatus through which the government exercises its power through elected politicians, public/civil servants, regulations, rules and laws. The Brazilian State (Federative Republic of Brazil) is composed of federal, state and municipal governments and their various public institutions. Therefore, public policies are tools that lead the direction of development of a country (Fernandes, 2007).

According to Benevides (2002: 102), the geographic public policy shall introduce a new system of objects (and actions), because the public investments " (…) establish the specific vectors that affect the planning, control and recovery of the territories, influencing thus the logistics of their occupation and directing the flow of people, information and goods it circulating".

Thus, there are goals – explicit or occult – in public policies. They reflect political and ideological clashes, agreements and power relations between the public and private sectors. From this perspective, the State acts as a driver of the expansion of capitalism through public policies. However, there are public policies that were created from the claim from other sectors of society such as the working class, social movements, class entities, among others.

Despite public policies involve various State actions (programs, projects and participation induction by the government), the regulatory process occurs mainly through control policies, i.e. through the legal standards. In the context of organic production, such rules are essential to control and direct the recent development of Brazilian organic agriculture, which involves farmers, companies, professional institutions, NGOs, among others.

Another important question in the discussion of public policies in organic agriculture and agroecology in Brazil is the existence of two Ministries involved in agriculture and agrarian themes: 1) the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA) that represents agribusiness interests and historically have a significant political and economical power; and 2) the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), created in 2000 to lead social actions in rural areas and extinguished in 2016 by the actual President Michel Temer. This extinction of MDA demonstrate how political interests influence public policies and the development of several sectors (productive, economic, environmental and social).

MAPA and MDA were the most important institutions to create and implement organic agriculture public policies. It demonstrates mainly contradictions on governmental sphere, polarized between defenders of agribusiness and defenders of sustainable agriculture in a multidimensional perspective.

In the context of organic agriculture and agroecology support, Schmitt et al. (2017) highlight three Ministries: Ministry of Environment (MMA); Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and Ministry of Social Development (MDS), besides the importance and power of MAPA. Currently, MAPA has been leading the direction of public policies regarding organic production systems.

3. Standards for organic agricultural production systems in Brazil

The regulation of organic agricultural production systems in Brazil has a historicity linked to the consolidation of production, marketing and certification of organic food in the country, resulting from the wishes of farmers, consumers, social movements, Non-Governmental