

# COMERCIALIZAÇÃO DE PRODUTOS AGROALIMENTARES PELO PNAE E PAA: UM ESTUDO COM AGRICULTORES FAMILIARES NO PARANÁ, BRASIL

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a study with smallholder farmers in Paraná, Brazil*

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*Commercialization of agri-food products through PNAE and PAA: a study with  
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**Resumo:** A comercialização é destacada como obstáculo para agricultores no Brasil. Políticas públicas têm incentivado pequenos agricultores a aumentar a comercialização através de programas institucionais como o Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (PNAE) e Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos (PAA). O objetivo do artigo é analisar a comercialização de produtos agroalimentares de agricultores familiares do Paraná, incluindo os programas PNAE e PAA. Foram realizadas entrevistas com 27 agricultores familiares em Paiçandu, Paraná. Os resultados indicaram que a maioria dos agricultores participa individualmente do PNAE e PAA, e os principais produtos são FLV e produtos processados. As principais vantagens são a garantia de venda, seguida pelos preços. As preocupações são relativas à escala de produção e garantia de abastecimento, além do baixo preço relativo, especialmente para produtores que acessam canais curtos. Ações coletivas auxiliariam na superação de dificuldades, criando oportunidades para o desenvolvimento de outros canais, como feiras.

**Palavras-chave:** agricultura familiar; canais de mercado; mercado institucional; agricultores familiares.

**Abstract:** Commercialization has been highlighted as one the main obstacles for farmers in Brazil. Public policies have encouraged smallholder farmers to increase commercialization through institutional markets, named National School Feeding Program (PNAE) and Food Acquisition Program (PAA). The aim of this paper is to analyze commercialization of agri-food products by smallholder farmers in Paraná, Brazil, including PNAE and PAA programs. Empirical research comprised primary data from interviews with 27 smallholders in Paiçandu, Paraná. Results indicated that most farmers participate individually of PNAE and PAA, and main products are vegetables and processed products. Main advantages of PAA and PNAE are the assurance of sale, followed by prices. Main difficulties concern scale and assurance of supply, besides relative prices, especially for those accessing short channels. Collective actions would help farmers to overcome difficulties, and create opportunities for developing other channels, such as collective street markets.

**Keywords:** family farming; market channels; institutional market; family-based farmers; agri-food chains.

**JEL:** O13, Q13, Q18.

## Introduction

Family-based agriculture in Brazil has suffered considerable changes due to globalization and deregulation during the 90s. Concerning commercialization, Azevedo (2001) explains that coordination failures along the chain can decrease competitiveness of farmers, even for those efficient on production level. In this sense, changes concerning internationalization of agri-food chains in Brazil, deregulation, public standards and demand, among others, have brought farmers, especially more vulnerable ones (such as smallholders), to different organizational and market concerns. Also, aspects inherent to agricultural commodities, such as seasonality and perishability, make supply chain coordination more complex, requiring specific commercialization mechanisms (AZEVEDO, 2001).

Commercialization has been highlighted as one of the main obstacles for farmers in Brazil, specially family-based and small-scale ones, including price volatility and production scale (AZEVEDO; FAULIN, 2005). In agri-food commercialization, public policies and governmental intervention are expected to help to decrease disparities between supply and demand and consequent price volatility (AZEVEDO, 2001). On the supply side, public policies in Brazil have mostly concerned problems associated to risk management and stimulus to produce. On the demand side, public policies shall warrant access to food and safety concerns.

Especially when it comes to less capitalized family-based farmers in Brazil, access to market is limited and represents a bottleneck to development (BUAINAIN, 2007). Production failures and access to market have been recent concerns of public policies in Brazil, especially for family-based farmers. Public policies have encouraged smallholder farmers to improve commercialization through institutional markets, named National School Feeding Program (PNAE) and Food Acquisition Program (PAA). Institutional markets focused on family farming represent an opportunity to strengthen farmers' social organization, alternative ways of production (e.g. agroecological systems) and product diversification (SILVA; SILVA, 2011).

Nevertheless, which seems to be opportunities can turn to be challenges at the first moment. Although their positive results, some obstacles have emerged, concerning product quality, supply and farmers' organization, among others (SOARES et al., 2013). In the same direction, Silva and Amorim Junior (2013) stated that family farmers need to reach several managerial capabilities, such as production planning and organization, management efficiency and strategic perspective. Hespanhol (2013) states that, despite the increasing number of farmers under PAA program, it is still limited and concentrated in some regions.

Considering the social and economic relevance of family farming in Brazil, as well as recent opportunities and challenges of institutional markets, the aim of this paper is to analyze commercialization of agri-food products by smallholder farmers in Paraná, Brazil, including PNAE and PAA programs. This paper is organized as follows: besides this introduction, section 2 presents a brief review of family farming and commercialization mechanisms; methodological procedures are presented in section 3; in section 4 we present and analyze the results; section 5 brings some conclusions and, finally, references are in section 6.

## 2 Family farming and commercialization mechanisms

A report from Agricultural Census 2006 (IBGE, 2009) pointed the relevance of family farming in Brazil: it stated more than 4.36 million family-based farms, which meant 84.36% of farms in Brazil, in 80.1 million hectares (i.e. 24% of total agricultural area in the country). Data show an average of 18.24 hectares per family-based farm, indicating small area (IBGE, 2009). Also, the report states that [...] family farming is responsible for assuring great part of food safety in the country, as an important food supplier for domestic market” (IBGE, 2009, p. 06, our translation).

According to Agricultural Census (IBGE, 2009), in 2006 Paraná comprised 302,907 family-based farms, which meant 35.64% of those in South region and almost 7% of total family-based farms in Brazil. Revenues from family-based farming comes mainly from agricultural production (66.5%), followed by livestock and its products (20.44%) (IBGE, 2009)

Despite their social and economic importance, family farming faces some challenges, one of them being commercialization. Commercialization comprises not only economic exchange between parties, but also social and cultural interaction among agents. According to Barros (1987, p. 06, our translation), agricultural commercialization is “[...] a social process involving interactions between economic agents through adequate institutions”.

According to Machado and Silva (2005), family-based farmers can trade their products through different market channels, or distribution channels. Among them, the authors highlight wholesalers and retailers, street markets, catering and governmental programs. For Wilkinson (2008), four different accesses to market by family farming can be found: direct access, through local market; middlemen; integration with agroindustry; and governmental procurement. Also, the author emphasizes quality, scale and diversification as important challenges some market channels, especially institutional market.

Schneider (2013) highlighted the need of more adequate commercialization channels for family-based farmers, in which autonomy and independency prevail. As pointed out by Azevedo and Faulin (2005), some commercialization mechanisms are not adequate for family-based farming products, such as spot market, since it involves risks concerning quality, price volatility and dependency on buyers.

Moreover, economic and institutional changes have increased disturbances concerning price volatility and demand instability for agricultural products. Undercapitalized family-based farmers have struggled with recent market changes, and alternative channels have provided viable opportunities for those farmers (VORLEY, 2002). Azevedo and Faulin (2005) pointed commercialization as an important bottleneck for family-based farmers in Brazil.

Thus, specific commercialization instruments are important mechanisms to family-based farming, based on small-scale production, uncertainty on production, and complex relationship with suppliers and buyers (AZEVEDO; FAULIN, 2005). According to Abreu (2012), public policies are important to include and/or strengthen farmers in socioeconomic systems. In this sense, traditional market channels are unable to build feasible conditions for most family-based farmers, and alternative ways of commercialization have emerged, among them institutional programs named National School Feeding Program (PNAE) and Food Acquisition Program (PAA).

PNAE was created in the 1940s, but only in the 1980s, with New Federal Constitution, assured the right of food for all children in Public Elementary School in Brazil (CONTROLADORIA GERAL DA UNIÃO, 2006). The aim of PNAE is to provide healthy food for students in public schools, comprising improvements in learning,

growing, nutritional and economic and biopsychosocial development. Financial resources come either from Ministry of Education (MEC) and National Funding for Educational Development (FNDE).

Procurement from family farming for school feeding was regulated in 2013, through Resolution CD/ FNDE n. 26 (BRAZIL, 2013). Since 2009, at least 30% of financial resources from FNDE (National Funding for Educational Development) must be direct to food supply from family-based agriculture (BRAZIL, 2009), which has favored the insertion of family-based farmers in the system.

Food Acquisition Program (PAA) was created in 2003 as part of Zero Hunger program, with Law n. 10696 (BRAZIL, 2003). Its aim is to promote access to food and motivate family farming in Brazil (MDS, 2013). It focuses on food safety, considering quantity, quality and regularity, for people in nutritional and food unsafe conditions. Also, it focuses on improving public stocks; strengthening local and regional food circuits; valuing biodiversity and organic and agro ecological farming; fomenting healthy consumption habits; and motivating cooperative and associative forms or organization (MDS, 2013).

PAA is directed to supply hospitals, day care centers, popular restaurants, socio assisting entities, among others. Financial resources come from Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS, 2013). PAA includes different modalities: Simultaneous Donation; Stock Formation; Family farming direct procurement; Incentive to Milk Production and Consumption; and Institutional procurement.

Soares et al. (2013) pointed out remarkable advantages of PAA and PNAE, such as access to market, assurance of sale, network improvements due to better relationship with intermediaries, customers and government officials, diversification of production, production improvements and consequent access to other market channels.

Other advantages of both programs (PNAE and PAA) are better production planning (production according to contract); *ex ante* price definition; and local economic returns. Main disadvantages generally concern bureaucracy, logistics and distribution difficulties; and price (since it can be lower than market price in some periods of the year). Also, the operation of the whole system depends on a group of skilled members, such as nutritionists, social assistants, rural extension agents and technical assistants.

### 3 Methodological procedures

This research was mainly conducted through a quantitative approach. Nevertheless, the joint use of a qualitative perspective improved analysis, allowing a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon. As stated by Kalof, Dan and Dietz (2008, p. 35), “[...] both qualitative and quantitative methods have a great deal to contribute to our understanding of the social world”.

Initial motivation for this research came from a specific demand concerning family farming commercialization. Public agents and technicians from Emater (Paraná Institute of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension) had identified some challenges for small-scale family farmers in Paçandu, in the Central Northern region of Paraná, Brazil. In this sense, in 2014 they searched for assistance with a research and extension group to help farmers to improve their performance, through a collective organization. As a first part of assistance, we conducted a diagnostic research with farmers, to better understand commercialization and its drawbacks.

To reach objectives, we followed some methodological procedures. First, we conducted a literature review on family farming and commercialization mechanisms, to better understand the theme. Secondary data came from articles, books and chapters, reports and official databases, among other academic scientific sources. Also, information gathered from key agents, specifically public agents and technicians from Emater in that municipality, were important in this first exploratory stage of research.

Primary data came from interviews with 27 family-based farmers in Paçandu. We conducted face-to-face interviews, with the use of a semi-structured questionnaire. Quantitative data concerning profile, production and commercialization were tabled and treated in Microsoft Excel 2013®. We conducted statistic descriptive analysis and frequency analysis. Also, qualitative information, collected during interviews, were used to help in the analysis. Through qualitative information, we could better understand some aspects concerning the mechanisms of commercialization (such as farmers' choice, their strengths and weaknesses, pros and cons of each channel), which helped in the analysis.

#### 4 Results

Considering 27 researched farmers, some general information can be described. From the 27 rural entrepreneurs engaged in production activities (agriculture, livestock and/or processing), 11 were female and 16 were male. All the farmers are smallholder ones, being most of them (77%) established in less than 15 hectares of land (figure 1), which means less than one fiscal module and may bring economic limitations for families<sup>1</sup>.

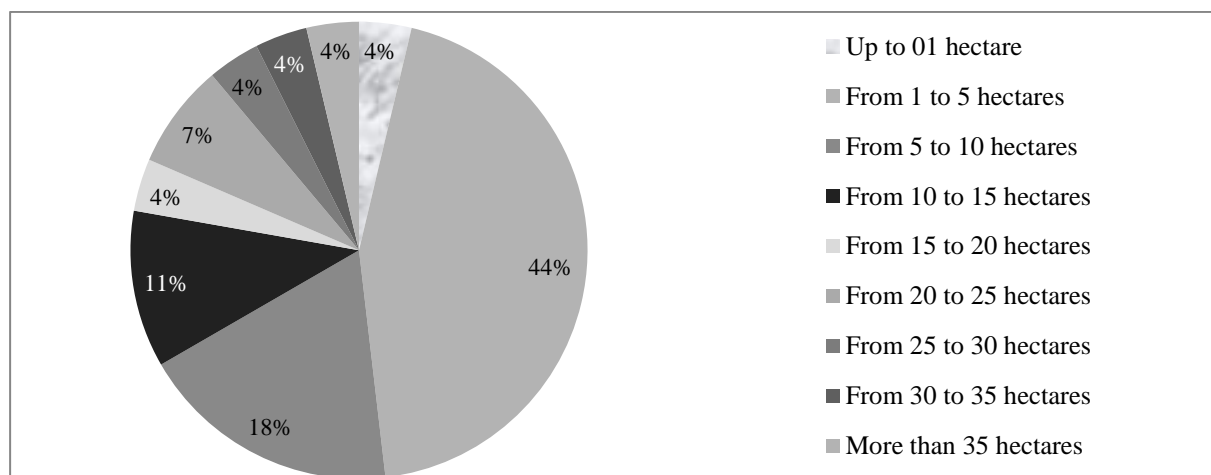


Figure 1 – Area of farm (hectares)  
Source: field research.

On average, farmers are not so young (figure 2), since 87.5% are older than 40 years-old. Most of them declared considerable experience in rural activity: 70% of farmers are engaged in agricultural and/or livestock activity for more than 10 years (Figure 3). As for their educational level, most of the farmers had access to formal education (93% of them declared to have attended school), being a sound percentage

<sup>1</sup> A fiscal module in Paçandu / PR is equivalent to 16 hectares, which is considered the minimum area for economic viability of rural activity (BRAZIL, 1980).

(52%) at least in high school (figure 3). It indicates a good level of education in the group.

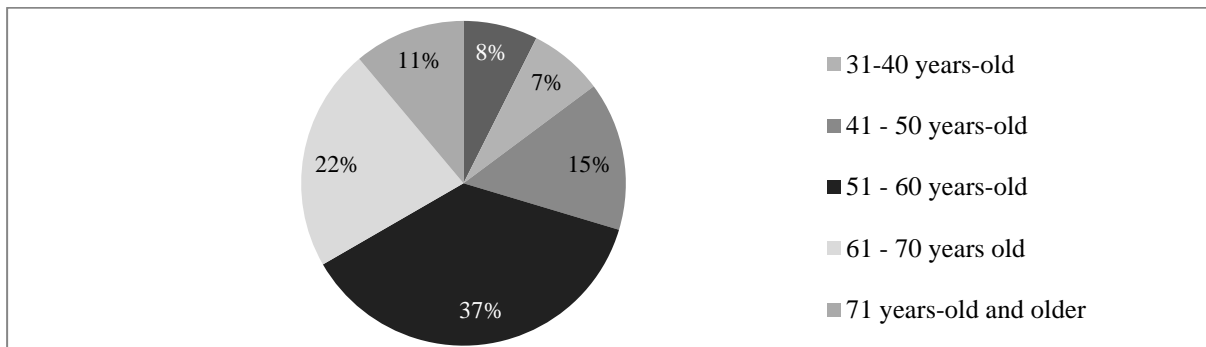


Figure 2 – Farmer's age (years)  
Source: field research.

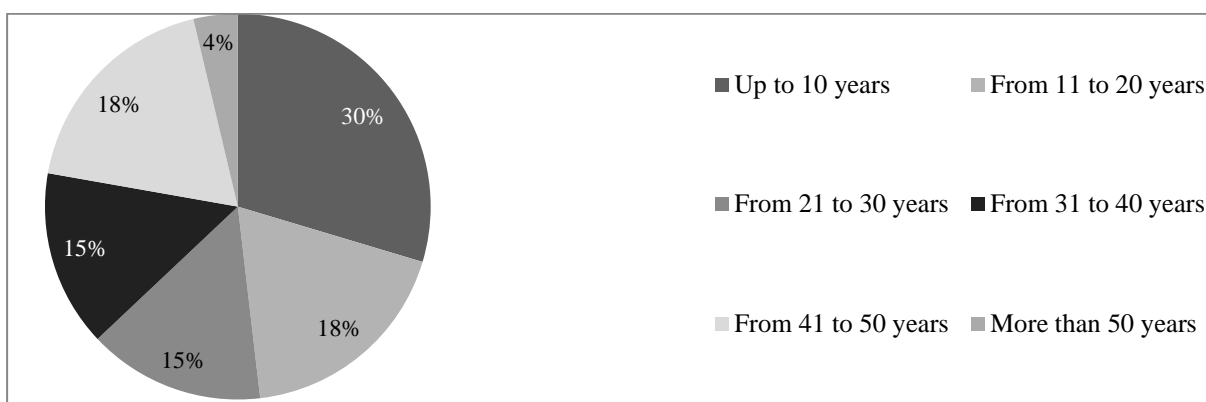


Figure 3 - Years in agriculture / livestock activity  
Source: field research.

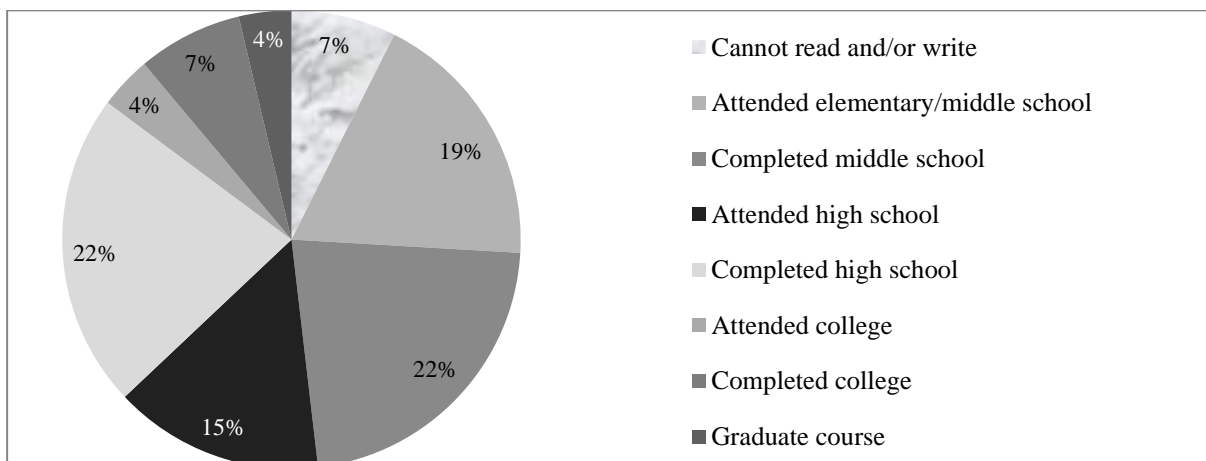


Figure 4 – Farmer's educational level  
Source: field research.

As for labor force, all interviewed farmers are directly involved in agricultural activity, working full time in their farms. Most of them declared other family members in farm's activities (figure5), mainly spouse or children. Only six farmers declared hired workers as a complement, which confirms family-based condition of the group.

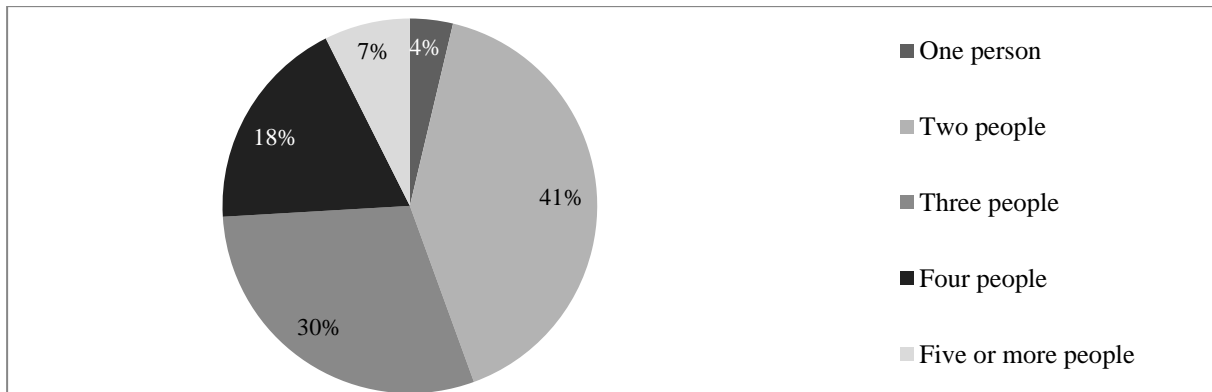


Figure 5 – Labor force (number of people working in the farm)  
Source: field research.

Most of the farmers makes from R\$1,000.00 to R\$3,000.00 per month as family's total income (figure 6), considering agricultural and non-agricultural revenues. Also, a considerable part of them earn more than R\$3,000.00 per month as family's total income (30%), which may indicate they are not in the low levels of revenue.

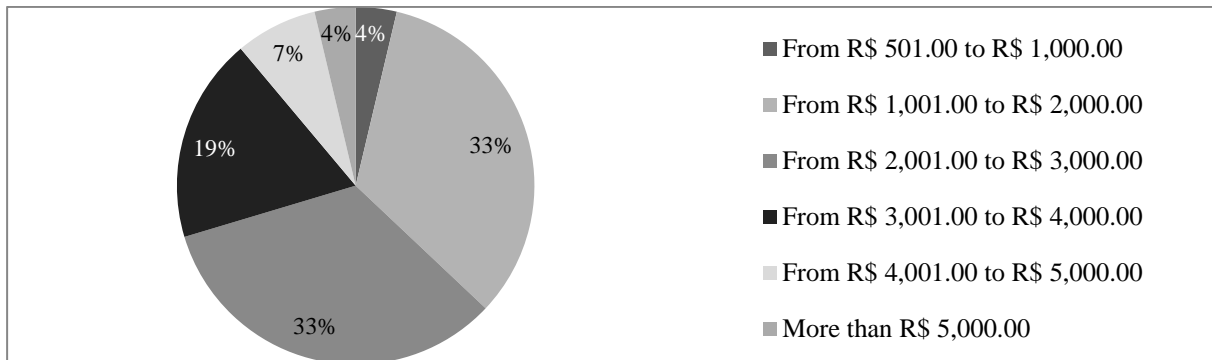


Figure 6 – Family's total income (R\$ per month)  
Source: field research.

According to interviews, main source of income for 70% of farmers is agriculture and/or livestock production; other 11% declared agroindustry (processing) as main source of income, which is considered agricultural-related activity (Figure 7). Data indicate that most farmers are economically dependent on agriculture, which improves the importance of good performance in rural activity.

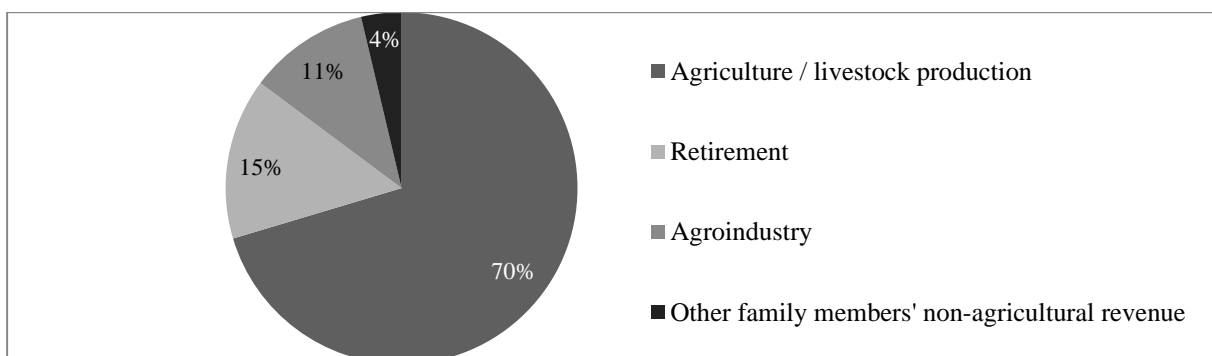


Figure 7 - Main source of income  
Source: field research.



In general, farmers' production is mostly directed to vegetables (leafy vegetables and others) and fruit (banana, grape, orange, passion fruit and lemon), followed by grains (mainly corn and soybean) (Figure 8). Livestock production, declared by five farmers, comprised poultry, hogs, dairy and beef cattle. Also, eight farmers declared processed products (agroindustry, mainly cookies and bread), which indicates the search for value-adding in primary products. In general, farmers presented considerable diversification, since 22 farmers declared the production of more than one commodity.

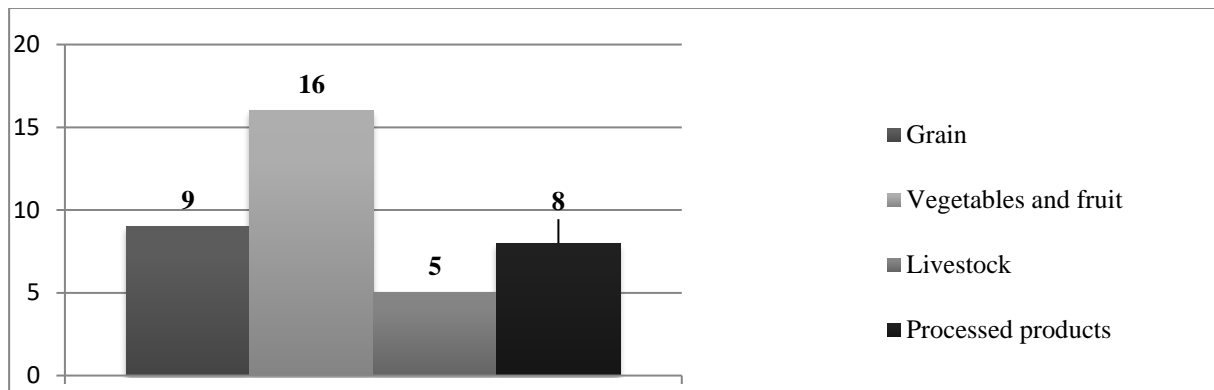


Figure 8 - Products (number of farmers) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

Considering commercialization mechanisms, all farmers are engaged in at least two different market channels, and some of them mentioned four different channels, indicating diversification in that aspect. Data showed that 2/3 of farmers (18 out of 27) sold products through institutional market: 18 farmers mentioned PPA and 13 of them were engaged in both PNAE and PAA. Twelve farmers had retail stores as market channel (mainly supermarkets, grocery stores and bakeries), and only three farmers sold products at street markets. Restaurants were mentioned only by two farmers. Final costumers (door to door or direct sales) were mentioned by seven farmers, mainly for livestock and animal products (eggs, chicken and pork). Eight farmers mentioned cooperatives. Mostly those producing grains declared cooperatives an important market channel, rarely used by farmers to sell other products.

PAA and PNAE were used by farmers to sell vegetables, fruit and processed products. Concurrent channels, in those cases, are mainly retail stores and street market, thus analysis will be focused on such channels.

Farmers were asked about advantages and disadvantages of each channel. Considering PAA, farmers pointed the assurance of sale, no surplus and price as most relevant advantages (figure 9). The assurance of sale and the inexistence of surplus are important aspect when it comes to vegetables and fruit, due to perishability and storage limitations. Although a considerable number of farmers declared no disadvantages in selling through PAA (figure 10), some of them pointed price, scale and seasonality as disadvantages.

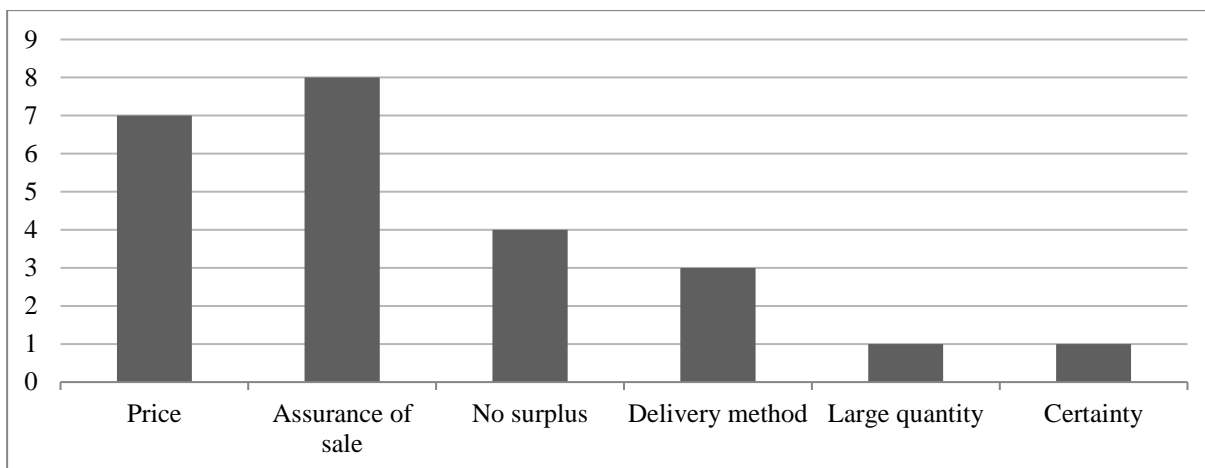


Figure 9 - Main advantages of PAA (n=18) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

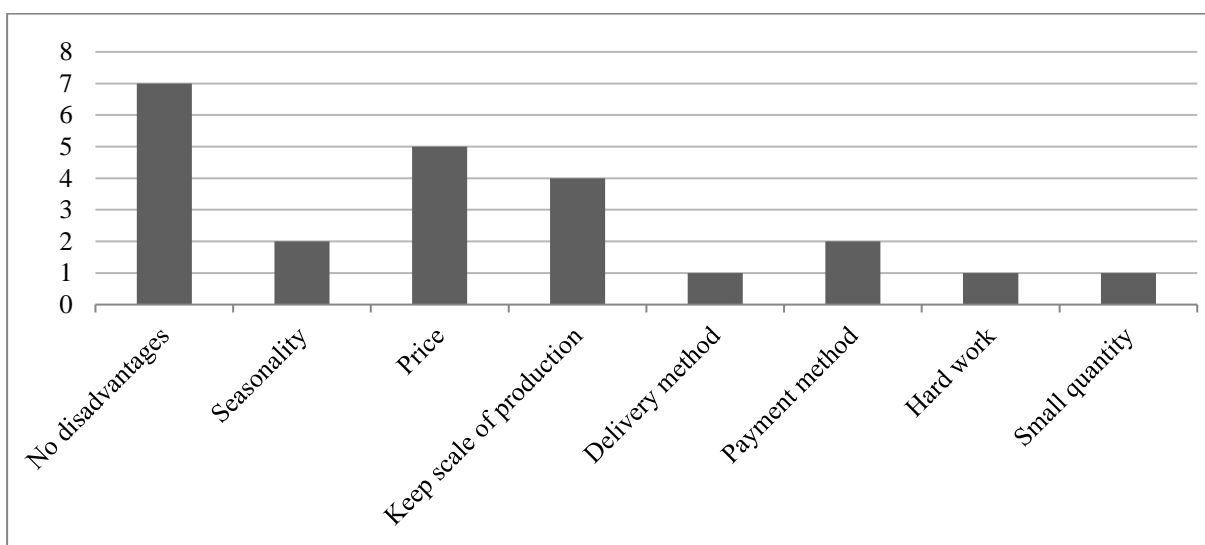


Figure 10 - Main disadvantages of PAA (n=18) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

Similar responses were found for PNAE: main advantages were price, assurance of sale and the inexistence of surplus (figure 11). Price, scale of production and seasonality were mentioned as disadvantages by farmers selling products through PNAE (Figure 12). Also, some farmers mentioned delivery method and payment method as important aspects. Specificities of institutional programs concerning payment and delivery are important aspects, since farmers are required to bring products to collect centers at specific schedules and receive payment with a delay.

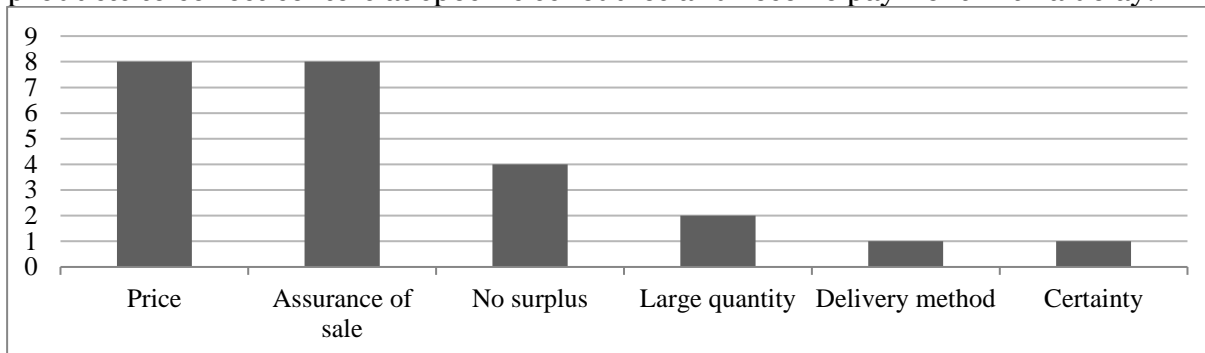


Figure 11- Main advantages of PNAE (n= 13) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

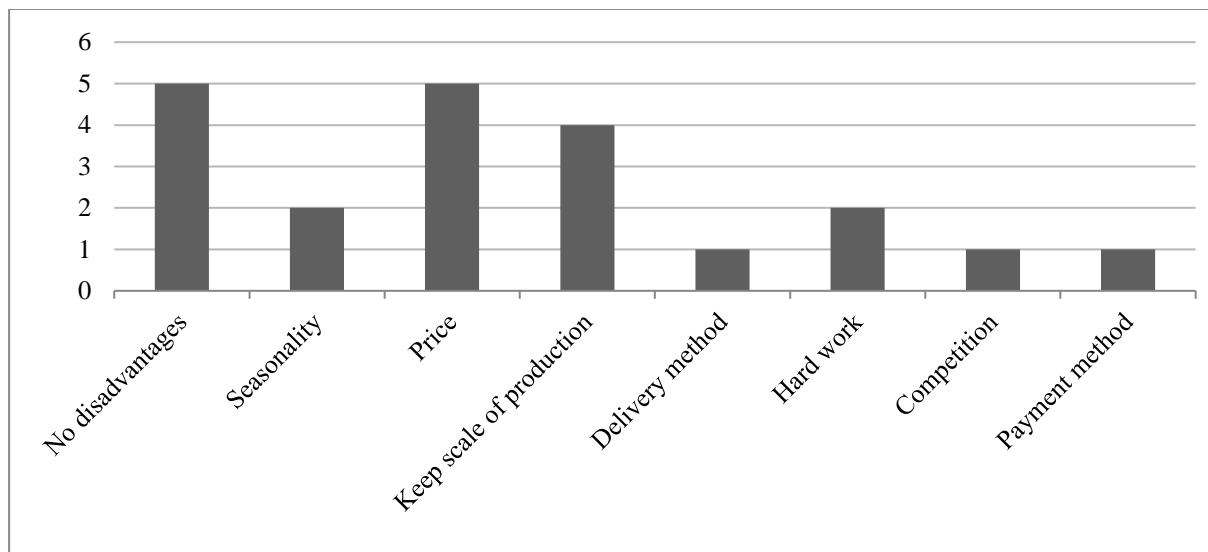


Figure 12 - Main disadvantages of PNAE (n= 13) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

Farmers highlighted the assurance of sale and payment method as important advantages in selling to retail stores, such as supermarkets and grocery stores (figure 13). They generally receive payment in cash and decrease the risks of surplus, compared to short channels, in which they are more subject to demand oscillations.

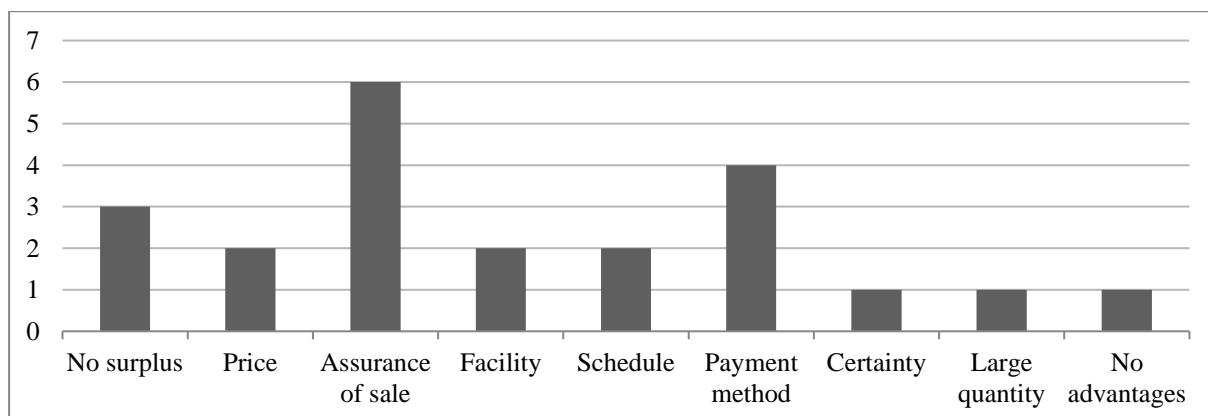


Figure 13 - Main advantages of retail stores (n=12) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

Although price was not a great advantage of retail stores, farmers didn't mention it as disadvantage either (figure 14). Disadvantages, in that channel, are more related to competition. It can be explained by the existence of negotiation pressures with retailers: buyer power may bring asymmetries when negotiating prices and other terms, which may increase competition among farmers.

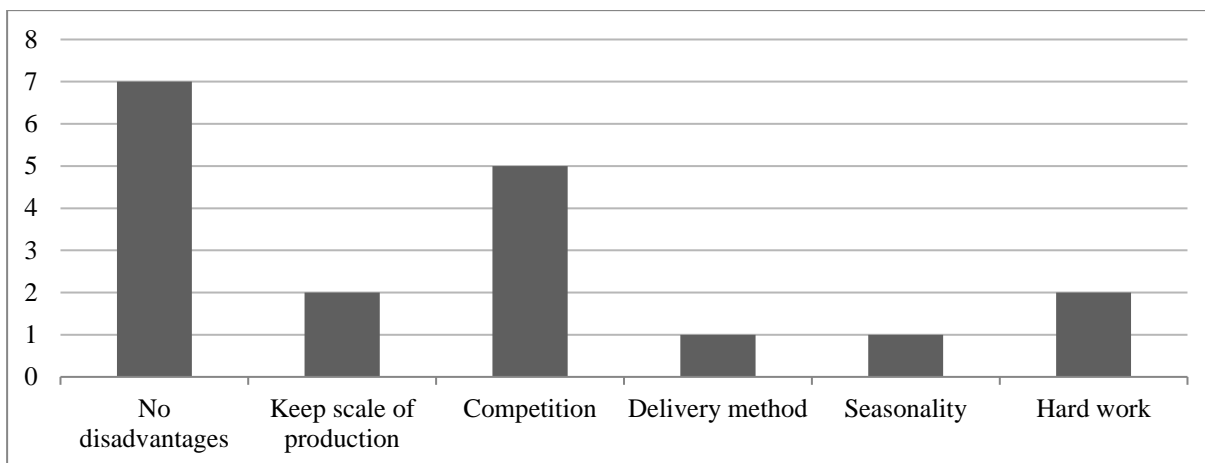


Figure 14 - Main disadvantages of retail stores (n=12) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

Finally, responses concerning street market are presented in figure 15 and 16. Street market is considered an important short channel for family farming, in which trust and other social aspects prevails (MACHADO; SILVA, 2005). In this sense, the three farmers engaged in street market channel pointed the assurance of sale as a relevant advantage, indicating that relationship and trust can help farmers to overcome problems as surplus. Also, as expected, price is an advantage in that channel, since farmers sell directly to final costumers, eliminating intermediary agents. Nevertheless, street market also present some disadvantages, according to farmers (figure 16): weather conditions and demand oscillations were pointed as relevant disadvantages.

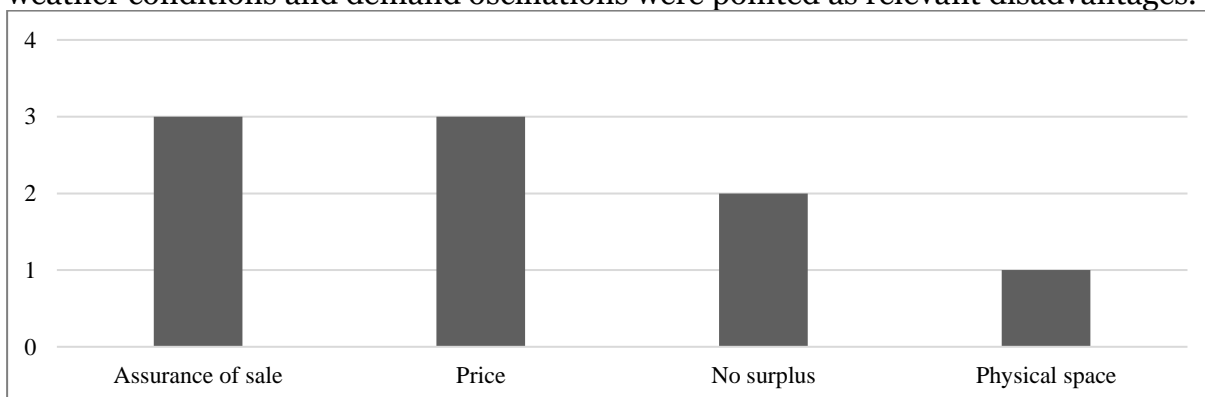


Figure 15 - Main advantages of street market (n= 3) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

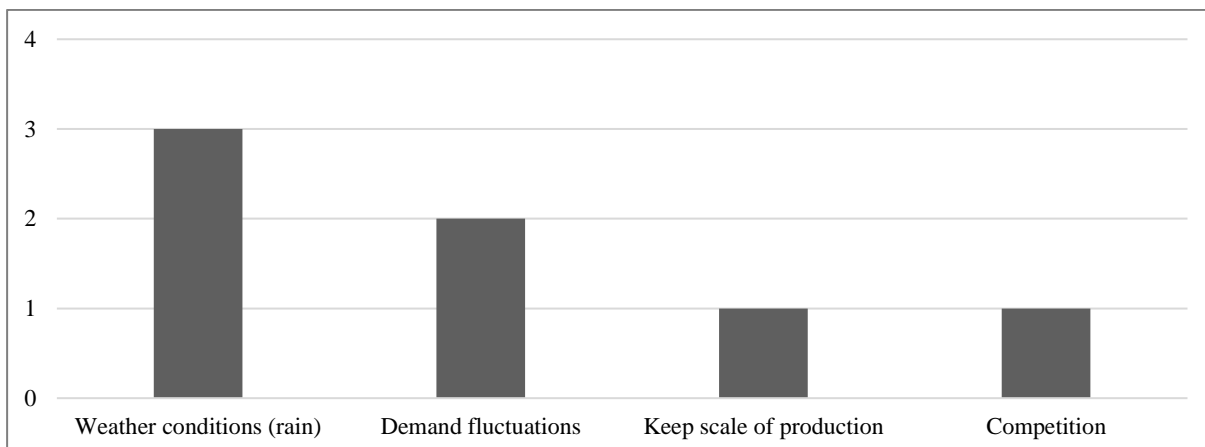


Figure 16 - Main disadvantages of street market (n=3) – multiple answers possible  
Source: field research.

Focusing analysis on PAA and PNAE, responses comprised two important variables in commercialization, price and quantity, which seems to be a dilemma for farmers. The assurance of sale and the assurance of having no surplus through PAA and PNAE indicate farmers can sell as much as they offer, which brings economic and logistic returns. On the other hand, they are asked for scale and frequency, even to keep programs working and to warrantee supply downstream, which requires production planning and organization. In this sense, problems concerning seasonality and scale need to be considered. Since commercialization includes negotiation between parties, compliance with requirements in terms of quantity or diversification, for example, can be important bottlenecks for individual farmers.

As for price, it is considered an advantage by some farmers and a disadvantage by others. It can be explained as follows: compared to some channels (such as retail stores), PAA offers a higher price, but a price lower than other channels, especially when it comes to shorter channels (street market and final costumers). In fact, when considering relative prices for products in different channels (figure 17), we can observe considerable discrepancies among channels: street market and final costumer are channels providing better prices for farmers, on average; retail, on the other hand, provides lower prices, reinforcing the assumption of power asymmetries between farmers and buyers.

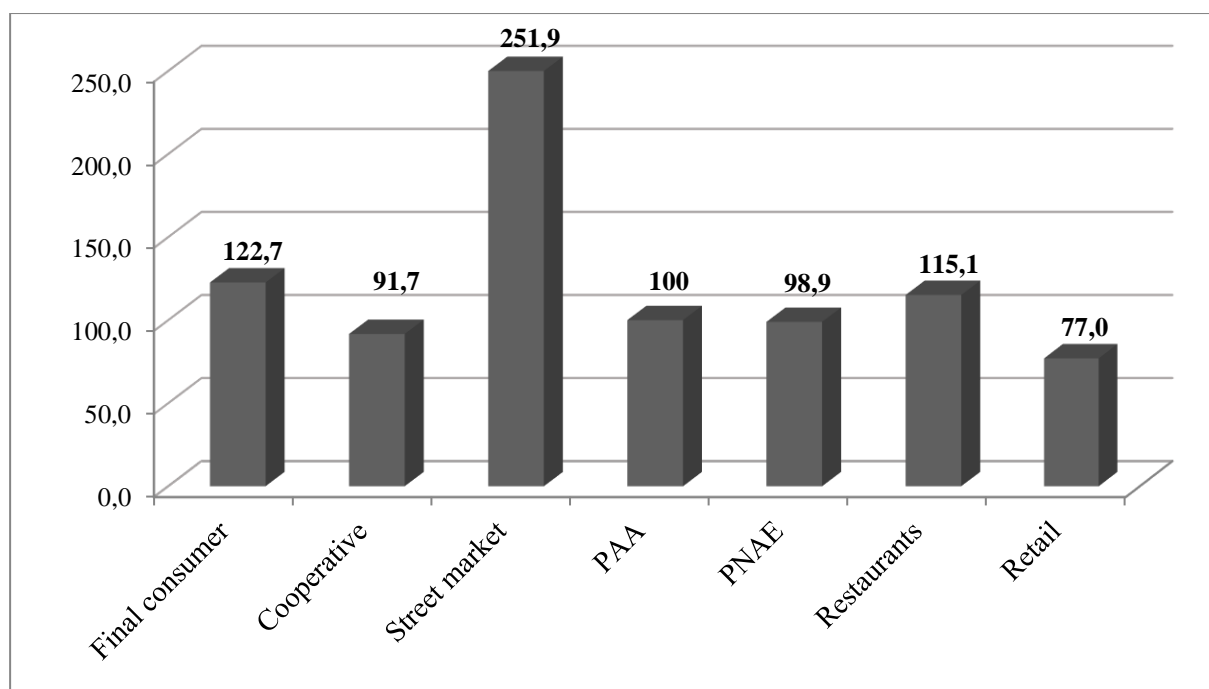


Figure 17 – Relative price (PAA=100)  
Source: field research.

## 5 Conclusions

Results show farmers access a diversity of commercialization channels, each one with advantages and disadvantages. Also, adequacy of each channel depends on farmer's characteristics and its possibility to answer requirements. As for PNAE and PAA, important aspects concern regularity in terms of volume and frequency. Aspects pointed as disadvantages can hardly be overpassed in the short-run by individual farmers. Improving volume and reaching large scale individually may be a drawback, especially considering limitation in terms of area and labor force. Economic viability

of family farming greatly depends on the engagement of family members in farm's activity, which is linked to children's interested in rural activity.

The absence of scale, diversification and regularity, which can limit farmers' performance in PPA and PNAE, could be overpassed through collective organizations for commercialization, such as cooperatives. Only 14 farmers were engaged in cooperative organizations. It is important to mention that most of farmers engaged in cooperatives are directed to sell grains (such as corn and soybeans) and to buy inputs, indicating that the participation in cooperatives was not focused to access PNAE and PAA programs.

Nevertheless, 24 farmers declared collective organizations could bring advantages, especially concerning access to market and increase of sales (50% of those farmers). Collective organization could bring new possibilities and better perspectives for farmers in PNAE and PAA programs. Finally, considering advantages of street market, collective actions among farmers would help them to overcome some difficulties, creating opportunities to access that channel and other short channels.

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