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## **MOTIVATIONS AND BOTTLENECKS OF THE MINIMUM PRICE GUARANTEE POLICY FOR SOCIO-BIODIVERSITY PRODUCTS IN AMAPÁ**

## **MOTIVAÇÕES E GARGALOS DA POLÍTICA DE GARANTIA DE PREÇO MÍNIMO DOS PRODUTOS DA SOCIOBIODIVERSIDADE NO AMAPÁ**

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### **Abstract**

This study analyzes the public policy in the context of rural Amazonian populations, with an example of the Minimum Price Guarantee Policy for Socio-biodiversity Products. The objective is understanding, from the perspective of açai extractivists, the motivations and bottlenecks that lead them to not access the policy and therefore receive the subsidy to which they are entitled when selling below the minimum price. The research was conducted with extractivists from Mazagão, the second municipality of the Amapá state in terms of fruit production. Bibliographic research, documentary investigation, field diary, focus group, application of questionnaires and interviews were the methodologies used. The results of the study show that the motivations are linked to four main bottlenecks that discourage extractivists and prevent them from accessing the PGPM-BIO: 1) little dissemination of qualified information for the producer; 2) the informal, relational based model, the supply chain governance; 3) the absence of internet infrastructure; and 4) the use of bureaucratic means that are distant from the extractivists' reality. The PGPM-BIO, despite starting from the rural workers' demands and being relevant as a supplement of income, has little impact on açai extractivists in the north of the country, and in particular in Amapá.

**Keywords:** PGPM-BIO, Açai Extractivists, Public Policy, Amapá

### **Resumo**

Este artigo analisa a política pública em contexto de populações rurais amazônicas, com exemplo da política de garantia do preço mínimo dos produtos da sociobiodiversidade (PGPM-BIO). O objetivo foi compreender, sob a perspectiva dos extrativistas de açai, as motivações e os gargalos que os levam a não acessar a política para receber a subvenção a que têm direito quando da venda abaixo

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do preço mínimo. A pesquisa foi realizada com extrativistas de Mazagão, segundo maior município do estado do Amapá em termos de volume de produção de frutos. A metodologia utilizada foi pesquisa bibliográfica, investigação documental, diário de campo, grupo focal, aplicação de questionários e entrevistas. Os resultados da pesquisa mostram que as motivações estão ligadas a quatro principais gargalos que desmotivam os extrativistas e limitam o alcance da PGPM-BIO: 1) a pouca difusão de informações qualificadas para os produtores extrativistas; 2) a governança da cadeia em modelo informal relacional; 3) a ausência de infraestrutura de internet; e 4) o uso de meios burocráticos distantes da realidade dos extrativistas. A PGPM-BIO, apesar de partir de reivindicações dos trabalhadores rurais e ser relevante como complementação de renda, pouco atinge os extrativistas de açaí no norte do país, e em particular no Amapá.

**Palavras-Chave:** PGPM-BIO, Extrativistas de Açaí, Política Pública, Amapá.

## Introduction

The northern portion of the Brazilian Amazon, where the state of Amapá is located, is integrated into global value chains (GVCs) as a supplier of primary products, a typical situation of the region. Commodities such as ore and soybeans move significant volumes of financial resources, but with heavily mechanized production, labor-saving, and significant concentration of capital. The GVC of açaí brings a differential when compared to the others, because it has great potential for socioeconomic dynamization. That happens because açaí is part of most of the labor systems and diets of rural Amazonian families. They are the main producers of the fruit and together with other local agents in the chain – middle-people and intermediaries – they compose commercial arrangements that circulate financial resources to social sectors historically excluded from market participation.

In fact, the açaí production chain unites a great diversity of local, national, and global markets, articulating agro-extravist families, informal entrepreneurs, artisanal and industrial entrepreneurs, around the commercialization of the fruit and the pulp. Since 2014, the growth of the market value has been continuous. In 2017 and 2018, açaí was the product in the subgroup of non-timber plant extraction foods that achieved the highest production value in Brazil. It represented 46.3% of all Brazilian production in this subgroup in 2018, with the volume of 222 thousand tons and the amount of R\$592 million (IBGE, 2019). The regional market is the main consumer, but the greatest growth in demand occurred in the national and exportation segments.

The producing states are amazonian. Pará is a state that leads the açaí production, that has a higher volume of commercialization for national and international markets and a greater number of industrial plants installed for the processing of açaí (CONAB, 2019). Pará is followed by the Amazonas, Maranhão, and Acre. The state of Amapá appears as the fifth producer (IBGE, 2019), but its production is strategic in the regional context because the extraction of açaí there happens in the off-season of its neighboring state and largest producer, Pará. That is when Amapá supplies an important part of the regional market, especially the processing industries, outside the main periods of harvest in Pará.

The productive activity of açaí in the territory of Amapá is mostly extractive and conducted by traditional communities. The business activities of cultivation are low in the state. Among these communities are quilombolas, riverside dwellers and indigenous peoples. As demonstrated by Superti and Silva (2015), the traditional communities of Amapá are generally constituted by a rural population with low income and little education. Its infrastructure conditions and difficulty of access show the lack of basic public services, such as treated water, sewage, electricity, health, and education. The açaí harvest guarantees the traditional daily meal and it represents a significant part of the composition of the annual family income (Martinot et al, 2017): around 60 to 70%.

Despite the social relevance of the açaí chain, the regionally strategic aspect, and the expansion of local demand for the presence of açaí processing and export business in the state (since the mid-2000s), the açaí market in Amapá has not been able to guarantee extractive families the minimum remuneration amount throughout the harvest. This amount is established by the Federal Government through the Minimum Price Guarantee Policy for Socio-biodiversity Products (Política de Garantia de Preços Mínimos de Produtos da Sociobiodiversidade - PGPM-BIO). PGPM-BIO is important to guide and equalize the prices practiced in the markets and guarantee minimum income

to the producing families through a subsidy paid by the federal government. The law that supports PGPM-BIO was created in 2008, having environmental discussions and pressure for mechanisms and strategies to protect traditional peoples and communities as background. PGPM-BIO is an economic subsidy executed by the Brazilian Supply Company (Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento - CONAB) that complements the amounts paid to the extractivist when the prices of products covered by PGPM-BIO are marketed with values lower than those stipulated as minimum by the Federal Government.

This study discussed the access of açai extractivist families to the subsidy provided for in PGPM-BIO. The specific focus was the municipality of Mazagão, the second largest producer of açai in Amapá, that had no registration of access to this policy until 2019. The guiding questions of the discussion are: Why did the açai agro-extractivists of the municipality of Mazagão, that are linked to formal collective organizations and important extraction areas, not use the policy of guaranteeing minimum prices of biodiversity to assure the complementation of their income? What are the main<sup>4</sup> access bottlenecks for these agro-extractivists?

This reflection leads to the debate on public policies in the context of rural Amazonian populations and aspects of the organization of the açai production chain in Amapá. To produce the analysis, we elected as the main source of information the focus groups of agro-extractivists from two main production areas in the municipality of Mazagão linked to the Cooperative of Extractivists and Producers of Mazagão (Cooperativa de Extrativistas e produtores de Mazagão - COOPMAZ) and the Association of Women Producers Agro-extractivists of Foz do Mazagão Velho (Associação de Mulheres Produtoras Agroextrativistas da Foz do Mazagão Velho - AMPAFOZ)<sup>5</sup>. The choice of extractivists linked to formal collective organizations was made based on the hypothesis that they would have better conditions of access to the policy from the point of view of meeting the required documentation and information about the existence of PGPM-BIO.

The investigation systematization and results are presented and structured in four parts, in addition to this introduction and the final considerations. In the first part, we present the research method. Next, we discuss the public policy of guaranteeing the minimum price of biodiversity products. In the third section, we expose the scenario of access to policy between the açai producing states and the productive context of the municipality of Mazagão. In the fourth part, we discuss the results of the field research.

## Methodological approach and research strategies

The reflections and results showed here were developed in the midst of a broader project<sup>6</sup> that involved research, collaborative construction of knowledge, transfers of social technologies, and professional training. The methodological approach was referenced in the action research that presupposes an action on the reality investigated by the involvement between the researchers and the researched in a mediated way and through non-hierarchical interaction. This approach guided the choices of research strategies and techniques that underlie this study in each of its sections.

Thus, the discussion on PGPM-BIO came from non-systematic research in the specialized literature. Content analysis of the Brazilian Plan for the Promotion of Socio-biodiversity Product Chains (Plano Nacional de Promoção das Cadeias de Produtos da Sociobiodiversidade - PNPSB) and regulation of the Minimum Price Guarantee Policy for Socio-biodiversity Products, Socio-biodiversity bulletins, PGPM-BIO booklet. And the visit to the websites of CONAB and the Ministry of Agrarian Development (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário - MDA) and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (Ministério de Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento - MAPA).

The scenario of access to policy among the açai producing states was built from the public data available in the Biodiversity Authorization and Information System – Public Consultation – CONAB (SISBIO/CONAB), the Socio-biodiversity Bulletins, non-systemic bibliographic research.

<sup>4</sup>Bottlenecks are the processes that prevent or are important obstacles to the access of extractivists to the minimum price policy of socio-biodiversity products.

<sup>5</sup>The disclosure of the names of COOPMAZ and AMPAFOZ was authorized by their respective presidents, observing the ethical precepts provided for in resolution 510/2016 - CNS.

<sup>6</sup> This is the project “Açais’ação: co-construction of knowledge and consolidation of quality markets for products of Amazonian sociobiodiversity”, developed in the Guyana Region between 2018 - 2022 by a multidisciplinary, international (Brazil (Amapá and Pará), Suriname, French Guiana) and interinstitutional team under the coordination of the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) and financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The productive context of the municipality of Mazagão was elaborated with data collected in the on-site visit to the municipality and the communities with the registry of information in field diaries, searches on the website of the city hall, at the Brazilian Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária - INCRA), public data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística IBGE), and non-systemic bibliographic research.

The most difficult part in the collection of information focused on the research problem was the field work<sup>7</sup>. It was divided into two periods – November and December 2018 with producers in the Maracá region linked to COOPMAZ<sup>8</sup> and in October 2019 with the AMPAFOZ extractivists. During these periods, the notes of the field diaries on the communities were developed.

The choice of the two organizations was made for four reasons; first, the hypothesis of the work brought the need for the extractivist to be linked to a formal collective organization as delimitator of the sample cut. Second, both were active when the research was conducted. Third, they gathered extractivists from the two main production areas in the municipality and, finally, their presidents, after clarifying and consulting the other members, agreed to accommodate at least two meetings to manage the research techniques.

The chosen sampling profile was: men or women producing açai with no first-degree kinship ties to each other, having a connection with one of the two chosen organizations, and having an extraction area in one of the two regions with the highest açai production in the municipality of Mazagão. The number of members of each of the organizations in the period totaled 90 extractivists - COOPMAZ had 28 extractivists among the members and AMPAFOZ had 62 women associated extractivists. Considering the size of the population, the confidence level and the maximum permissible error close to 5%, the sample was defined as 30% of the total number of associates or members of each organization, with rounding.

The choice was random and based on free and informed agreement to participate. In all, 27 extractivists collaborated, of which eight were linked to COOPMAZ and 19 to AMPAFOZ. Two research techniques were used, the questionnaire in an unidentified form and the focus group.

The questionnaire was applied at the first meeting in each organization. The objectives of this instrument were to certify that all participants met the sample composition requirements and to verify whether they: knew about PGPM-BIO and how they categorized this knowledge; met the bureaucratic and documentary requirements to access the policy, had made sales below the minimum in the investigated period; and, had at some point accessed the PGPM-BIO.

The focus group technique with the same participants was performed after tabulating the questionnaire data. This technique allows the collection of information through group interactions that provide the researcher with the understanding of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes on themes or issues that generate debate (TRAD, 2009). In these meetings, it was possible to understand how the extractivists sought reliable information and how they became aware of the PGPM-BIO, to list in order of importance what they understood as a difficulty to access the policy, to detail their perceptions about bureaucratic procedures required by the policy – including the the issuance of invoices – and understand aspects of the primary organization of the açai production chain. To achieve the focus group objective at AMPAFOZ, a meeting was necessary. At COPMAZ, two meetings were organized to adopt the technique, since some participants of the group were unable to attend the first meeting.

In the same period of the fieldwork, the president of COOPMAZ and the president of AMPAFOZ; An employee of the Tax Office of The State Department of Finance (Posto Fiscal do Trevo da Secretaria de Estado da Fazenda - SEFAZ)<sup>9</sup> and a servant of the Superintendence of the Regional of CONAB in Amapá were also heard in semi-structured interviews.

These interviews had the purpose of complementing and ratifying information, besides addressing institutional aspects. The method and techniques applied, observing the ethical aspects of the research, allowed the crossing of information and data, and the elaboration of the arguments showed in this article.

<sup>7</sup>The fieldwork strictly observed the ethical principles in Human and Social Sciences as provided for in resolution 510/2016 – CNS.

<sup>8</sup>Data from this phase of the research were discussed in the co-author's dissertation of this article (PINTO, 2019).

<sup>9</sup>This tax office is the service point of SEFAZ closest to Mazagão for the issuance of an invoice. It is located on Rod. Duca Serra, km 12, in the municipality of Santana/AP.

## PGPM-BIO: theoretical assumptions, construction, and access procedures

The perspective adopted here for the discussion of public policy understands it as a result of the correlation of multiple social forces struggling for the power to define collective costs and benefits. To defend their interests and worldview, these forces articulate, associate, and confront themselves unequally and using different instruments when participating in the arenas of disputes that compose the capitalist State. In this logic, in a synthetic reading and within the limits of this article, the State, beyond its institutional materiality strongly represented in the state apparatus, is a network of sociopolitical relations. Or rather, a network of more or less structured and consolidated multidimensional power relations that complexly involve different social actors (POULANTZAS, 1990). The accommodation of the different forces occur in arenas whose existence and rules of participation are full of mechanisms and forms of domination and alienation to ensure the maintenance of the system.

The dynamics of the social forces game – social, economic and political interest groups, state bureaucracy, media, social movements, social classes, international organizations, and other societal actors – makes public problems emerge or consolidate on the government agenda. They also press for the recognition and viability of means and strategies to produce an intentional guideline that promotes the confrontation of these problems, which mobilize mechanisms and resources of governments and other bodies and organizations (SECCHI, 2010; BONETI, 2013; SUPERTI, 2011). These two elements: public problem and intentional guideline, form the phenomenon we delimit as public policy and are forged in collective actions of sociopolitical character. Therefore, public policies are not separated from social struggles, on the contrary, they are the basis of their establishment.

However, recognizing that public policies also have the capacity to restructure conflicts, resize coalitions and forces in confrontation, is important. That is, to redefine the set of forces that result in public policies, especially when considering that their construction is not linear, but rather by strictly rational stages of organization. Thus, the political game both determines public policy and is determined by it. The classical text by Theodore J. Lowi (1972), in proposing that “policies determine politics”, provoked an important shift in the causal relationship defined by traditional political science, in which public policies were only a result of politics. Which shed light on the relationship of mutual determination between the two.

This mutual determination that Lowi (1972) mentions to us is due to the fact that at the heart of the elaboration of public policies is the struggle for power and the distribution of resources, typical of politics (Souza, 2006). Public policies distribute costs and benefits, use collective resources and is generated from the political game to the same extent that it is able to redefine this game, meeting sometimes contradictory and accommodated interests in the institutional order.

Within the State, the operationalizer of public policies are the governments. The government represents the aggregation of proposals, projects, and conceptions of the world from a part of society that somewhat articulately proposes to the social set a program for the performance of the State functions in a given period (HOLFING, p.3). The government is, when exercising the functions of the State, that executes public policies. Hence, important authors (LYNN, 1980; PETERS, 1986; DYE, 1984; MEAD, 1995) indicated that the debate on public policies required the analysis of the “government in action”. The ideological side or the political ideology of the government influences the strengthening or weakening of social forces in the arenas and its democratic or authoritarian scope makes it more or less sensitive to social demands. Being even able to establish new spaces or arenas for the correlations of strength and accommodation of disputes.

The formulation of PGPM-BIO is related to this movement of opening new arenas and accommodating forces, when in the 2000s the government opened, under pressure, an institutional space to accommodate demands from family farming by creating the Ministry of Agrarian Development<sup>10</sup> (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário - MDA). These demands united groups and social movements that were organized in the democratic scenario, added forces with the Landless Workers' Movement (Movimento Sem Terra - MST) in the struggle for recognition and meeting their needs. The MDA began to share with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply the agendas of Brazilian agricultural policies. The Minimum Price Guarantee Policy (Política de Garantia de Preço Mínimo - PGPM) was not a novelty. Created in 1943 with the objective of supporting the

<sup>10</sup>The MDA was transformed in 2016, in the government of Michel Temer, into Special Secretariat for Family Agriculture and Agrarian Development (Secretaria Especial de Agricultura Familiar e Desenvolvimento Agrário - SEAD).

country's grain production and avoiding large fluctuations in the prices of the main agricultural products, PGPM was on the list of government actions to promote and protect Brazilian, mainly exporter, agribusiness. Family farming was historically the least favored in these actions.

According to Schwantes and Bacha (2019), the Federal Government centralized the entire agricultural policy on MAPA until the creation of the MDA. The new ministry represented an important institutional change, as each “defended specific policies for different interest groups, namely: the first (MAPA), employer and commercial agriculture; and the second (MDA), family farming” (SCHWANTES; BACHA, 2019, p 32). With the MDA, family farming started to be included in subsidized public policies such as the PGPM.

However, it was with the rise of the Workers' Party (PT) to the federal government from 2003 and in the context of the advancement and democratic organization of social movements, trade unions, and the struggle for social policies in the countryside that the MDA gained strength as a decision-making arena for public policies and in terms of volume of resources. The pressure also reached the Congress, where the Joint Parliamentary Front in Defense of Family Agriculture was established, with the objective of mobilizing efforts in favor of small producers (SCHWANTES; BACHA, 2019, p. 33).

In this same context of social pressure for the expansion of the presence of historically less favored forces in the arenas of political disputes, other movements also intensified their participation. Among them, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and environmentalists who took on the discourse of sustainable development, strongly supported by the agreements signed at the global climate conferences, and extractivists who put on the agenda the violence that marked the fight for the preservation of forests and the survival difficulties of traditional communities. Both sought to make room on the agenda for discussions on public policies that combined strategies for the sustainable use of forests and the preservation of the way of life of traditional populations.

The combination of the efforts of the multiple movements and organizations led to an intense debate in which, in addition to the movements and organizations themselves, technicians and bureaucrats from the MDA, the Ministry of Sustainable Development (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Sustentável - MDS), and the Ministry of the Environment (Ministério do Meio Ambiente - MMA) and others participated between 2007 and 2008. The result was the elaboration of the National Plan for the Promotion of Socio-biodiversity Product Chains (Plano Nacional de Promoção das Cadeias de Produtos da Sociobiodiversidade - PNPSB). It is in the midst of this plan that the policy of guaranteeing minimum prices for socio-biodiversity was structured as the objective of “reducing variations in the income of extractivists and supporting the appreciation of their products. These, in turn, using their traditional exploitation methods, of low environmental impact, contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources” (IPEA, 2015).

PGPM-BIO thus meets a double demand; simultaneously support non-timber plant extraction and stimulate the sustainable use of forests. Its execution occurs through the direct subsidy to the extractive producer (subvenção direta ao produtor extrativista - SDPE) that is paid to the extractive producer who proves to have sold native product – which appears in the list of products subsidized<sup>11</sup> by PGPM-BIO – below the minimum price. The proof must be made through invoices. Thus, producers are guaranteed a minimum income for their production, stimulating them, at least in the short and medium term, to continue offering the product (Conab, 2018). The State through the PGPM-BIO thus transfers income by ensuring that the extractivist receives a supplement.

However, PGPM-BIO does not guarantee profit to producers, but ensures their minimum income, motivating them to maintain the activity (SOUZA, 2018). Besides, the SDPE has a limit for producers. In 2018, the limit was up to R\$3,000/DAP<sup>12</sup> for each subsidized product (CONAB, 2018).

However, even with a limit for the subsidy, the PGPM-BIO has a very significant impact on the income of the extractivist. As an example, according to Brasil (2019, p.38) considering the 17 subsidized products and all extractivists who received SDPE in 2018, the weight of the subsidy was on average 53% of the producer's income. That is, more than half of the producers' income that year was provided by the policy. In Amapá, in the same year, only açaí extractors received subsidies.

11The 17 extractive products included in the PGPM-BIO agenda are: Açaí, Andiroba, Babaçu, Baru, Extractive Rubber, Buriti, Extractive Cocoa, Brazil Nut, Carnaúba, Juçara, Macaúba, Mangaba, Murumuru, Pequi, Piaçava, Pinhão and Umbu (BRAZIL, 2019)

12DAP is the acronym for Declaração de Aptidão para o Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar (Declaration of Aptitude for the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture).

Table 1 shows the percentage of supplementary income of the açai producer in the three states that received SDPE in 2018.

**Table 1:** Average revenue of açai producers in the states that received the SDPE in 2018

Product	Producer's Average Annual Revenue					No. of Extractivists	
	State	Sale		Subsidy	Total		
Açaí	Amapá	R\$3,171.16	57%	R\$2,435.26	43%	R\$5,606.42	51
	Acre	R\$4,830.00	63%	R\$2,898.00	38%	R\$7,728.00	1
	Manaus	R\$4,812.50	70%	R\$2,050.03	30%	R\$6,862.53	12

Source: Adapted from BRASIL (2019).

As noted in table 1, the açai producer in Amapá had a total income with açai below the others, and the subsidy by PGPM-BIO in 2018 was more significant for producers in this state<sup>13</sup>. In any case, the SDPE guaranteed a complementation that ranged from 30% to 43% of the income of açai producers in the states that received it. These are very significant percentages, especially when considering low-income producers.

To access the direct subsidy, the producer needs to meet bureaucratic requirements such as having the documents: Identity Card, Individual Taxpayer Registration (Cadastro de Pessoa Física - CPF) and a bank account. Also having DAP - Declaration of Aptitude for the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture (Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar - PRONAF), this declaration identifies the producer, the family workforce and their territorial area of work that does not necessarily need to be on their property<sup>14</sup>. DAP can be done with unions of rural workers, state agencies of assistance and rural extension, or other accredited entities.

Holding these documents, it is necessary to register in the CONAB system (SICAN) in person at the service station or through the internet. Producer associations and cooperatives can also support by registering on the internet and assisting in sending the documentation with formal authorization from the producer. To register, having an electronic address (e-mail) and know how to operate it is necessary to receive links and passwords. Finally, when marketing their products, the extractor must have the outgoing (sale) invoices when he issues them or incoming (purchase) when the buyer issues them and complete the SDPE request document. In Amapá and Pará, açai as a native plant product is exempt from the Tax on Circulation of Goods and Services (ICMS - Imposto sobre Circulação de Mercadorias e Serviços)<sup>15</sup>. The invoices and the subsidy application are sent over the internet.

Proven, by the invoice, the sale below the minimum price and meeting the documentary requirements, the amount of the subsidy is deposited in the producer's bank account. All these procedures are detailed by CONAB in its means of dissemination ranging from posters and illustrated booklets to digital media and videos. They are used in training actions with cooperatives and extractive associations.

However, the procedures for accessing the PGPM-BIO were considered "very difficult" by the producers<sup>16</sup> participating in this research. Viana (2015, p.14) found a similar answer with extractive organizations in an analysis on the scope of the minimum price policy for socio-biodiversity products in 2015. This answer gives us clues to the reasons for the small number of accesses of producers, as we will show soon, despite the importance of the subsidy for supplementing income in periods of low marketing price.

### Scenario of Access to PGPM-BIO and Productive Context of Açai in Mazagão/AP

<sup>13</sup>In 2021, Conab rectified the information on the number of extractivists served by PGPM-BIO in 2018 in Amapá to 70. However, this did not significantly affect the calculation shown in table 1 that deals with the average annual income of the producer and we chose to keep the information of the publication cited as a source.

<sup>14</sup>To have access to DAP, the farmer or extractivist must meet the following requirements: explore a parcel of land as owner, squatter, lessee, partner or concessionaire of the National Policy of Agrarian Reform (Política Nacional de Reforma Agrária - PNRA); reside on the property or in a nearby place; do not have, in any capacity, an area greater than four tax modules; and, have, predominantly, the presence of family work within the family enterprise, eventually making use of salaried work (up to two employees).

<sup>15</sup>The ICMS Agreement 58/05 of the Brazilian Council of Finance Policy granted the States of Amapá and Amazonas the exemption from ICMS in internal operations with native products of plant origin, including açai.

<sup>16</sup>The answer given by all of the extractivists who declare to know the policy.

The seasonality of production, consumer market dynamics, outflow infrastructure problems, and the existence of local public incentive policies are among the main factors that impact the formation of açai marketing prices (CONAB, 2019). The table below shows the dynamics of the prices paid to agro-extractivists in 12 months between 2018 and 2019 in the five states with the highest production.

**Table 2: Price paid to the açai producer from May 2018 to May 2019 – R\$/kg**

STATE	May18	Jun18	Jul18	Aug18	Sep18	Oct18	Nov18	Dec18	Jan19	Feb19	Mar19	Apr19	May19	Average Price	Min Price
AC	1.23	1.29	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.23	1.24	1.25	1.24	1.26	1.27	1.27	1.27	1.35	1.63
AM	1.41	1.38	1.91	1.69					2.11	1.83	1.47	1.45	1.29	1.61	
AP	1.49	1.26	0.94	0.74	1.18	1.67	2.11	2.36	1.72	1.21	1.11	2.82	2.55	1.76	
MA	3	2.83	2.83	2.86	2.85	2.90	3.05	3.13	3.23	3.33	3.25	3.5	3.47	3.35	
PA	3.3	3.09	2.55	1.5	1.37	1.30	1.84	2.19	2.58	3.04	3.54	4.08	4.22	2.88	

Source: Adapted from CONAB (2019, p.15)

In the first three states – Acre (AC) (12 months below the minimum), Amazonas (AM) (5 months below the minimum of the 9 registered months) and Amapá (AP) (7 months below the minimum) – the price variation below that established by PGPM-BIO prevailed in the period, even considering the four months (September to December 2018) in which Amazonas had no record of marketing prices. In the last two – Maranhão (MA) and Pará (PA) – the prices practiced were more constant above the minimum – (9 months in Pará and 12 months in Maranhão). Furthermore, in the first three states the average price in the period was below or very close to the minimum. In these states, PGPM-BIO could have been used as a market balance mechanism protecting the income of extractivists.

However, analyzing the accesses in 2018 and 2019, the policy has clearly been unable to fulfill this role in an expressive way. Table 3 shows that among the subsidized states in the northern region in 2018 and 2019, the number of extractivists benefited is still very low.

**Table 3: Execution of the PGPM-BIO for the açai product in 2018 and 2019**

STATE	Attribute	YEAR		TOTAL PER STATE
		2018	2019	
AC	Amount Subsidized (kg)	4.830,00	13,093.81	17,923.81
	No. of Extractivists	1	8	9
AM	Amount Subsidized (kg)	51,469.00	73,039.53	124,508.53
	No. of Extractivists	12	25	37
AP	Amount Subsidized (kg)	178,704.67	281,859.03	460,663.70
	No. of Extractivists	51	119	170
PA	Amount Subsidized (kg)	0	390,744.95	390,744.95
	No. of Extractivists	0	157	157
TOTAL ANNUAL	Amount Subsidized (kg)	235,003.67	758,737.32	
	No. of Extractivists	52	309	361

Source: Sisbio/Conab

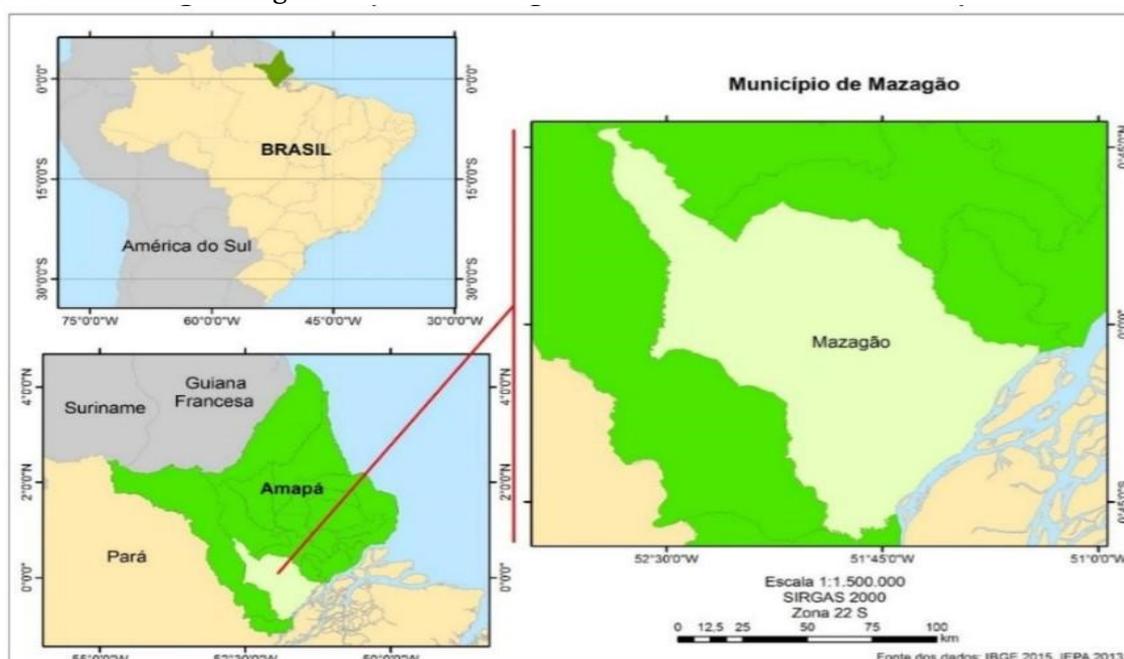
The total number of extractivists covered by the subsidy is very small when considering the number of people involved in the chain – estimated at 500,000 (Brasil, 2019). Even so, the number of Amapá producers who accessed the subsidy is noteworthy. The number is higher than in the states of Amazonas (AM) and Acre (AC), which has a higher production volume. According to CONAB, the access of Pará producers to PGPM-BIO in 2019 was linked to issues specific to some regions that are difficult to access.

When we advance the analysis of the Amapaense context regarding access to a public policy to guarantee the minimum price for açai, we realize that it fails in the distribution among the producing municipalities. The accesses are concentrated in Macapá (state capital), which is the main producer (CONAB, 2019). Mazagão, even being the second largest producer of açai (IBGE, 2020), had no extractivist receiving the subsidy until 2019.

The absence of Mazagão producers is partly explained by the socioeconomic context of the municipality in which they live and produce. According to IBGE (2018), the estimated population of Mazagão in 2018 was 21,125 inhabitants. The municipality had the lowest formal occupation rate of the population in the entire state, only 4% or 845 people. Among these formal workers, the average monthly wage was 2 minimum wages. The monthly income of 48.02% of households was up to half a minimum wage per person. Sanitary sewage met only 5.6% of the residences in the urban core, where only 0.6% of the roads had adequate urbanization according to IBGE criteria (2018). The precarious situation of urban infrastructure is also reflected in the quality of available internet. CONAB does not have a service station in Mazagão, the company's only service address is in the capital Macapá, 33.7 km away by paved highway.

The municipality has three districts, Mazagão Novo (headquarters), Carvão do Mazagão, Mazagão Velho and 44% of its territory are conservation units, all considered for sustainable use: Sustainable Development Reserve (Reserva de Desenvolvimento Sustentável - RDS) of Iratapuru River, Extractive Reserve (Reserva Extrativista - RESEX) of Cajari River and Amapá State Forest (Floresta Estadual do Amapá - FLOTA). It also includes a small portion of Waiãpi indigenous lands (MELO, 2017).

**Figure 1:** Location of Mazagão



Source: MELO, 2017

As in many small Amazonian cities, a significant part of the income comes from family farming and extractive activities. Mazagão has 51 rural, riverside, agro-extractivists communities and agrarian reform settlers. Among the latter, three Extractive Settlements Projects (Projetos de Assentamentos Extrativistas - PAEs) stand out, two of them – PAE of Maracá and PAE of Foz do Mazagão Velho – located in the main areas of açaí extraction (MELO, 2017).

The two main açaí producing regions – Foz do Mazagão Velho and Maracá – are wet or flooded plains, near the rivers Mazagão Velho and Maracá-Pucu that flow into the Amazon river. The work of harvesting açaí involves the entire family that enters the forest to the açaí groves. In a journey, the extractive family collects approximately 180 kg (SUPERTI, PEGLER, ARAÚJO, 2018).

Extractive families live in these localities, in riverside communities with little infrastructure and precarious public services – from the most basic such as electricity and treated water. Internet access in both regions is unstable and sometimes non-existent. The displacement to conduct the work of collection and flow happens, as a rule, by the rivers. The commercialization of the production is commonly done in front of the houses or in specific spaces in the communities and with trustworthy middle-people – small informal entrepreneurs – who resell açaí at the street markets in Macapá and Santana. Less frequently, they make collective sales through cooperatives or associations. The trip to urban centers occurs monthly for health care, purchase of provisions, visit to family members and

resolution of bureaucratic issues, but in an ordinary way the extractive family lives in the community (Diário de campo, 2019)

Reaching these populations is a challenge for public policies, the requirements of using the internet and electronic means of communication mismatch the daily reality of riverside families. Moreover, bureaucracies such as withdrawing of invoices, filling out forms and registrations that are common for urban producers and traders used to these routines, are not part of the ordinary practice of the extractivist. Fulfilling them requires an effort that in turn depends not only on the will, but on objective conditions, such as commuting, specific knowledge, computer equipment, and internet access. This context revealed elements that were completed with the field research to understand in more depth the motivation and the bottlenecks that limit access to PGPM-BIO.

### **Challenges for access to PGPM-BIO: results of field research.**

The productive scenario of Mazagão was present in the speeches of the presidents of the organizations. The cooperative and the association are not part of the main research proposed in this analysis – centered on extractivists. However, considering that organizations can help producers receive the subsidy and that their presidents were also extractivists and exercised local leadership, their speeches are important to understand aspects of the collective organization and its more general difficulties.

According to the president of COOPMAZ, the cooperative still did not have all the documentation for registration with CONAB and that the required bureaucracy was excessive. He informed that he was unaware of PGPM-BIO as a subsidy to the producer and that he believed that in Maracá almost no one knew about it. He also was uninformed that the cooperative could support the extractivists to individually receive the SDPE or collectively through the sale with an invoice organized by the cooperative. He said he knew about the PRONAF policies of credit to producers, but even regarding these, he had doubts. He stressed that the extractivists of Maracá were organizing themselves in the cooperative, precisely to get support for production, have access to policies and that the flow was the main difficulty related to working with açaí. According to him, producers made most of their sales individually to middle-people (Field interview, 2018).

The president of AMPAFOZ explained that the association arose from the effort of women in the community who had no voice in the old association of residents and the need to improve the living conditions of their families. The açaí exporting company that operates in the state was also a stimulus, as the existence of the association was a prerequisite for them to be able to sign commercial agreements and enable the construction of a school in the community by the company, which was accomplished. Subsequently, the association started organizing collective sales to public agencies. She informed that the association has all the documentation required for registration with CONAB. She said she knew PGPM-BIO and had basic knowledge of the procedures necessary to receive the subsidy, she said that other associates also knew about it, but she believed that no one had registered to the program. According to her, the employee of the exportation company that monitors the producers spoke at a meeting about the minimum price policy to explain how the company defined the purchase price. The Association never accessed the subsidy, because its sales were always for the minimum price (exporting company) or above (public authority). In addition to collective sales, she said, each associate sold their production individually and commonly to a community middle-person. When asked about the support to the extractivist to access the PGPM-BIO individually, she said that the Association relies on the work of the associated women, who had neither structure (computer, internet) nor people with knowledge for this work. As well as the president of COOPMAZ, she revealed that the main difficulty related to the production of açaí was the flow (Field Interview, 2019).

Both presidents stated that they had not been sought or sought CONAB to do the training or receive information material on the policies. They also said that the training that happened in their communities was on the management of açaí. They indicated that it would be “very important” for the extractivists to do the training on the policies and procedures to access them. But, the president of AMPAFOZ reinforced, “(...) to do it with those who know what is the açaí’s work is here, in the community, and in the way we talk” (Field Interview, 2019) indicating that both the message and the messenger need relate to the producers’ way of life and work.

With the application of the questionnaire, we found that all respondents met the profile of the sample and that they had made sales below the minimum price in the years in which the surveys were made. They also indicated that they did not receive SDPE and that most had the personal

documents necessary to register with CONAB. Of the total of 27 interviewees, 26 had CPF and Identity Card documents.

Regarding DAP, a representative part of the extractivists (20) participated in sales to the government that required this declaration. Thus, DAP was known by all and 20 producers declared to have it within the validity period. According to the 2019 report of the Brazilian Open Data Portal (2019), Mazagão was the municipality with the highest number of active DAP (2,522) in the state of Amapá. The large number of producers with personal documentation and DAP confirmed the hypothesis that extractivists linked to formal collective organizations would meet these requirements. This result differs from the one found by Viana (2015) who, in a nationwide analysis of the scope of PGPM-BIO, identified DAP and personal documents as a bottleneck for the access to subsidies by extractivists. Lomba, Filocreão and Silva (2020) also mentioned that DAP is a limiting factor for family farmers and extractivists to access public policies in Amapá.

Two other requirements for registration were the e-mail and the bank account. The latter was also common among extractivists, 21 of whom had an account or a savings account, many due to the receipt of benefits from the state or federal government. The e-mail, however, was more uncommon, only three producers declare to use it, 13 did not know what it is and 11 knew what it is, but they did not have it. Regarding internet access, an issue also addressed in the meetings of the focus groups, all were unanimous in saying that the functioning is irregular and in some parts of the communities for those who have cell phones and SIM cards of specific mobile operators. Even so, its only feature is to send/receive messages from “WhatsApp”. As expected, the use of electronic means to access information and bureaucratic procedures in areas without adequate internet infrastructure is a bottleneck for the beneficiary of public policies to access their right.

The questionnaire also allowed us to assess the knowledge about the existence of PGPM-BIO among respondents. The vast majority, 70% of respondents or 19 among the 27 participants, were unaware of the existence of the policy. Among the eight who knew it, two were linked to COOPMAZ and the other six to AMPAFOZ. Only one of the extractivists knew someone who had received the subsidy.

Even those who had information about the policy, the knowledge about the procedures necessary to access it was classified by four of them with “very little” and three as “little”. One only stated that he had “good knowledge” of the procedures. Through the focus groups it was possible to know that the extractivists of AMPAFOZ became aware of the policy by meeting with the export company employee as already reported by the president of the association, but they did not try to register with CONAB. They did not know the producers who received the subsidy. Those linked to COOPMAZ, one attended a meeting at another cooperative in Macapá in which technicians talked about the minimum price policy, he did not know anyone who had received the SDPE. The other knew about the policy through friends from another community in Macapá who had received the subsidy and encouraged him to register. But he never applied for the subsidy. The knowledge of the extractivists about the policy partially confirmed our hypothesis of selecting the respondents to the questionnaire, since the vast majority did not know about the PGPM-BIO, but among those who were aware of it, most were through formal organization.

In the focus groups, the procedures that were necessary to receive the subsidy were recalled and the producers, who previously knew about the existence of the PGPM-BIO, were asked to indicate up to four reasons why they were not interested or did not try to receive it. The answers, with previously established options and considering the greatest constancy, were in this order: a) does not issue invoices on individual sale to the middle-person; b) did not have access to internet and/or computer equipment; c) believed that the amount to be received would not compensate for expenses; and; d) bureaucracy. To detail item c, they were asked to indicate, without predefined options, what the expenses would be, in order of importance. Two were the most present in the responses: taxes on the issuance of invoices and displacements. The same was requested with regard to item d, but without the criterion of importance and with predefined options. The most constant responses were: sending documents over the internet, filling out forms, using e-mail, and registering.

The other participants in the focus groups, who were unaware of the PGPM-BIO, were asked if they issued invoices when they made individual sales to the middle-people and they all answered no. The invoices were only withdrawn when the sale was made to the government, given the requirement. The sale to middlemen corresponds, according to the total of respondents, more than half of the total marketed during the harvest. Most (17) of the 19 respondents who did not know about

the policy also stated that they believed that the issuance of the invoice for individual sale would require payment of taxes.

To cross-reference the information on the issuance of invoices and their costs, an interview was conducted with an employee of the SEFAZ tax office. He confirmed that it is unusual to issue invoices for the individual sale of açaí producers. He revealed that it is usually the presidents of associations who seek the office when they make the collective sale to public agencies. According to him, the invoice can be issued on the internet, but considering the difficulty of access and filling, they choose to go to the office for issuance. He emphasized that there is no tax or fee on the extraction of açaí in the state. When asked if SEFAZ organizes training for producers on how to issue the invoices and on taxes, he stated that he is unaware of such action in the secretariat and that producers have many doubts.

Besides the belief in the cost of taxes, the concern of not issuing an invoice in the individual sale to the middle-person is also related to the organization of the extractivist and the existing governance at the base of the production chain, as demonstrated by Superti, Pegler and Araújo (2018). The açaí in natura perishes very quickly, it has to be sold within a maximum of 24 hours after extraction, the most common is that the harvest happens in the morning and the sale happens until the end of the afternoon (Field research, 2019). As a rule, the producer and his family do not register the production after the extraction work (how much was collected in each day of work, hours worked, quantity sold, amount received, data of the buyer), which would allow them to have more control and make invoices later. Sales are informal and directly to the middle-person, who tends to be the same for several harvests in a row and who goes to the communities.

The middle-person is not only the buyer of the product, but a person close to the producer, that is reliable and brings information about the market (prices, quality, forecast of harvest in other communities) and provides small favors such as family displacement, advance of values, transport of goods, and that establishes friendship with the extractive family. This is an informal entrepreneur who, when he is not a resident, he frequently visits the community where he buys açaí and closes informal quantity-based advance purchase agreements with the extractivists. Prices are established at the time of delivery of production by the middle-person according to market value. Producers, as a rule, recognize and comply with the sales agreement, even when there are other possibilities of commercialization for greater value (Field Diary, 2019).

Even participating in collective organizations, the extractivist has the most frequent agent for the outflow. Most of the time, he is the only one who faces and bears the costs of dirt roads with large quagmires, typical of Amazonian winter, and long boat trips to withdraw production. Given the perishability of açaí, the producer has no option to bargain the marketing price and its removal from urban retail also puts it in a fragile and susceptible situation regarding the relationship with the middle-person that becomes personal and a moral commitment for the favors provided (SUPERTI, PEGLER, ARAÚJO, 2018)

According to Barney (2002), this governance model is classified as relational and based on the informality established by the relationship of trust, friendship, and good faith among agents. The issuance of the invoice would require that the extractivists were trained to control their production and that they assume as a practice the formalization of the act of sale, changing aspects that establish the traditionally constituted governance model.

This governance model shows that bonds of trust and proximity are important for the decision making of extractivists. Note that the only extractivist in the respondent group who registered at CONAB was the one who became aware of it by friends who were also extractivists. This indicates that the network of marketing contacts and between communities, which is one of the ways producers use to obtain information from people they trust, is important in the process of disclosing the minimum price policy and in the decision to make efforts to access it. However, considering the result of this survey, PGPM-BIO is little disseminated in this network, probably due to the small number of producers who received values for the policy.

Another important element of the non-issuance of the invoice is related to item c of the extractivist' response and concerns the cost that it would generate in taxes. This is a misinterpretation and very present among the survey respondents. The extraction of açaí in Amapá is exempt from the collection of taxes, both from ICMS as already mentioned, and from any other type of tax and is exempt from the issuance fee. Scheduling for the service is not necessary. However, the displacement costs are real since the precariousness of the internet in rural communities prevents this medium from being used.

In an interview, a servant of the Regional Superintendence of CONAB in Amapá stated that the need for more training and dissemination of PGPM-BIO is a known problem and that the confrontation will be organized by adding efforts with other agencies and with the rural extension team of the state that has greater penetration with rural communities. However, according to her, “the big obstacle is the informality of the chain” that training alone will not solve. The solution, in her opinion, would be to stimulate and provide associations and cooperatives with minimum conditions to assist producers and promote formal sales also to middle-people, but this goes beyond what the company is able to do.

When asked about the use of the internet as a means of access to the minimum price policy, she said that it would be impossible to have service stations in all municipalities given the costs and that the use of the internet would be an option instead of face-to-face service. But, she recognizes that the state’s infrastructure is precarious. She mentioned that internet access would be one of the minimum conditions that producers’ collective entities should have.

Regarding the bureaucracy involved in the procedures to receive the SDPE, she said that this is a constant complaint from the producers. She revealed that minimum procedures are necessary to ensure that the receipt is made by those who are entitled and within the rules, especially considering the limitation of the resources allocated in the execution of the policy. She affirmed, however, that those who define the rules and procedures “are not always here on a daily basis and do not know the reality of the communities” and that “more simplified ways such as the use of “WhatsApp”” could help. For her, “changing this is not simple, the company, like every public service, has its bureaucracies and the ministry too”.

The speech of the CONAB servant exposes that the process of implementation and execution of the minimum price policy involves hierarchical levels of decision in a “top down” logic. This hinders the redraft of the rules and strategies for access and requires a greater effort from those who are responsible for bringing public policy to the beneficiaries.

Chart 01 below was composed by systematizing the data collected in the research. In the column “reasons” are the main elements related to the motivation indicated by the extractivists who were aware of the PGPM-BIO and also those inferred from the responses of the other respondents and interviewees. In the column “bottlenecks” are the structural elements, strategies, and means that involve the execution of the policy and the operation of the chain that generate difficulties in accessing SDPE and relate to the reason indicated in the first column.

**Chart 01: Reasons and Bottlenecks**

Reasons		Bottlenecks	
Information	Disinformation regarding the existence of PGPM-BIO. Little information on policy access requirements and procedures.	Disclosure and Training	
	Information on receiving the SDPE little disseminated in the marketing network and contact between extractive communities Misleading information about taxes on the issuance of invoices.		
Invoice	Absence of issuance of invoices in the individual sale to the middle-person.	Informality of the production chain	Relational governance prevalent in the chain.
			Lack of production control by extractivists Non-performance of formal collective organizations in sales to middlemen
Cost to perform PGPM-BIO access procedures Internet access and computer equipment		Internet Infrastructure and Digital Inclusion	
Bureaucracy (sending documents over the internet, filling out forms, using e-mail and registration)		Use of means that differ from the reality of the producers.	

Source: Field Research, 2018 and 2019.

Despite the specific focus of the research, its results help to understand the scenario that produces the non-access of extractivists to subsidies. Among the reasons, the item “information” draws attention and highlights the small penetration of public policy among these beneficiaries. It

also shows that misinformation about taxes linked to invoices creates false difficulties and discouragement among extractivists. As for the bottlenecks, the informality of the chain and the infrastructure of internet and digital inclusion are the most complex. The first involves culturally rooted habits, personal relationships, and a governance model that disfavors formalization. The second requires significant expansion and qualification investments in areas where basic public services are not yet fully available.

## Final Considerations

The implementation of public policies in the Amazonian context faces important challenges, even when those policies are the result of a democratic process including its beneficiaries and therefore with a greater chance of being adequate to the reality of the interested parties. The results of the research show that PGPM-BIO, despite the demands of rural workers, reaches very little the açai extractivists in the north of the country and in particular in Amapá.

Two main points found in this research explain the bottlenecks of the implementation of PGPM-BIO in the açai chain. The first concerns the recognition of the socio-cultural diversity of the region and its specificities when designing means and strategies of access of the beneficiary public to policies. One possibility of overcoming would be to provide the executor at the tip of public policy, in this case the rural extension workers and local agents of Conab, with greater discretion and flexibility to deal with obstacles to access, simplifying them. Secondly, the confrontation of historical problems, particularly the precariousness of public infrastructures and services insufficient to meet and monitor populations not used to dealing with administrative processes.

In turn, in the 21st century and particularly in the current context of physical isolation of people due to the pandemic, access to electricity and the internet is fundamental. The existing digital fracture results in the exacerbation of inequalities in the governance of the production chain. Effective digital inclusion could increase the participation of the base in the production chain and gain bargaining power, reducing the opportunism of other agents in the governance process. Thus, the informality of the chain, which today often acts to the detriment of the extractivists, could become a force of sovereignty of the short circuits, as well as reinforce its negotiating position in the face of the figure of the middle-person who exercises the leadership in the commercialization of this chain in Amapá.

Finally, we want to highlight the fundamental role of rural extension in the Amazon region. The latest data from CONAB (2020) show an increase in the number of extractivists benefiting from PGPM-BIO in 2020 (municipality of Mazagão) as a result of the expansion of the company's qualification and training actions and the performance of the extractivist organizations. However, technical assistance and rural extension are fragile in the state of Amapá and do not reach a significant part of the producers (FILOCREÃO; SILVA, 2020), despite being essential tools for the empowerment of collective organizations of family and extractive farmers. Even to provide them with better material conditions and promote the integration of the actions of the various policies aimed at this same public. This could make a difference in the dissemination of qualified information and in the performance and scope of collective producer organizations. When the PGPM-BIO policy was changed to cover the fruit of juçara in the state of São Paulo, where the agricultural population is more familiar with public and private contracting, rethinking the essence of these policies was necessary. not only in ecological terms, but also in terms of empowerment and social sovereignty.

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