

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Açaí: Success story of integrating a global product through informal markets with marginal indigenous and local communities

T2.21 Pathways towards sustainable and circular forest-based bioeconomies: Advances in research to address challenges and realize opportunities

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Abstract: In the last decade, açaí (*Euterpe oleracea*) has become part of a global chain, with growing markets mainly in the United States and Europe. At the same time, it represents a staple food for a large part of the Amazonian population, including indigenous and traditional communities. Until today, the coexistence of local informal circuits has been possible with the structures of global chains. In our research, we sought to understand how indigenous and local communities participate in the açaí chain, both in local marketing circuits and in national and international supply chains. Data on the açaí value chain were collected from official documents, interviews and observations during field missions in the Brazilian states of Amapá and Pará. The greatest production and consumption are found in the state of Pará, but the largest exporters are companies in the state of São Paulo. Informal circuits are important to guarantee the food and nutritional security of the local population; however, they are not yet being contemplated by public support although these markets need to improve transport, storage, processing, marketing and communication infrastructure. In global circuits, purchasing companies depend strongly on local communities regarding fruits supply. In this sense, producers coordinating through associations, cooperatives or collective brands makes possible to group larger supplying volumes, as well as requirements for different types of certifications. Challenges arise for both local and global markets, mainly in terms of logistics infrastructure, communication and training of actors, not to mention the variation in production between harvests as it is a predominantly gathering product, and the decrease in supply during the off-season. Fruits providers and enterprises commitments may also enhance natural and social production factors, such as forest management – to avoid process of açazation (increase in the density of açaí groves with biodiversity loss) and gathering labour conditions. The success story of açaí, to be sustainable, needs to maintain the participation of local actors in the production and marketing activities, as well as local consumers since the fruit is the main food for Amazonian communities and generates thousands of jobs in the Amazon urban centers.