

Agro-ecological products qualification and certification participatory initiatives effects of Brazilian public policies

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In the last years in Brazil, beside External Audit firm Certification (EAC), various participative certification instruments, behind the figure of Social Control certification, have been set up between producers or between producers and consumers (Medaets & Medeiros, 2004; Brasil, 2002; MAPA, 2008). These alternatives are due to the development of local agro-ecological markets and the dynamics of the effects of reputation (Hess & Ostrom, 2007). This paper propose a comparative analysis of three certification systems (EAC, Network Participative Certification – NPC and Social Control Certification – SCC) in which the advantages and limitations of auto centered and decentralized certification are highlighted as an autonomy process both for family farmers and consumers units and organizations.

Selling ecological farm products is not just a matter of capitalistic exchange. Although it is now the norm for many of the small and family farms of Brazil (Conterato, 2004; Ploeg, 2008), one still see socially controlled markets which is also governed by the rules of reciprocity and redistribution, the two different economic forms defined by Polanyi (1957) beside merchant exchange.

When the producer's name is at stake, reciprocity relationships generate values of trust, reputation, honor and accountability. It is often these ethical values that guarantee the legitimacy and the authority of the certification process of quality and origin standards: geographical indications, production process, ethnic or cultural identity. In fact, it thus creates a territoriality of reciprocity around a specific product. However, a part from this group of qualified producers and also for the marketing of other products which are not quality-labeled by these producers, it is the rules of the capitalistic exchange market that apply. So, qualification and certification could also induce exclusion. That is why, in this type of process, there has to be some sort of interface between production and the market. The quality certification mechanism can reintroduce a dimension of reciprocity and solidarity (the domestic unit, the peasant community, the co-operative) into the capitalist exchange market system.

The communication will also examine how these grassroots certification instruments have influenced the public policies programs in Brazil and the main trade off and synergy between public policies and these instruments. The results come from a research based on three case studies in Brazil, of family farmers producing and marketing their own agro-ecological production.

The method is based on a comparative study of three Brazilian recent qualification and certification systems of family farm products: an External Audit Certification firm (Ecocert Brazil) with the Cooperagrepa, an agro-ecological cooperative of Amazonia (Mato Grosso), the Ecovida Participative Certification Network in the South of Brazil (Santa Catarina) and the agro-ecological markets group Eco Boreborema for the Social Control Certification experience in the Nordeste (Paraiba)

The comparative scheme examines the social and institutional trajectory of any initiatives and some four key elements of quality control: the checking means, the certifier organization functioning, the means of communicating quality, the costs and it analyses their effects or influence on local or national public policy certification instruments.

In fact, the NPC system works as an interface between the logics of reciprocity and exchange on two counts. Firstly, it creates a link between domestic production and market exchange by protecting the qualified production from the effects of competition. Furthermore, the guarantee and control of product quality in the NPC system is based on reciprocity and mutual aid between peers. However, this virtually

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gratuitous certification mechanism (3 days of work/family/year) defies the capitalistic mercantile logic but at the same time it enables producers to enter into dialogue with it, especially concerning international standards required for the export market. In this sense, NPC is a hybrid certification mechanism suitable for systems that combine the logics of exchange and reciprocity.

The results show an important advance with the institutionalization of participative certification by Brazilian legislation, with a specific set of norms and its bureaucracy services, implanted by the Ministry of Agriculture (MAPA, 2007). The main expectation of a certification system is that it should lead to reducing the asymmetry of information and fraud and/or opportunism. The three certification systems studied all fulfill this goal with no significant differences in terms of results, but with an important difference in terms of costs and processes: participative and social certification is quite cheaper.

The capitalist exchange market sets the homogeneity of firms' standardized certification norms against heterogeneity procedures or Network Participative Certification registration modalities. Certification resulting from External Audit shows some difficulties to integrate and translate the diversity of production systems and conditions, the diverse realities of different countries, terroirs and producers, and particularly social and cultural realities.

This is one of the assets of certification by social compliance. It should not, however, become a complete substitute to technical compliance. This is why the producer's opinion as peers, and that of the consumers as judges, is absolutely essential.

Notions of reputation, trust and knowledge sharing are at the heart of the qualification process of products (especially agro-food products). Social pressure has been recognized for its efficiency in the process of guaranteeing quality credibility. In Brazil, several authors have put forward the idea of developing the debate about social compliance as an efficient alternative mechanism in terms of quality control in the frame of family peasant farming.

Some referencies

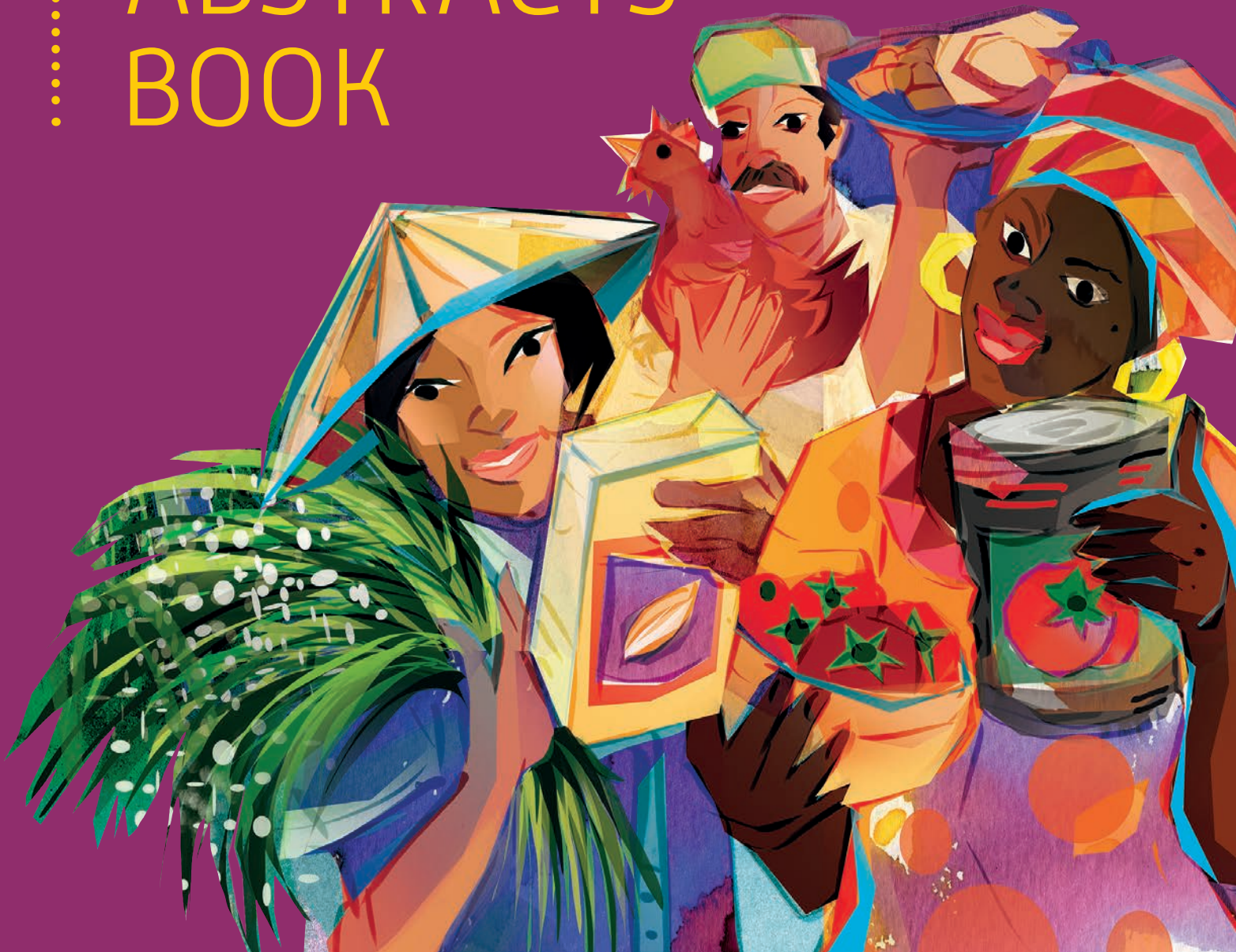
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AC & SD 2016

Agri-Chains & Sustainable Development
> *Linking local and global dynamics*

ABSTRACTS BOOK



WELCOME ADDRESS



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Welcome to AC&SD 2016

On behalf of the Scientific and Organizing Committees, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the International Conference on Agri-chains and Sustainable Development (AC&SD 2016). This conference aspires to widen the debate about the role of agricultural value chains towards sustainable development. Year 2015 was a critical political and diplomatic milestone: the member states of the United Nations signed a new agenda for development, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) placing sustainability at the core of international efforts. Development and academic actors are since then exploring new avenues for translating the SDGs into reality and implementing global and local frameworks and partnerships. Our conference aims at joining these efforts, with the consideration that agricultural value chains form spaces where local and global challenges to sustainability connect and within which local and global actors experiment and negotiate innovative solutions.

The scientific committee has assembled a very attractive program for AC&SD 2016 that seeks to cover and confront the diversity of realities behind agri-chains, from localized chains, embedded in specific places, to global value chains. In the parallel sessions, transformations of these agri-chains and their connections to sustainable development will be discussed by speakers from the academia, the civil society, the private sector and decision makers. This multi-stakeholder perspective will also be brought about in the plenary sessions. Here, world renowned keynotes and panelists to three high level round tables will discuss about the role and importance of evaluation, public and private institutions and innovations at different scales for transforming agri-chains towards sustainability transitions.

This edition gathers about 250 participants from 39 countries. AC&SD 2016 owes a lot to the scientific and organizing committees for preparing the program, and particularly to Brigitte Cabantous, Chantal Carrasco and Nathalie Curiallet for all the logistics, as well as to our support team of Alpha Visa that we warmly thank for their help.

We wish us all a fascinating, successful, inspiring and enjoyable AC&SD 2016 and we very much look forward to its result and to the strengthening of both a scientific community and a community of practice to implement the outcome!!

Estelle Biénabe, Patrick Caron and Flavia Fabiano,
Cirad Co-chairs AC&SD 2016

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