



# **Family Farming in Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCS): agroecological commercialization in Chapecó/SC**

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## **Abstract**

Family farming is the predominant form of agriculture developed in the municipality of Chapecó/SC. Examples of this activity are the so-called Short Food Supply Circuits (SFSCs) and agroecological-based production, which represent a possible production and consumption alternative for family groups that remain outside the predominant production model (agribusiness chains). In this sense, the objective of this research is to analyze the commercialization dynamics in SFSCs of agroecological production in the municipality of Chapecó. In methodological terms, this study is characterized as qualitative; data collection was carried out through interviews, and the interpretation of data collected in the field took place through the technique of content analysis. The main results demonstrate that the interviewed families that are in agroecological production have an average activity time in the area of about 14 years. The data obtained show three other findings: the considerable diversity of foodstuffs produced, the lack of labor, and the high demand for this type of production. The interviewed consumers point out that they opted for agroecological foods due to the quality of the products, the health benefits resulting from consumption, and the high demand and little supply for products of this nature. The final results show the great potential of the sector and the challenges to the expansion and consolidation of agroecological production in the City of Chapecó (SC/Brazil).

**Keywords:** Family Farming. Short Food Supply Circuits. Agroecology.

## **Agricultura familiar em circuitos curtos de abastecimento alimentar: comercialização agroecológica em Chapecó/SC**

### **Resumo**

A agricultura familiar é a forma predominante de agricultura no município de Chapecó/SC (IBGE, 2017). Os Circuitos Curtos de Abastecimento Alimentar (CCAAs) se inserem neste modelo de agricultura como uma alternativa possível de produção e consumo para aquelas famílias que, no processo histórico, ficaram à margem das cadeias do agronegócio, especialmente a partir da produção agroecológica. Nesse sentido, o objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar as dinâmicas de comercialização em CCAAs da produção agroecológica no município de Chapecó. Em termos metodológicos, este estudo caracteriza-se essencialmente como qualitativo, o instrumento de coleta de dados se deu por meio de entrevista e os resultados do campo de pesquisa foram realizadas por meio da análise de conteúdo. Os principais resultados demonstram que as famílias entrevistadas que estão na produção agroecológica possuem experiência de aproximadamente 14 anos nesse modelo de agricultura. Os dados do campo de pesquisa também demonstram pelo menos outros três aspectos: i) diversidade produtiva; ii) carência de mão de obra; iii) alta demanda da produção. No que se referem aos consumidores, esses relataram que optam por alimentos agroecológicos, especialmente, em função da qualidade dos alimentos e da saúde familiar. Há também apontamentos relacionados quanto à demanda por produtos que atualmente não são produzidos de forma agroecológica. As considerações finais apontam para as potencialidades em termos de demanda, bem como os desafios colocados para expansão e consolidação da produção agroecológica no município.

**Palavras-chave:** Produção de Alimentos Saudáveis. CCAAs. Agroecologia.

## **Agricultura familiar en circuitos cortos de abastecimiento de alimentos: comercialización agroecológica en Chapecó/SC**

### **Resumen**

La agricultura familiar es la forma predominante de agricultura desarrollada en el municipio de Chapecó/SC. Ejemplos de esta actividad son los llamados Circuitos Cortos de Abastecimiento y la producción de base agroecológica, que representan una posible alternativa de producción y consumo para los grupos familiares que quedan fuera del modelo productivo predominante (cadenas agroindustriales). En ese sentido, el objetivo de esta investigación es analizar la dinámica de comercialización en cadenas de comercialización cortas e producción agroecológica en el municipio de Chapecó. Por razones metodológicas, este estudio se caracteriza como cualitativo; la recolección de datos se realizó a través de entrevistas y la interpretación de los datos recolectados en el campo se realizó a través de la técnica de análisis de contenido. Los principales resultados demuestran que las familias entrevistadas que se encuentran en producción agroecológica tienen un tiempo promedio de actividad en la zona de unos 14 años. Los datos obtenidos muestran otros tres hallazgos: la gran diversidad de alimentos producidos, la escasez de mano de obra y la alta demanda de este tipo de producción. Los consumidores entrevistados señalan que optaron por alimentos agroecológicos debido a la calidad de los productos, los beneficios para la salud derivados del consumo y la alta demanda y poca oferta de productos de esta naturaleza. Los resultados finales muestran el gran potencial del sector y los desafíos para la expansión y consolidación de la producción agroecológica en el municipio de Chapecó (SC/Brasil).

**Palabras clave:** Producción de Alimentos Saludables. CCAA. Agroecología.

## 1 Introduction

Family farming in Santa Catarina represents 142,987 (78.1%) of the 183,066 rural establishments in the state, according to data from the 2017 Agricultural Census carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). This composition is associated with geographic characteristics and strongly rooted in the process of occupation of the territory of Santa Catarina, especially from the mid-nineteenth century and which lasted for approximately one hundred years, when considering the process of colonization of the western region of Santa Catarina.

The concentration of the agro-family production model in Santa Catarina is considerably higher in the western region of the state, where 84.2% of rural establishments of the family farming type are registered, considering all the production units (IBGE, 2017). The western region of Santa Catarina basically has small rural municipalities, with larger central cities in each micro-region, and with the city of Chapecó (State of Santa Catarina) as the hub city for the entire region.

Family farming in the West region, especially from the 1980s onwards, suffered a marked process of marginalization and exclusion of families from the production process due to the concentration of the productive model, of the large chains of the agro-industrial complex, due to the crisis in pig farming and poultry farming (TESTA et al, 1996).

Due to the concentration of the productive model and the exclusion of a large number of producers from agricultural activity, a good part of the rural population ended up migrating to the urban centers of the region and to the coast of the State, in search of employment opportunities (RENK; DORIGON, 2014).

Especially in the last decades of the 21st century, an important opportunity arose for family farming in the city of Chapecó and neighboring regions, for the commercialization of products in Short Food Supply Circuits (SFSCs), especially in local fairs. From there, an important process of building channels and forms of commercialization of quality products from family farming, originating from local production, began, with the appreciation of regional eating habits and the strengthening of family farming.

Local agroecological production (Chapecó/SC) has been gaining more and more relevance, having built a faithful local consumer market, since, in recent years, there has been a growing concern of consumers with the quality of food and, also, the search for sustainability (production without pesticides, productive diversification, and preservation of nature) (ALTIERI, 2000).

From the early 1990s to the present day, family farmers have encountered various challenges. Initially, they have faced difficulties in complying with and meeting sanitary requirements in both the production and transportation processes, as well as in the marketing aspect. Furthermore, the lack of support from the municipal government and residents' associations has emerged as a concerning factor, primarily due to the limited availability of spaces for organizing fairs (FOSSÁ; TERNUS; BADALOTTI, 2020).

Another significant challenge involves the dynamics of consumer demand and supply by market traders, as many spaces for family farming fairs in Chapecó have either been discontinued or are trending towards that direction, mainly because they

fail to establish themselves as vibrant marketplaces for promoting agroecological products (FOSSÁ; TERNUS; BADALOTTI, 2020).

In recent years, especially since 2020 and the pandemic (COVID-19), there has been a considerable expansion in the use of digital channels for marketing agroecological production in Chapecó (SC) – local producers who began to sell their products through social network and using smartphones. As a result of this action, several companies specializing in the supply of healthy and agro-ecological foods began to set up in the localities.

This study focuses on this topic, and to achieve this objective, the general research problem was defined: How do the dynamics of commercialization occur in short chains of agroecological production in the municipality of Chapecó?

To answer this question, the general objective of the research was defined as: To analyze the dynamics of commercialization in short chains of agroecological production in the municipality of Chapecó. In addition, the specific objectives of this work were defined: (a) Identify how this dynamic contributes to the strengthening of these farming families in the social, economic, and environmental spheres; (b) Understand the motivations for adopting this agri-food consumption habit based on consumer perceptions.

This article has been divided into four sections. In the first section, a debate is held on the theoretical state of the art of agroecological production in family farming with commercialization in short chains. In the second section, the methodological aspects adopted in this work are presented, and in the third section, the results and discussion of the work are presented. At the end, in a fourth section, the conclusions of the research are presented.

## **2 Family farming and agro-ecological production in Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCS)**

Family farming, in the early 1990s, went through a process of conceptual change based on three major axes: (i) in the academic environment, with the publication of books in Portuguese that supported the understanding of socioeconomic differences and their relevance in national development; (ii) the large demonstrations for rights at the national level by rural social movements, especially the movement called "O Grito da Terra" ("The Cry of Earth"); (iii) surveys between FAO and INCRA in 1994 that established the main guidelines related to family farming (VEIGA, 1991; ABRAMOVAY, 1992; LAMARCHE, 1993).

The creation of the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF) in 1996 is considered a historic milestone as it was the first public policy of this nature created, with specific incentives for small producers and family farming (GAZZOLA; SCHNEIDER, 2013). According to Grisa and Schneider (2015), it is due to this public investment program (PRONAF) that a cycle of construction of public policies to support family farming is established in the country, in a cycle of three great generations of similar public policies.

From the year 2016, with the beginning of the Temer administration in the Federal Government, a process of deconstruction of social policies begins, with the withdrawal of investments and dismantling of technical teams (institutional aspect),

especially of policies aimed at family farming, leading to a return to the situation of the 1980s (inexistence of specific policies for family farming) (LEITE *et al.*, 2023).

Several social mobilizations have taken place in recent decades, on the initiative of civil society and universities, seeking to encourage family farming, both through the formation of specific public policies for the area and to strengthen the production and consumption of healthy foods, especially those based on agroecology (GRISA; SCHNEIDER, 2015).

In Brazil, there was the creation of the Food Acquisition Program (or PAA<sup>1</sup>) in 2003, the increase in the “green” (ecological) financing lines of the Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (or PRONAF<sup>2</sup>) still in the Crop Plan<sup>3</sup> (“Plano Safra”) 2003/2004 and the establishment of a goal in 2009 whereby at least 30% of the resources of the National School Feeding Program (or PNAE<sup>4</sup>) were destined directly to family farming. These are examples of public policies whose purpose is to promote food security based on the promotion of a production model (agro-family production) different from that usually adopted in the country (plantations) (CAZELLA *et al.*, 2020).

Over the years, there have been several challenges and difficulties in the implementation of public policies in favor of family farming, especially regarding public financing of productive activities, highlighting the lack of support from the state and the low effectiveness in achieving results by these financing projects, especially the low success of financing lines for agroecology (the “green” financing lines, PRONAF) (AQUINO; GAZOLLA; SCHNEIDER, 2021).

The production and consumption of agroecological foods face significant difficulties, and their possibilities are underused and repressed by the dominant food production systems on a global scale (SCHNEIDER; GAZOLLA, 2017).

Faced with contradictions in current eating habits, reflections arise on the need to change healthy eating habits, especially through the introduction of agroecological foods. Poulain (2013) highlights cultural resistance to food as potential horizons for expanding consumption and creating sustainable markets, beneficial to producers and consumers.

Lines of theoretical debate (agroecology, family farming, and alternative agro-food production networks) have been strengthened, especially in recent decades, both in Brazil and in Europe, in this perspective, which has expanded the debate on food and alternative food networks (short chains). It is an interdisciplinary field of debate that includes several analytical categories: family farming; rural development; agroecology; food security; health, local economies, territory, and innovation and technology.

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<sup>1</sup> Food Acquisition Program (“PAA”) is a Brazilian government program to promote access to food and encourage family farming (BRASIL, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (“PRONAF”) is a public rural financing program that aims to stimulate income generation and improve the use of family labor, through the financing of agricultural and non-agricultural activities and rural services developed in rural establishments or in nearby community areas (MALDANER, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> The Crop Plan (“Plano Safra”) is about the allocation, by the Brazilian government, of public funds for investment or for funding, industrialization and commercialization of agricultural products. This is the biggest financial incentive for the area in the national context (SERVO, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> National School Feeding Program (“PNAE”) offers school meals and food and nutrition education actions to students in all stages of public basic Education (BRASIL, 2023).

The adopted concept of short agrifood chains is one in which foods are directly identified and attributed to a producer, seeking to reduce to a minimum, or ideally eliminate, the number of intermediaries between the producer/farmer and the consumer. In this context, the environment of short agrifood chains promotes a reorganization of relations between the consumer and producer, facilitating the exchange of knowledge about forms of production and establishing relationships of trust (BALESTRO, 2017).

The short chains showed dynamics in market relations that are established in the link between producers and consumers, in the Brazilian case, especially in the context of Brazilian family farming. Renting, Marsden, and Banks (2017) classify agrifood short chains into three types, according to the proximity between consumer and producer: (i) the "face-to-face" type, especially through farmers' fairs, tents, roadside sales, ready-made baskets, pick and pay, orders, and e-commerce; (ii) close in scope, that is, the possibilities of commercialization are expanded from more complex institutional arrangements through cooperation between producers and their organizations; (iii) with an extended reach, through certification seals, production codes, and reputation effects, which generally occur from regional specialties, such as wines and cheeses.

The adoption of the agroecological production and commercialization strategy in short chains greatly favors family farming, insofar as several symmetry relationships between family farming, short chain production, and the principles of agroecological production can be identified (ROVER; DAROLT, 2021). Agroecological production is based on diversified production, proper soil management, protection of water resources and the environment, resulting in the supply of healthy and nutritious food, fair prices, exchange of knowledge, and greater proximity between producer and consumer (BONILLA, 1992; ALTIERI, 2000; BALESTRO, 2017).

According to Rover and Darolt (2021), these new production and commercialization relationships in short chains arise due to new dynamics and production circuits, especially those linked to agroecological and organic production. These new models can result in vigorous processes that help in the formation of a more positive scenario for sustainable development in environmental and socioeconomic terms.

### 3 Methodological procedures

The approximation with reality mediated through the adequate methodology, its representations in confrontation with the theoretical data, allows an adequate apprehension of the scenario under study. The analysis is improved with the rationality developed in a systematic, methodical and critical way (KÖCHE, 2015) and the adoption of research methods and instruments, thus understood as the mediating paths that allow the deepening of the research questions (DESLANDES; GOMES; MINAYO, 2015). The approach proposed by Marconi and Lakatos (2018) is adopted, which emphasizes the relevance of the initial research hypothesis for the development of the work.

Thus, the following general research problem was adopted: "How do the dynamics of commercialization in SFSCs of agroecological production occur in the municipality of Chapecó?" And the following secondary (specific) research questions

were adopted, resulting from the general question: "How did this process contribute to the strengthening of family farming in Chapecó?"; "What are the reasons for adopting this habit of sustainable consumption based on consumer perceptions?"

The general objective of this study is "to analyze the dynamics of commercialization of agroecological production in the municipality of Chapecó," and the two specific objectives are: (a) to understand how this process contributes to the strengthening of these families in the social, environmental, and economic spheres; (b) understand the reasons for this sustainable consumption based on consumer perceptions.

The municipality of Chapecó (SC) was intentionally selected for investigation, as the location is known to have the presence of family farmers with agroecological certification and with long experience in commercialization processes (social capital), with conditions to respond to the intended objectives of our research. This time, it proposes to establish a dialogue with producers and consumers of local agroecological products.

This study has a predominantly qualitative character, with the secondary use of quantitative techniques by consulting the statistical database, to better understand the reality studied. The qualitative approach gives special emphasis to the subjective senses and meanings of people and groups in the face of social problems and issues analyzed within the scope of the study (CRESWELL, 2010).

As stated by Vieira (2004), the qualitative method provides the researcher with a greater margin of flexibility to adapt the theoretical structure to the investigation of the phenomenon in question.

The process of conducting research using the qualitative method is similar to the handmade creation of a quilt, where information is carefully joined and intertwined to form a detailed and systematized analysis pattern, with meticulous attention to details. From this perspective, the qualitative method proves to be a skillful tool for building a critical social perspective (SCHWANDT, 2006; DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2010).

The adoption of the qualitative approach as predominant in research is justified by the characteristics of the study, taking into account the data collection environment, the descriptive analysis (data collection/display of results), the selection of the inductive method for data analysis, and the primacy of understanding reality from the subjective apprehension of the research subjects (GODOY, 1995).

Entry into the field of research is qualified, especially relevant for qualitative research, or it is in this phase that contact with data and research subjects is more intense (FLICK, 2009). In the present study, semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection instrument.

The most common strategy for collecting information on a scientific topic during fieldwork is the interview. In this study, we chose to use an in-depth interview approach, where participants are encouraged to freely express their opinions and ideas about the topic, while the researcher asks questions to deepen reflection (MINAYO, 2011).

In a qualitative study, the definition of the sample is essential, as the research subjects are chosen according to their ability to provide information, so that the number of sources is not as relevant as the quality of the data to be obtained, thus,

the number of interviewees was being defined along the research path and according to the saturation of information.

Survey participants were carefully selected from two distinct groups: (i) Family farmers who owned rural establishments with agroecological certification; (ii) Consumers residing in Chapecó who attend agroecological product fairs or purchase these products through social networks, cell phone applications, or delivery.

This selection approach allowed directing the research to individuals capable of significantly contributing with relevant information, enriching the understanding of the topic under study. In the second half of 2022, a total of six family groups were interviewed for this survey.

According to data provided by the Association of Agroecological Producers of Chapecó, only eight families had agroecological production certification in that period. In addition, an interview was conducted with five consumers of agroecological production in the municipality. The sample was intentionally obtained from the fair of agroecological products in the municipality, and data collection took place between July and September 2023.

With respect to the ethical parameters of the research, each interviewee was duly informed of the research procedures, and the "Term of Free and Informed Consent" (standard form for obtaining and using personal data obtained in interviews for scientific research) was read in their presence. The interviews were recorded for later transcription into text and systematic analysis of the information.

Data analysis processing was carried out through thematic content analysis, as asserted by Bardin (2016), in three phases: (i) approximation and pre-analysis; (ii) exploration, selection, and analysis of the materials obtained; (iii) systematic treatment of results and articulation of information with other previous studies and analyzed theories.

#### **4 Results analysis and discussion**

Family farmers involved in food production and marketing through the short food supply circuits in Chapecó generally have production units with an average area of 15 hectares (ha), which is equivalent to approximately 37.07 acres. These properties range from 1.2 hectares (2.97 acres) to 48 hectares (118.61 acres). When disregarding the properties with a larger area, the average area per productive unit is only 8.5 hectares (approximately 20.98 acres), which characterizes these properties as small or very small.

As for the link with the rural area, most of the families mentioned having lived on the properties for many decades, with the exception of the family in Interview n° 04, which stated that they had lived on the property for only 12 years. The families in Interviews 01, 02, and 03 reported having lived on their properties for over 60 years, having inherited them from their parents and grandparents.

Regarding the number of people involved in agricultural production among all the families interviewed, 17 people were registered, ranging from two to four people per property. As for the age group of the producers, it was found that 41.2% of the participants were over 60 years old, 5.8% were aged between 51 and 60 years old, 11.8% aged between 41 and 50 years old, 5.8% between 31 and 40 years old, and 35.3% up to 30 years old (or less).



The average time of activity of dedication of families to agroecology is 14 years, highlighting the case of the interviewee (Interview n° 05), who declared to have been in agroecological production for more than 30 years, and the interviewee (Interview n° 04) who declared to produce thinking about the quality of life and products.

In Interview n° 02, it was reported that the insertion of the family group in agroecological production took place through learning and that there was the option for agroecological production, since the 2000s, due to the quality that it provides to food, the absence of pesticides.

In the interviews (n° 05 and 06), it was reported that the differential (agroecological production) facilitated the permanence in the market, with the interviewees informing that in the usual production area there is a lot of competition (Interview n° 05) and that with agroecological production there is a good financial return, capable of generating a considerable working capital (Interview n° 06).

It was possible to notice a great diversity of crops and agroecological products produced by the interviewees (greens, vegetables, fruits, seeds, and teas), as shown in the results obtained by Menezes *et al.* (2020), which reveal the incorporation of a wide range of products into agroecological marketing, previously limited to the female economy of rural establishments.

It is important to note that out of the six families interviewed, only four have public authorization for the production and/or processing of jellies, teas, juices, peeled cassava, among other products. Some difficulties were also evidenced by the producers, such as the lack of labor for agrifood production (Interview n° 01), possibly due to the rural exodus, usually leaving only one couple remaining per property (RENK; DORIGON 2014).

In Interview n° 05, it was emphasized that agroecological production does not rely on a ready-made scientific formula, but rather requires acquiring knowledge, experience, and dedication. The climate was mentioned as another relevant aspect (Interview n° 06), in which the lack of control over the climate results in difficulties in achieving significant production.

During Interview n° 02, they mentioned the difficulty in obtaining technical guidance and the absence of government incentives for this specific type of production. It was noted that there was once a specific government incentive for agroecology (PRONAF), but it is no longer available, and everything now seems very bureaucratic.

As for the financing of activities, out of the six interviewed families, only three accessed financing through the traditional public program (PRONAF) and not through specific credit lines for agroecology. Public financing lines, as in the case of PRONAF Agroecology, have limited financing and scope, do not reach all producers, there is great difficulty in accessing credit lines (bureaucracy and complexity), there is no equitable distribution of resources (large and small producers), and the State does not provide technical assistance to producers (VON DER WEID, 2006; FOSSÁ *et al.*, 2023; GRISA, 2012; CMAP, 2020).

The other families were organizing themselves and developing the activity without the need for greater dependence on public funding, taking, for example, the family (Interview n° 01) which stated that it took public funding and is still paying for

it, having built a greenhouse on the property, but that they prefer to develop the activity more slowly, without depending on funding (loans).

As for commercialization, the interviewees emphasized that it takes place at the local level, through the use of negotiation strategies in short chains (face-to-face), emphasizing that the commercialization channels are local fairs (municipal fair and at the local university), home delivery, public purchase of food intended for school children's feeding (PNAE), in local commerce (supermarkets/specialized stores), and direct sale in rural establishments. Two families of farmers carry out the promotion, commercialization, and delivery of products through new media (internet/social networks/Instagram/Whatsapp).

As for the challenges and opportunities of commercializing agroecological products, the good production capacity and the need for continuous efforts on the part of the producers to guarantee the quality of the product were evident (Interview n° 01). In Interview n° 02, the interviewee emphasizes the ease of selling agroecology products, but the considerable difficulty in producing them (lack of labor), and in Interview n° 05, the producer emphasizes that the low price is a fundamental factor in the sale of products since, in his opinion, there would still not be a habit of consuming agroecological products in the locality.

Jomalinis and Maluf (2022) recognize that the social systems associated with food and nutrition constitute complex interrelated networks among their components, evolving with contradictions, conflicts, and imbalances in the economic, social, and political dynamics.

The relationship of proximity and trust between consumers and producers is one of the fundamental characteristics of short chains, as highlighted by Zimmermann *et al.* (2022). The interviewee (Interview No. 01) stated that, despite his shyness, he really enjoys being at the fair and interacting with consumers. The interviewee (Interview n° 04) emphasizes the relationship of trust that is built between producer and consumer, expressing an interest in opening his property for visitation, with another interviewee (Interview n° 03) stating that he has a very close relationship with the consumer (friendship).

From now on, the information obtained from interviews with consumers will be made explicit. Five consumers were interviewed who were shopping at the municipal fair for agroecological products in Chapecó (SC/Brazil), who were, on average, 54 years old, aged between 39 and 67 years old (minimum/maximum), and all of them declared to have completed higher education (schooling) and income greater than five monthly national minimum wages.

Asked about the average preference time and regular consumption of agroecological products, the average period of ten years was obtained for all consumers, and as for the preferred place for purchase, all reported purchasing the products at the local fair or from fairs, through deliveries and orders made using smartphones (social networks/apps/internet).

As for consumers' motivation for purchasing agroecological products, the interviewees highlighted the quality and good appearance of the food, the fact that production takes place without the use of pesticides or transgenics, the adoption of healthy consumption habits, and a healthier diet (Interviews n° 07, 08, 09, and 10).

As for the diversity of products consumed, there is a relationship between the purchase of a certain variety of products according to individuals and families, with

all consumers informed that they prefer to consume legumes and vegetables. Although a wide variety of products is available, consumers reported the lack of availability of some products (greater variety of fruits, country chicken, green corn, sprouts, colonial melon, and homemade cookies).

#### 4 Conclusions

This research addresses a topic of significant public and social interest by analyzing the marketing dynamics in short chains of agroecological and family production in the municipality of Chapecó. Although this production modality has gained considerable attention from the public in recent times, it is still limited and faces numerous challenges.

Short production chains play a crucial role in food supply, enabling family farming to enhance the commercialization of its produce through local channels. In the city of Chapecó, agroecological marketing through short chains primarily occurs at municipal fairs, university fairs, specialized stores, and innovative initiatives by local producers who sell online.

The interviewed farmers point out that the main challenges of agroecological production are associated with negative factors affecting production, such as labor shortages, marketing difficulties, and the need to increase the price of products. A fundamental element is linked to the existing demand for food produced in an agroecological way, as all the producing families interviewed considered that the demand for these products is greater than the supply. This scenario can be the beginning of a structural rearrangement, through which more families in the municipality of Chapecó can be included in this modality of agro-family production.

Short-chain marketing strategies can enhance this dynamic as they are developed, especially in the use of strategies to bring producers and consumers closer together. The strengthening of local markets can mean, on the one hand, the generation of more work and income for rural producers and, on the other, access to healthier and quality food for consumers.

It is important that the dynamics of agroecological commercialization enter the public agenda, as public agents, civil society organizations, and consumers need to articulate around this process to strengthen existing actions and initiatives. However, exactly the opposite is observed: a small number of producing families and the absence of incentives from municipal and state governments. And, as a cause of these problems, the weaknesses in the organization of social movements and civil society organizations that stimulate local agroecological production can be cited.

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