

Municipal governance and family farming: innovative practices for local development in Taciba-SP

Governança municipal e agricultura familiar: práticas inovadoras para o desenvolvimento local em Taciba-SP

Gobernanza municipal y agricultura familiar: prácticas innovadoras para el desarrollo local en Taciba-SP

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ABSTRACT

Goal: This article aims to analyze the practices of municipal governance in maintaining family farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP, in the context of Covid-19 that began in 2020. **Methodology/approach:** The methodology is based on basic bibliographic and documentary research; the study was descriptive and analytical with a qualitative approach; the method was deductive. The basis for data collection was guided by the search for information from the departments of the Municipality of Taciba-SP in the period from 2017 to 2020 (beginning of the pandemic). **Main findings:** The study revealed that municipal public governance adopted a new relationship with society, through the maintenance of family farmers in the countryside, especially during the pandemic period, thus indicating that the municipal public authority of Taciba obtained strong, decentralized and participatory public governance with the local community as it approached family farmers, their desires and their needs. **Theoretical contributions:** The study broadens the understanding of how to put into practice the theoretical bases of public governance, decentralization and social participation, permeated by the reference that development should be based on the paraeconomic paradigm, overcoming the hegemonic economic logic in the construction of public policies. **Management contributions:** The research demonstrates that local public administration that adopts a decentralized and participatory management model consolidates a more inclusive public governance, capable of meeting society's demands more efficiently in times of crisis.

Keywords: Family farmer. Municipal government. Public policies. Society.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar as práticas da governança municipal na manutenção da agricultura familiar no Município de Taciba-SP, no contexto da Covid-19 que teve início em 2020. **Metodologia/abordagem:** A metodologia está alicerçada na pesquisa básica bibliográfica e documental, o estudo foi descritivo e analítico de abordagem qualitativa, o método foi o dedutivo. A base da coleta de dados foi guiada pela busca das informações junto os departamentos do Município de Taciba-SP no período de 2017 a 2020 (início da pandemia). **Principais resultados:** O estudo revelou que a governança pública municipal adotou uma nova relação com a sociedade, por meio da manutenção do agricultor familiar no campo, em especial no período pandêmico, apontando, dessa forma, que o poder público municipal de Taciba obteve uma governança pública forte, descentralizada e participativa com a comunidade local na medida em que se aproximou dos agricultores familiares, dos seus anseios e das suas necessidades. **Contribuições teóricas:** O estudo amplia a compreensão de se colocar em prática as bases teóricas da governança pública, a descentralização e a participação social, permeado pelo referencial de que o desenvolvimento deve se pautar no paradigma paraeconômico, superando a lógica econômica hegemônica na construção de políticas públicas. **Contribuições da gestão:** A pesquisa demonstra que a administração pública local que adota um modelo de gestão descentralizada e participativa, consolida uma governança pública mais inclusiva, capaz de atender de forma mais eficiente às demandas da sociedade em tempos de crise.

Palavras-chave: Agricultor familiar. Poder público municipal. Políticas públicas. Sociedade.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las prácticas de gobernanza municipal en el mantenimiento de la agricultura familiar en el Municipio de Taciba-SP, en el contexto de Covid-19 iniciado en 2020. **Metodología/enfoque:** La metodología se basa en investigación bibliográfica y documental básica, el estudio fue descriptivo y analítico con enfoque cualitativo, el método fue deductivo. La base para la recolección de datos fue guiada por la búsqueda de informaciones en los departamentos del Municipio de Taciba-SP en el período de 2017 a 2020 (inicio de la pandemia). **Principales resultados:** El estudio reveló que la gobernanza pública municipal adoptó una nueva relación con la sociedad, a través del mantenimiento de los agricultores familiares en el campo, especialmente durante el período de pandemia, indicando así que el poder público municipal de Taciba obtuvo una gobernanza pública fuerte, descentralizada y participativa. sector con la comunidad local en la medida que se acercó a los agricultores familiares, a sus deseos y necesidades. **Aportes teóricos:** El estudio amplía la comprensión de poner en práctica las bases teóricas de la gobernanza pública, la descentralización y la participación social, permeadas por la referencia de que el desarrollo debe basarse en el paradigma paraeconómico, superando la lógica económica hegemónica en la construcción de políticas públicas. **Aportes a la gestión:** La investigación demuestra que la administración pública local que adopta un modelo de gestión descentralizado y participativo, consolida una gobernanza pública más inclusiva, capaz de atender de manera más eficiente las demandas de la sociedad en tiempos de crisis.

Palabras clave: Agricultor familiar. Poder público municipal. Políticas públicas. Sociedad.

■ INTRODUCTION

Family farming occupies a strategic position in Brazilian rural development, not only because of its contribution to food production but also because of its role in generating employment and income, enabling families to remain in rural areas, and fostering local economies. According to Abramovay (1998), family farming constitutes a social and economic category whose reproduction depends on public policies that promote access to credit, technical assistance, institutional markets, and quality public services. From a similar perspective, Görgen (2004) highlights that peasant agriculture faces challenges arising from economic transformations and agricultural modernization, making State action essential to the development of public policies that strengthen production, social organization, and the continued presence of families in rural areas.

In recent decades, this understanding has been broadened by studies that recognize family farming as a central element of sustainable territorial development. Schneider (2016) emphasizes that strengthening family farming depends on the integration of public policies, innovation, social organization, and the recognition of territorial specificities. Similarly, FAO (2019) stresses that the development of family farming requires coordinated policies that promote food security, local markets, environmental sustainability, and productive inclusion. In this context, the effectiveness of these policies depends not only on their formulation at the federal or state level, but also on the capacity of local governments to coordinate different institutions, instruments, and social actors in implementation of public actions.

In recent decades, the literature on public governance has also evolved significantly. The concept has moved beyond an exclusive focus on the State as the formulator and implementer of public policies to encompass management models based on cooperation among government, civil society, and the private sector, with emphasis on participatory processes, interinstitutional coordination, shared responsibilities, and collective decision-making (Diniz, 1997; Ckagazaroff et al., 2008). Internationally, collaborative governance has become established as an important approach for understanding joint action among different actors in addressing complex public problems, particularly in territorial and local development policies (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Pierre & Peters, 2000).

In the Brazilian context, the political-administrative decentralization promoted by the 1988 Federal Constitution expanded municipal responsibilities for implementing public policies and strengthened mechanisms for social participation, giving local governments a more prominent role in coordinating actions aimed at territorial development. However, as Arretche (1999) points out, decentralization alone does not guarantee greater effectiveness of public policies; institutional capacity is required to integrate different government sectors and promote the participation of local actors. From this perspective, public governance constitutes a fundamental element in transforming administrative competencies into tangible outcomes for society.

In the field of family farming, the literature has primarily emphasized the evolution of national public policies, such as the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF), the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), and technical assistance and rural extension initiatives, highlighting their importance for strengthening production, food security, and rural development (Sabourin et al., 2014; Schneider, 2016; FAO, 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, several studies also analyzed the impacts of the health crisis on family farmers, highlighting the challenges they faced in marketing their production, maintaining income, and sustaining short food supply chains (Futemma et al., 2021; Breitenbach, 2021; Grisa & Niederle, 2020; Cassol, Vargas & Canever, 2020).

Despite these advances, most research has focused on evaluating federal programs, sectoral policies, or analyses conducted at the national and state levels. Municipal experiences that demonstrate how local public governance coordinates different policies, institutions, and participatory mechanisms to address the specific needs of family farming, particularly in times of crisis, remain relatively underexplored. Thus, rather than analyzing public policies in isolation, it is important to understand the institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms, and forms of participation that enable their implementation at the local level.

It is within this context that the Municipality of Taciba, located in the Pontal do Paranapanema region of the State of São Paulo, is situated. Between 2017 and 2020, the municipality developed an integrated set of public policies aimed at strengthening family farming, combining federal and state programs with its own initiatives, which were intensified at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This provides a relevant case for analyzing how public governance mechanisms — based on institutional coordination, administrative decentralization, and social participation — can contribute to enhancing the capacity of public authorities to respond to situations of high social and economic vulnerability.

Against this background, this study addresses the following research question: What role did municipal public governance play in coordinating public policies aimed at sustaining family farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP between 2017 and 2020, including the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic? Accordingly, this article aims to analyze how the public governance mechanisms adopted by the municipal government contributed to the integrated implementation of public policies designed to strengthen family farming, discussing this experience in light of the literature on public governance, decentralization, and territorial development.

Although the literature on family farming has advanced significantly since the seminal studies by Abramovay (1998) and Görgen (2004), which consolidated the understanding of family farming as a structural pillar of Brazilian rural development, most research has focused on analyzing public policies at the national or state level. Municipal experiences that demonstrate how local public governance coordinates different policies, institutions, and participatory mechanisms to address the specific needs of family farming, particularly in times of crisis, remain relatively underexplored. Thus, rather than analyzing public policies in isolation, it is important to understand the institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms, and forms of participation that enable their implementation at the local level.

By focusing on the municipal level, this research broadens the understanding how public governance is implemented in local contexts, providing empirical evidence on the institutional mechanisms that connect the State and society in the development of public policies aimed at rural development and thereby helping to address a gap that remains relatively underexplored in the Brazilian literature.

■ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Public Governance, Decentralization, and Public Policies

The concept of public governance has undergone significant transformation in recent decades. Initially associated with the State's capacity to govern, make decisions, and implement public policies, the concept has come to encompass broader dimensions related to coordination among different actors, social participation, the decentralization of decision-making, and the development of institutional arrangements capable of addressing complex public problems. In this sense, governance is not limited to isolated State action but involves coordination among the State, civil society, public institutions, economic actors, and social groups directly affected by public policies.

In the field of public administration, Diniz (1997) contributes to the understanding of governance as the State's capacity to formulate, coordinate, and implement policies, taking into account both institutional resources and the political conditions required for their effective implementation. This perspective makes it possible to analyze public governance beyond the formal existence of programs and regulations by considering the actual capacity for coordination between government and society. Thus, governance involves not only decision-making but also the coordination and mediation of interests, resource mobilization, and the implementation of public actions.

Ckagazarooff et al. (2008) further develop this discussion by relating governance, planning, and local development and by highlighting three central dimensions: command, coordination, and implementation. Command refers to public authorities' capacity, for leadership and articulation in conducting policies; coordination concerns the integration of different demands, sectors, and actors; and implementation corresponds to the mobilization of the technical, financial, political, and institutional resources required to carry out these actions. These dimensions are particularly relevant to studies at the municipal level because they make it possible to examine how local governments organize their institutional capacities to respond to the needs of the population.

In Brazil, the debate on public governance is directly related to the process of political-administrative decentralization that intensified following the adoption of the 1988 Federal Constitution. The expansion of municipal responsibilities strengthened the role of local governments in implementing public policies, particularly in the social, territorial, and development spheres. However, Arretche (1999) emphasizes that decentralization alone does not guarantee greater democratization or greater effectiveness of public policies. To produce tangible results, decentralization must be accompanied by institutional capacity, intergovernmental coordination, financial resources, and social participation.

Thus, decentralization should be understood as an important but insufficient condition for strengthening public governance. The transfer of responsibilities to municipalities requires administrative capacity, planning, coordination with local actors, and mechanisms for monitoring actions. In this sense, municipal public governance plays a strategic role because social demands are expressed most concretely at the local level, where public policies must also be adapted to specific economic, social, cultural, and environmental conditions.

De Sant'Anna, Neto and Marchi (2020) reinforce this perspective by relating public governance, social activation, and local development. According to the authors, local development depends on the capacity of social and institutional actors to engage in collective action, mobilize resources, and formulate public choices oriented toward the collective interest. Public governance thus becomes an expression of the territory, as it results from the relationships established among public authorities, civil society, and other actors involved in the production of social life.

At the international level, research on public governance evolved from criticism of centralized and hierarchical models of State administration. The emergence of complex public problems, such as territorial inequalities, food insecurity, and environmental and health crises, has required more integrated and collaborative forms of management. In this context, governance has come to be understood as a process of coordination among different levels of government, institutions, and social actors and is particularly relevant to public policies that require territorially based action and local participation.

In Brazil, this discussion takes on particular characteristics because of regional inequalities, territorial diversity, and the importance of municipalities in implementing public policies. The Brazilian literature has demonstrated that the effectiveness of public actions depends on the capacity of local governments to coordinate federal and state programs with their own initiatives and adapt them to local realities. Thus, municipalities are no longer merely implementers of policies formulated at other levels but instead become agents of coordination, mediation, and the promotion of local development.

Public Governance and Family Farming

Family farming occupies a strategic position in Brazilian rural development, not only because of its productive relevance but also because of its social, environmental, and territorial contributions. Schneider (2016) emphasizes that the continuity of family farming depends on conditions that extend beyond the economic dimension and encompass social, cultural, symbolic, and institutional aspects. This means that the ability of family farmers to remain in rural areas is associated with the existence of public policies that ensure access to land, credit, technical assistance, institutional markets, infrastructure, and adequate conditions for social reproduction.

The studies by Abramovay (1998) represent a milestone in the understanding of Brazilian family farming by demonstrating that its social reproduction depends on permanent public policies and public services that support rural development. From a complementary perspective, Görgen (2004) emphasizes that strengthening peasant agriculture requires State actions that integrate production, social organization, and territorial development. These contributions provided the foundation for subsequent research, such as Schneider (2016), which broadened the understanding of family farming

beyond the productive dimension by incorporating territorial, institutional, and governance-related aspects.

In this sense, family farming should be understood as a social and productive category that requires integrated public policies. Programs such as the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF), the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER) initiatives, and regulatory and productive support instruments constitute important mechanisms for strengthening the sector. However, the effectiveness of these policies depends on how they are implemented within the territory, particularly on the capacity of local governments to coordinate farmers, municipal councils, technical agencies, and available resources.

FAO (2019) emphasizes that strengthening family farming requires public policies that go beyond access to credit by incorporating the development of local markets, support for short food supply chains, the promotion of sustainable production, and the assurance of food security. This approach is directly aligned with the perspective of public governance, as it presupposes coordination among different policies and the participation of the actors involved.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the vulnerability of family farming became even more evident. Studies such as those by Fudemma et al. (2021), Breitenbach (2021), Grisa and Niederle (2020), and Cassol, Vargas and Canever (2020) demonstrated that family farmers faced difficulties in marketing their products, disruptions to sales channels, reduced demand, and food insecurity. At the same time, these studies indicated that local experiences involving the reorganization of production, the strengthening of short food supply chains, and the maintenance of institutional procurement were important in mitigating the impacts of the crisis.

In this context, municipal public governance plays a decisive role. In times of crisis, such as the pandemic, the responsiveness of local public authorities depends on the articulation of planning, social participation, institutional coordination, and the implementation of emergency measures. Because family farming is strongly embedded in the territory, it requires public policies tailored to local conditions and developed with the participation of farmers and their representative organizations.

Although the literature on family farming has advanced in its analysis of national and state programs, further research is still needed to examine how municipalities operationalize these policies in the day-to-day practice of public administration. The municipal level makes it possible to observe concrete governance mechanisms: how programs are coordinated, how councils participate in decision-making, how resources are mobilized, how farmers' demands are incorporated, and how policies contribute to enabling families to remain in rural areas.

Thus, the relationship among public governance, decentralization, public policies, and family farming can be understood through three main dimensions. The first concerns the municipal government's command capacity, that is, its ability to lead processes and define public priorities. The second concerns coordination among different policies, programs, departments, councils, and family farmers. The third concerns implementation, understood as the capacity to translate decisions into concrete actions through resources, technical instruments, and social participation.

Based on this theoretical framework, the analysis of municipal governance directed toward family farming should consider not only the

existence of public programs but also how these programs are coordinated within the territory. Accordingly, the study of the municipal experience makes it possible to understand how decentralization can be translated into effective governance practice, provided that it is accompanied by social participation, institutional capacity, and the coordination of public policies aimed at local development.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Data Collection Instruments

This research is characterized as a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical study based on bibliographic and documentary research. The qualitative approach is justified by the need to understand the mechanisms of municipal public governance related to the formulation, coordination, and implementation of public policies aimed at family farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP. The study did not seek to measure direct causal impacts but rather to analyze, based on official documents and specialized literature, how the municipal government coordinated actions, programs, and institutional instruments designed to strengthen family farming during the period under investigation.

The methodological strategy adopted was a documentary case study, with the Municipality of Taciba-SP as the unit of analysis. This focus was chosen because of the existence of a set of municipal, state, and federal public policies implemented at the local level between 2017 and 2020, including actions developed at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The case study made it possible to examine in depth the relationship among public governance, administrative decentralization, social participation, and the implementation of public policies targeting family farmers.

Bibliographic research was used to develop the theoretical framework on public governance, decentralization, local development, public policies, and family farming. National and international authors addressing State capacity, governance arrangements, social participation, institutional coordination, and the implementation of public policies at the local level were considered. This stage made it possible to define the analytical categories used to interpret the documents: command, coordination, and implementation, in accordance with the theoretical framework proposed by Diniz (1997) and Ckagnazaroff et al. (2008).

The documentary research was based on official documents, secondary data, and administrative records related to the Municipality of Taciba-SP and public policies aimed at family farming. Municipal, state, and federal institutional sources were consulted, including municipal laws, the Budget Guidelines Law (LDO), the Annual Budget Law (LOA), the Multi-Year Plan (PPA), minutes of municipal council meetings, data from the Census Survey of Agricultural Production Units of the State of São Paulo (LUPA), information from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), documents from the Casa da Agricultura, records from the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), and information on programs and instruments such as PRONAF, FEAP/BANAGRO, the National Registry of Family Farming (CAF), the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR), the Declaration of Compliance of Ag-

gricultural Activities (DCAA), the Melhor Caminho Program, and the Municipal Agricultural Machinery Patrol.

The period analyzed covers the years from 2017 to 2020. This time frame was defined because it corresponds to the municipal administration that began in 2017 and ended in 2020, making it possible to examine the organization of public actions aimed at family farming over the course of a complete administrative term. The year 2020 was retained within the time frame because it marked the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when specific institutional responses targeting family farmers were observed, particularly through the municipal project “Family Farming Cannot Stop During the Pandemic” and the continuation of institutional procurement under the PNAE.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were adopted for document selection. Official documents directly related to family farming, municipal public administration, public budgeting, productive support programs, school feeding, technical assistance, rural extension, and actions implemented between 2017 and 2020 were included. Documents containing official statistical data on agrarian structure, agricultural production units, rural population, agricultural production, and rural public policies were also included. Documents with no direct relationship to the research object, records without institutional identification, information without a defined date or authorship, opinion-based or promotional materials, and documents unrelated to the period analyzed were excluded.

The documentary data were organized into analytical matrices based on three main dimensions: (a) characterization of family farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP; (b) identification of the public policies and programs implemented or operationalized between 2017 and 2020; and (c) analysis of the public governance mechanisms involved in coordination among the municipal government, councils, technical agencies, and family farmers. This systematization made it possible to distinguish contextual data, such as the number of Agricultural Production Units and the area they occupied, from institutional evidence related to the coordination and implementation of public policies.

The analytical method adopted was qualitative documentary analysis, guided by analytical categories previously defined on the basis of the theoretical framework. Documentary analysis made it possible to examine the content of the documents and identify recurring patterns, institutional relationships, forms of coordination, and evidence of public policy implementation. The categories used were: command, understood as the municipal government’s capacity for leadership and priority setting; coordination, understood as the articulation among administrative sectors, municipal councils, technical agencies, and family farmers; and implementation, defined as the capacity to mobilize financial, technical, institutional, and human resources to implement public policies.

The analysis was conducted in five stages. In the first stage, a bibliographic review was conducted on public governance, decentralization, public policies, local development, and family farming. In the second stage, documentary sources related to the Municipality of Taciba-SP and rural public policies were identified and selected. In the third stage, the documents were classified according to their nature: regulatory, budgetary, administrative, statistical, and programmatic. In the fourth stage, the data were organized into analytical matrices, allowing comparisons among programs, actions, and

management instruments. In the fifth stage, the data were interpreted in light of the categories of command, coordination, and implementation, with the aim of understanding how municipal public governance was manifested in the conduct of policies aimed at family farming.

Thus, the methodology adopted made it possible to analyze the municipal experience without reducing the study to a description of government actions. Rather, the study sought to understand how the documents provide evidence of public governance mechanisms, institutional coordination, and the capacity to implement public policies at the local level. It should be emphasized, however, that because this is a qualitative and documentary study, the results do not allow direct causality to be inferred between municipal actions and all indicators of the continued presence of family farming in rural areas; nevertheless, they make it possible to interpret how public management instruments and social participation contributed to organizing institutional responses during the period analyzed.

Study Area

The Municipality of Taciba is located in the inner of the State of São Paulo, with a total area of 607.267 km². It belongs to the intermediate and immediate geographic regions of Presidente Prudente-SP and is one of the 32 municipalities that comprise Pontal do Paranapanema (Figure 1). Its inhabitants are known as tacibenses. According to the latest Census, conducted in 2022, the population reached 6,260 inhabitants, representing an increase of 9.56% compared with the 2010 Census, with a population density of 10.31 inhabitants per square kilometer, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2023).

Figure 1

Location of the Municipality of Taciba in the State of São Paulo.



Note. IBGE (2019).

The municipality borders the following municipalities: to the north, the Municipality of Regente Feijó; to the south, the Municipality of Porecatu (PR); to the east, the municipalities of Martinópolis and Nantes; and to the west, the municipalities of Anhumas and Narandiba. Located at an altitude of 394 meters, Taciba has the following geographic coordinates: Latitude: 22° 23' 13" South, Longitude: 51° 17' 7" West.

The municipality's economy is predominantly agricultural, particularly soybean, corn, peanut, coffee, pumpkin, and watermelon production, among other crops, as well as beef and dairy cattle farming. Although commerce/market is not its main economic activity, its notable development in recent years should also be acknowledged. The municipality had a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of R\$ 30,157.56 in 2020 and is classified by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as having a high Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI), at 0.723 (IBGE, 2023).

According to data from the Census Survey of Agricultural Production Units of the State of São Paulo (LUPA, 2009), in 2007, the Municipality of Taciba had 449 Agricultural Production Units (UPAs), of which 354 were family farming units and 95 belonged to medium and large rural landowners. In 2017, LUPA data for 2016 and 2017 (LUPA, 2019) show that family farming increased in terms of the number of production units and continued to represent the largest productive group: of the 513 UPAs, 406 belonged to family farming and 107 to medium and large rural properties.

These data reflect the Brazilian context, in which 77% of agricultural establishments in Brazil are classified as family farming establishments (IBGE, 2017). From 2007 to 2017, there was an increase of 52 UPAs associated with family farming, corresponding to a 14.7% increase in the number of production units in the Municipality of Taciba. However, when the increase in medium and large rural properties over the same period is examined, there was an increase of only 12 UPAs, corresponding to a 12.6% increase in the number of production units.

Thus, the data demonstrate that family farming accounts for the largest number of agricultural production units in the Municipality of Taciba, with this sector experiencing a 14.7% increase in agricultural production units between 2007 and 2017. In addition, the number of people living in rural areas increased by 1.7% between 2010 and 2018, with no rural exodus occurring (IBGE, 2023). Therefore, although the population of the Municipality of Taciba has been increasing, there was also a slight increase in the number of rural residents, with no migration from rural to urban areas, indicating that continued residence in rural areas is largely attributable to family farmers.

Public Management and Municipal Governance in Taciba-SP: Foundations for Local Government

The municipal government of Taciba-SP, drawing on the main components or dimensions of public governance — command, coordination, and implementation (Ckagnazaroff et al., 2008; Diniz, 1997) — began implementing public policies designed to address the demands and needs of family farmers in Taciba.

From the perspective of public governance, command is not restricted to the exclusive action of the State but is exercised jointly by public authorities and the different social actors involved in the formulation and

implementation of public policies. Within this arrangement, the municipal government assumes a leadership and institutional coordination role, promoting integration among public agencies, civil society organizations, and other actors interested in developing solutions to collective problems (Ckagnazaroff et al., 2008). According to Diniz (1997), the command dimension should be analyzed in terms of how the government exercises its leadership capacity in governance processes, as well as the degree of involvement of civil society and the private sector in the formulation, coordination, and implementation of public policies.

The coordination dimension refers to the State's capacity to integrate different government sectors, public policies, and social actors around common objectives. According to Diniz (1997), this capacity is manifested in the articulation of sectorial and territorial demands, seeking to reconcile different interests and promote intersectorial actions oriented toward the public interest. At the municipal level, coordination involves integration among different secretariats, councils, public institutions, and civil society organizations, allowing public policies to be planned and implemented in an integrated manner consistent with the needs of the territory. Thus, coordination capacity represents one of the main elements of public governance, as it fosters the development of collective solutions to complex problems and enhances the effectiveness of government actions.

The implementation dimension, in turn, corresponds to the State's capacity to translate decisions and guidelines into concrete actions. According to Ckagnazaroff et al. (2008), this capacity depends on mobilizing the technical, financial, institutional, and political resources required to implement public policies, as well as on the existence of qualified administrative structures and political conditions that ensure their continuity. Thus, implementation is not limited to the availability of material resources but also involves technical expertise, management capacity, institutional coordination, and political support, all of which are essential for public policies to achieve the expected results and effectively promote local development.

In this study, the dimensions of command, coordination, and implementation constitute the analytical categories used to interpret the role of the municipal government of Taciba-SP in conducting public policies aimed at family farming. These categories make it possible to examine not only the existence of government programs but also the institutional capacity of the local government to coordinate different actors, mobilize resources, and implement actions capable of responding to the demands of family farmers, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding the governance dimension from the perspective of implementation, because it is inherently political in nature, it requires a strategy for maintaining open channels between the representative system (political parties and the legislative branch) and civil society.

Public governance contributes to local development and becomes necessary because both governance and social participation are expressions of the territory that (re)produces life in society and from which emerge public choices capable of affecting the promotion of economic growth and local development (De Sant'Anna; Neto; Marchi, 2020).

Clearly, the mere existence of institutional mechanisms — decentralized and participatory management of public policies — does not mean that they are effectively fulfilling their role and contributing to the consoli-

dation of strong public governance that addresses the interests of different social actors.

Accordingly, it is important to demonstrate how public governance, through the municipal government of Taciba, made use of political-administrative decentralization and implemented public policies based on the needs of family farmers in order to achieve the development sought by this agricultural sector, which for a long time remained on the margins of society. Decentralization is understood as a process of transferring power from central to peripheral levels. It is not a new concept in the specialized literature and, specifically in the Brazilian context, emerged as a demand of social movements for the democratization and reform of the power structure (Arretche, 1999).

With the decentralization of power from the central government (Federal Government) to the federative entities (Federal District, member states, and municipalities), municipalities acquired autonomy to legislate and manage the financial resources they collect; in short, each has its own responsibilities, which, except in cases provided for by the Constitution itself, are not subject to interference by another federative entity. In the Municipality of Taciba, political, administrative, and financial autonomy can be observed through Complementary Law 12/2019 (2019), which provides for the Administrative Reorganization of the Municipality of Taciba, with this autonomy expressly established in Article 2 and its subsections.

It is important to note that political-administrative decentralization alone does not transform relations between the State and society in such a way as to enable public policies resulting from efforts to reconcile diverse and contradictory social demands. Rather, this transformation results from the political will of those who govern to seek joint solutions with civil society to address problems affecting the community and, furthermore, to enable local development in accordance with the needs and interests of different actors from a multidimensional perspective.

Although frequently associated, the concepts of decentralization, democratization, and social participation have distinct meanings. Decentralization refers to the redistribution of responsibilities and decision-making power among different levels of public administration; however, this process produces democratic advances only when it is combined with the effective participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation, and oversight of public policies. Thus, as Rofman (1990) emphasizes, decentralization acquires meaning as an instrument for strengthening public governance only when it fosters shared decision-making between the State and society.

Thus, decentralization, as a process defined dialectically in relation to centralization, provides the possibility of bringing decisions concerning public policies to the local level, closer to their intended beneficiaries (Martins et al, 2014).

The process of political-administrative decentralization and the municipalization of public policies made changes in the organization and functioning of local governments possible. However, these changes were incorporated in different ways according to the guidelines adopted and the degree of institutionalization of democratic management channels and instruments for redistributing the income and wealth generated in Brazilian municipalities.

In the Municipality of Taciba-SP, the research period was defined as 2017 to 2020 precisely because it encompasses the beginning and end of the term of the democratically elected mayor, who must govern in accordance with the Municipal Organic Law (2023). This period therefore makes it possible to examine the redefinition of proposed policy changes for the family farming sector, efforts to establish coordination with civil society, particularly family farmers, and the management approach adopted by the Municipal Secretariat of Agriculture.

Thus, to achieve the results of sustaining and strengthening family farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP, it is first necessary to examine the use of public governance elements in implementing and developing public policies that, in addition to addressing the needs of the largest productive group — the family farming sector — seek to increase municipal revenue so that, in turn, investments can be made to improve the quality of life of Taciba residents, as can be observed from the functional structure of the Municipal Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, and Environment and from data provided by official agencies on family farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP.

The *Budget Guidelines Law* (LDO) (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) establishes the rules for preparing the Annual Budget Law for the following year. The LDO also determines the overall balance between revenues and expenditures, establishes rules for public expenditure, authorizes increases in personnel expenditures, regulates the transfer of Federal Government funds to states, municipalities, and private entities, and indicates funding priorities for public banks.

The *Annual Budget Law* (LOA) (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) must estimate revenues and establish municipal government expenditures, with an annual period of validity; that is, it provides for the municipality's fiscal and investment budgets, since public policies cannot be implemented without budgetary appropriations. The law is always proposed by the head of the executive branch. It must be prepared in accordance with the Multi-Year Plan (PPA), established by Law No. 689 (2017), and with the LDO, and must include a statement demonstrating the compatibility of the budget programming.

In 2020, during the pandemic, the Municipality of Taciba identified the needs of the agricultural sector and authorized an additional appropriation in the public budget to enable investment in the sector beyond the amount originally provided for under Law No. 732 of May 6, 2020 (2020), for fiscal year 2020. Therefore, attentive to the difficulties faced by the agricultural sector, particularly family farming, the municipal government, in a joint decision with the Rural Development Council, implemented integrated actions to prevent producers from being directly affected by the impacts of the pandemic.

Analysis of Public Policy Programs Aimed at Family Farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP

LUPA data (2009) show that, in 2007, the Municipality of Taciba had 449 UPAs, of which 354 were family farming units and 95 belonged to medium and large rural landowners. According to LUPA data (2019) from the 2016/2017 survey, the Municipality of Taciba had 513 Agricultural Production Units (UPAs), of which 406 were classified as family farming units and 107 corresponded to medium and large rural properties. These data indicate that family farming

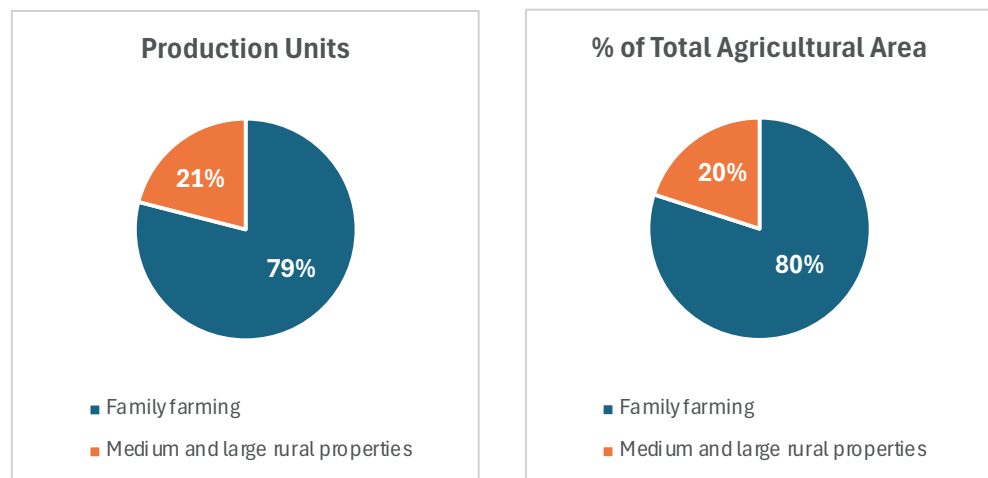
continued to account for the largest share of the municipality's production units, representing approximately 79% of the total, a proportion similar to that observed in the previous survey. Thus, the increase in the absolute number of UPAs should be interpreted in conjunction with other indicators related to the implementation of public policies and the dynamics of local agricultural activity.

In the Municipality of Taciba, 107 UPAs correspond to medium and large rural properties (non-family farming), equivalent to 21% of the agricultural production units, which account for a total of 48,800.30 hectares, or 80% of the total agricultural area. Family farming, in contrast, comprises 406 UPAs, representing 79% of the production units, but occupies an area of only 11,785.40 hectares. Family farming therefore represents the largest share of the municipality's production units; however, because these units are small-scale properties (up to four fiscal modules or 96 ha), they occupy a smaller area, equivalent to 20% of the total agricultural area (Figure 2).

Figure 2 presents the institutional structure currently in place in the municipality. Its purpose is to facilitate an understanding of the organization of the agencies involved in the management of family farming and is not used as a source for the analysis of the results, which is restricted to the period from 2017 to 2020.

Figure 2

Production Units in the Municipality of Taciba-SP, 2024.



Source: Prepared by the authors based on institutional documents from the Municipality of Taciba (consulted in 2024).

In this regard, the Municipality of Taciba reflects the Brazilian context, in which family farming continues to account for the largest share (77%) of the country's agricultural establishments. However, because these establishments are small-scale, they occupy a smaller area, totaling 80.89 million hectares, equivalent to 23% of the total agricultural area (Figure 3). Compared with large agricultural establishments, which are responsible for producing agricultural export commodities such as soybeans and corn, family farming accounts for a much smaller share of production value: only 23% of the national total (IBGE, 2019).

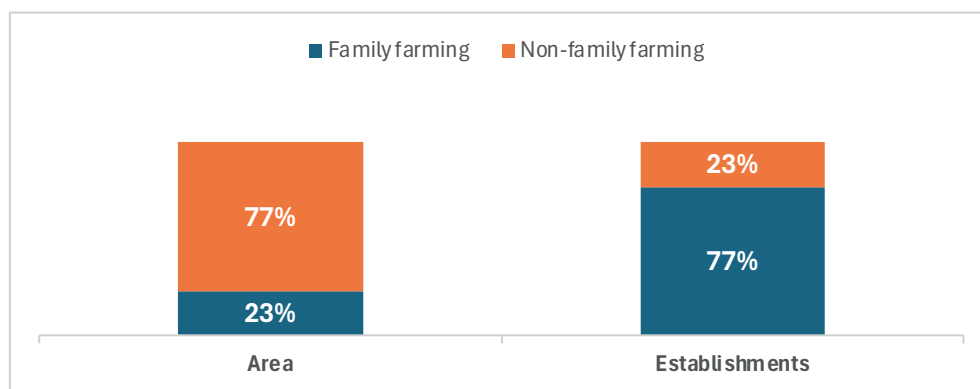
According to data from the most recent Agricultural Census of the State of São Paulo (IBGE, 2019) and the Census Survey of Agricultural Pro-

Municipal governance and family farming: innovative practices for local development in Taciba-SP

duction Units of the State of São Paulo (São Paulo, 2019), rural production in the Municipality of Taciba comprises a diversity of agricultural and forestry crops, as well as different types of livestock farming, involving a large number of rural producers who, in addition to generating income, contribute to the municipality's food security.

Figure 3

Proportion of Areas and Number of Family and Non-Family Farming Establishments.



Note. IBGE (2019).

In this regard, it is important to present an overview of agricultural and livestock production in the Municipality of Taciba-SP by comparing the years 2007 and 2017, making it possible to examine the development of family farming in food production, both within the municipality and throughout the Pontal do Paranapanema region, where the municipality is located. Thus, Table 1 shows an increase in production and in the number of farmers in the Municipality of Taciba-SP from 2007/2008 onward (LUPA, 2009; 2019).

Table 1

Agricultural Statistics, Municipality of Taciba-SP, LUPA 2007/2008 and 2016/2017.

Item	Agricultural Production Units (UPAs)		Total area (hectares)	
	2007/2008	2016/2017	2007/2008	2016/2017
Number of UPAs/Total area	449	513	54.775,20	60.585,7
Perennial crops	103	90	311,9	237,5
Temporary crops	157	246	20.834,7	31.715,0
Pasture	417	422	28.175,0	22.154,1
Reforestation	67	61	279,6	380,2
Natural vegetation	242	256	3.943,3	4.190,9
Complementary area	373	378	473,7	449,9
Fallow land	08	12	71,9	186,0
Wetland and floodplain vegetation	98	133	685,1	1.272,2

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the Census Survey of Agricultural Production Units of the State of São Paulo (LUPA 2007/2008 and LUPA 2016/2017) (São Paulo, 2009; São Paulo, 2019).

LUPA data indicate that, between the 2007/2008 and 2016/2017 surveys, the number of Agricultural Production Units (UPAs) increased from 449 to 513, corresponding to a growth of 14.25%, while the total registered area increased from 54,775.20 ha to 60,585.70 ha, representing an increase of 10.61%. These data indicate changes in the municipality's productive structure over the period; however, taken alone, they do not allow the factors responsible for this growth to be identified. For this reason, this information is used in this study to characterize the local agricultural context and is interpreted in conjunction with evidence concerning the public policies implemented, municipal governance mechanisms, and strategies for strengthening family farming analyzed in the following sections.

In 2016/2017, perennial and temporary crops occupied 31,952.50 ha, corresponding to 52.7% of the cultivated area, distributed across 336 UPAs. Pasture areas, in turn, were present in 422 UPAs and covered 22,154.10 ha, equivalent to 36.6% of the total registered area, demonstrating the coexistence of different production systems in the municipality (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4

Agricultural Statistics, Municipality of Taciba-SP, LUPA 2007/2008.

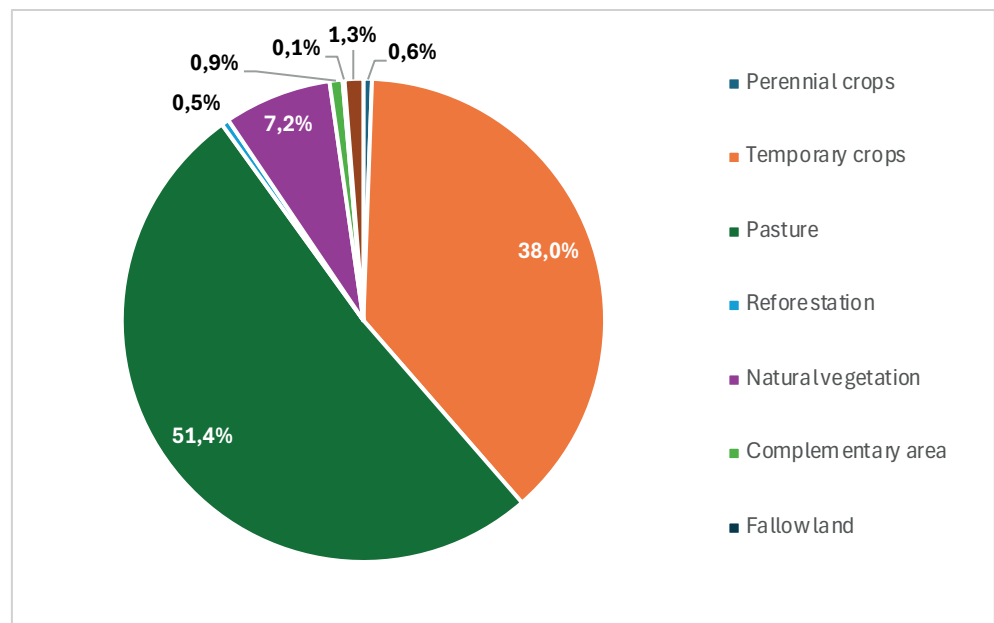
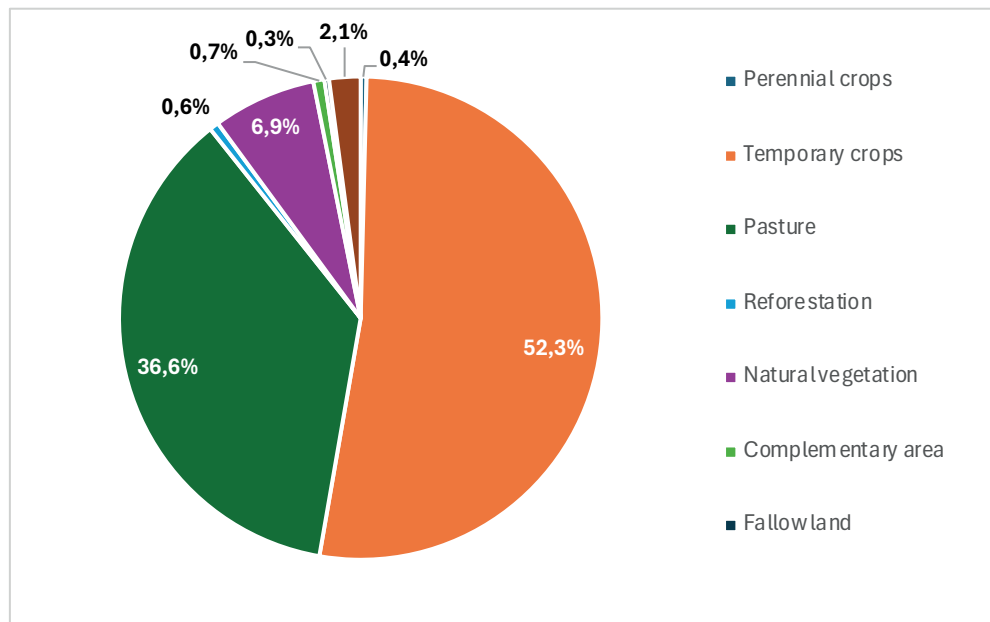


Figure 5

Agricultural Statistics, Municipality of Taciba-SP, LUPA 2016/2017.



The Municipality of Taciba plays an important role in diversifying the products cultivated by family farmers that reach consumers' tables, with eight new crops introduced between 2007/2008 and 2016/2017: second-crop corn, peanuts, pumpkin, sugarcane for other purposes, sweet potato, lettuce, passion fruit, and lemon, according to LUPA data (2009, 2019).

The Municipal Government of Taciba in the Development of Public Policies for Family Farming

The results of the documentary analysis indicate that, between 2017 and 2020, the municipal government of Taciba played a relevant role in coordinating public policies aimed at family farming, assuming coordination functions among federal, state, and municipal programs and promoting their implementation at the local level. The evidence gathered demonstrates the mobilization of institutional instruments, administrative resources, and coordination mechanisms among different public agencies, aspects that, in light of the analytical categories proposed by Diniz (1997) and Ckagnazaroff et al. (2008), characterize elements of command, coordination, and implementation within public governance.

Similarly, the documents analyzed indicate that some of the actions undertaken were developed through dialogue with family farmers regarding their expressed demands and within the institutional participatory spaces existing in the municipality, contributing to the implementation of public policies aimed at strengthening family farming during the period studied. It should be emphasized, however, that the findings concern the institutional capacity observed in the case analyzed and do not allow direct causal relationships to be established between government actions and all family farming performance indicators.

Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER) constitutes one of the main public policies for strengthening family farming by promoting the dissemination of technical knowledge, the adoption of appropriate technologies, and the improvement of production systems. In addition to contributing to increased productivity and income, ATER promotes production diversification, farm management, and the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices, thereby expanding opportunities for families to remain in rural areas.

According to the Special Secretariat for Family Farming and Agrarian Development (SEAD, 2018), technical assistance represents one of the strategic factors for enhancing the productive capacity of family farmers by supporting decision-making and the adoption of technologies suited to the conditions of each farm. This perspective is consistent with Schneider (2016), who emphasizes that strengthening family farming depends not only on access to credit but also on the continuous provision of technical assistance, training, and institutional support services capable of increasing farmers' productive autonomy and their integration into markets.

From the perspective of public governance, ATER also represents an important mechanism for coordination between the State and family farmers, as it brings public agencies closer to local demands and fosters the development of shared solutions. According to Diniz (1997) and Ckagnazaroff et al. (2008), public policies of this nature strengthen the coordination and implementation capacity of public authorities because they bring together different institutions, technical resources, and social actors around rural development. In this sense, ATER extends beyond the strictly productive dimension, serving as an instrument to support food security, natural resource conservation, and sustainable territorial development.

The National School Feeding Program (PNAE) constitutes one of the main public policies for food security and the strengthening of family farming in Brazil. In addition to ensuring adequate food for basic education students, the program promotes income generation in rural areas by requiring that a portion of the food purchased by public schools be sourced from family farming. Thus, the PNAE simultaneously integrates educational, social, economic, and rural development objectives.

In the Municipality of Taciba, financial resources are transferred by the National Fund for Education Development (FNDE) to the municipal administration, which is responsible for operationalizing procurement and coordinating with local family farmers. However, the effectiveness of this policy depends on the municipal government's institutional capacity to coordinate the different actors involved, including municipal secretariats, schools, technical assistance agencies, and rural producers.

The literature demonstrates that public procurement programs such as the PNAE play a strategic role in consolidating institutional markets for family farming. According to FAO (2019), these instruments contribute to enhancing food security, stimulating short marketing chains, and strengthening territorial development. Similarly, Grisa and Niederle (2020) emphasize that improving food policies is essential to increasing the resilience of family farming, particularly in times of crisis.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining institutional procurement became even more important. Fudemma et al. (2021) demonstrate that the partial or complete interruption of PNAE purchases significantly compromised the income of many family farmers, while Breitenbach (2021)

shows that the contraction of consumer markets increased the economic vulnerability of this segment. In this context, the continued operation of the PNAE by municipal governments constitutes an important expression of public governance implementation capacity by ensuring coordination among education, food security, and rural development policies.

Article 14 of Law No. 11,947 (2009) establishes that at least 30% of the federal PNAE funds transferred by the FNDE must be invested in the direct purchase of products from family farming, a measure that promotes the economic and sustainable development of family farmers and is based on the principles of healthy and adequate food and support for sustainable development, with an emphasis on food produced locally.

In the Municipality of Taciba, implementation of the PNAE enabled the purchase of food produced by local family farmers, in accordance with the mechanisms established by Law No. 11,947/2009 and FNDE regulations, which authorize the direct purchase of these products through public calls, without a competitive bidding procedure. The documentary analysis indicates that the municipal government established the administrative procedures necessary to implement this policy during the period studied, facilitating family farmers' access to the institutional school feeding market.

This result is consistent with the literature highlighting the PNAE as an important instrument for integrating food security policies with the strengthening of family farming. According to FAO (2019), Schneider (2016), and Grisa and Niederle (2020), public procurement expands marketing opportunities, strengthens local food supply chains, and contributes to income generation in rural areas. From the perspective of public governance, this integration demonstrates the municipal government's capacity to coordinate federal instruments with local demands, promoting the implementation of public policies aimed at rural development.

In this context, the amount transferred through the PNAE in 2017 was R\$ 156,896.40, of which R\$ 31,052.74 was spent on food products from family farming, corresponding to 19.8%. Thus, the required minimum percentage was not reached, and it was decided that the necessary measures would be taken to increase supply by encouraging suppliers.

In 2018, the amount spent on family farming was R\$ 39,374.91, equivalent to 23.90%, again falling short of the 30% requirement. In 2019, however, the total amount spent on food products from family farming was R\$ 68,348.18, equivalent to 43.30% of purchases, thus exceeding the minimum requirement of 30%, according to the respective minutes of the Municipal School Feeding Council (CAE).

Following the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Law No. 13,987 (2020) was enacted, amending Law No. 11,947/2009 (2009) and authorizing, during the suspension of in-person classes in public basic education schools due to an emergency or public calamity, other forms of PNAE implementation. The Municipality of Taciba opted to continue purchasing directly from family farmers to prepare packed meals at the Cozinha Piloto for students in vulnerable situations, based on a registration process.

Thus, in 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, 28.90% was allocated to the purchase of products from family farming, only 1.10% short of the 30% requirement. This occurred because, with the suspension of classes due to COVID-19, only 232 packed meals were provided, whereas the total number of daily meals for that year would have been 1,382 meals/day (852 students from

the municipal school system and 530 from Escola Estadual Cleófano Mota). In 2021, the percentage exceeded the minimum of 30%, with R\$ 52,507.49 spent on food products from family farming, equivalent to 33%, given the return of in-person classes in the second half of that year.

The PNAE became a highly important program in Taciba because, in addition to directly purchasing products from family farmers in the municipality, who benefit from the program, it is essential for students in the public school system, who receive school meals made with quality food, thereby fostering healthy eating habits.

Between 2017 and 2020, the municipal government of Taciba made efforts to achieve the minimum 30% established by law for direct purchases from family farmers without competitive bidding. However, in order to achieve the target from 2019 onward, the CAE discussed alternatives and the necessary measures to increase the food supply by encouraging rural producers (CAE minutes of March 2018).

This is consistent with LUPA data (2009), which show that in 2007 there were 354 UPAs belonging to family farming in the Municipality of Taciba. In 2017, LUPA data (2019) show that family farming had increased in terms of the number of production units and continued to represent the largest productive group, with 406 UPAs belonging to family farming. In addition, the Action Plan for Sustainable Economic Development of Pontal do Paranapanema (PADES-PONTAL, 2022) shows that the municipality has a diversity of agricultural crops, resulting in food products that are supplied to the school feeding program.

In 2017, the municipal government of Taciba sought access, through the São Paulo State Secretariat of Agriculture and Supply, to the program known as Melhor Caminho, which aims to restore rural roads, thereby improving economic and social indicators by facilitating the transportation of agricultural and livestock production, as well as generating direct employment through the execution of the works.

Thus, following several requests from rural producers, the Municipality of Taciba entered into an agreement with the São Paulo State Secretariat of Agriculture and Supply, resulting in the restoration of the TCB438 Municipal Rural Road through the Melhor Caminho Program.

The National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF), an initiative of the Federal Government under the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming (MDA, 2024a), provides credit at low interest rates and under favorable conditions to farmers who meet the eligibility requirements. It is therefore one of the main public instruments supporting family farmers, particularly through financing for operating costs, investment, marketing, and industrialization.

The purpose of this program is to promote sustainable rural development through actions aimed at increasing productive capacity, generating employment, and raising income, with a view to improving family farmers' quality of life and enabling the exercise of citizenship.

PRONAF (MDA, 2024a) serves family farmers and rural producers who comprise family-based rural production units, family-run rural enterprises, and family farming cooperatives that demonstrate their eligibility by presenting an active Declaration of Eligibility for PRONAF (DAP) or a valid National Registry of Family Farming (CAF-PRONAF) (MDA, 2024b). In the Municipality of

Taciba, a family farmer is defined as one who owns up to four fiscal modules or up to 96 hectares of land.

An active DAP or a valid National Registry of Family Farming (CAF-PRONAF) is required to obtain financing under PRONAF, and it must be issued by government-accredited agents. In Taciba, the Casa da Agricultura team advises rural producers regarding the accredited professional responsible for registration.

With a DAP or CAF-PRONAF, rural producers in Taciba may contact the municipality's Casa da Agricultura, where the responsible agronomist prepares a budget, plan, or technical project. Following this procedure, the rural producer submits all documentation to the financial institution with which they have a relationship or to any public or private bank, the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), or rural credit cooperatives to obtain financing.

There is also the São Paulo Agribusiness Expansion Fund — the Family Agribusiness Bank (FEAP/BANAGRO) — linked to the Secretariat of Agriculture and Supply (SAA) (2023), which aims to provide financial support for programs and projects of interest to the economy of the State of São Paulo, serving farmers, livestock producers, artisanal fishers, and their associations and rural producer cooperatives through financing programs, credit lines, or economic subsidies, including interest rate equalization.

The National Registry of Family Farming (CAF) is the instrument used to identify and qualify beneficiaries of the National Family Farming Policy, as well as Family Agricultural Production Units (UFPA), Family Rural Enterprises, and associative forms of family farming (agricultural cooperatives and rural associations) (MDA, 2024b).

Registration with the CAF is a basic requirement for accessing various public policies aimed at the development and strengthening of family farming. CAF registration replaced the DAP — Declaration of Eligibility for the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF) — for access to all public policies for which this document is required. To register with the CAF, rural producers in the Municipality of Taciba must contact the Casa da Agricultura, which will refer them to an accredited agent responsible for registration.

The Rural Environmental Registry (CAR), linked to the Coordination for Comprehensive Technical Assistance (CATI, 2024a), is a national electronic registry mandatory for all rural properties. It provides information on the occupation of rural properties and supports environmental and economic planning of land use, while also constituting a requirement for access to programs, benefits, and authorizations.

Finally, the Declaration of Compliance of Agricultural Activities (DCAA), also linked to CATI (2024b), is a document that provides information on activities exempt from environmental licensing. It may be granted to agricultural activities with low pollution/degradation potential, provided that they do not involve the removal of native vegetation or intervention in permanent preservation areas or legal reserves, and that they have authorization for the use of water resources, when required, on properties that adopt good production practices.

Thus, through the qualified professionals of the Casa da Agricultura, the municipal government of Taciba provides support to local rural producers in accessing various benefits through the CAF, CAR, and DCAA. While, for

the CAF, the Casa da Agricultura refers producers to an accredited agent responsible for registration, in the case of the CAR and the issuance of the DCAA, the technically qualified professionals of the Casa da Agricultura themselves can provide the necessary support directly to rural producers.

The Municipality of Taciba has a program known as the Agricultural Machinery Patrol, which consists of a set of agricultural equipment used exclusively to provide services on actively productive rural properties through daily service provision, prioritizing small farmers who face difficulties in mechanizing their production and diversifying their productive activities.

The objective is to promote soil conservation, crop planting and management, and the correction of soil acidity and fertility. Accordingly, through the Casa da Agricultura, the municipal government of Taciba provides the following services to rural producers: application of agricultural pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides); soil preparation (plowing, harrowing, and planting); soil conservation management (mowing, terrace construction, and contour farming); soil amendment practices, liming, and fertilization; and forage harvesting (corn silage, forage sorghum, and Napier grass) for livestock production.

It is important to emphasize that services provided through the Agricultural Machinery Patrol are charged at an hourly machine rate below market prices, since the purpose of the patrol is to subsidize investment and it therefore constitutes a public policy provided by the municipal administration. In addition, from 2017 onward, the municipal government sought to expand the services provided by the Agricultural Machinery Patrol, for example, by purchasing new equipment and increasing the public budget allocated to the agricultural sector. This made it possible to implement new services aimed at supporting farmers and enabling them to remain in rural areas. The program was essential to family farmers during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly through the development of the municipal project “Family Farming Cannot Stop During the Pandemic.”

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the highest level of global health emergency, the “COVID-19 Pandemic”. This designation means that “the term ‘pandemic’ refers to the geographic distribution of a disease and not to its severity. The designation recognizes that, at that time, outbreaks of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) were occurring in several countries and regions of the world” [Organização Pan-Americana da Saúde (OPAS), 2021, p. 9].

Thus, states and municipalities were responsible for adopting health measures and protocols to curb the spread of coronavirus infections. In the absence of medications and vaccines to control a pathogen, health systems adopt Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions: “[...] NPIs are public health measures with individual, environmental, and community scope. Individual measures include handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and social distancing.” The authors continue: “Social distancing, in turn, includes the isolation of cases, quarantine applied to contacts, and the voluntary practice of avoiding places where people gather” (Garcia & Duarte, 2020, p. 2).

Social distancing affected the economic viability of activities and farmer’s food security (Reis-Filho & Quinto, 2020; Lucena et al., 2020; Resnick, 2020), since measures to combat COVID-19 in Brazil led many short food marketing chains to suspend their activities, making it difficult for producers to market their output. However, the continuity of family farming as a cate-

gory depends on the viability of its social, economic, cultural, and symbolic reproduction (Schneider, 2016), all of which were affected during the crisis.

In this scenario, characterized by food security problems, the importance of family farming, local production, and short food supply chains is reinforced (Cappelli & Cini, 2020). Federal, state, and municipal governments faced urgent demands that had to be addressed in the context of the pandemic in Brazil and began defining emergency measures to tackle these problems, including measures directed toward family farming. One of the main initiatives was Emergency Basic Income (RBE), established by the Federal Government to minimize the social and economic impacts of the pandemic. However, farmers were excluded from the RBE (Silva Filho & Gomes Junior, 2020; Alpino et al., 2020).

Therefore, some studies on the situation of family farming in different areas of Brazil following the adoption of health measures to contain COVID-19 are presented below. From a public health perspective, Fudemma et al. (2021, pp. 4-6) present a study conducted with Small Rural Producers (PPR) in 51 municipalities across the states of Amazonas (1 municipality), Pará (6 municipalities), and São Paulo (44 municipalities). Of these producers, 86% reported that people close to them had been infected, ranging from ten or more people among acquaintances and family members, while only 11% reported that they did not know anyone who had been infected.

From an economic perspective, Breitenbach (2021) describes studies by Lucena et al. (2020) and Reis-Filho and Quinto (2020) on the adverse effects of the pandemic on family farming in the small-scale fishing and goat-farming sectors, where precarious conditions were already a reality and became even more evident. The decline in demand affected the economic viability of these activities and producer's food security.

In the context of the pandemic, a specific food distribution strategy was adopted under the PNAE, whereby parents or guardians of students enrolled in public basic education schools could receive food products while classes were suspended through the distribution of food kits intended for consumption by students and their families, expanding the scope of the program through *Resolution No. 2* (2020). The kits followed PNAE legislative recommendations regarding nutritional quality while respecting local eating habits and culture.

However, the intended scope of the PNAE was not achieved in practice, as 78% of producers reported that they did not participate in the program during the pandemic, 8% reduced their production, and 8% ceased production altogether; only one producer from Tomé-Açu (Pará) increased production, corresponding to 3% of the study population. Overall, 66% reported that the PNAE underwent several changes during the health crisis; school closures resulted in the suspension of contracts for 31% of producers, 22% reduced their deliveries, and 13% began delivering directly to students' families (Fudemma et al., 2021).

From an environmental perspective, Silva et al. (2021) affirm the interconnection between the environmental and pandemic crises, since anthropogenic activities such as deforestation, the expansion of agriculture and livestock farming, mining, environmental degradation, and wildlife exploitation facilitate the spread of diseases between animals and humans. All the discussions presented demonstrate the vulnerability of family farming,

particularly in the context of the pandemic, which clearly exposed the economic, social, and political inequalities experienced by these farmers.

However, it should also be emphasized that although the pandemic increased the vulnerability of family farming, it also revealed the capacity of this category to reinvent itself and respond to crises. In this regard, several studies (Nogueira & Marcelino, 2021; Futeemma et al., 2020; Pedroso, Corcioli & Foguesatto, 2020; Zuñiga, Zuñiga & Montilla, 2020) show that many farmers were able to develop marketing strategies and intensify food distribution channels through the PNAE, helping to supply food to students served by the public school system and their families, who belong to a highly socio-economically vulnerable population.

These inequalities could have been mitigated if the Federal Government had guaranteed emergency basic income to rural families. Approved by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, Bill 735/2000 was vetoed by the President of the Republic, preventing family farmers from accessing these resources. New food policies must therefore be created to stimulate demand for family farming products, fulfilling a dual role in development: ensuring income for farmers and food security for vulnerable populations through access to food (Grisa & Niederle, 2020; Cassol, Vargas & Canever, 2020).

It is necessary to go beyond public policies for the development of family farming that are generally expressed through the provision of credit. Financial access must be linked to access to land, incentives for the creation of local markets (short chains), and the adoption of sustainable production systems (FAO, 2019), as well as to strong public governance that addresses the needs and aspirations of family farmers and seeks to develop public policies that serve the interests of this sector, with local public authorities therefore being responsible for coordinating this process.

In the Municipality of Taciba, contrary to the data presented above, at the very beginning of the pandemic, in March 2020, with social isolation measures in place, the municipal government, together with the Municipal Rural Development Council (CMDR), implemented the municipal project "Family Farming Cannot Stop During the Pandemic," which began on March 30, 2020, with the objective of supporting and encouraging the development of family farming during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

The project consisted of subsidizing 01 hectare of land for each rural producer previously identified by the Casa da Agricultura. The agricultural team carried out all stages of soil preparation for planting, beginning with 04 hours using a large tractor for harrowing, followed by 02 hours using a smaller tractor for leveling and 02 hours for planting. The project was designed to serve 30 family farmers using equipment, human resources, and agricultural inputs provided by the municipal administration.

It should also be noted that, although family farmers were required to pay the municipality the applicable hourly machine fee for the services provided, the amounts charged were lower than market rates, since the purpose of the services provided by the Municipal Agricultural Machinery Patrol was to subsidize investment by family farmers, thus constituting a public policy offered by the municipal administration.

Regarding the PNAE, in 2020, the year of the pandemic, the municipal government spent R\$ 47,984.33 on purchasing food products from family farming, equivalent to 28.90%, falling 1.10% short of the minimum percentage

required. In the previous year, the percentage applied exceeded the minimum requirement of 30%, reaching 43.30%.

However, this decrease is explained by the fact that, at the beginning of the pandemic, 1,382 students were enrolled, including 852 students in the municipal school system and 530 at Escola Estadual Cleofano Mota. Thus, in principle, a total of 1,382 meals would have been provided each day; however, with the suspension of classes due to COVID-19, only 232 packed meals were provided daily, from Monday to Friday. In 2021, the percentage exceeded the minimum of 30%, with R\$ 52,507,49 spent on food products from family farming, equivalent to 33%, given the return of in-person classes in the second half of that year.

The documentary analysis identified evidence of command, expressed through the leadership of the Municipal Executive in integrating programs aimed at family farming; coordination, observed in the articulation among the Municipality, Casa da Agricultura, Municipal Rural Development Council, and state agencies; and implementation, demonstrated by the operationalization of the PNAE, PRONAF, Agricultural Machinery Patrol, CAR, CAF, and the other actions described above.

Thus, it can be observed that, in Taciba, the municipal government, recognizing the negative impacts that the pandemic would have on family farmers, developed a specific public action to sustain the development of family-based production activities in the municipality, ensuring the livelihoods of these farmers and their families during the pandemic. This municipal project was made possible by the existence of strong governance within Taciba's public administration, characterized by its close attention to the aspirations and needs of this important family farming sector.

■ FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to analyze how municipal public governance contributed to the coordination and implementation of public policies designed to strengthen family farming in the Municipality of Taciba-SP from 2017 to 2020, including the initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the documentary analysis and the theoretical framework adopted, it was possible to understand how the municipal government coordinated different institutional instruments, government programs, and local actors to respond to the demands of family farming in a context of high social and economic vulnerability.

The results show that municipal public governance was manifested through the three analytical dimensions proposed by Diniz (1997) and Ckag-nazaroff et al. (2008). The command dimension was observed in the municipal government's capacity to establish priorities for family farming and mobilize administrative and budgetary instruments aimed at rural development. The coordination dimension was reflected in the articulation among different municipal secretariats, the Casa da Agricultura, municipal councils, state and federal programs, and family farmers, enabling the integration of public policies and a coordinated response to territorial demands. The implementation dimension, in turn, was evidenced by the operationalization of public policies such as the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER), the Agricultural Machinery Patrol, the Melhor Caminho Program, and other instruments supporting production,

demonstrating the municipality's institutional capacity to translate policy guidelines into concrete actions.

The results also demonstrate that the effectiveness of public policies aimed at family farming depends not only on the existence of federal and state programs but also on the capacity of local governments to coordinate actors, integrate policies, and adapt instruments to territorial specificities. In this regard, the case of Taciba shows that municipal public governance can enhance institutional response capacity in times of crisis, supporting the continuity of actions aimed at family farming and contributing to sustaining local production and food supply chains during the initial period of the pandemic.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to advancing research on public governance by empirically demonstrating the applicability of the categories of command, coordination, and implementation in a small municipality. By integrating the frameworks of Diniz (1997) and Ckagnazaroff et al. (2008) with the literature on family farming and territorial development, the study broadens the understanding of how governance mechanisms materialize at the municipal level, demonstrating that integrated action between the State and society constitutes a fundamental element in the implementation of public policies.

From a practical perspective, the results provide insights for public managers interested in strengthening policies aimed at family farming. The experience analyzed demonstrates that the integration of planning, interinstitutional coordination, technical assistance, public procurement, and social participation can enhance the effectiveness of government actions, particularly in small municipalities. In addition, it highlights the importance of the coordinated use of budgetary instruments, federal and state programs, and local governance mechanisms to promote rural development and strengthen food security in times of crisis.

As with any scientific investigation, this study has limitations. The research was based on a single qualitative and documentary case study, relying predominantly on institutional documents and secondary data. Therefore, the results reflect the specific characteristics of the context investigated and cannot be generalized to other Brazilian municipalities. Furthermore, the absence of interviews with public managers, family farmers, and representatives of municipal councils limits the understanding of aspects related to the perceptions of the different actors involved in the implementation of public policies.

In light of these limitations, future research should broaden the analysis through comparative studies of municipalities with different socioeconomic and institutional characteristics, making it possible to identify different models of public governance applied to rural development. Quantitative or mixed-methods studies are also recommended to assess the effects of governance practices on family farming performance indicators, as well as longitudinal studies to analyze the medium- and long-term impacts of public policies implemented during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is therefore concluded that the experience of the Municipality of Taciba-SP reinforces the importance of public governance as a structuring element in the implementation of public policies aimed at family farming. Beyond implementing government programs, the municipal government played a role in coordinating actors, resources, and institutional instruments, demonstrating that the capacity for command, coordination, and implemen-

tation constitutes an essential condition for strengthening rural development, enhancing the resilience of local communities, and responding more effectively to the challenges posed by crisis contexts.



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