

Restoration Chains with Economic Value – From Producer Groups to Consumer Markets

AGRI-WOMEN SOCIOECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



The Agri-Women Profile

The reality of the women's lives in family farming - be it in the settlement areas of the agrarian reform, in the indigenous villages, or in the quilombolas¹ - is very similar.

The work load includes a wide range of tasks, from taking care of the children, the house, and the farm, to the cultivation of vegetables and the raising of animals for consumption (chicken, cattle, goats, etc.). On top of it, the women are also involved in the hands-on farming activities from crops cultivation to harvesting. Nevertheless, they are excluded from financial management and the decision making processes of the businesses.

Furthermore, everything related to food production falls into the responsibilities of the women. Due to the close relation between production and self-consumption, the women own the knowledge about the seeds, plants growing techniques, and the storage of native fruits. This knowledge is very relevant when looking at food security and the healthcare of families and communities.

From the socioeconomic perspective, women in rural areas belong to the most vulnerable groups. As the well-known migration from the country-side to the big cities is often pursued by men, they leave women and children behind. In Brazil, 34% of the families are headed by women and it is common to see three generations of women living and cooperating in the same house (as shown in the picture above).

"When we arrived here in the 90's, we thought that the cumbaru had no use. Today, we see its value as a food which tastes good and does good. I feel much better because I eat the baru nuts every day. I also drink its oil which is very medicinal specially for women in the menopause"

**Izabel Custódio de Souza, 68 y.o,
Monjolinho, Anastácio**

(1) Quilombolas are the descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves who escaped from their farms before the Abolition in 1888. Frequently, slaves who escaped organized hidden communities called Quilombo.

The Women of the Brazilian Savanna – a network towards sustainable extractivism and Landscape change

This project foresees the development of a sustainable value chain of Baru-nuts or Cerrado Nuts as the promoter of an integrated grass-roots development led by a group of women whose main economic activity is the extractivism. These women are located in the Land Reform Territories of the southwestern part of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, in Brazil

The project comprises of three complementary action lines:

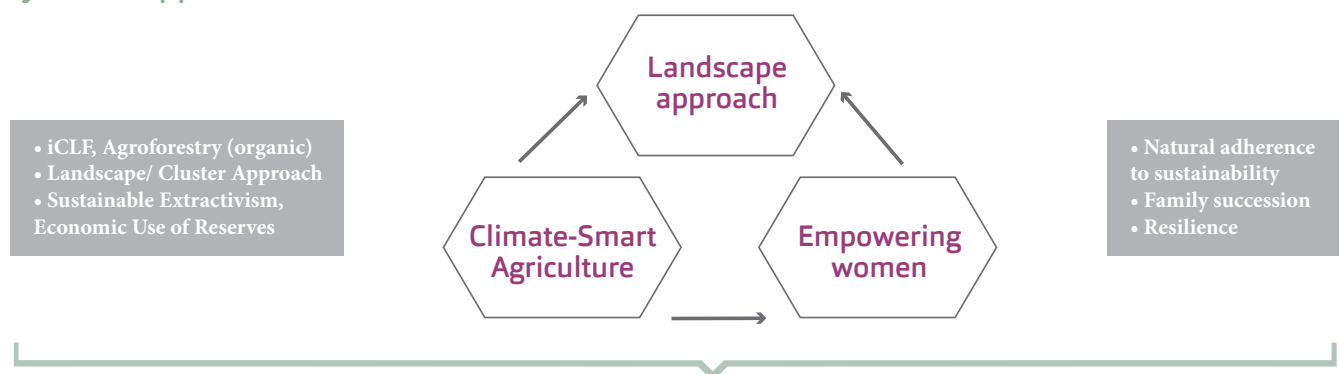
a) A mapping of the current status of available Cumbaru trees (a Cerrado native tree) in both open and conservation areas, and a feasibility study related to the economics of restoration and the economic use of reserves, including potential environmental services valuation;

b) The engagement and empowerment of existing cooperatives and associations led by women, plus a series of workshops with the objective of providing them with the needed knowledge related to harvesting time, quality processes, financial literacy, and basics for an entrepreneurial behavior and market orientation;

c) The establishment of a revolving fund to provide the needed access to credit used for working capital and/or credit to invest in the facilities (warehouse, drying-oven, nut-cracker, etc.)

In the future, this same approach, based on the value chain analysis, can be applied to other similar projects in Brazil, aiming at a producer cluster development along with both landscape and socioeconomic change.

Restoration Chains with Economic Value and Agri-women Engagement Systemic Approach



Economic	Environmental	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating sustainable agri-businesses • Income generation • Entrepreneurship • Innovation • Market access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation and restoration • Cerrado's biome – world hotspot • Low-carbon agriculture • Improvement of local environmental governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities benefits • Settlements • Indigenous people • Quilombos • Health benefits

Monjolinho, São Manuel and Cepege

The initial group of women organizing the project is located in the municipality of Anastácio (MS) and will have the role of (1) mobilizing and engaging other women from the region; (2) giving technical training on the Baru-nuts extractivism; (3) preparing and developing products containing the Baru-nuts; (4) promoting a grass-roots development which would be fostered by the Baru-nuts Agro-Women

The Association of Agricultural Women of the Monjolinho Settlement (AMAM) and the Baru Group – Sustainable

Production Group of the São Manuel settlement are two cooperative groups formed over ten years ago, which have already developed activities related to extractivism, food production, Baru-nuts sub products, as well as their commercialization.

The Cepege, which is a Training and Research Center located in the settlement of Geraldo Garcia, in Sidrolândia (MS), will play the role of being a central reference for the dissemination of knowledge as well as training related to the Baru-nuts.

Indigenous Villages

The engagement of indigenous people is also part of the main activities of the project, as they form a part of the target group, additionally to the two groups already engaged with Baru-nuts extractivism. In Nioaque (MS), the indigenous village of Brejão has already been developing agroecological activities and thus has a relevant activity in the production of seeds and reforestation techniques. The young leaders of this indigenous village will be responsible for the articulation of other indigenous villages that would also like to become part of the Baru-nuts value chain.

The second already mapped indigenous village is located in the municipality of Sidrolândia (MS), in the indigenous reserve of Buriti and although they have already developed

some extractivism activities, they are not yet pursuing any activities related to the cumabru, which is the indigenous name for the Baru-nuts.



THE CERRADO (BRAZILIAN SAVANNA)

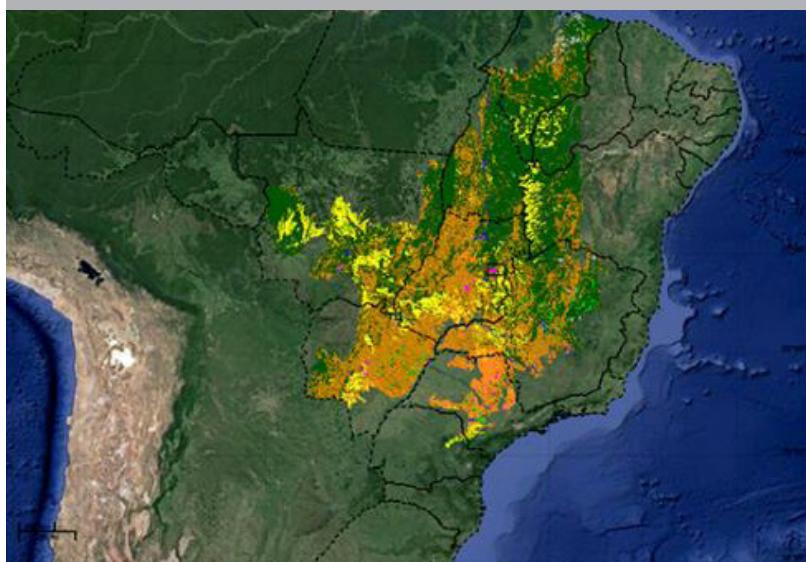
For the last ten years, the deforestation rate of the Cerrado has been higher than the one in the Amazon. According to Greenpeace, from 2013 to 2015 only, an area of over 18.962 km² of this biome have been devastated. If the degradation of land continues at this rate, soon there will not be much left of the Cerrado and its resilience will be threatened.

The biome's biodiversity is one of the richest ones in the world. There are more than 13,000 plant species, over 850 types of birds, and over 250 types of mammals. Additionally, the Cerrado is located in the middle of three of the most important water resources in South America (Guarani, Bamuí, and Urucuia), that feed the

groundwater table which in turn feeds eight out of the twelve hydrological regions of Brazil. With the biome's destruction, the process of absorbing the rain water is compromised alongside.

The agricultural and cattle ranching expansion in that region have been the most relevant factor for the Cerrado transformation. The production of soybeans, corn, beef, and vegetal coal has been the driving force in this process. The resulting impact can be clearly seen in regions like the municipality of Sidrolândia, where the landscape changes drastically after just a few kilometers from an indigenous village area, as shown in the pictures in the next page.

The Cerrado Area Map





This picture shows the landscape change in a distance of less than 80 kilometers between the indigenous reserve 'Adeia do Brejao' and the large open fields for monoculture of corn and soybeans in Sidrolândia city (both in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul)

The Extractivism Corridor

The concept of an extractivism corridor is part of an articulation strategy to develop a network formed by smallholder farmers, people already pursuing extractivism, indigenous groups, quilombolas, fishermen, workers, and those involved with Fair Trade. It promotes the development of products and services based on the extractivism economy, the small-scale farming, the environmental services valuation promoted by these groups, as well as the sustainable management of the Cerrado natural resources.

The Cerrado Nuts (Baru)

Considered to be a 'superfood', the Baru-nut plays a fundamental role in the (economic) survival of the local communities in the Cerrado, as its seeds and pulp provide them with food for both the people and the cattle during the dry season. The fruit can be used entirely to produce fruit pulp, oils, flour, and butter.

Due to its regenerative nature, the Baru or Cumaro tree offers a win-win situation: the fruits can be harvested to generate income while at the same time the economic, but sustainable

use of the tree promotes the conservation of the vulnerable Cerrado biome.

Call for Action or Business Opportunity?

The answer is: both. There is a clear and urgent call for action when it comes to holding back the Cerrado deforestation. One of the possible ways to do this is by engaging the locals – the Agri-Women of the land settlements, the young generation, the indigenous peoples and the quilombolas – in the development of economic activities which contribute to the biomes conservation and restoration.

Above all, this project offers an opportunity for first movers to engage in the sourcing of highly nutritional nuts which have not yet been explored to their full potential.

We are currently in a phase fund raising for this project that involves providing training and basic infrastructure to guarantee homogeneity in quality and consistency; as well as the creation of a revolving fund to provide the Agri-Women with the working capital needed to develop their activities.

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