

FAMILY AND PEASANT AGRICULTURE IN FEIRA DE SANTANA – BA: FROM THE CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION TO THE POTENTIAL OF ASSOCIATIVISM

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the situation of family and peasant agriculture in the municipality of Feira de Santana, and reflects on the potential of associativism as a strategy to strengthen these ways of living and producing. The research starts from the central question: What are the impacts of urbanization on family and peasant agriculture in Feira de Santana, and how can associativism contribute to face these challenges and strengthen family and peasant agriculture? Methodologically, a literature review and data analysis from IBGE, SEAGRI/PMFS and MapBiomass were carried out. The results reveal the complex scenario of agriculture in Feira de Santana, marked by the decline of the rural population, the decrease of arable areas and the consequent reduction of agricultural production, processes directly related to urbanization. In this context, associativism is highlighted as a potential for the mobilization and collective struggle of farmers and peasants, being fundamental to face challenges imposed by urban expansion. However, the research points to the need for more in-depth studies on rural community associations in the municipality. It is concluded that urbanization in Feira de Santana has generated social inequalities between countryside and city, demanding integrative public policies that value family and peasant agriculture, protect rural territories and encourage the local development of communities.

Keywords: Urban expansion. Countryside-city relationship. Rural communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern agriculture, resulting from the Green Revolution implemented from 1960 onwards, established a new production model characterized by the intensive use of mechanization, chemical inputs and plant varieties aimed at high productivity and commercial interests (Santilli, 2009). This model promoted the constitution of the "agricultural entrepreneur", making the existence and importance of peasants invisible, by treating their way of producing and living as outdated and incapable of meeting the demands of the capitalist market (Martins and Souza, 2016).

In Brazil, in order to guarantee access to public policies for rural development, the legal category of "family farming" was created. Law No. 11,326, of July 24, 2006, defines the family farmer and rural family entrepreneur as one who carries out activities in rural areas in areas less than four fiscal modules, predominantly uses the family's workforce, has a minimum percentage of family income originated from economic activities of his establishment or enterprise, and manages it with his family (Brasil, 2006).

In this context, it becomes relevant to characterize family and peasant agriculture in the face of the numerous attempts, anchored in capitalist economic rationality, to weaken these ways of living and producing, and which go beyond economic aspects, encompassing social, environmental and cultural dimensions. Such relevance is even more significant in Feira de Santana, where urbanization advances over rural areas, causing profound changes in the relationship between the countryside and the city.

In view of this, this work aims to discuss the situation of family and peasant agriculture in the municipality of Feira de Santana, and to reflect on the potential of associativism as a strategy to strengthen these ways of living and producing. The central question that guides this study is: What are the impacts of urbanization on family and peasant agriculture in Feira de Santana, and how can associativism contribute to face these challenges and strengthen family and peasant agriculture?

This study was motivated by the discussions carried out within the scope of the curricular component Popular and Solidarity Economy and Local Development, of the Graduate Program in Territorial Planning of the State University of Feira de Santana - PLAN TERR/UEFS. In addition, the author's experience as an intern at the Department of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development of the Municipality of Feira de Santana (SEAGRI/PMFS), provided an in-depth contact with critical aspects of local agriculture, serving as a basis for articulating theory with practice.

Methodologically, the work is based on a literature review, with a search for information on agriculture in Feira de Santana in articles, theses and dissertations available on platforms such as Elsevier, Science Direct, Scopus and Google Scholar. Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development of the Municipality of Feira de Santana (SEAGRI/PMFS), and data on land use and land cover from collection 9.0 of the MapBiomas portal (2024) were also consulted.

From a structural point of view, this article composes, in addition to the introduction and final considerations, the following sections: i) Overview of family and peasant agriculture in Feira de Santana; ii) Urbanization of the countryside in Feira de Santana and its impacts on family and peasant agriculture; iii) Associativism as an element of strengthening family and peasant agriculture in Feira de Santana.

OVERVIEW OF FAMILY AND PEASANT AGRICULTURE IN FEIRA DE SANTANA

Feira de Santana is located in the north-central mesoregion of Bahia, microregion of Feira de Santana and Portal do Sertão identity territory, at a distance of 109 km from the state capital, and occupying a territorial area of 1,338 km² (SEI 2019; 2020; 2023).

Historically, the geographical location of Feira de Santana is a milestone for the economic development of the municipality. Dating back to the colonial period, roads were opened connecting the coast to the hinterland, and on the lands on the banks of the Paraguaçu River, the Jacuípe River, the streams and lagoons, farms were installed for cattle raising, and the construction of corrals (Freire, 2012). The farm that gave rise to the municipality, called Sant'Anna dos Olhos D'água, served as a stopping point for drovers and other travelers who moved from the hinterland and the region of Minas Gerais, Piauí and Goiás towards the port of Cachoeira (Santo, 2012; Carvalho, 2017).

In the records of local history, Domingos Barbosa de Araújo and Ana Brandoa, owners of the Sant'Anna dos Olhos D'água farm, built a chapel in honor of Our Lady Sant'Ana and São Domingos. Around this chapel a village emerged that was officially established as a village in 1832 (Carvalho, 2017). In this village, commercial houses and a cattle fair were established, also contributing to the development of a free market (Santo, 2012). The urban core grew and was elevated to the category of municipality in 1883, receiving the name of Commercial City of Feira de Santana (Souza, 2017).

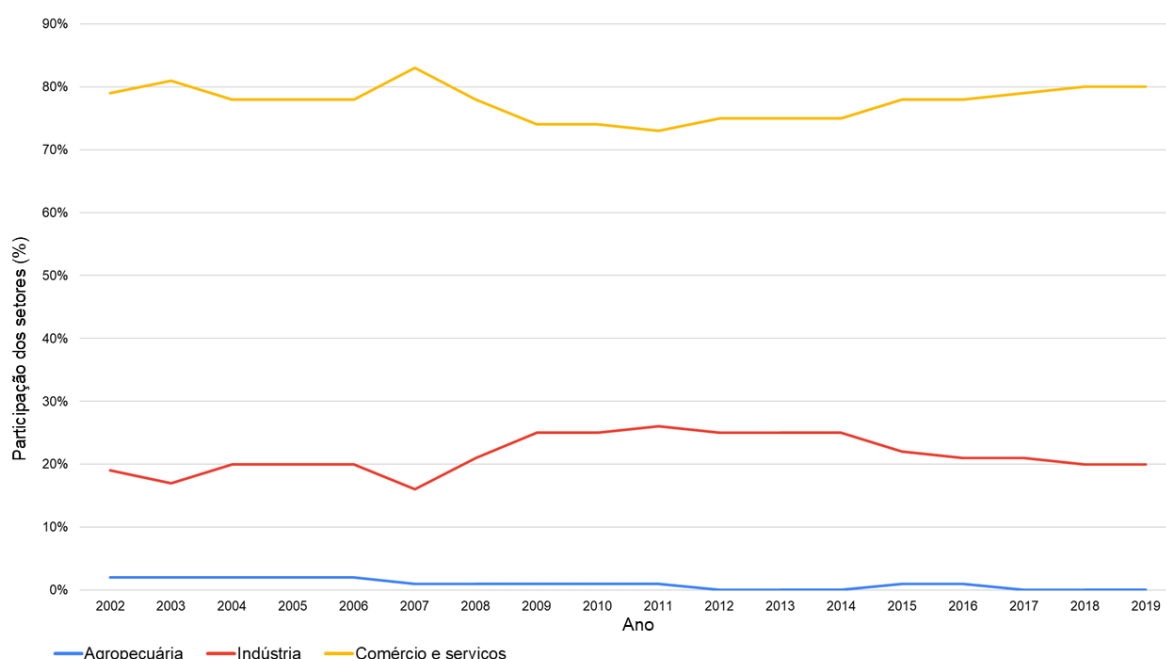
According to Freire (2012), in the inventories of the inhabitants of the lands that is now Feira de Santana, between the years 1850 and 1888, it is stated that in addition to cattle raising, the farms had tobacco, cassava, cotton, sugarcane, beans and corn crops; and in the open market, cassava flour, tobacco rolls, processed cotton, boxes of sugar, corn, beans and bovine leather were sold. Among the possessions of the planters were also described the slaves, who were the labor force in the plantations.

In the current context, Feira de Santana continues to exercise a position of centrality, constituting an important road junction, being crossed by five state highways (BAs 052, 084, 502, 503 and 504) and three federal highways (BRs 101, 116 and 324). According to the hierarchy of Brazilian urban centers established by the Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020), the municipality is classified as regional capital B, and establishes a region of influence with 40 other cities in the interior of Bahia and important connections with Brazilian capitals such as São Paulo, Recife, Brasília and Salvador.

For Freitas (2009), commerce is traditionally the main economic activity of Feira de Santana. Souza (2021), in turn, analyzed the socioeconomic panorama of 15 regional capitals in the interior of the Northeast and showed that Feira de Santana had the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 2010 and 2018, attributing this prominent position to commercial development, which in turn has driven urban expansion and population growth.

Figure 1 shows the participation of different sectors in the economic activity of Feira de Santana, between the years 2002 and 2021. The data show the predominance of the trade and services sector in the economy of Feira de Santana over the last two decades, with participation ranging from 74% to 83%. The participation of agriculture, in turn, is extremely low, not exceeding 2%.

Figure 1. Participation of the sectors of the economy of the municipality of Feira de Santana, between 2002 and 2021.



Source: Prepared by the author with data from SEI, 2023.

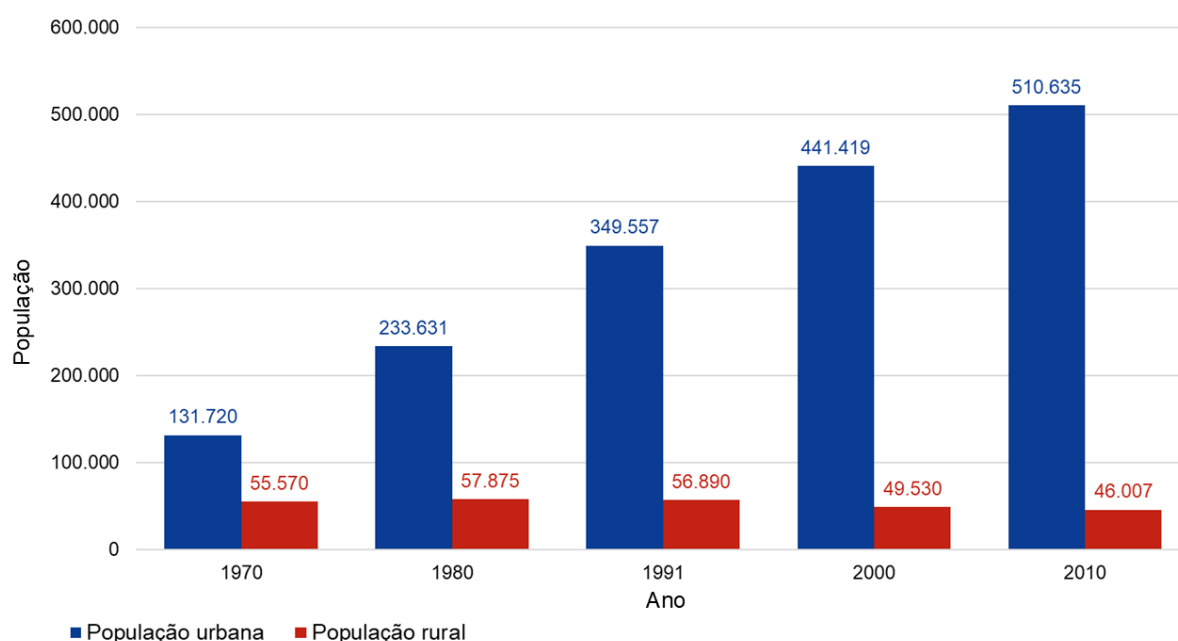
The analysis of the importance of economic activities based exclusively on the mercantile aspect and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reflects the hegemony of capitalism. This economic model favors the production of goods and services, as well as the labor force itself, destined to exchange, that is, to capital gain. However, in the logic of capitalism, the accumulation of wealth is historically based on the exploitation of natural resources, the decimation of peoples and cultural destruction, perpetuating social inequalities (Marx, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2016).

Outside the logic of capitalism, family and peasant agriculture expresses its importance through multifunctionality. Carneiro and Maluf (2003) highlight the dimensions of family farming, such as the socioeconomic reproduction of families, exercising labor force, avoiding rural exodus and ensuring family succession. In addition, it guarantees the food security of both their families and society, through the production of diversified and nutritious food. And it also contributes to the preservation of biodiversity and natural resources. More than that, family and peasant agriculture assumes an educational and cultural function, transmitting knowledge and practices to future generations, strengthening identity and relations with the territory (Machado, 2020).

Figure 2 shows the evolution of the rural population of Feira de Santana in the period from 1970 to 2010, showing a trend of continuous decline over the decades. The

data indicate a significant reduction in the percentage of inhabitants living in rural areas, from 29.67% of the total population (equivalent to 55,570 people) in 1970, to only 8.26% of the population (equivalent to 46,007 people) in 2010³.

Figure 2. Evolution of the rural population of Feira de Santana, between 1970 and 2010.



Source: Prepared by the author with data from IBGE (2024).

The decrease in the rural population of Feira de Santana reflects the effects of the urbanization process and migration to the seat of the municipality, driven by industrial and commercial expansion, which attract residents from rural areas to the urban core, as highlighted by the Sustainable Economic Development Plan of Feira de Santana (PDES) (EY, 2018). The advance of population concentration in urbanized areas in the municipality is also a reality in rural areas, as occurs in the districts of Bonfim de Feira and Humildes, which have their population predominantly concentrated in the district headquarters (PMFS, 2018).

According to Bulhões (2022), although Feira de Santana has one of the largest absolute rural populations in the state of Bahia, the precariousness of access to land, the low efficiency of public policies aimed at the sector, and the emptying of rural communities have weakened family farming and contributed to the deterritorialization of rural productive

³ The demographic data collected in the 2022 Census have not yet been made available by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) for public consultation, making it impossible to carry out an updated analysis of the rural population of Feira de Santana. Thus, the information used in this study refers to previous censuses, which cover up to the year 2010.

activities. This dynamic is aggravated by the reduction in the number of schools in rural areas, which evidences the loss of social and economic structure in these areas (EY, 2018).

For Haesbaert (2005), deterritorialization, when dominated by the exclusivist territorial logic of the state pattern, is strongly linked to social inequalities, especially affecting the most vulnerable social groups, not only because of the socio-spatial changes that have occurred, but also because of the transformations in human experiences in relation to the living space, generating clusters of exclusion.

The rural population of Feira de Santana is spatially distributed in eight districts, which are configured as important territorial units for the municipality. Each district has a headquarters, which functions as a local administrative and commercial center; their villages and communities; and the scattered houses. Chart 1 shows the districts of Feira de Santana and their respective headquarters and villages.

Table 1. Districts and villages in the rural area of Feira de Santana.

District	Thirst	Villages
Humble	Humble	Tanquinho, José Falcão, Fulô, Campestre, Vitória, Pau Seco, Terra Dura, Doutor, Bom Viver, Escoval, Rosário, Vila Fluminense, Caboronga, Barroquinha, Borda Mata, Onça, Caetano, Caruara, Pindobal, Ferrobilha
Tiquaruçu	Saint Vincent	Jenipapo, Boa Vista, Capim Grosso, Mucambo, Alto dos Santos, Lagoa de Pedra, Carro Quebrado, Ladeira, São Cristóvão, Calandro, Vila Feliz, Socorro, Caatinga, Piabas, Vila Santa Inês, Bandeira, Bandarra, Fazenda Riachão, Jaqueira, Malhada Grande, Babilônia, Saco de Pedra, Selão
Maria Quitéria	San Jose	Água Grande, Lagoa Grande, Casa Nova, Fazenda Caldeirão, Boqueirão, Pé de Serra, Lagoa de Pedra, Fazenda Morro, Formiga, Olhos D'Água da Formiga, Ovo da Ema, Santa Rita, Jenipapo, Saco do Capitão, Garapa, Varinhas, Lagoa do Crespo, Carro Quebrado, Lagoa da Nega
Bushy	Bushy	Alto do Canuto, Alecrim Miúdo, Jenipapo, Santa Quitéria, Olhos D'Água das Moças, Moita da Onça, Candeia Grossa, Vila Menilha, Jacu, Sítio do Padre, Alto do Tanque, Tanquinho D'Água, Baixão, Ponto, Salgada, Sucupira
João Durval Carneiro	Ipuaçu	Km 07, Vila Fluminense, Santa Rosa, São José, Caroá, Umbuzeiro, Galhardo, Amarela, Pedra da Canoa, Santa Luzia, Formosa, Capim, Baeta, Vera Cruz, Brava, Diving, Gameleirinha
Bonfim de Feira	Bonfim de Feira	Santa Bárbara I, Santa Bárbara II, Jenipapo, Sucupira, Ouricuri, Impueira, Camisãozinho, Sítio do Mato, Terra Nova, Caboronga, Gameleira, São Bento, Mucambo, Fazenda Ponto, Malhador, Candeal, Bom Jardim, Santa Maria

Jaguara	Jaguara	Morrinhos, Malhador, Barra, Mendonça, Sete Portas, Lagoa D'Água, Rio do Peixe, Varginha, Sítio do Meio, Conceição, Juazeiro, Barbosa, Honorato, Olaria, Falhado, Lizíbia, Bebedouro, Larginha
Jaíba	Jaíba	São Roque, São Francisco, São Domingos, Corredor dos Araçás, Calundú, Lagoa das Pedras, Tapera I, Tapera II, Brandão, Mantiba, Candéal I, Candéal II, Alto do Rosário, Retiro, Canteiro

Source: Prepared by the author based on data from SEAGRI/PMFS, 2024.

The survey carried out by the Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development (SEAGRI/PMFS), in 2019, revealed that the district of Humildes has the largest population contingent, totaling 16,408 people, equivalent to 30.42% of the rural population of the municipality, while Jaguará has approximately only 6.1% of the total rural population of Feira de Santana (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of the rural population of Feira de Santana by district - 2019.

District	Population
Humble	16.408
Tiquarucu	6.020
Maria Quitéria	7.940
Bushy	5.280
João Durval Carneiro/ Ipuaçu	4.560
Bonfim de Feira	4.220
Jaguara	3.308
Jaíba	6.160
Total	53.896

Source: Prepared by the author with data from SEAGRI/PMFS, 2019.

Santos (2007) attributes the population concentration in the district of Humildes to factors such as the installation of the Subaé Industrial Center (CIS), the proximity to the seat of the municipality and the strategic presence of the BRs 101 and 324, which favor the connection between the countryside and the city. These factors have also boosted commercial development, reinforcing the importance of non-agricultural activities as a source of local income.

As for agricultural production in the municipality, between 2005 and 2020, corn, beans and cassava crops, cultivated by family and peasant agriculture in the municipality, showed a reduction of 71.1% (from 18,000 ha to 5,200 ha), 73.5% (from 18,120 ha to 4,800 ha) and 93.8% (from 8,000 ha to 500 ha) in the potential use of cultivated area, respectively. For the 2020/2021 agricultural year, the average municipal productivity of corn, beans and cassava was respectively 361 kg.ha⁻¹, 94 kg.ha⁻¹ and 1,938 kg.ha⁻¹,

corresponding to values lower than the productive potential of the municipality (SEAGRI/PMFS, 2021). Significant loss rates were also observed in the 2020/2021 agricultural year, due to the lack of rain in the municipality's corn, beans and cassava crops, especially in the districts of Tiquaruçu and Matinha.

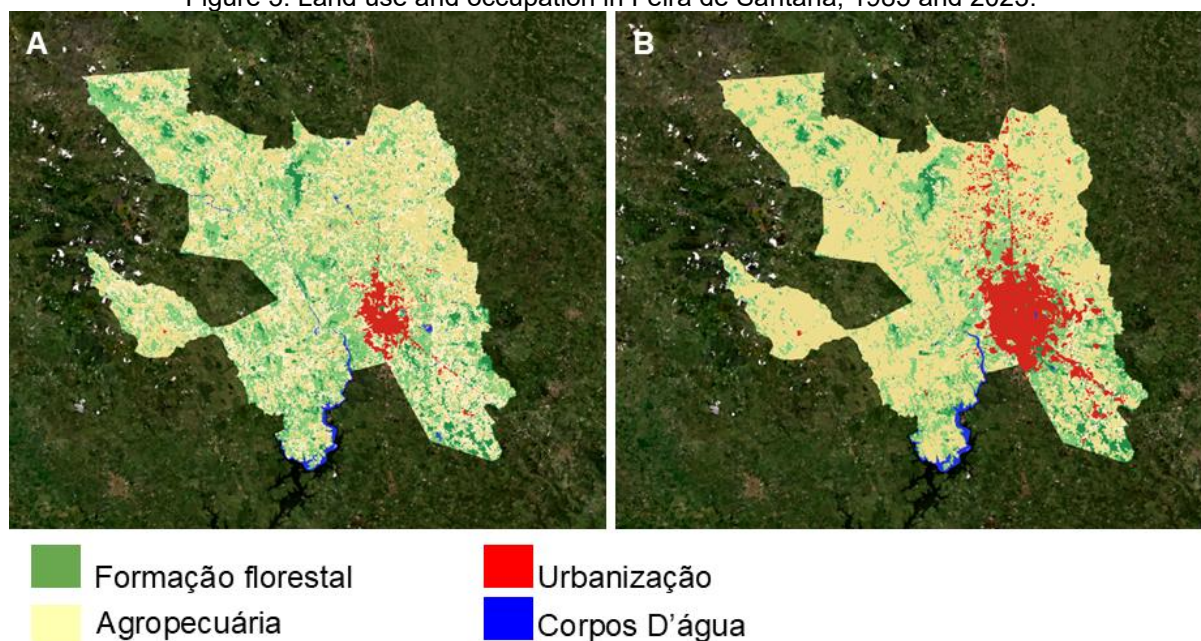
The decline in family agricultural production in the municipality of Feira de Santana can be attributed to several factors such as the progressive reduction in the size of family units, the decrease in natural soil fertility, the occurrence of extreme weather events such as droughts and droughts. In addition, public policies such as the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture (PRONAF), the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), in addition to the public service of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER) and the Crop Guarantee, have been emptied, directly affecting the productive capacity of family farming in the municipality of Feira de Santana (SEAGRI/PMFS, 2021).

According to land use and occupation data in Feira de Santana (MapBiomass, 2024), in 2023 agriculture occupied 83,941 hectares, representing 64.35% of the total area of the municipality. Of this total, 74,998 hectares were allocated to pastures, and only 3 hectares to temporary crop agriculture, 12 hectares to silviculture and 8,927 hectares to mosaics for use⁴ (Figure 3B). Comparatively, in 1985 agriculture occupied a smaller area of 77,217 hectares, distributed among 41,112 hectares of pastures, 36,096 hectares of mosaics of use and 8 hectares destined to the agriculture of temporary crops.

Regarding urbanization, there was a significant growth: in 1985, urbanized areas occupied 3,569 hectares, while in 2023 this area increased to 12,448 hectares, equivalent to 9.53% of the territory of Feira de Santana (Figure 3A). Other categories of land use and occupation include water bodies (1,305 hectares or 1%), forest formations (32,463 hectares or 24.89%), and non-vegetated areas (133 hectares or 0.11%).

⁴ The mosaic of use corresponds to the areas of agricultural use where it was not possible to distinguish between pasture and agriculture.

Figure 3. Land use and occupation in Feira de Santana, 1985 and 2023.



Source: Prepared by the author from MapBiomass (2024).

From Figure 3, we can observe an expressive urban expansion that significantly transforms the territorial dynamics of Feira de Santana. This expansion is not limited to the occupation of a larger spatial area, but directly influences the countryside-city relations, redefining the ways of life and productive practices of family and peasant agriculture, as will be discussed in the following axis.

URBANIZATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IN FEIRA DE SANTANA AND ITS IMPACTS ON FAMILY AND PEASANT AGRICULTURE

The spatial organization of Feira de Santana was historically shaped by capitalist economic dynamics, evidencing the central role of commerce and industry in the conformation of the municipality. Initially, cattle ranching and cattle trade drove the emergence of the first urban agglomeration (Freitas, 2009). In the 1970s, the creation of the Subaé Industrial Center (CIS), the Supply Center and the first housing complexes marked a developmental project aimed at the economic and urban expansion of the municipality (Santos, Silva and Alves, 2013). More recently, in 2014, the Supply Center underwent significant interventions with the construction of the Shopping Popular Cidade das Compras, considered the greatest transformation of this space and also seen as an attack on cultural traditions and the popular classes (Dias, 2021).

According to Neves and Lima (2024), Feira de Santana is undergoing a new process of eminently neoliberal urbanization, which accentuates inequalities between social classes, socio-spatial segregation, and the control of the real estate market in the urban configuration. Gated communities emerge as the most evident symbol of this transformation, functioning as physical and symbolic barriers that delimit access to privileged urban spaces.

Between 1984 and 2018, 184 gated communities were counted in Feira de Santana, the first of which were intended for the middle and upper classes, were concentrated in the vicinity of the urban center and had few units, as the main characteristic was socio-spatial exclusivity (Figueredo, 2019). However, from 2009 onwards, the government program Minha Casa Minha Vida (My House My Life) program drove an explosion of condominium launches, both horizontal and vertical (Oliveira and Santos, 2022). An emblematic example is the Vila Olímpia urban complex, in the Pedra do Descanso neighborhood, where several condominiums were built in a previously devalued area with cheaper land (Araújo, 2019). This movement resulted in the expansion of the urban fabric beyond the central limits and consolidated a new logic of land occupation.

According to Silva et al. (2021) in villages such as São Domingos and São Roque, both located in the district of Jaíba, the growing presence of condominiums and subdivisions configures a new reality that impacts agricultural activities, work dynamics, and the supply of public services. In this context, aspects such as the dilution of the dichotomy between city and countryside, the invisibility of rural subjects and the progressive expropriation of the peasant population stand out. In some cases, this results in conflicts over land and the collection of taxes on real estate or land, aggravating the situation.

Regarding the district of Humildes, Alves and Freitas (2023) point out that the duality between urban and rural has configured a "new rural-urban", marked by the coexistence of urban and rural practices in a territory transformed by real estate and industrial expansion. According to the authors, the opening of allotments converted land into a commodity, driven by the local government and real estate capital, favoring the expansion of the urban sprawl over previously rural areas. Oliveira (2008) complements this analysis by observing that, although the installation of industries has altered the local landscape, it has not been able to absorb the growing workforce resulting from the population increase, causing a significant drop in the production of cassava and fruit growing. In response to this reality,

the cultivation of vegetables, such as lettuce, coriander, chives and parsley, has emerged as a viable economic alternative, ensuring the livelihood of family farmers and peasants.

To minimize the problems generated by urbanization, especially in Feira de Santana, where changes occurred at an accelerated rate and affected areas previously considered "urban voids", urban planning actions are necessary, such as studies to map urban expansion, definition of priority zones, areas of restriction, expansion directions, and assessment of environmental impacts (Santos, 2019). Souza (2020), when carrying out a study of the vectorization of the urban sprawl in Feira de Santana, highlighted that the urbanized area has already exceeded the limits of the headquarters, reaching the districts of Humildes, João Durval Carneiro, Maria Quitéria, Matinha, and Jaíba. The survey also points out that urban expansion tends to continue, especially in the east, southeast, south and west directions of the municipality.

In view of the scenario presented, in which family and peasant agriculture in Feira de Santana is often denied and excluded from urban planning, it becomes urgent to mobilize farmers and peasants so that their demands are incorporated into public policies. Urban development strategies need to consider the specificities of the countryside, valuing agricultural practices, protecting rural territories and promoting the inclusion of these groups in decision-making processes. Only through integrative policies will it be possible to balance urban expansion with the preservation of the social, cultural and economic dynamics that sustain family and peasant agriculture in the municipality.

ASSOCIATIVISM AS AN ELEMENT OF STRENGTHENING FAMILY AND PEASANT AGRICULTURE IN FEIRA DE SANTANA

From a legal point of view, associations are constituted by legal entities governed by private law, duly registered in the civil registry offices of legal entities, and freely constituted by the union of people who organize themselves for non-economic purposes (Brasil, 2002). Martins (2018) highlights that these organizations have a social function, contributing both to consolidate public policies and to foster criticism, which we consider relevant whether as social or positional engagement of communities, for example.

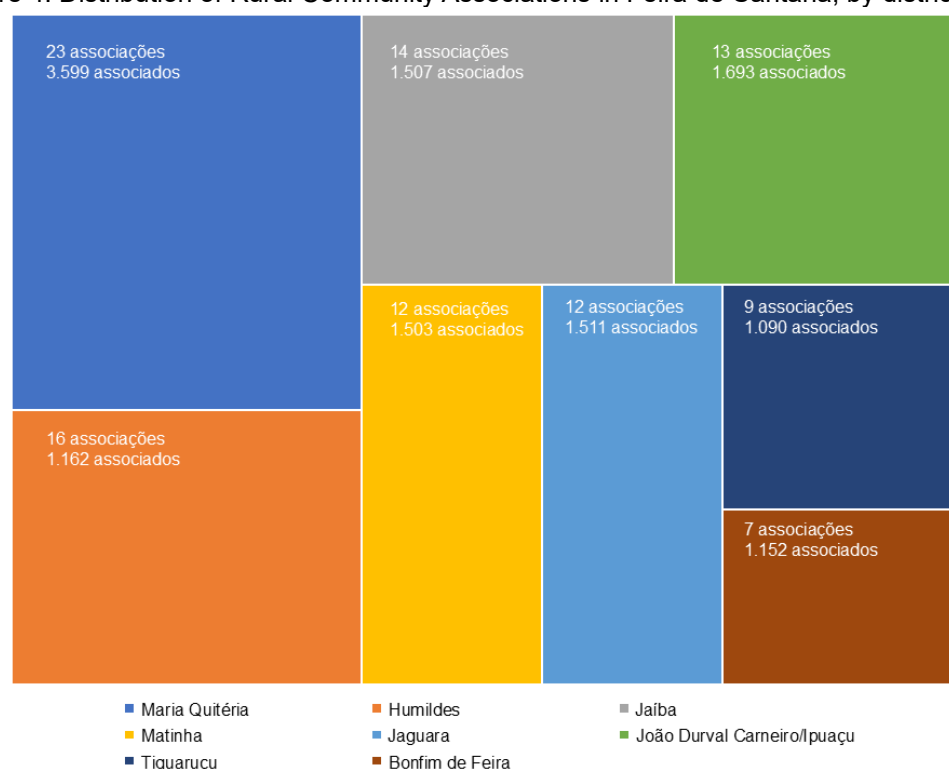
In the context of struggles in rural areas, Sampaio (2019) observes that community associations play an important role in the mobilization of family farmers and peasants, promoting collective organization and strengthening of rural communities. Through them, farmers and peasants can claim their rights, and also organize production and marketing,

reducing dependence on middlemen and increasing family income. In addition, these associations favor the construction of support networks that enable greater autonomy for farmers and peasants.

Neves and Lima (2024) analyze associativism linked to the Popular and Solidarity Economy as an alternative to combat capitalist logic, as it promotes social participation, values collectivity, and encourages the struggle for fairer living conditions, both in the countryside and in the city. Lima (2022) argues that, in order to be truly revolutionary, the Popular and Solidarity Economy must take a critical stance, strengthening popular organization and class struggles.

In Feira de Santana, rural associations are significant, with 106 active community associations in 2022, according to the Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development of Feira de Santana (SEAGRI/PMFS). These associations bring together 13,217 family farmers and peasants, who frequently seek access to services and technical support offered by SEAGRI/PMFS, such as seed distribution, soil analysis and correction, supply of sheep seedlings and matrices, access to training courses by the National Rural Learning Service (SENAR). The distribution of rural community associations by district of Feira de Santana is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Distribution of Rural Community Associations in Feira de Santana, by district, 2022.



Source: Prepared by the author based on data from SEAGRI/PMFS.

Despite their relevance, community associations face challenges such as the aging of their members and the low engagement of young people. This scenario points to the need for strategies that revitalize these organizations, promoting greater participation of the new generations.

Thus, rural associativism reaffirms itself as an important element for the strengthening of family and peasant agriculture, contributing to the fight against inequalities and in favor of socio-spatial justice. The number of associations already demonstrates the mobilization or reactions of the community populations, abruptly sent to the city, having reduced their possibilities of material production of their existences.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Urbanization in Feira de Santana has advanced through rural areas and has generated significant impacts on family and peasant agriculture, such as the reduction of arable areas, the emptying of rural communities and the precariousness of access to land, aggravated by the low efficiency of public policies. Thus, for example, districts such as Humildes, Maria Quitéria, Matinha, and Jaíba, face urbanization processes that transform productive activities and traditional ways of life.

In view of this reality and the significant number of rural community associations in the municipality, associativism presents itself as a potential to strengthen family farming and rural communities, especially due to the ability of farmers and peasants to mobilize in favor of collective needs and demands. However, more in-depth investigations on these associations are necessary, seeking to make visible their actions, achievements and challenges, in addition to encouraging youth participation and strengthening these important demarcations of the rural territory of Feira de Santana.

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