

FAMILY AGRICULTURE AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY: A STUDY FROM MULTIPLE UNDERSTANDINGS

A AGRICULTURA FAMILIAR COMO INSTRUMENTO DE REALIZAÇÃO DO DIREITO AO DESENVOLVIMENTO E DA SUSTENTABILIDADE: UM ESTUDO A PARTIR DE MÚLTIPLAS COMPREENSÕES

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Abstract

The right to development, in its current form, presupposes the dignity of the human person arising from the combination of economic, social, cultural, and political aspects to fully value the individual. The concern has been with providing evolving environments guaranteeing individual and social rights, such as housing, food, employment, education, a balanced environment, among others. Based on these considerations, this study seeks to reflect the concepts of the right to development, drawing on the interdisciplinarity between Sociology, Geography, Law, and Economics.

Resumo

O direito ao desenvolvimento, nos moldes atuais, pressupõe a dignidade da pessoa humana oriunda da conjugação de aspectos econômicos, sociais, culturais e políticos para valorizar o indivíduo integralmente. A preocupação tem sido proporcionar ambientes de evolução garantindo direitos individuais e sociais, tais como moradia, alimentação, emprego, educação, meio ambiente equilibrado, entre outros. A partir dessas considerações, este estudo busca refletir os conceitos de direito ao desenvolvimento, valendo-se da interdisciplinaridade entre a Sociologia, a Geografia, o Direito e a Economia. Além disso, evidencia



Furthermore, it highlights the relationship between sustainability and development, focusing on rural development. Finally, it presents family agriculture and establishes overviews of the right to development, bringing the social actors involved and their contribution to society to the center of the discussion. This article is justified by the need to promote family farming as an instrument toward the right to development and sustainability so that the State grants greater incentives in all aspects. The chosen method was hypothetical-deductive, using bibliographic and documentary resources.

Keywords: family agriculture; rural development; right to development; sustainability;

a relação entre sustentabilidade e desenvolvimento, colocando em foco o desenvolvimento rural. Por fim, apresenta a agricultura familiar e estabelece panoramas junto ao direito ao desenvolvimento, trazendo para o centro da discussão os atores sociais ali inseridos e a contribuição deles para a sociedade. Este artigo se justifica na necessidade de promover a agricultura familiar como instrumento do direito ao desenvolvimento e da sustentabilidade para que o Estado conceda maiores incentivos em todos os aspectos. O método escolhido foi o hipotético-dedutivo, com utilização de recursos bibliográficos e documentais.

Palavras-chave: agricultura familiar; desenvolvimento rural; direito ao desenvolvimento; sustentabilidade;

Introduction

The right to development, as framed by the Declaration on the Right to Development, defines human rights as a synthesis encompassing both individual and collective rights and implies that all individuals and communities must actively engage in political decision-making, as well as contribute to comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political development. States are obligated to promote this right through domestic programs and international cooperation.

Authors from various scientific fields have proposed theories regarding the right to development, emphasizing that the subject extends beyond purely financial matters, also relating to issues of freedom, capability, and the provision of opportunities for personal and societal advancement. This perspective aligns the right to development with the aspiration of cultivating a fully developed human being, engaging in various dimensions of life.

From a conceptual and normative standpoint, the right to development may be inherently linked to sustainability, given the expansive scope of development, preserving a balanced environment for current and future generations is crucial for fostering the comprehensive well-being of individuals. The concept of sustainable development underpinned the creation of the 2030 Agenda, established by the United Nations (UN) and endorsed by numerous countries, setting goals aimed at advancing social progress.

Within the framework of development, family farming emerges as a viable

instrument for sustainability, enabling social actors to produce high-quality food for self-sufficiency while supplying rural and urban areas with minimal environmental impact. Family farming can also be understood as a tool for implementing the right to development, with contributions that extend beyond food production, fostering the identity of rural populations, preserving their social and cultural roots, and supporting their continued stay in their territories.

To examine these themes and their points of intersection, the following objectives were outlined—first, to explore the doctrinal and normative dimensions of the right to development through a multidimensional lens; second, to analyze sustainability as derived from the right to development, including its implementation in the UN 2030 Agenda and its alignment with the national context, particularly rural development; and, finally, to investigate family farming within the framework of rural development, highlighting its societal contributions and advocating for its continued support by the State.

The methodology employed was hypothetical-deductive, utilizing bibliographic and documentary resources such as books, journals, periodicals, laws, resolutions, and international standards, with an interdisciplinary approach incorporated social sciences alongside legal sciences.

1 Conceptual and normative support for the right to development

The right to development has been built progressively over recent years. While its aspects were previously referenced in earlier legal frameworks, it was not until 1972 that Supreme Court Justice of Senegal, Keba M'baye, introduced the terminology during the inaugural lecture of the human rights course at the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg. His lecture, titled “The Right to Development as a Human Right” marked a pivotal moment, as pointed out by Anjos Filho (2017).

In this lecture, the Senegalese jurist emphasized the importance of safeguarding human dignity through a holistic understanding of individuals, which necessitates integrating moral, legal, and political concepts. He critiqued Eurocentric and liberal interpretations of human rights, advocating instead for solidarity and a focus on developing countries.

At the time, development was predominantly understood in economic terms, measured by the evidence that a nation was evolving through its *quantum* production of wealth, often without equitable distribution among its population. This perspective shift, however, carried profound implications globally, as

highlighted by Arnold Wald (2022, p. 22, emphasis added, free translation¹):

This global characterization of development is very important, as it consists of the basic distinction between growth and development, the first of a purely quantitative nature, based on the statistical increase in gross product, or other indices, and *the second qualitative, inspired by historical mutation, in the transition from one type of social life to another, in becoming aware of the industrialization process and its social and pedagogical corollaries, encompassing greater equality among all citizens.*

The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development by the United Nations, influenced by this reinterpretation, asserts that the right to development is an inalienable human right, affirming that all individuals and peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural, and political development, ensuring the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This perspective broadens the concept of development beyond mere economic growth, integrating political, sociological, and cultural dimensions. When analyzing the Declaration on the Right to Development (UN, 1986), Piovesan (2023, p. 257, free translation²) points out that

[...] development comprises an economic, social, cultural, and political process, with the objective of ensuring the constant improvement of the well-being of the population and individuals, based on their active, free, and significant participation in this process, guided by fair distribution of the benefits it yields.

Sen (2010, p. 11) further elaborates on these dimensions of the right to development, asserting: “development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states”.

In his work, Sen (2010) emphasizes the indispensability of granting individuals the freedoms necessary to achieve personal and, consequently, collective development, defining development as a process of expanding the real freedoms

1 From the original: “Essa caracterização global do desenvolvimento é muito importante, pois nela consiste a distinção básica entre crescimento e desenvolvimento, o primeiro de caráter meramente quantitativo, baseado no aumento estatístico do produto bruto, ou de outros índices, e o *segundo qualitativo, inspirado na mutação histórica, na passagem de um tipo de vida social para outro, na tomada de consciência do processo de industrialização e dos seus corolários sociais e pedagógicos, abrangendo maior igualdade entre todos os cidadãos*”.

2 From the original: “[...] desenvolvimento compreende um processo econômico, social, cultural e político, com o objetivo de assegurar a constante melhoria do bem-estar da população e dos indivíduos, com base em sua ativa, livre e significativa participação nesse processo, orientada pela justa distribuição dos benefícios dele resultants”.

that people enjoy. The author identifies instrumental freedoms essential to this process, including political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security.

In this context, the right to development places social justice at its core, striving to provide everyone with opportunities to access basic resources such as health, education, food, housing, and employment, along with active participation in democracy and political decision-making. This vision aligns with a development focused on “the interests of the social whole, more than mechanical or linear economic growth”, as Britto (2010, p. 138, free translation³) asserts.

The dimensions of the right to development encompass the scope of popular participation, the initiative of national and international policies and programs, as well as social justice, as highlighted by Rosas (1995). Popular participation aligns with the foundational principle of the right to development: the inseparable relationship between the exercise of civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights. This principle reflects Piovesan’s (2023, p. 258, free translation⁴) assertion that “States must promote and ensure the free, meaningful and active participation of individuals and groups in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of development policies”.

National and international programs and policies form what Anjos Filho (2017, p. 218, free translation⁵) describes as the “*multidimensional* panorama of the right to development”, encompassing variations of this right based on active and passive ownership and its national and international impacts.

At the international level, identifying the subjects and content of the right to development requires consideration of international conventions and other relevant documents, such as the Declaration on the Right to Development, whose essence lies in the principles of self-determination of peoples and cooperation among nations. At the national level, the source will derive from the regulations of each State, aiming to address rights on an individualized basis. This duality aligns with the observations of Trindade (2009, p. 291, free translation⁶), who served as

3 From the original: “interesses do todo social, mais do que um mecânico ou linear crescimento econômico”.

4 From the original: “Estados devem promover e assegurar a livre, significativa e ativa participação de indivíduos e grupos na elaboração, implementação e monitoramento de políticas de desenvolvimento”.

5 From the original: “panorama *multidimensional* do direito ao desenvolvimento”.

6 From the original: “O direito ao desenvolvimento, como um “direito humano inalienável” (direito subjetivo), há de ser distinguido do direito internacional do desenvolvimento, com fontes distintas, sistema normativo objetivo voltado à transformação mais equilibrada e equitativa das relações entre Estados juridicamente iguais e economicamente desiguais”.

a legal advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time⁷:

The right to development, as an “inalienable human right” (subjective right), must be distinguished from international development law, which has different sources and serves as an objective normative system aimed at fostering a more balanced and equitable transformation of relations among legally equal but economically unequal States.

In the Brazilian legal framework, the right to development finds its etymological foundation in the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 (CRFB), which, in its Article 3, establishes the following fundamental objectives:

- I — to build a free, just, and solidary society.
- II — to guarantee national development.
- III — to eradicate poverty and marginalization and reduce social and regional inequalities.
- IV — to promote the well-being of all, without prejudice based on origin, race, gender, color, age, or any other form of discrimination (Brasil, 1988, free translation⁸).

By employing infinitive verbs, the national legislator outlined a set of goals to be pursued by governments, which encompass political, economic, sociological, and cultural dimensions inherent to the contemporary understanding of the right to development. There is an intrinsic connection between this right and the constitutional objectives related to social well-being, necessitating positive action by the State to ensure the full realization of individual and social rights.

It is crucial to remember that the right to development was conceived to provide enhanced protection for human dignity. Consequently, at the national level, it also draws on the principles enshrined in Article 1 of the CRFB as the material foundation for its implementation, namely:

- I — Sovereignty.
- II — Citizenship.
- III — the dignity of the human person.
- IV — the social values of labor and free enterprise.
- V — political pluralism (Brasil, 1988, free translation⁹).

⁷ Excerpt delivered at the “Global Consultations on the Realization of the Right to Development as a Human Right” event, held at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva from January 8 to 12, 1990.

⁸ From the original: “I – construir uma sociedade livre, justa e solidária;

II – garantir o desenvolvimento nacional;

III – erradicar a pobreza e a marginalização e reduzir as desigualdades sociais e regionais;

IV – promover o bem de todos, sem preconceitos de origem, raça, sexo, cor, idade e quaisquer outras formas de discriminação”.

⁹ From the original: “I – a soberania;

By linking humanism to the quality of life of the population—a concept closely tied to legal obligations that require State action—Britto (2010, p. 728, free translation¹⁰) references the preamble of the CRFB to assert:

[...] this highly legitimized Constitution of 1988 was drafted with the explicit objective of “establishing a democratic state” (initial portion of the preamble of our Supreme Law). However, it was not designed as just any democratic state. Instead, it envisions a democratic State “intended to ensure the exercise of social and individual rights, freedom, security, well-being, development, equality, and justice as supreme values of a fraternal, pluralistic, and unprejudiced society, founded on social harmony and committed, in both domestic and international spheres, to the peaceful resolution of conflicts”.

Given the lack of consensus on a single definition of the right to development—whose dimensions are numerous and context-dependent—it is understood as a premise within the broader framework of human rights, interrelated with many of them. According to Anjos Filho (2017, p. 223), the right to development can be viewed as a “synthesis”, as its objectives encompass fundamental human rights such as education, health, food, and others.

Arising from this multidimensional nature, with its inherent connection to other rights, the right to development guarantees the full realization of human personality; a view supported by Sátiro, Marques, and Oliveira (2017, p. 184, free translation¹¹), who argue that “recognizing the right to development as a human right means understanding its legal legitimacy as a trans-individual, meta-legal, and complex right, which aims to ensure the full development of the human personality”.

The right to development, therefore, regards humankind in its entirety and requires the implementation of programs and public policies that integrate both individual and collective rights, aiming to transcend the mere notion of freedom

II – a cidadania;

III – a dignidade da pessoa humana;

IV – os valores sociais do trabalho e da livre iniciativa;

V – o pluralismo político”.

10 From the original: “[...] essa tão legitimada Constituição de 1988 foi elaborada com o explícito desiderato de “instituir um Estado democrático” (parte inicial do preâmbulo da nossa Lei Mais Alta). Mas não um Estado democrático qualquer. Porém um Estado democrático “destinado a assegurar o exercício dos direitos sociais e individuais, a liberdade, a segurança, o bem-estar, o desenvolvimento, a igualdade e a justiça como valores supremos de uma sociedade fraterna, pluralista e sem preconceitos, fundada na harmonia social e comprometida, na ordem interna e internacional, com a solução pacífica das controvérsias”.

11 From the original: reconhecer o direito ao desenvolvimento como um direito humano significa compreender a sua legitimidade jurídica enquanto um direito transindividual, metajurídico e complexo, que tem por finalidade assegurar o desenvolvimento pleno da personalidade humana”.

in all its dimensions and bring about a dignified existence for each individual. To achieve this, participatory democracy and the integration and safeguarding of plural values—particularly those related to social justice—are indispensable.

2 The right to sustainable development and the categorization of rural development

In its preamble, the Declaration on the Right to Development defines development as

[...] a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom (ONU, 1986).

Throughout the text of the Declaration, this multifaceted conception of the right to development is emphasized, highlighting the importance of State action in implementing public policies that ensure equal opportunities for individuals and minority groups to access essential resources such as education, health, food, housing, employment, and the environment, among others.

Such considerations can be expressed in the words of Sen (2010, p. 54), who explains that, for development to occur, it is necessary to achieve individual freedoms across various domains, with the State playing a fundamental role in this process:

Substantial attention has to be paid to the social influences, including state actions, that help to determine the nature and reach of individual freedoms. Social arrangements may be decisively important in securing and expanding the freedom of the individual. Individual freedoms are influenced, on one side, by the social safeguarding of liberties, tolerance, and the possibility of exchange and transactions. They are also influenced, on the other side, by substantive public support in the provision of those facilities (such as basic health care or essential education) that are crucial for the formation and use of human capabilities.

From a similar perspective, the right to development must integrate the concept of sustainability. States must aim not only for macro-level development (political, social, cultural, and economic) but also for sustainable development that enables individuals to achieve satisfactory socioeconomic and cultural growth through the judicious use of natural resources, ensuring their availability for future generations.

This concept emerged in the context of crises, environmental degradation,

and the challenges associated with globalization. Tonneau (2004, p. 81-82, free translation¹²) underscores that while progress has been made in health and technology, the social and environmental costs have been exorbitant, noting that “the development of some may arise from the underdevelopment of others”.

A critical instrument in linking development with sustainability, the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1991, p. 47, free translation¹³), asserts that the goal of development is to fulfill both current and future human aspirations: “For sustainable development to occur, everyone must have their basic needs met and opportunities to realize their aspirations for a better life”.

This vision of sustainability aligns with contemporary aspects of the right to development, as achieving comprehensive individual development requires addressing two key dimensions:

[...] (a) the perception of the needs of the present, that is, the unshakable search for solutions to poverty spread throughout the world, since, without overcoming this obstacle – it is impossible to speak in development; and (b) the perception that, with the current stage of technological evolution and social organization, there are obvious environmental limitations for the satisfaction of basic needs, whether present or future (Marco; Mezzaroba, 2017, p. 329).

In light of global concerns about sustainable development, the UN General Assembly (2015) adopted the 2030 Agenda, the culmination of a global participatory process spanning more than two years. This process incorporated contributions from governments, civil society, the private sector, and research institutions, setting objectives aimed at economic development, the eradication of poverty, extreme poverty, and hunger, as well as social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and good governance at all levels.

It is a universal action plan comprising 17 goals that form the backbone of the new sustainable development agenda. All the so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are intrinsically connected to the right to development as outlined in the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions discussed here, encompassing both individual and collective rights, requiring implementation by States.

12 From the original: “desenvolvimento de alguns pode nascer do subdesenvolvimento de outros”.

13 From the original: “Para que haja um desenvolvimento sustentável, é preciso que todos tenham atendidas as suas necessidades básicas e lhes sejam proporcionadas oportunidades de concretizar suas aspirações a uma vida melhor”.

Among the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda is Goal 2: “Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture—Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, as well as promoting sustainable agriculture” (ONU, 2015, free translation¹⁴). It is significant that the objective of ending hunger is paired with promoting sustainable agriculture, suggesting that sustainable agriculture is one of the key drivers for eradicating hunger.

Resuming the concept of development as freedom, Sen (2010) emphasizes that hunger is not solely tied to food production or agricultural expansion but is also a consequence of how the economy operates. The author underscores the importance of political and social provisions in shaping people’s ability to access food, a concept he refers to as “entitlement”. Accordingly, addressing hunger requires more than charitable food distribution—it requires empowering individuals to acquire or produce food themselves.

The right to development, therefore, extends to encompass rural development, reinforcing its dynamic nature and adaptability to the needs of specific individuals or social groups to which it is related. This is because the sustainable agriculture outlined in Goal 2 of the 2030 Agenda relates directly to the rurality of the territory and the social actors¹⁵ emerging from Brazil’s rural environment (ONU, 2015).

Rural development, much like the right to development, has an extensive and evolving bibliography that reflects ongoing social transformations. Historically viewed as synonymous with agricultural modernization or rural urbanization, the contemporary understanding of rural development centers on “the creation of capabilities—human, political, cultural, technical, etc.—that enable rural populations to act to transform and improve their living conditions through changes in their relationships with the spheres of the State, the market, and civil society” (Condraf, 2013, p. 13, free translation¹⁶).

14 From the original: “Fome Zero e Agricultura Sustentável – Acabar com a fome, alcançar a segurança alimentar e melhoria da nutrição e promover a agricultura sustentável”.

15 From the perspective of Long and Ploeg (2011, p. 24, free translation), “social actors are not merely viewed as empty social categories (based on class or classification criteria) or as passive recipients of intervention, but rather as active participants who process information and employ strategies in their relationships with various local actors, as well as with external institutions and individuals”. From the original: “os atores sociais não são vistos meramente como categorias sociais vazias (baseados na classe ou em critérios de classificação) ou recipientes passivos de intervenção, mas sim como participantes ativos que processam informações e utilizam estratégias nas suas relações com vários atores locais, assim como com instituições e pessoas externas”.

16 From the original: “criação de capacidades – humanas, políticas, culturais, técnicas etc. – que permitam às populações rurais agir para transformar e melhorar suas condições de vida, por meio de mudanças em suas relações com as esferas do Estado, do mercado e da sociedade civil”.

Drawing on the works of José Eli da Veiga and Ricardo Abramovay, Schneider (2010) highlights that rural development constitutes a fertile and expansive proposal with a broad thematic and theoretical foundation which, over years of research, has emerged within a multidisciplinary framework in which economics, ecology, and economic sociology play a prominent role. The author emphasizes points of consensus across the fields studying rural development, such as the valuation of family farming and its recognized potential to drive local economies.

Rural areas perform various roles within the overall development process, which evolve over time, leading to the establishment of “multisectoral” rural development. Kageyama (2004, p. 388-389, free translation¹⁷) elucidates the term:

Previously limited to agriculture, the productive role now encompasses diverse activities such as handicrafts, the processing of natural products, rural tourism, and environmental conservation. The population role, which during periods of rapid industrialization served to supply urban labor, has now been reversed, requiring infrastructure development, services, and job creation to retain populations in rural areas. The environmental role, increasingly emphasized following the initial stages of industrialization (including rural areas), demands that rural spaces contribute to the creation and protection of public and quasi-public goods, such as landscapes, forests, and the environment as a whole. Thus, rural development must be not only multisectoral but also multifunctional.

The principles of rural development clearly align with sustainability and the right to development, as they position the rural human being as both a social actor and an active participant—individually and collectively—in shaping the multifaceted rural space. At the same time, these principles prioritize the preservation of natural resources for present and future generations.

Reflecting on this subject, Duque (2004) argues that the dual expression “rural development and sustainability” expresses a reality—or rather, an exceedingly complex ideal. According to the author, the contemporary definition of development is articulated as “a pathway toward a state of well-being for humankind, encompassing all components of quality of life: health, education,

17 From the original: “A função produtiva, antes restrita à agricultura, passa a abranger diversas atividades, como o artesanato e o processamento de produtos naturais e além do turismo rural e conservação ambiental; a função populacional, que nos períodos de industrialização acelerada consistia em fornecer mão-de-obra para as cidades, agora inverteu-se, requerendo-se o desenvolvimento de infraestrutura, serviços e oferta de empregos que assegurem a retenção de população na área rural; a função ambiental passa a receber mais atenção após as fases iniciais da industrialização (inclusive do campo) e demanda do meio rural a criação e proteção de bens públicos e quase públicos, como paisagem, florestas e meio ambiente em geral. Assim, o desenvolvimento rural, além de multissetorial, deve ser também multifuncional”.

culture, security, etc.” (Duque, 2004, p. 77-78, free translation¹⁸). Beyond the economic dimension, this definition emphasizes solidarity and harmonious relationships with others and with nature.

Rural development, therefore, embodies the entire conceptual framework of the right to development, as it aims to guide the efforts of the State and society toward ensuring a holistic quality of life for rural men and women. This involves fostering economic growth while ensuring their active participation in the adoption of the policies necessary to uphold their social and cultural identities and safeguard the environment through the sustainable use of resources.

3 Family farming in the context of sustainable development and the realization of the right to development in rural areas

The evolving concept of rural development is grounded in the principles of the right to development and sustainability, reflecting an apparent interdisciplinarity. Although it may not have explicitly sought to unify Sociology, Law, Economics, and Geography (among other fields), the foundations of the right to development are inherently present in rural development, which focuses on social actors and seeks to advance them economically, socially, culturally, and politically.

These considerations lead to the proposal of sustainable rural development, which not only promotes the well-being of rural populations today but also accounts for the needs of future generations and the environment. Sustainable rural development aligns with Schneider's (2004, p. 94-95, emphasis added, free translation¹⁹) discourse, which identifies its key elements:

Analyzing some of the key works and authors in this recent debate, scholars emphasize four key elements that underpin the *renewed discussion on rural development: the eradication of rural poverty, the prominence of social actors and their political participation, the territory as a reference unit, and a core concern toward environmental sustainability*.

Once again, reference is made to the 2030 Agenda, which outlines the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be pursued by States, including economic

18 From the original: “caminho para uma situação de bem-estar da humanidade, incluindo os aspectos de qualidade de vida com todos os seus componentes: saúde, educação, cultura, segurança, etc.”.

19 From the original: “Analisando-se alguns dos trabalhos e autores referenciais nesse debate recente, ressalta-se a preocupação dos estudiosos com quatro elementos-chave a partir dos quais se preconiza a *retomada do debate sobre o desenvolvimento rural: a erradicação da pobreza rural, a questão do protagonismo dos atores sociais e sua participação política, o território como unidade de referência e a preocupação central com a sustentabilidade ambiental*”.

development, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and good governance at all levels (ONU, 2015).

In clear alignment with rural development, as discussed in the previous section, is Goal 2, which addresses zero hunger and sustainable agriculture. The intersection of these themes emphasizes that encouraging sustainable farming practices and respecting the environment can ensure food security for the current generation without compromising that of future generations.

Within the Brazilian legal framework, Food and Nutritional Security²⁰ is defined as ensuring the right of all people to regular and permanent access to quality food in sufficient quantities, without jeopardizing access to other essential needs. This is based on food practices that promote health, respect cultural diversity, and are environmentally, culturally, economically, and socially sustainable:

As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 1989), sustainable agriculture involves the efficient management of available resources to maintain production levels that meet the growing aspirations of an expanding population without degrading the environment. Paterniani (2001, p. 303, emphasis added, free translation²¹) underscores that sustainability in agriculture must be understood dynamically, evolving alongside societal development:

In agriculture, the concept of sustainability cannot carry the static aspect commonly implied by the term, in which agricultural systems are considered sustainable as long as production is maintained at current levels. *A dynamic concept is more appropriate and aligns with the evolution and development of society.* Many agricultural practices may have been considered sustainable in the past, or even in the present, depending on socioeconomic, soil and climate conditions, and other local characteristics. *Within a dynamic concept of sustainability, it is crucial to account for temporal changes in human needs, particularly those driven by a growing population, alongside a nuanced understanding of agriculture's relationship with the environment.*

This broad concept encompasses a range of strategies to enhance agricultural productivity under the framework of rational resource use, including methods

20 Article 3 of Law No. 11.346, of September 15, 2006. Establishes the National System for Food and Nutritional Security (*Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional – SISAN*) seeking to ensure the human right to adequate food and other related provisions (Brasil, 2006).

21 From the original: “Na agricultura o conceito de sustentabilidade não pode ter o aspecto estático, comumente implícito no termo, pelo qual os sistemas agrícolas são considerados sustentáveis desde que a produção seja mantida nos níveis atuais. *Um conceito dinâmico é mais apropriado e atende à evolução e ao desenvolvimento da sociedade.* Muitas práticas agrícolas podem ter sido consideradas sustentáveis no passado, ou mesmo no presente, segundo as condições socioeconômicas, edafoclimáticas e demais características locais. *Num conceito dinâmico, a sustentabilidade deve considerar as mudanças temporais nas necessidades humanas, especialmente relacionadas a uma população crescente, bem como uma adequada percepção da relação ambiental com a agricultura*”.

such as reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and implementing rainwater harvesting systems for irrigation, among other techniques. Such practices not only help maintain soil fertility but also combat food shortages and promote food security.

Sustainable agriculture projects vary widely depending on specific circumstances, as noted by Tonneau (2004). Discussing Brazil, he explains that a project in São Paulo will differ significantly from one in the Agreste da Borborema region. The author emphasizes the challenge of fostering autonomous family farming amid drought, lack of productive inputs, and other complex issues—factors that underscore the need for research and action in support of this model, particularly in terms of research for development.

Thus, food security and sustainable agriculture converge to build Goal 2 of the 2030 Agenda, which includes segmented targets aimed at ensuring sustainable food production systems and implementing resilient agricultural practices. These practices seek to increase productivity and production while preserving ecosystems and the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals, and their respective wild species. The goals also seek to guarantee access to, and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge²² (ONU, 2015).

Established under Goal 2, Target 2.3²³ deserves attention for its focus on directing public policies toward rural development, striving to introduce previously excluded social groups, such as small-scale food producers, particularly women, Indigenous peoples, family farmers, and others.

Family farming constitutes a social and political category for the implementation of sustainable agriculture, gaining State recognition more recently as policies began to focus on the socioeconomic aspects of rural populations, aimed to reduce poverty, improve income distribution, prioritize people's well-being, and preserve ecosystems.

Historically, as Grisa and Schneider (2015) explain, family farming—often referred to as “small farmers”—was marginalized in the Brazilian State's actions regarding the country's development options. According to the authors, it was the CRFB that promoted new spaces for social participation and recognized rights.

²² Goals 2.4 and 2.5 of the 2030 Agenda – Transforming Our World (ONU, 2015).

²³ Goal 2.3. By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and income of small food producers, particularly women, Indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists, and fishers. This will be achieved through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, opportunities for value addition, and non-agricultural employment (ONU, 2015).

From that point onward, efforts were directed toward this group, such as the establishment of the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF – *Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura*)²⁴ in 1995.

The term “family farming” encompasses various interpretations, depending on the disciplines and researchers referencing it. However, Neves (2007, p. 221-222, free translation²⁵) emphasizes that: “they all operate with the objective of recognizing the legitimacy of the political action of rural workers, settlers, and small-scale farmers in their pursuit of professional qualifications, access to credit, and technical assistance”. The author identifies several potential social actors within this category, including small producers, farmers engaged in family-based production, settlers under the National Agrarian Reform Program, and individuals with small plots of land producing their food (Neves, 2007).

For the purposes of national programs, institutions like the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA – *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária*) and PRONAF guidelines define family farmers as “small rural producers, agrarian reform settlers, foresters, aquaculturists, extractivists, and fishermen” (EMBRAPA, 2024, free translation²⁶). Additionally, as of 2010, traditional peoples and communities—including Indigenous peoples, *quilombolas*, Romani people, communities of African origin, people from *terreiros*, rubber tappers, chestnut gatherers, babassu coconut breakers, mangaba collectors, and others—have also been recognized as “family farmers”.

Indeed, although there may be varying requirements and characteristics, the view that family farming is fundamentally carried out by individuals with kinship or emotional ties sharing the rural productive space appears to be the most accurate. This understanding is supported by Savoldi and Cunha (2010, p. 25-26, emphasis added, free translation²⁷), who state

24 Established by Resolution No. 2.191/1995, it was designed to provide financial support for agricultural activities carried out through the direct labor of the producer and their family members. According to Decree No. 3.991/2001, PRONAF aims to promote the sustainable development of rural areas through actions that enhance productive capacity, generate employment, and increase income, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life and enabling family farmers to exercise their citizenship.

25 From the original: “todos operam com o objetivo de fazer reconhecer a legitimidade da ação política de trabalhadores rurais, de assentados e agricultores parcelares, em busca de enquadramento profissional, de acesso a recursos creditícios e de assistência técnica”.

26 From the original: “agricultores familiares os pequenos produtores rurais, assentados da reforma agrária, silvicultores, aquicultores, extrativistas e pescadores”.

27 From the original: “A agricultura familiar não é entendida como trabalho familiar. *O que a distingue da maioria das formas sociais de produção como familiar é o papel preponderante da família como estrutura fundamental de organização da reprodução social*, através da formulação de estratégias (conceitos

Family farming is not understood as family labor. *What distinguishes it from most social forms of production as familial is the predominant role of the family as a fundamental structure for organizing social reproduction*, through the formulation of family and individual strategies (whether explicit or implicit) that directly relate to the transmission of material and cultural heritage.

Similarly, Abramovay (1997) defines family farming as a system in which management, ownership, and the majority of labor are provided by individuals sharing either blood or marital ties. However, the author notes that this definition is not universally accepted, as different social sectors construct scientific categories that serve specific practical purposes, such as the allocation of public resources.

In any case, family farming stands out as a powerful instrument of sustainable development, as those involved produce food both for urban supply—selling at markets, for instance—and for self-consumption, which reduces the potential for waste and contributes to sustainability. Since they do not hold large land estates, there is a harmony between humans and nature in their cultivation practices, which employ techniques that are less harmful to the environment, prioritize agroecology, and care for both food and the environment by employing knowledge and practices passed down through different generations/ancestry.

From this perspective, citing data from the 2006 IBGE Agricultural Census, Noronha and Falcón (2018) highlight that approximately 4.3 million family farming establishments occupy only 24.3% of the agricultural area yet produce 70% of the food consumed in the country. They also employ 74.4% of rural workers and are responsible for over 38% of the gross revenue of Brazilian agriculture. This information aligns with the idea that family farming contributes significantly to the development of individuals in rural areas.

Furthermore, due to the substantial amount of food produced on small plots of land for consumption, family farming makes a pressing contribution to food security and sustainability. Noronha and Falcón (2018, pp. 186-187, emphasis added, free translation²⁸) note that

[...] food waste in the agribusiness production chain is 10 times greater than in the small-farmer production chain. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that organic and

ou não) familiares e individuais que remetem diretamente à transmissão do patrimônio material e cultural”.

28 From the original: “[...] o desperdício de alimento na cadeia produtiva do agronegócio é 10 vezes maior que na cadeia produtiva do modo produção campestino. Desse modo, não está errado afirmar que a produção orgânica e sustentável vem da agricultura familiar. É mais fácil garantir uma produção livre de veneno com o agricultor familiar que no agronegócio. Ou seja, é preciso discutir uma reorganização da produção de alimentos do País em um paradigma agroecológico. A disputa entre modelos para o campo: apontamentos sobre a questão agrária no Brasil em busca de um novo paradigma”.

sustainable production comes from family farming. It is easier to guarantee poison-free production with a family farmer than in agribusiness. In other words, it is necessary to discuss a reorganization of the country's food production within an agroecological paradigm. The dispute between models for the countryside: notes on the agrarian issue in Brazil in search of a new paradigm.

Production on family-owned land tends to be passed down through generations, perpetuating both know-how and the supply of foodstuffs to predetermined locations. Besides generating income, family farming fosters the construction and evolution of the identity of rural people, safeguarding their social and cultural roots and encouraging their continued presence in the territory.

Obviously, however, for family farming to continue contributing to food security and productive sustainability, it is essential for the State to provide greater incentives. Only with the CRFB, as of 1988, were these social actors elevated within the country's production levels. Although programs aimed at their development exist, subsidies remain negligible compared to those provided to other groups.

Supporting this stance, Nóbrega and Ferreira (2021, pp. 254-255, free translation²⁹) emphasize: "stimulating the production of artisanal foods should be a foundation of sustainable rural development policies". The authors propose that both State and society must value artisanal production. This means endorsing the strategies and territorialities created by farmers as they use their territorial resources, transforming them into income and employment opportunities to strengthen the local economy.

The experience of social actors in family farming is rooted in cultural identity and know-how transmitted through generations, transcending the merely productivist logic focused on profit, revealing aspects of economic, social, cultural, and political development. Rural human beings must be understood holistically, through *inclusive development*, as emphasized by Sachs (2008). This requires strategies to provide resources that reflect the diversity of socioeconomic and cultural configurations.

Ensuring the participation of rural actors is crucial, as this development relies significantly on: "Complementary public policies based on the principle of unequal treatment of unequals, affirmative actions that favor small producers and small entrepreneurs, aiming to compensate for the initial disadvantage in relation to larger, modern, and stronger companies" (Sachs, 2008, p. 100, free translation³⁰).

29 From the original: "estimular a produção de alimentos artesanais deveria consistir em um fundamento das políticas de desenvolvimento rural sustentável".

30 From the original: "políticas públicas complementares baseadas no princípio do tratamento

In this context, Aquino and Schneider (2015, p. 76-77, free translation) highlight

[...] the great challenge for social movements is to resume the debate on the future of family and small farming in rural Brazil and redefine the strategic role that rural credit can and should assume in a development project that seeks to reconcile wealth production, social equity, and environmental appreciation.

The integral development of social actors from rural areas thus represents a macro strategy that links improvements in quality of life, rural-urban integration, strengthened production, and the assurance of food security. If the State increases its support for family farming, it will foster greater social justice in production and consumption relationships while contributing to the preservation of cultural and social roots.

Thus, encouraging family farming is a means of realizing the right to development. When the State implements technologies and provides subsidies to increase productivity, it fosters environmental preservation, strengthens social relationships, consolidates the identity of individuals in rural territories, and promotes their participation in discussions on public policies. Society, in turn, will benefit from closer engagement with the social actors involved, gaining deeper insight into their roots, farming methods, know-how, and other rural family traditions.

Final considerations

In the current context, it is impossible to define the right to development with a single, universal definition, as the concept intersects with multiple scientific disciplines. It can be stated, however, that this multidimensional character encompasses individual and social human rights and is closely related to them, while also requiring popular participation, an understanding of social justice, and the development of integrative public policies.

The right to development is reflected in several international documents, such as the Declaration on the Right to Development (ONU, 2015), which seeks to promote cooperation among States and advance the economic, social, cultural, and political development of people. Under the Brazilian legal framework, the etymological foundation of the right to development is explicitly stated in Article

desigual aos desiguais, de ações afirmativas que favoreçam os pequenos produtores e empreendedores de pequeno porte, visando compensar a desvantagem inicial em relação a empresas maiores, modernas e mais fortes”.

3 of the CRFB, which sets forth fundamental objectives, such as building a free, just, and solidary society; ensuring national development; eradicating poverty and marginalization; and reducing social and regional inequalities, among others. However, other constitutional provisions and infra-constitutional norms also align with the broader concept of fostering fully developed human beings.

This analysis of the conceptual and normative framework of the right to development highlights the need to adopt programs and public policies that address both individual and social rights, aiming to transcend freedom and embed the practice of a dignified life into the reality of each human being. The right to development thus emerges as a comprehensive right, encompassing not only economic evolution but also cultural, social, and qualitative dimensions of human life.

Research on the right to development further highlights its intersection with sustainability and the rural context. The central focus is on directing State and societal efforts to provide rural men and women with a full and dignified life, employing resources that minimally impact the environment while preserving it for future generations. In this perspective, the UN 2030 Agenda plays a significant role by setting goals for States, in collaboration with civil society, to pursue economic development, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, promote social inclusion, ensure environmental sustainability, and achieve good governance at all levels.

Goal 2 of the Agenda addresses zero hunger and sustainable agriculture. The means in which these issues engage each other is understood as an inverse cause-and-effect dynamic, wherein food production and agricultural expansion ensure food security and the development of rural territory actors without harming the current or future environment.

The connection between rural development and the right to development lies in the essence of these terms: the promotion of a holistic approach to life for rural men and women. This includes fostering economic growth, encouraging political participation, and supporting social and cultural aspects while maintaining environmental sustainability.

The development objective based on sustainable agriculture finds its primary precursor in family farming, as it has been demonstrated to be the sector that proportionally contributes the most to providing high-quality food for consumption while using small parcels of land. Thus, there is a clear rationality in the use of natural resources and food itself, as production from this group supplies urban centers as well as the producers and their families.

Although the term “family farming” carries various meanings depending on

the context, it can be asserted that its foundation lies in the kinship and/or emotional ties among producers, with ties fostering the intergenerational transmission of know-how, perpetuate the identity of social actors, and ensure their continued presence in rural territories.

Family farming, therefore, is a powerful instrument of sustainable development, as its production is achieved with less harm to the environment and with the aim of reaching the greatest number of people within the established bonds. Thus, it is essential to promote family farming through public policies aimed at creating increasingly valued rural spaces, not only in terms of the economy but also with regard to social and cultural identity relations.

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