Cocoa and Livestock in Amazon: understanding Livelihoods on family farming in São Felix do Xingu

Por: Daniel Braga

As main economic strategy from the rural environment, in São Felix do Xingu – PA, cocoa and livestock farming in family farming are being researched by ESALQ/USP in partnership with IMAFLORA for over 4 years. The forestry engineer Daniel Palma Perez Braga spends several seasons in the field, living with farmers and conducting research about its activities.

His dissertation evaluated the soil and vegetation from the agroforestry systems with cocoa for the rehabilitation of degraded areas. Currently, the thesis in progress evaluates the environmental and socioeconomics aspects of family farming livelihoods.

1 Forestry Enginner, doctorate by ESALQ/USP. The thesis in progress has as Prof. Dr. Edson José Vidal da Silva e co-advisor Prof. Dr. Flávio B. Gandara Mendes, both from Escola Superior de Agricultura “Luiz de Queiroz” - ESALQ/USP
During this time, the improvements are evident in multiple dimensions. The farmers received capacitation to improve their production techniques, being able to produce a fine cocoa beans, with quality suited to the most demanding market. The cooperative (CAMPPAX\textsuperscript{2}) restructured itself and started to better organize the commercialization process, approaching fundamental partners, as ADAFAX\textsuperscript{3}, CFR\textsuperscript{4} and IMAFLORA in its establishment. In addition, the non-timber products have been established with the Association of Women Producing Fruit Pulp (AMPPF) and the activities of collecting Brazil nuts and jaborandi, for example.

\textsuperscript{2} Mixed Cooperative of Small Producers of Alto Xingu
\textsuperscript{3} Association for the Development of Family Agriculture of Alto Xingu
\textsuperscript{4} Rural Family House
In livestock, despite the attack of spittlebug and the reduction on market offers, producers who joined the project about Silvopastoral systems showed themselves satisfied. These systems prioritize leguminous species, which generate biomass and with commercial value, mainly timber. In this sense, according to the doctorate, the introduction of the tree component transcends the economic issue and represents an evolution to better use of the natural resources associated with the cultural issue of cultivation and management of the trees, which needs to be valorized and strengthened in the Brazilian agriculture.
Figure 3 - Farmer Mr Deniston expanded the “silvipastoral” system after seeing the benefits in practice. Picture: Daniel Braga.
Figure 4 - Mr. Pedro shows the development of mahogany and jatobá seedlings, planted in a “silvipastoral” system. Picture: Daniel Braga.

Also notable is the change in the quality of life, highlighting the access to electric power, communication benefits through the installation of antennas to capture wifi signal, houses that now have a bathroom with toilet or masonry structure, acquisition of vehicles or
household utensils, better feeding and training of agroforestry yards, etc.

Figure 5 - House of masonry recently built by a young family of farmers, the couple Edmilson and Maria. Picture: Daniel Braga.

The approach of the Rural Family House among the partners of this IMAFLORA activity is of fundamental importance for the process of transforming family farming, in a constructive way with peasant youth, in order to seek a more balanced between environmental, social and economic factors of the region. In addition, this strategy allows to promote greater capillarity in the diffusion and exchange of knowledge associated to agroecological practices.

Despite the advances, the complex reality still presents numerous obstacles and gaps that make necessary the careful planning of the next steps. For example, the region faces little training in administrative management of associations and cooperatives, labor shortages, large distances from commercial centers, expansion of the agricultural frontier, use of
toxic substances in “garimpo” (mining), improper disposal of solid waste, logging and conflicts with wildlife are some of them. However, gradually and uniting efforts, solutions to the problems are being drawn in the search for sustainability with the protagonists of family agriculture.

Figure 6 - Crossing the Xingu River, São Félix do Xingu - PA. Picture: Daniel Braga.
Figure 7 - Blue macaws feed on the inajá coconut in the agroforestry yard. Picture: Daniel Braga.
Imaflora operates in the Southeast Region of Pará and especially in São Félix do Xingu since 2010 in partnership with producers, cooperatives, governments, companies and institutions, developing replicable models in scale and business opportunities that can stimulate sustainable development in the region.

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http://www.imaflorea.org/desenvolvimento-local-sustentavel_florestas-de-valor.php
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