

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED RESEARCH IN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT – IPADES**

**MODERN FARMING AND REFORESTATION WILL BOOST THE ECONOMY
OF THE MIDDLE MEARIM**

Francisco Benedito da Costa Barbosa

Founding Partner – IPADES

In the period between the decades of 40 and 80 of the last century, the region of the Middle Mearim (MA) having Pedreiras as municipality leader, obtained relevant participation in the economy of Maranhão, due to its growing and diversified agricultural production: rice, cotton, banana and milk. The babassu gave his contribution as extractive segment. Pedreiras, in 1954, was among the largest municipalities rice producers of Brazil reaping the greatest production of Maranhão.¹

However, this diverse agricultural production has not been able to establish productive chains that reach the link agroindustrial sector. The fall in agricultural productivity dropped to the stage of subsistence agriculture and livestock raising, in their majority is extensive. Although the livestock is the largest segment of the current production showed an average yield of 1.83%, below the inflation rate, 2.85% and 7.00%, savings, in 2017. The dairy cattle of low technology presents negative return, - 8,47%, that same year, according to data from the Central Bank, Getúlio Vargas Foundation and Scot Consulting. This scenario demonstrates impoverishment of the region.

In the period of growth of the economy agriculture there was an accumulation of capital in the region, but not invested in technological innovations in this segment, what did decline productivity reflected in profitability discouraging its expansion in production and in the establishment of new links of productive chains. This accumulation of capital was directed to the trade and services. Currently there are those segments that maintain the regional economy, supported in large part by the financial transfers of social policies, mostly retirement and family scholarship.

¹AMARAL, Luís. História Geral da Agricultura Brasileira: no triplice aspecto político-social-econômico. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1958. v.II. p. 80.

This scenario is worrying because it keeps the economy with low capacity of endogenous accumulation of capital and, consequently, low investment capacity, in other sectors of the economy, since the strongest segment is the trade, that capital transfers for the production centers of goods traded in the region. Who more strongly capitalizes on the region are the productive segments, i.e., agriculture and industry.

The low investment capacity of the regional economy contributes on a small scale to the diversification and expansion of the economy through productive chains more elastic. These collaborate more closely with economic growth, with better wages, to add greater value to the products. Without them, the labor market expands and wages remain low, composing a worrying future scenario in which the fall of population density will be real, composing the frame of a stagnant society.

It is, therefore, the time has come to reverse this economic picture of almost stagnation of the economy of the Middle Mearim, an action that seeks its dynamism through the modernization of agriculture and the introduction of reforestation, and their productive chains, such as economic options possible, viable and sustainable. In addition to the reforestation will give significant contribution in improving the climate conditions and water in this region.

The apogee of economic growth in the Middle Mearim counted with migrants from the Northeast, who flee from drought, here were land with forest cover and rainy period regular - Amazon biome. In addition to the expansion of the agricultural frontier exerted by migrants, contributed the average natural fertility of the soil - in their majority Argissolos and Latossolos² - plus the burning of plant biomass as cleaning the area for planting, and the markets of São Luís city and the Northeast.

This process was carried out on the basis of empirical knowledge of these producers established in the system of production of cutting and burning of vegetation - shifting cultivation or itinerant farming. This system of production after the third year of cultivating the soil fertility declines with it to production, but that resulted in a process of accumulation of capital in the region.

² EMBRAPA. Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária. Sistema Brasileiro de Classificação de Solos. Rio de Janeiro: Embrapa Solos, 2006.

This condition leads the farmer to seek a new area for planting, but with the closing of the agricultural frontier, this possibility has been exhausted. Also begin to appear pests and diseases in crops, forming a cycle of production deficit affecting the profitability and, consequently, the cessation of activity for the production on a large scale. The livestock, is not modernised and has been practiced with empirical technologies that contribute to the decrease in productivity and environmental degradation.

However, the cattle, as the productive segment of greater representation, its modernization is possible, feasible and necessary, making an important contribution to the development of this region. Its implementation, this will not be built on foundations of empirical knowledge, but in sustainable production systems indicated by agronomic research, so as to establish productive chains of agriculture and forestry segment.

Brazil is currently an important player in the production and export of meat. In addition to that the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimate that 40% of the increase in demand for food until the year 2050 should be remedied by Brazil. It is therefore important that the Middle Mearim integrates in the Brazilian position with sustainable productive chains, propicias to this region, in order to obtain better conditions for economic growth and development.

Restore and boost agricultural Middle Mearim, so the drives the regional economy on a sustained growth in databases, sustainable and profitable; also enter the forest segment through reforestation with native species, and those introduced in the region, that are already being researched and with agronomic and ecological satisfactory results here in the region, forming productive chains that comprise the industrial segment – agri industry and timber industry – through the production systems integrated crop-livestock-forest, and also of reforestation on a large scale.

But for this change is necessary that people leaders in municipalities of various economic segments, political, academic, social, committed with the regional development to move, in order to be established in each municipality a working group with the task of being the catalyst between the projects of the municipality and the entities, public and private, supporters of the modernization of agriculture and the introduction of reforestation in the Middle Mearim.

Among the work groups, Pedreiras have dual function, i.e., to establish the projects for the municipality, and also coordinate other municipal groups to be created

in the region, in order to establish a ranking of demands to supporters, and more than that, provide a cohesion between the groups. The groups will be formed producers, students of middle and higher education and other people interested in regional development, including those linked to the prefecture, chambers of councilors, trade unions, associations, institutions of higher education or research in the region or outside of it. Public and private support exist and are available to be integrated through articulation of working groups who will act in the implementation of the respective municipal projects to be established.

The achievement of this proposal in projects for implementing municipal, beyond the economic aspect, will make a ransom of economic history of this region, so lavish, and it is doomed to oblivion. And more, will be an incentive for society to feel the urgent need to extend its innovative actions, in the sustainable production, and also in the revitalization and the sustainability of the watershed of the Rio Mearim, whose basin committee of their struggle with enormous difficulties to get some action to revitalize this important and more genuinely Maranhão basin.