

BUFFALO STATE PROGRAM FOR SMALL FARMERS ASSOCIATED TO COOPERATIVES IN RONDÔNIA, BRAZIL

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INTRODUCTION

The energy balance at small farmer's level in Rondônia is negative, strongly dependent and imediatist; not guaranting a safe and economically viable sustainable development. This fact, together with the difficult economic situation created a gap in the agricultural development of the state and generated wide areas of iddle economic explotation, known as "capoeiras". Several reclamation alternatives do exist, in spite of the tremendous environment destruction that already appears(1).

The "Departamento de Associativismo e Cooperativismo-DENACOOOP", is an official institution responsible for support to the rural development, linked to the "Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Rural - SDR" of the Ministry of Agriculture, Supply and Agrarian Reform. This support is mainly offered for diffusion of technical knowledge making possible for farmer's associations to diversify their production and increase their income.

Buffalo, as a working instrument, milk and meat producer, and source of organic matter to improve the soil conditions, is also a diversifying element that the NEW FRONTIERS TO COOPERATIVIES PROJECT is incorporating into the small rural properties(2).

This program safely indicates a way to modify the present situation of the small farmers in Rondônia, most of them poor "colonos", by using the state resources already existing, altogether with federal and state government effort. Backed up by scientific data produced by the EMBRAPA research stations at Porto Velho and Belém, and Knowledge accumulated by the Secretaria de Agricultura itself and by the Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural-EMATER, the beneficiaries of the Program are expected to improve their standard of living.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Government of the state of Rondônia, through the Secretaria de Agricultura, produces yearly a great amount of buffalos in the Pau D'oleo farm, located at the Município of Costa Marques, and some of them must be necessarily discarded periodically.

As a part of this procedure, some 300 couples are being transfered to small peasants, through Cooperatives and Associations, under technical assistance of SAGRI/EMATER, SDR/DENACOOOP, OCER and EMBRAPA. Buffalos are taken to the training center of EMBRAPA/CPAF, located at the Município of Presidente Médici, to be trained at work.

INDEX TERMS: BUFFALO - FARMERS-COOPERATIVES

Several courses were given to the beneficiaries on methodologies of animal training (3) including practices with working equipments. All of the farmers are previously interviewed in order to determine their ability to work with the animals. The Program will benefit only small farmers associated to a cooperative or association, not disposing of any source of milk for their families or working implements for their farm labours. Most of them appear subnourished and do not have enough basic resources to buy food for their families. They got a couple of buffalos (male and female), both trained for field work. The first two calves must be given to another families, under the supervision of the cooperative or association. After that, technical assistance is given both for working and sanitary purposes. This is performed by technical personnel of the cooperative or association, with the assistance of specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture.

A "Manual of buffalos growing" was elaborated by technicals of the Project NOVAS FRONTEIRAS DO COOPERATIVISMO, aiming at facilitating the farmer's performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adaptation of the buffalos to the small farmers environment was satisfactory. By-products of maize, bean and rice are being utilized for animal's feeding. Diseases were not reported and all the females without exception produced healthy calves. A small infestation of louse (*Haematopinus tuberculatus*) was easily controled with local natural products. The organic matter is being utilized to fertilize fruit trees and vegetables for family self consumption.

A credit line was created by the State government in order to finance working instruments like plows, harrows and planters, and small traction cars for produce transportation.

ANNUAL COST OF THE PROGRAM (US\$ 1.00)

ITEM	INSTITUTIONS IN CHARGE OF FUND ALLOCATION	TOTAL
AQUISITION OF 300 ANIMALS	SEAGRI	144,000
TRANSPORTATION CO-OPERATIVE/ ASSOCIATION OF ANIMALS	SEAGRI/EMATER	21,600
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	EMATER	18,200
MAINTENANCE OF 600 ANIMALS	BENEFICIARIES	15,452
TOTAL COST		199,252

REFERENCES

- (1) PEREIRA, R.G. de A. & TAVARES, A.C. Utilização da tração animal na fazenda. EMBRAPA-CPAF-RO, 8, 1991.
- (2) PINTO, J.M.; PIMENTEL, G.B.M. & PEREIRA, R.G. de A. Búfalos na pequena propriedade rural. DENACOOOP/PNUD, 38, 1992.
- (3) PINTO, J.M. Programa Estadual de Bubalinocultura para pequenos produtores rurais organizados em associações e cooperativas. DENACOOOP, 52, 1993.