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*FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: CASE STUDY OF AMAFAP IN THE LIGHT
OF THE NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMY¹*

**EMPREENDEDORISMO FEMININO: ESTUDO DE CASO DA AMAFAP À LUZ
DA NOVA ECONOMIA INSTITUCIONAL**

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the constitutive aspects of the Association of Women Farmers Araras do Pantanal (AMAFAP), in order to identify the specific mechanisms of social organization and governance arrangements of collective action among rural producers. In addition to documentary research, semi-structured interviews with the association's managers were used as a data collection instrument. After the data collection, the SWOT matrix was used to highlight the external and internal factors that influence the association's management and results. As results, it was found that AMAFAP presents the dimension of asset specificity, related to organic production. In addition, it was identified that the association has contracts with a frequency of nine years of transaction with the federal government, through PAA - Food Acquisition Program. It became evident that sales to that program are the only existing marketing channel, imposing restrictions on the association's growth potential. In addition, the importance of public policy mechanisms via the acquisition of food was evidenced, as a means of empowerment and strengthening of the activities of the female organization in family farming.

Keywords: associations, governance, family farming.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa os aspectos constitutivos da Associação das Mulheres Agricultoras Familiares Araras do Pantanal (AMAFAP), de forma a identificar os

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mecanismos específicos de organização social e dos arranjos de governança da ação coletiva entre as produtoras rurais. Além da pesquisa documental, foi utilizada como instrumento de coleta de dados, entrevistas semiestruturadas com as gestoras da associação, após a coleta de dados foi utilizada a matriz SWOT para destacar os fatores externos e internos que influenciam a gestão e resultados da associação. Como resultados encontrados, verificou-se que a AMAFAP apresenta a dimensão de especificidade de ativos, referente à produção de orgânicos. Complementarmente, identificou-se que a associação apresenta contratos com frequência de nove anos de transação com o governo federal, através do PAA - Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos. Evidenciou-se que as vendas ao referido programa são o único canal de comercialização existente, impondo restrições ao potencial de crescimento da associação. Complementarmente, demonstrou-se a importância dos mecanismos de política públicas via aquisição de alimentos, como meio de empoderamento e fortalecimento das atividades da organização feminina na agricultura familiar.

Palavras-chaves: associativismo, governança, agricultura familiar.



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INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender is closely linked to culture and the historical development process of individuals. Therefore, it is constructed through social interaction and mutual recognition, considering the specific characteristics of social groups. It is important to note, however, that gender typology is recent and stems from social movements fighting for equality between men and women. Brumer and Anjos (2008), for example, report that the theme of gender has become a priority in social science studies focused on rural areas, due to rural exodus, especially of young people - with a predominance of women - which causes the aging and masculinization of the rural population.

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2015), the rural female population is nearly 15 million people. The proportion of the female population in rural areas was 48.29% in 1993, dropping to 47.75% in 2015. Additionally, the work performed by women in rural spaces is not duly valued. This is because activities in the field are dominated by machismo, where men are culturally considered the main responsible for agricultural production, management, and marketing. This situation highlights the inequality faced by women in Brazilian rural areas. Under these conditions, women tend to care for the home and perform activities for family self-consumption, with a low level of income independence. Men hold the family leadership position, being responsible for economic activities and income management (Butto, 2011; Silva; Schneider, 2010; De Heredia; Cintrão, 2012).

Deere and Leon (2003) argue that gender inequality in rural areas results from prioritizing inheritance for male children in the inventories of land property. This derives from characteristics still remaining from the regime of asset sharing in marriage, and additionally from the primacy of males in participating in agrarian reform land distribution programs. Faria (2011) emphasizes that this situation is linked to the capitalist notion of labor, which reduces production relations to what



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can be traded in the market. As a result of these factors, the work performed by women has been concealed and unrecognized, both in the reproductive sphere (self-consumption/domestic) and in the rural productive sphere. This leads to the denial of economic and political autonomy for women in rural environments. Finally, Ávila (2013) corroborates that the situation of gender inequality has been socially constructed over time, with the guiding idea that men are responsible for productive activities - work that is recognized, valued, and remunerated. Women, on the other hand, are relegated to the reproductive aspects of family life, domestic chores, and childcare, which, not being monetized, lack appreciation in capitalist society.

This scenario began to change in the 1990s, through the organization of women via rural workers' movements, aiming at the guarantee of rights and equality. At the Federal Government level, initiatives emerged regarding gender issues in rural areas, in dialogue with women's movements in the countryside. For example, the "Marcha das Margaridas" and others enabled the creation of several programs, including specific resource allocation such as Pronaf-Mulher (Faria, 2011). These transformations were not spontaneous, but rather the result of social mobilization that encouraged women to unite through collective action as a means to reduce rural gender inequality. As a consequence, improvements were achieved regarding economic independence, giving rise to female entrepreneurship and community entrepreneurship.

According to Dornellas (2001), entrepreneurship can be defined as an economic initiative that assumes risks, characterized mainly by innovation and creativity in utilizing available resources. In this context of gender inequality in rural areas, women identified entrepreneurship as an opportunity to achieve financial independence and, consequently, a better quality of life. One result of this process was the emergence of associations and cooperatives formed by women with the aim of generating income and, above all, having a greater voice



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in decision-making in rural activities. These movements stand out for the capacity of female groups to generate cooperation, self-management, and autonomy.

In this context, the present article analyzed the constitutive aspects of AMAFAP – Associação Mulheres Agricultoras Familiares Araras do Pantanal, in order to identify its mechanisms of social, administrative organization and productive structure, considering the normative influence in light of Institutional Economics. To contextualize the relationship between AMAFAP's organizational mechanisms and the institutional environment, the approach adopted was transaction cost economics, focusing on the specificities that influence organizational governance.

The study is justified by the relevance of understanding the movement triggered by the women of the Sadia Vale Verde settlement. This group seeks, in a pioneering and innovative way, through projects and actions, leadership in the productive space of family farming and, consequently, autonomy and better quality of life for their families.

In accordance with this analytical perspective, the present contribution is structured, in addition to this introduction, from a theoretical review with emphasis on the importance of institutions for the development of family farming. Next, the methodological procedures are described and the empirical results and their evaluation are presented from a theoretical perspective, and, finally, the concluding remarks are made.

NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Collective action refers to the ways in which groups of people organize themselves in pursuit of common objectives capable of generating coordination and, above all, economic and social transformations. However, the level of cooperation depends on the existing social capital within the community, which cannot be developed instantly, but rather through a lengthy historical process.



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Social capital is understood as the bonds of trust and reciprocity among community actors.

In this context, according to institutional theory, there are certain restrictions on human actions that may compromise the expected outcomes of social cooperation. Factors such as opportunism and individualism are counterproductive to the emergence of coordination among actors. Additionally, information asymmetry reduces individual commitment to collective objectives. These organizational attributes are developed by NIE – New Institutional Economics, which identifies variables that influence governance structures. The focus of the institutional approach lies in the microeconomic environment, describing the role of institutions and the relevance of habits and behavioral patterns that arise from organizational arrangements. From this perspective, economic costs are classified as production and transaction costs. The analytical innovation introduced by this school of thought, highlighting the studies of Oliver Williamson and Ronald Coase, is based on the definition and measurement of transaction costs. The factors responsible for inefficiencies arise from the compilation and use of relevant information for the transfer of property rights between different stages of the production process. Therefore, transaction costs are managed by mechanisms such as contracts, property rights, franchises, and various arrangements that define rights and duties among economic agents (Azevedo, 2000).

Coase (1937) discusses that every transaction involves a cost; thus, transaction costs vary, and individuals are responsible for minimizing them by choosing the most appropriate resource allocation mechanism. These coordination mechanisms are identified with governance by the State, firms, and markets, each acting as a means to reduce transaction costs. Williamson, like Coase, also considers economic institutions as tools for dealing with transaction costs. Among the listed mechanisms are the hierarchical structure of firms,



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markets, and contractual relationships. Based on the characteristics of transaction costs, the most suitable means of coordination for their reduction are defined. For example, transactions with high specificity that result in high transaction costs tend to be managed through the internalized governance structure of the firm. Conversely, transactions can be efficiently carried out using spot market mechanisms. Intermediate situations require the use of hybrid mechanisms, such as relational or formal contracts, which establish varying degrees of flexibility in clauses between the parties.

Williamson, in his description of the constitutive aspects of transactions, notes that:

the transaction is the basic unit of analysis, and in given dimension, the attributes that describe and distinguish alternative modes of governance are set out, and transactions and governance structures are aligned in relation to a transaction cost (Williamson, 1994, p. 178-179).

North (1991) presents a macroeconomic approach to institutions, conceiving them as the “rules of the game” of society, which are classified as formal and informal institutions. According to the author, institutions are behavioral constraints that regulate political, economic, and social interactions, limiting the set of choices available to actors. These consist of formal constraints, such as property rights. In addition, North highlights the existence of informal constraints, exemplified by customs, knowledge, traditions, and codes of conduct. In this context, the institutional environment is the set of formal and informal rules that establish and regulate the behavior of economic agents.

Cavalcante (2014, p.379) states that transaction costs “are all those involved in an economic transaction, such as price research, contracts, as well as market knowledge itself.”

Williamson (1981) draws attention to the study of transaction cost economics even in nonprofit organizations, emphasizing that these costs are



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important for all forms of organization. It is worth noting that transaction cost economics is based on two hypotheses: first, that individuals are naturally opportunistic, i.e., they pursue self-interest; second, that they are rationally limited, which assumes that individuals have limits in processing the available information.

Thus, in an environment full of uncertainties and with individuals who possess bounded rationality, decision-making is influenced by institutional arrangements (Pavan, Santos Junior, 2016; Cavalcante, 2014; Williamson, 1994). Furthermore, transactions are subject to three main dimensions: (i) the frequency with which transactions are repeated, (ii) the uncertainties to which the transaction is subject, and (iii) the degree of asset specificity. These dimensions are fundamental for governance in contractual relationships (Williamson, 1994).

Williamson (1998) also points out that transaction cost economics is focused on conflict problems resulting from bilateral dependence. These problems arise as interaction between agents grows and the need for cooperative adaptation accumulates. Greater density and interaction among parties with distinct interests, in a condition of bilateral dependence, tend to be confronted with the relational incompleteness of contracts that require cooperative adaptation. This mechanism is not simple to achieve, due to characteristic behavioral opportunism among parties and the limited capacity to process information about future and still uncertain events.

Regarding the obstacles to collective action, North (2018, p.29) emphasizes that:

Cooperation is difficult to sustain when the game is not repeated (or is nearing its end), when information about other players is lacking, and when the group of players is large. We observe cooperative behavior when individuals interact repeatedly, have abundant information about one another, and when the group is small.



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At this point, Williamson emphasizes that individuals are opportunistic and cognitively limited, meaning that the emergence of individualistic practices among parties is the rule. This situation requires the role of institutions, such as firms, contracts, and property rights, among others, as a means of restricting opportunism that weakens cooperative actions (Williamson, 1994).

Due to these theoretical characteristics, the evaluation of cases of collective organization calls for the application of institutionalist concepts. In the present study's approach, the governance structure with a focus on gender organization carried out by AMAFAP is emphasized, since the perspective of transaction costs highlights the importance of governance structure for collective action. Therefore, based on this analytical outline, the next section will contextualize the specific importance of institutions in the context of family farming.

IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY FARMING

Agriculture plays an important role in the Brazilian economy, with the country being the second largest food exporter in the world. The agricultural sector contributes 22.5% to the GDP and 37% to the workforce (Embrapa, 2017). In this context, family farming represents 77% of all agricultural establishments in Brazil and 23% of the country's total agricultural area (IBGE, 2017).

However, there is currently an exclusionary development process, in which family farmers form a group that remains marginalized and receives little encouragement from public policies. From this perspective, social exclusion and income concentration are interconnected with environmental degradation, which affects society as a whole. Therefore, family farming is a strategic element, as it brings great diversity - social, territorial, and economic. These aspects highlight the need for empirical investigations that address these farmers and their



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production characteristics. It is essential to create appropriate diagnostics for the development of policies and actions to promote sustainable rural development in these areas from a social inclusion perspective (Bianchini, 2005).

This reality is recurrent in Brazilian society, depending on the guidelines of the governments in power. After the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, the importance of family farming in public policies was strengthened, through the push for land reform, the creation of PRONAF – National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture, and policies for purchasing and encouraging the production of family farming. In summary, family farming became the subject of research and governmental prioritization, as a result of the evaluation of a rural development model centered only on agribusiness and large-scale production (Schneider, 2005).

In this sense, Sachs (2004, p. 19) mentions that planning public policy aimed at the consolidation and modernization of family farming is “part of a strategy to encourage rural development based on the multi-activity of the rural population, taking a leap towards a modern civilization based on biomass (biodiversity - biomass - biotechnologies).” However, despite the advances, public policies are still created in a top-down and mimetic way, which reduces their effectiveness.

It should be noted that endogenous development requires flexible policies adapted to specific conditions and, therefore, inseparable from the participation of local actors. In this aspect, from the institutionalist premise, North (1994, p. 366) observes that guaranteeing property rights is an essential factor:

Public policies significantly shape economic performance because they define and reinforce economic rules. Therefore, an essential part of development policy is the creation of policies that establish and strengthen efficient property rights. However, we know very little about how to create such policies.



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Bianchini (2005, p. 82) adds that the current state of the rural development model presents a challenge for sustainability. The author discusses the need for "a broad and permanent debate about adjustments in policies and institutions that take into account the characteristics of family farming and the dimensions of sustainable development."

However, this is only possible when the local community has strong cooperation ties, relying on trust and self-organization capacity. Through these attributes, actors are strengthened and able to position themselves in relation to other economic agents, such as middlemen, wholesalers, and retailers. Consequently, the local community begins to lead its own development process, according to its economic, social, and institutional strategies (Barquero, 2001).

Nevertheless, the development of communities depends on human capital, the diffusion of innovations within their productive framework, and, above all, the existing social capital. Community and production system organization depends on the coordination capacity of local actors. However, social capital is the set of social organization characteristics built over a long historical process (Putnam, 1996).

It is important to emphasize that the process of endogenous development is driven by cultural traits, institutions, and its own forms and mechanisms of organization. Thus, development emerges stronger in territories with an institutional system rooted in habitual practices. More precisely, institutions, in the form of coordination arrangements, are fundamental to the development process, as they reduce transaction and production costs. In short, they allow for increased efficiency in the collective action of human activities.

In rural communities, it is evident that this capacity for articulation is essential for the successful implementation of public policies aimed at family farming. Conversely, there are several restrictions to the realization of this relational deepening, arising from various shortcomings, such as low educational



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levels, deficient infrastructure for transportation and storage, and the lack of rural extension, among others. These factors are compounded, in the case of women's participation in agriculture, by cultural habits and traits that hinder the expansion of such associations in less privileged communities (List, 1983; Barquero, 2001; Vergara, 2004; Sen, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out at the Associação das Mulheres Agricultoras Familiares Araras do Pantanal (Association of Women Family Farmers Araras do Pantanal), located in the Sadia Vale Verde settlement, BR-070 Km 663, Rural Zone, Nova Cáceres District, municipality of Cáceres, in the state of Mato Grosso.

Based on the contextualization of the community where the association is organized, the evaluation strategy was defined using exploratory and descriptive procedures. The objective is to analyze the social organization mechanisms, management, and production structure of AMAFAP. According to Collis and Hussey (2005), Silva and Menezes (2005), and Vergara (2005), the research is classified as descriptive, as it is related to the practical performance of phenomena, via the characteristics of the phenomenon and its population. It is also classified as exploratory, given the novelty of the study object concerning the organization mechanisms of a family farmers' association. In this sense, Hair Jr. et al. (2009) state that exploratory research should be used when there is little information on the subject studied. Regarding the approach to the problem, this study is characterized as qualitative.

Regarding the procedures for empirical investigation and data collection, the research was carried out through a literature review, a case study on AMAFAP, and, concurrently, documentary research. According to Yin (2010,



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p.39), the case study “is an empirical investigation that examines a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context.”

The research was conducted from November to December 2020; during this period, the scientific protocol consisted of the following steps: (i) Collection of secondary data related to Brazilian family farming and female participation in rural areas; (ii) Field research at AMAFAP, through a visit to the association’s headquarters on December 28, 2020, by collecting information and conducting semi-structured interviews with the two managers of the association; (iii) Documentary research through reading the AMAFAP minutes book.

As a result of this research planning, the analysis variables for the research protocol were selected based on a critical assessment of the theoretical framework.

Chart 1: Variables

Fonte: Dados da pesquisa

Quantitative variables	Qualitative variables
Costs	Quality of life
Income	Access to information
Length of existence	Participation in public policy
Number of members	Type of Governance

Source: Research data

To visualize and assess the strategic landscape of the association, a SWOT matrix was subsequently used to identify the organizational strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats. Based on the data collected, it was possible to prepare analyses and considerations to be presented and discussed in the next section.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This article sought to identify the determining factors of collective action organized by women residents of the Sadia Vale Verde settlement. Additionally, it aimed to analyze the constitutive aspects of AMAFAP, in order to identify the coordination mechanisms employed in this collective arrangement.



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The area where the settlement is now located originally belonged to two farms from the agrarian reform settlement project, named Fazenda Sadia II and Fazenda Vale Verde, both intended for extensive livestock production. The company Sadia S/A, owner of Fazenda Sadia II, had a debt with the federal government and negotiated the farm in exchange for settling the obligation. Approximately three years after the creation of the Sadia Settlement, the owner of Fazenda Vale Verde decided to sell it to the federal government for agrarian reform purposes. The settlement creation orders date to 12/05/1996 for Sadia II Settlement, with 373 families, and 07/19/1999 for Vale Verde Settlement, with 53 families.

The Sadia Settlement was occupied by families from the municipality of Várzea Grande. This group had camped near Fazenda Sadia to pressure for the expropriation of the land and ensure its allocation for agrarian reform. In turn, the Vale Verde settlement was destined for families from the municipality of Cáceres (Valentim, 2010). The settlement projects were unified in 2003, becoming the Sadia Vale Verde settlement.

The main source of income for the settlement's residents is livestock, an activity mainly carried out by men - an exclusion factor that drove the emergence of female cooperation in the community. Thus, the women's collective action arose from economic need, and especially from the lack of opportunity to participate in other existing associations. Usually, the family member representing associations at that time was the man of the household. Additionally, the few women who participated in some community association reported that they had no decision-making power, as men's opinions always prevailed.

It was then that the women of the settlement began selling milk but quickly failed due to a lack of planning. At this point, some of these women participated in training activities in partnership with the Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE), such as lectures,



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fairs, and workshops. They traveled to learn about associations and cooperatives in various Brazilian states and also got to know the programs of the National Supply Company (Conab).

It is worth noting that FASE is a non-governmental, non-profit organization focused on mechanisms for community and associative organization and local development. Given the inequalities faced by women, FASE works with family farmers, quilombolas, fisherwomen, and agro-extractivists by strengthening women's groups, networks, and forums that help them achieve greater independence and autonomy (Fase, 2018).

After these trainings, one of the program's technicians suggested forming an association of women farmers. However, among the women, only one was already producing on her land; the others had only theoretical knowledge from the educational activities. This was not an obstacle to starting the organization of the association. Therefore, AMAFAP was founded in 2006, with 51 women members. In 2017, the association made an exception and admitted two men to the group. The justification was that "one of them joined because the land document was in his name, but it is his mother who produces; as for the other, they made an exception and allowed him to join the association" (field interview).

Currently, the association has 48 members, but only 11 are active. Active members are those who pay the minimum monthly fee of R\$5.00 and participate in the production sales project for the federal government's Food Acquisition Program.



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Table 1: Profile of Active Members

Member	Place of Birth	Age	Education	Number of Children	Has Other Income
1	São Paulo	56	Incomplete Elementary	3	Yes
2	Jauru	60	Incomplete Elementary	4	Yes
3	Poxoréu	38	Incomplete Elementary	2	No
4	Minas Gerais	53	High School	3	No
5	Cuiabá	60	Incomplete Elementary	8	Yes
6	Cáceres	34	High School	3	No
7	Bahia	53	Complete Elementary	1	No
8	Cuiabá	46	Specialist	2	No
9	Rondônia	48	Illiterate	4	No
10	Bahia	60	Incomplete Elementary	2	Yes
11	Bahia	44	Incomplete Elementary	3	No

Source: Research data.

According to the table above, most of the associates come from other Brazilian states, are between 34 and 60 years old, have incomplete elementary education, all have at least one child, and their income comes solely from the association. It is worth noting that another source of income for many members is derived from retirement.

The administrative structure of the association consists of the following arrangements: general assembly, administrative board, and fiscal council. The administration is carried out by the administrative board, composed of six members elected from among the effective associates: president, vice-president, treasurer, vice-treasurer, secretary, and vice-secretary. The fiscal council consists of three full members and three substitutes, responsible for overseeing the actions of the administrative board and for giving an opinion on the association's financial statements. The general assembly is made up of all associates.

In terms of governance structures, it was found that the main asset specificity is related to the production and commercialization of organic products. The association uses fertilizer made from banana plant, ashes, and cattle manure compost. Each associate produces on their own property/plot.



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The association's production is mainly based on the contract with the Food Acquisition Program (PAA). The PAA is a federal government initiative aimed at reducing hunger and poverty in Brazil and strengthening family farming. The government purchases food produced by family farmers for consumption by people in economic vulnerability.

Thus, every 15 days, participants harvest their production and deliver it to the home of an associate where the "headquarters" of the association is located. At this site, the boxes are organized, and the products are taken to the city to be delivered to the Social Assistance Center (Cras)/Social Action of the municipality.

Another factor to be considered is the perishability of the products (see chart 2), so they must be transported carefully to avoid damage. In this regard, it is important to highlight the cost that AMAFAP faces with freight, since the association does not have its own means of transport and relies on third-party carriers. To address this, the association sought support from the municipal government, and for the past two years, transportation has been provided by the Cáceres-MT municipal government. Next, Chart 2 presents the basket of products produced by the association.

Chart 2: Products produced by AMAFAP

Zucchini	Jiló (Scarlet Eggplant)	Sweet Pepper
Plantain	Orange	Mild Pepper
Apple Banana	Pink Lemon	Manioc (Cassava)
Eggplant	Tahiti Lime	Tomato
Chives	Papaya	Other Vegetables

Source: Research data.

Among the activities developed, the vegetable garden stands out as the main source of income. However, AMAFAP intends to scale up production and is also planning to start producing cassava flour. The aim is to diversify its client network. It was identified that the association needs investments to carry out this initiative, by expanding the headquarters' structure, with greater storage and



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processing capacity for the production of cassava flour. An additional aspect that increases the association's transactional costs is the variation in prices paid for organic production, which fluctuates seasonally.

Regarding the influence of external organizations on the association, the importance of the following was highlighted: (i) Mato-grossense Company for Research, Assistance and Rural Extension (Empaer) for technical support; (ii) FASE, which has been assisting the association since the project began and continues to provide training and consultancy; (iii) the Municipality of Cáceres for its support in transporting the produce.

In terms of public policies, the programs aimed at family farming are considered essential in the analyzed case, especially the Food Acquisition Program (PPA), the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF), and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE).

According to research data, it was found that the association is dependent on the program implemented by the National Supply Company (CONAB), with the federal government's PAA program serving as the main destination for the association's products for almost nine years, as shown in the table 2.

Table 2: History of AMAFAP Contracts in the PAA

Contract Year	Expiration Date	Formalized Amount	Amount Executed
2012	10/14/2013	116,394.40	113,220.80
2014	06/30/2016	103,320.48	98,233.58
2016	03/16/2018	45,001.30	45,001.30
2018	06/06/2019	43,734.21	43,733.77

Source: Prepared by the authors.

AMAFAP has participated in the PAA program since 2012, with that year seeing the largest contract being signed. According to Conab's data, in 2012, 2014, and 2016, the association delivered its food products to both schools (Escola Municipal 16 de Março and Escola União e Trabalho) in the community.



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In this way, the PAA contributed to income generation for the women farmers and provided healthier food for the students in the community.

Furthermore, the association has also taken part in the PNAE but is currently no longer eligible to sell under this program due to the high transaction costs involved. The managers highlighted the costs connected to bureaucratic and formal requirements, such as issuing invoices with an accountant and obtaining tax receipts. The association still struggles with a high degree of informality in its procedures. Currently, the managers are seeking access to Pronaf-Mulher in order to acquire new materials, utensils, and equipment, aiming to improve AMAFAP's operational infrastructure and expand production.

Based on the previous paragraph, it is possible to identify another important aspect of the association's dependence on the PAA. If the association cannot secure a new project for delivering its production, it will need to redirect sales to new clients and seek customer loyalty. Next, an analysis based on the SWOT matrix is presented, in other words, an analysis considering AMAFAP's internal and external factors.

The SWOT Matrix is a tool that analyzes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that surround the environment of the subject under analysis. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors to the association, while opportunities and threats are external factors, since AMAFAP has no control over them.



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Chart 3: SWOT Matrix

	Positive Factors	Negative Factors
Internal Factors	Partnership with organizations. 2 years of existence. Interest and determination of the women. The culture and knowledge of the members.	The majority of women do not participate in trips and events that require time away from home. 37 members do not pay the association maintenance fee. Precarious infrastructure of the production area and little use of technology. No own brand or personalized packaging.
External Factors	Public policies and social projects focused on family agriculture and women. Growth of the organic market.	The opinion of men (family and community). Climate. Intermediaries. Unpaved road that becomes impassable at certain times.

Source: research data.

Based on Table 3, it is possible to see that the association's main weakness is its infrastructure and the low technological level of its production process. For example, the association still uses a simple water flow regulator instead of employing an irrigation system. Another indicator of the low engagement of a significant portion of the members is that 37 women have not paid the association's maintenance fee. Regarding threats, first is the opinion of partners and men from the community, who do not value the activities carried out by the women. Next, climate variability has a direct impact on the agricultural sector, including influencing product price fluctuations and transport logistics during the rainy season.

As for strengths, the experience of the members stands out, as they have been working together for twelve years. Additionally, the group shows an entrepreneurial profile, planning to increase production and even industrialize, with a focus on cassava flour derivatives. Regarding opportunities, public policies aimed at family farming and women's groups, as well as the growing organic products market, can be highlighted.



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FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the relevance of studies on the gender issue in family farming, this research aimed to identify the determining factors of collective action by women engaged in family agriculture. The case study was conducted in the Sadia Vale Verde settlement, in the municipality of Cáceres-MT, with the purpose of describing and analyzing the constitutive aspects of an association of women producers of organic products.

According to the research, the determining factors for the collective movement of women agricultural producers were motivated by income generation and gender equality. AMAFAP presents specific characteristics in its assets, as it produces organic products that have particularities in terms of production and marketing processes. The entire production is sold through the PAA program, indicating a high degree of dependence on this public policy. It was also found that the association has a diversification strategy but lacks the financial capacity and productive structure for its implementation.

Additionally, the research points out that AMAFAP was established through the work of a non-governmental organization, FASE, combined with the extension support from EMPAER. Both organizations demonstrated that expanding institutional synergies between civil society entities and the public sector can be a relevant factor for the growth of gender initiatives in family farming.

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