

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Between 1970 and 2010, the population of young people in rural areas in Brazil declined by almost 30% (FOGUESATTO & MACHADO, 2015; IBGE, 2017), leading to problems such as labour shortages and celibacy among young men (GODOY et al., 2010; WAQUIL et al., 2016). Young rural farmers are the main actors in this rural exodus (FOGUESATTO et al., 2016; IBGE, 2017). The loss of young population in Brazil was more intense in Rio Grande do Sul, followed by other states in the Southern region (FOGUESATTO & MACHADO, 2015; IPEA, 2010). How to explain this phenomenon?

We chose to study the communities of the uplands of Serra Gaucha, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Today, only 11% of the population of Serra Gaucha resides in rural areas, but agriculture represents 6.5% of the gross added value of the region (DE AVELINE BERTÊ et al., 2016). The Serra Gaucha population is aging above the state average (DE AVELINE BERTÊ et al., 2016). We interviewed 55 young people from the region with an online questionnaire about their motivations for remaining in the countryside.

Some producers interviewed highlighted the scarcity of labor, and their low qualification. However, 76% of the young people interviewed prefer to live in the countryside, and 81% of the producers' children want to work in family farming, within which 84% want to take over the family farm. 83% of the producers' children interviewed have already proposed changes on the farm. In one third of the cases, these changes have not been implemented by the family.

When asked about what could be improved in the rural area, the recurring answers evoke the need to implement public policies such as investments or government incentives to sustain family farming. The second issue pointed out is the state of roads, access and transport in the countryside. Others deplore being dependent on inputs and observe land concentration. This result agrees with the pressures on family farming identified in the literature (TOURRAND et al., 2015, SARAVIA, 2016).

The results show that young people leave the countryside to study and work, but that most of them wish to continue on the family farm. They deplore the lack of public policies aimed at young people and the lack of support for young farmers. However, a willingness to change the production system and the organization of work on the farm can be observed.