

COLLECTIVE ACTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY IN PARANÁ, BRAZIL.

Keywords: Collective action, small farmer, ACEMPRE.

1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The objective of this paper is to investigate the main roles of small farmers associations and the characteristics that guarantee the sustainability of the horizontal networks.

Particular interest in this issue arose due to the increased concern of the public sector and some rural leaders to encourage the development of the horizontal networks through associations or farmer cooperatives. Likewise, the literature on the topic of small farmers shows that the sustainability of this sector is highly related to its ability to enhance the generation of value-added, and most of these strategies are related to create and manage associative forms organized by small farmers.

The creation of these associations is important for the development of rural communities and as a strategy to reduce poverty. However, in practice, it is observed that these initiatives are not always successful. Elements such as trust between network members, group size, convergence of interests, have been studied and identified as critical issues to the success of these initiatives. Thus, it is important to evaluate how to characterize the relationships within the network, and which functions are commonly developed in them. Usually they can improve the learning and innovation processes, enhance the ability to meet the requirements of the marketing channels, and to expand the market access. Among others, it helps the producers to increase the bargaining power in relationships upstream and downstream, and gives the possibility to develop joint market.

Cooperation initiatives can reduce the risk of farmer's bankruptcy and generates competences more difficult to be replicated, ensuring competitive advantages to those involved. It is common sense in the literature on small producers that collective actions, through private interest associations, seem to play a key role to establish better trading conditions upstream and downstream of the chain, to facilitate the adaptation of this sector

to the dynamic environment, and new standards of competitiveness.

It is observed that the associations are looking to build profit margins for their members beyond the traditional pressure for changes in the institutional environment, and represent the interests of their members with the government and society. Typically, organizations that coordinate collective action are increasingly mediating conflicts of interests and monitoring the actions of their members (ZYLBERSZTAJN; MACHADO FILHO, 1998).

So, this paper examines the main functions of the small farmers associations that guarantee the sustainability of the horizontal networks. We empirically analyzed a case study of the Central Association of Ecological Small Farmers - ACEMPRE, since its settlement, in 1992, up to December 2010, through which we tried to identify these features.

2. DISCUSSIONS ON COLLECTIVE ACTIONS AND NETWORKS

Because of the costs arising from the market failures, asymmetric information and imperfections, monopoly power and predatory competition, the collective actions represented by associations of private interest, are seen to be relevant strategies in the pursuit of competitiveness of the agribusiness systems. Seek to create and defend profit margins for their members, besides the traditional roles of pressure for favorable changes in the institutional environment and representation of the interests of its members along with the government and society. Typically, the organizations which coordinate the collective actions become increasingly to mediate conflicts of interests and monitoring the actions of its members (ZYLBERSZTAJN; MACHADO FILHO, 1998).

The continuing development of new information and communication technologies has generated the expansion of higher knowledge-based organizations, some of it tacit, whose transfer makes it essential to establishing partnerships (PECI, 1999). In this context allied with the limitations of vertically integrated organization and of the small isolated company, it has been common in the literature the approach about collective action of the economic agents, especially the networking organization and or network of organizations. To understand the logic that results in the union of individual companies or in the case of

this article, farmers around the organizations through which they feel represented implies, at first, to understand the motivations that lead the individuals to adopt collective action.

According to Olson (1999), members of a particular group with common interests tend to act together to achieve the goals of this group. However, due to conflicts between individual and collective interests, if there is not some financial or social incentive, the individuals do not work in a collaborative way. The motivations for participation in collective actions are related to the group size as well as the analysis of the costs and benefits that the individuals seem to compare to engage in a particular organization. As the group size increases, individuals tend to perceive the individual contribution as being greater than the individual results obtained through collective action. It was also observed that participants in larger groups tend to tolerate individuals who do not contribute directly in the collective action (free-ride or rider). In smaller groups are easier for participants to contribute to this since they are most noticeable to the benefits resulting from the work of each individual on the joint action and usually are lower the costs of organizing the collective action in smaller groups.

Another important aspect that interferes with the performance of the collective actions is the heterogeneity of interests within groups. Due to the transaction costs such groups tend to show less performance which needs incentive to act collectively. However, according to Lourenzani e Lago Silva (2010) the cooperation between different individuals or organizations allows the acquisition of resources or capabilities that could hardly be achieved individually, and also it enables the participating agents the acquisition of valuable competencies that can hardly be imitated . In this respect the collective actions through the network strategy have been utilized to explain contemporary trends and behaviors.

The networks can be viewed as a set of actors working together within an enterprise or between enterprises with the goal of adding value to their customers. These actors can be differentiated into meso-economic level when represented by aggregated agents who work with common goal of such companies, cooperatives, associations and governmental agencies, or at micro level, when the agent is a person as individual producer or entrepreneur (OMTA; TRIENEKENS; BEERS, 2001).

According to Grandori and Soda (1995) for the study of networks must necessarily be considered some important variables. The first variable is the differentiation between the goals and orientations existing between the units to be coordinated. This differentiation may be an important source of coordination costs between the firms. Other important variables are the intensity of the interdependence between the firms and the number of units to be coordinated. The intensity of interdependence is directly related to the transaction costs arising from uncertainty, specificity of the assets and frequency of the transactions. Regarding the number of units to be coordinated, in the case of networks although there is no normal limitations of hierarchical arrangements, it must be the adoption of mechanisms of coordination.

Schmidt (2010) argues that the sociologist Mark Granovetter has provided significant contributions to the network theory in his writings: "The Strength of Weak Ties," in 1973 and "Economic Actions in the Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness" in 1985. According to this author the first work highlights the existence of strong and weak ties within a network. Strong ties are characterized by relations of trust and reciprocity exist for a long period of time, usually established between neighbors, friends and relatives. Such bonds would add some to the networks since the agents have the same resources or of information already available within the network. On the other hand the weak ties, where issues of trust and reciprocity are not as intense, but have greater potential to add value to the relationship to the extent that it acts as bridges connecting the different segments of the network.

In their second paper, written in 1985, Granovetter affirms that the individuals do not take decisions disconnected from their social environment, which is why actions or economic behaviors are directly related to the roots of these within a system of social ties or relations.

Schmidt (2010) in his study, from several theoretical streams, primarily identified five creation sources of value of the organizational systems complex or hybrids, which are among the networks. Briefly these sources of value creation are:

- a) Innovation - creation and pooling of unique resources ;
- b) Reduction of monitoring costs;

- c) Positive externalities;
- d) Reduction of the transaction costs;
- e) Generation of knowledge and information exchange.

It is observed therefore that the reduction of the transaction costs is not the only reason that justifies the hybrid forms, but also other aspects such as the generation of knowledge that can create value for the stakeholders.

According to Santos (1994) between the various types of network cooperation between the organizations, they can be characterized as vertical and horizontal networks. Vertical networks would consist of organizations that establish technology or market relations within a particular productive chain. Horizontal networks describe the relations of cooperation between competing organizations that operate in the same sector producing similar assets or services.

The organization of small and medium enterprises in networks allows them to become more competitive as a result of the various benefits obtained such as greater exchange of information and knowledge between the companies, expansion and improvement in the market access, political representation, improvements in the business processes, bargain of price with the suppliers, joint marketing, greater security in the supply of credits to the customers, improved marketing of the inputs between the firms, and saving earnings of scale, of scope and of specialization (BALESTRIN; VARGAS, 2004, SANTOS et al. 1994).

The organizations that choose to work in the form of networks pass through deep changes in management processes. The coordination, previously undertaken through the hierarchical structure, though it may exist, shall be replaced in the trust and in the partnership in its main feature so this way the information and its sharing to the network members becomes a fundamental aspect (PECY, 1999). In accordance with Rademaerkers (2000) apud Lourenzani and Silva (2010), the trust is based on three fundamental factors: experience gained over time in the relationship between the individuals, the rules of society and in social factors such as ethnicity, religion, affinity and social relations.

It was observed that in the literature is easy to find foundations that discuss the advantages derived from of the performance in networks, such as improvements in the processes of learning and innovation, better conditions to meet the requirements of

distribution channels expanding the access to markets, greater bargaining power in the relations with the upstream and downstream segments of the production process, joint marketing.

For this reason, in the case of the family farming, especially when it is about the producers who are dedicated to the production of fruits and vegetables, it has been common for the public sector and of some rural leaders the incentive to the formation of horizontal networks through Associations or Cooperatives of producers. However, it is observed that these initiatives are not always successful. Examples of these occurred in the city of Toledo, located in the western region of Paraná, when in 1993 was established the APROP (Association of Rural Producers - Western of Paraná) in order to support the production and marketing of horticulture. This association had the support of municipal government and state power which passed them vehicles, equipment, facilities, payment of staff salaries for management and technical assistance as well as financial resources for funding. This initiative despite the strong support from the government, was not successful resulting in the closing activities of three years after its establishment.

Despite the advantages of the acting in networks, such initiatives have their success related to aspects such as trust between the network members, group size, convergence of interests. Authors such as Bevilaqua et al (2003) also highlight the quality and ethics in the management, strategic vision, transparency of the information between members and managers, loyalty and participation of members of the network and investment in technical capacity and operational as critical success factors of the membership organizations . Another important aspect to consider is that the performance in networks or in associative groups go through different degrees of maturation on the need to control the collective decisions over projects of common interest.

In this direction, in studies performed with the Chambers of the Agriculture Sector in the State of São Paulo, it was found that the functions performed through the collective action of these organizations may have character demands, self-regulation and partnerships. The actions can be classified as unidirectional when they are claimed or made requests or pressures that result in an increase in costs or reduction of revenues by the government, of self-regulation, when, in a way not exclusively dependent on the public sector, seek to eliminate bottlenecks in the chain with a view to increasing internal and external

competitiveness and, finally, shares of partnership, in which partnerships can be developed with the public and private sector through incentive stock, qualifications, among others (TAKAGI, 2004). In this work, this methodology will be used with the objective of evaluate the functions of the association, subject of this study.

Bijmann (2002) shows that the farming organizations, depending on their ability to support either economic development or social, are an important tool for the rural development. The collective action of small farmers is needed to reduce the logistical inefficiencies, reduced of transaction costs and to strengthen the bargaining power to obtain best possible prices to be paid to the producers for their output.

2.1 THE NETWORKS AND THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The apprehensions with the development of a region or territory date back to nineteenth-century Germany, which were focused on the location of productive activities. By the end the World War II the theory of location was dominant in this context, the regional development gained a new impulse after this period, especially with regard to the challenges to many economists taxes, who had to explain the inequalities that have arisen due to the process of economic development. In this sense, were formulated and implemented various public policies aimed at promoting the regional development and the overcoming of the economic backwardness. At several moments these policies were able to explain the economic growth and the evolution of the income of a region, especially in peripheral regions with less development. But in the 60's there has been a disenchantment with the adopted policies, since the results were not satisfactory. The development of a region doesn't depend on the economic factors only, but it depends on the social and political organization, which are directly related to increased local autonomy, increased of the investment capacity, social inclusion and also the preservation of the resources in the region. These factors should be considered when actions are organized around the family farm. Thus, among the new concepts to explain the reason why some countries or regions grow and develop faster than others are knowledge. The skills of a particular region determines its growth and development, possibly raising the production levels, income,

employment, among others (HADDAD, 2009).

The globalization process and, therefore, the development of new regional markets confirms the need for a greater understanding of the regional needs in order to combine common projects, formulated in accordance with an action plan related to the need for local development in each region, since each one has its own particularities. Thus the actions that are taken for a particular site feature decentralized character, which creates new challenges and opportunities for both companies and for the public sector and community organizations. The major development local and regional needs through negotiation and the convergence of common goals. These goals are pursued as specific methods of local and regional planning (COSTA, et al., 2006).

When analyzing approaches on rural development, Murdoch (2000), questions the traditional debate on endogenous and exogenous factors or between State and market as being mutually exclusive since the simultaneous combination of strategies that contemplate these two aspects should be normal. According to this author the concept of networks, especially the horizontal seems to portray the development of a more comprehensive way, considering important not only the relationships within the territory, but also considering the relationships with the external stakeholders, thereby pointing to a new paradigm of rural development.

In accordance with Abramovay (2000) in spite of the current affirmations that rural development is not restricted to agricultural growth, suggesting the relevance of non-agricultural growth, the rural development is not restricted to the possibilities of expanding these activities. For this author the dynamic regions are characterized mainly by the density of the network relations services and public organizations, rural and urban enterprises, related to agricultural activity or not. Noted that in dynamic regions there is a convergence of factors related to social proximity or relations of trust which allow the coordination between the set of local actors aiming the enhancement of the space where they act in order to allow turning it into an innovative environment.

To Lourenzani and Silva (2006), small farmers, individually, depending on characteristics of their units such as small areas, small scale production, poor management and inefficient technologies have demonstrated inability to meeting the growing market demands. This way the cooperation between individuals or organizations can create easy to

obtain funding or development of capacity for which they could hardly have individual access.

Still, according to Goodman, Sorj and Wilkinson (1990) the increasing replacement of natural processes by industrial in the agriculture production , and the length of the food webs due to the industrialization of these products by allowing it's transportation for longer and over long distances, increase the complexity socio-rural economic networks in the aspect of space and time.

For Murdoch (2000), the vertical networks in the rural areas are related to the agri-food chains, characterized by being based on significant use of natural resources, especially from the land for the production of commodities, and also of how the agriculture is part of a series of processes increasingly large, existing outside of rural areas. The author suggests that capitalist development in the food sector led to rising unemployment and lower wages, thus influencing negatively, family farmers and rural workers, weakening the trust relationships between them, as well as negative environmental consequences.

Regarding to the horizontal networks of innovation and learning Murdoch (2000) points out some peculiarities that distinguish them from the urban sector. Highlights the crucial importance of these in the valuation of the natural components, and also a greater consistency of relationships of trust and cooperation, due to traditions, kinship and friendship, often between members of farming communities. Another aspect mentioned by the author is that in the rural environment, due to lower population density, the networks are established in a largest spatial dimension . Therefore implies in more time and effort to establishing and maintaining of the networks, and support on a lasting basis relationship. Means of higher consequence are the challenges for the development of networks in remote rural areas. Murdoch calls attention that the networks do not deal with an answer to the problems of rural development, but allows jointly assess issues that are internal to external problems and opportunities for rural development. That is, the importance of the networks is fundamentally in the objects and relationships that flow through them.

Thus, it is worth analyzing the response capacity of small agricultural enterprises that work collaboratively with other agents from the same link (horizontally), because as Staatz (1987), in the case of collective actions that take place through cooperatives or these associations, as well as a distribution of income in favor of the farmers involved, resulting

in a regional income distribution more balanced when compared to systems dominated entirely by large corporations. According to the perception of this author, the large corporations extract profits from rural communities by channeling them to the metropolitan centers rather than reinvest them locally. So the process of collective organization of the farmers would, in addition to increased income from these, an important contribution to strengthening rural communities and redistribution of power in these societies.

2.2 THE CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF ECOLOGICAL FARMERS - ACEMPRE - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OBJECT OF STUDY

The ACEMPRE - Central Association of Ecological Farmers was founded on October 10, 1992, as a result of an internal movement of the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) via Pastoral Popular Luterana (PPL), which encouraged the union of the groups farmers in the search for new alternatives for income generation. Its headquarters in the city of Marechal Cândido Rondon - PR, covering the municipalities of Mal. Cdo. Rondon, Mercedes, Quatro Pontes, Nova Santa Rosa, Pato Bragado and Maripá.

Among the goals of ACEMPRE are union, integration and the solidarity among the family farmers, the mutual aid and improving the living conditions of families, education and training of the associates, agro-ecological production, joint marketing and solidarity , as well as the promotion of the socio-economic and cultural development (VARGAS, 2010).

Data from 2010 show that the ACEMPRE has counting with 100 families, in which they were beneficiaries by the partnership the farmer and his family, and the areas of properties ranging between 1 to 12 hectares. This year there were still 54 suppliers for the Food Acquisition Program - PAA, obtaining an amount of R \$ 190,000.00, also 20 vendors for the school meals totaling approximately R\$ 90,000.00, and finally 55 suppliers for many different markets, obtaining a value of around R \$ 300,000.00. The average sales volume is of 18 tons / month covering vegetables, dairy, fruit and colonial products, a total of 55 items. The markets used methods fall into shop, specialty shops, supermarkets, fairs in the neighborhoods Organic Market in Curitiba, South Circuit ECOVIDA Network

Commercialization, and institutional markets, and the forms of commercialization take place in supermarkets, neighborhood fairs , ACEMPRE stores, restaurants, food purchase program - PAA, and the school lunches (VARGAS, 2010).

The ACEMPRE is organized by general assemblies, where the group of farmers participating who is composed of member families. Also participates, the planning committee of the producers and CAPA, and board of directors which is formed by employees, a central market and the suppliers (farmers) (VARGAS, 2010).

Among the forms of production remains the production of damage vegetables in protected cultivation, crop shading in the field, the field cultivation of vegetable crops , organic grains and seeds, among others. It is worth noting that the ACEMPRE makes the planning of the protected cultivation in each area, in order to guarantee and optimize the cultivation of each product. The vegetables have great importance in the ACEMPRE, the tomatoes represents 28%, lettuce with 15%, the brassica represents 8,6% (cauliflower 4.2%, 3.4% broccoli and cabbage leaf 1.0 %), cucumber 7.8%, 5.2% alfalfa sprouts, radish 4.7%, carrots 4.6% and green beans 4.6% (VARGAS, 2010).

The ACEMPRE has a working methodology that encompasses courses, exchanges, advice on production, in the certification, processing and marketing of products, academic researches on the properties, biological control laboratory in partnership with the University of West of Paraná - UNIOESTE (VARGAS, 2010).

But for the agroecological farmers there are still major difficulties, among them the climate, low availability of skilled labor, the pressure of the agribusiness, lack of resources for the period of conversion and investments, technical problems, low ability of producers to horticulture, poor research on the subject, deficiency in the management of agricultural properties and in the association, lack of trained personnel to manage the association. In this sense the ACEMPRE counts with some institutional partnerships, in order to improve the conditions in the environment. Among them are partnerships with Paraná's Institute of rural technical assistance - EMATER Center of Support for Small Farmers - CAPA Municipality of Marechal Cândido Rondon, State University of West of Paraná - UNIOESTE, Referral Networks in Olericultura - IAPAR Itaipu Binacional (VARGAS, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the methodology utilized by Takagi (2004), who in his work analyzes the prevalence of certain characteristics that guide the functions performed by the agribusiness sector chambers of the State of São Paulo, allowing it to obtain an indication of evolution and of the degree of the same maturity. Based on the work by this author about the agribusiness sector chambers and the theoretical referential presented describes the main functions developed through collective action by associations of producers of horticultural characterized as family farmers. Were analyzed attributes of collective action that are important to allow the growth and stability of these organizations.

The empirical analysis was done through a case study of the ACEMPRE. The choice of this association of producers is justified because it is about the network of family producers of horticulture active for the longest time in western region of Parana, are 19 years of existence, and also with the largest number of associates.

To characterize the functions that this association of agroecological producers has been performing over the course of its existence, we proceeded to the analysis and classification of actions and decisions taken and recorded in the minutes of the assemblies and meetings held since the founding of ACEMPRE on October 10, 1992 until the month of December 2010. During this period, were recorded in the minutes book a total of 29 assemblies and meetings held by the executive board and associates of the ACEMPRE resulting in a total of 157 decisions or actions taken. These actions or decisions, according to their characteristics, were classified as self-regulation, partnership and claimed. To raise the necessary information were also used marketing reports and other documents generated by the direction of the association as well as interviews with technicians who work directly with the producers that make up this entity.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The minutes of meetings and assemblies of ACEMPRE reveal the existence of 120 decisions or actions that can be classified as being self-regulatory character, demonstrating the predominance of these who represent 76.4% of the actions or decisions taken in these

meetings. It is observed that among this group of decisions, 50.8% deal with organizational aspects, and 49.2% are directly related to the planning and improvement of the productive processes and market access.

The actions or decisions from self-regulated are related to organizational aspects, in which issues are discussed such as the status and general requirements of the association, review and approval of the accountability, creation of internal committees for the improvement of participatory decision-making processes, definition of values of jewelry and contributions by the associates, annual plans of activities, approval of new branches, approval and termination of membership, process of choosing new leaders and fiscal advisers and administrative decisions like hiring and firing of employees, and decisions on rents.

Some measures of administrative nature could have been taken only by managers of ACEMPRE represented by the Board. However, there is a set of articulated intentional efforts, to discuss a wide range of issues with the participation of the associates, looking for a transparent procedure process. The adoption of these mechanisms is in the direction indicated by Pecz (1999), that the adoption of networking, while maintaining a certain level of hierarchical coordination, the trust aspect the main characteristic. To have confidence is necessary to guarantee their producer members to share information, thereby reducing the asymmetry of information between the participant's organization, consequently increasing the degree of transparency about the process of the association management, by encouraging openness questioning for clarification on doubtful points, and especially constructive contributions.

Another important aspect observed in the study of this association are the strongest social relationships because of the religious and ethnic identity existing between the participants of ACEMPRE. The association was established with the support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church was originally known by the acronym ACEMPRE which was the Association of Evangelicals Mini farmers reflecting the strong influence of the religious identity of the participants. It was found that in 89.7% of the meetings held since 1992 began with Biblical reading or messages, and part of these also had the participation and manifestation of the of ministers from the Church Evangélica de Confissão Luterana. Coupled with the strong religiosity is also noticeable the cultural and ethnic identity since at

least 90% of the members have Germanic origin. Later, at a meeting held on November 20, 2003, through statutory amendment, the denomination was changed to the Central Association of Ecological Farmers, introducing a character more secular in the association.

The land ownership structure of the participants of the association points out in its entirety from small farms. The associates have farms with areas between 1 and 12 ha, developing activities with agroecological principles. This similarity in the agricultural activities and in the agrarian structure between the participants is an important component, so that it can get in an integrated large scale production, bargaining power, diversity, facilitating the access to different markets.

The information gathered and discussed for this study case is coherent with those described by Murdoch (2000) by stating that in the countryside the horizontal networks present some peculiarities that distinguish them from urban areas. The author discusses the valuation of natural components and greater consistency in the relations of trust and cooperation due to aspects of cultural identity, religious, traditions, ethnicity, kinship normally found in agrarian communities and found in this case study.

On the other hand, despite the social and cultural identity and similarity in aspects of production, according to Olson's approach (1999), sometimes the individual interests to collective ones overlap giving room for the opportunistic behavior. This problem was detected in the relationship among the associates and the ACEMPRE, being one of the topics discussed in at least 12 of the 29 meetings held. Among the problems that were found in this study are misclassification of goods and noncompliance of standards of organic production by some members. Still, defaults with the revolving fund and infidelity in the delivery of production to the marketing association. However, it is noticeable that the existing social relations and how this information is shared decision-making in ACEMPRE are important facilitators for the establishment of incentives and punishment in order to control this situation, contributing for the stability and organizational growth.

The self-regulation related to the production processes and access to distribution channels manifests itself in discussions which represented 49.2% of the decisions of the assemblies. These decisions from the ACEMPRE are illustrated by actions such as implementation of a revolving fund for financing of crops of the associated producers who have difficult access to rural credit; processes for quality assurance and certification of

production, technical assistance for rural activities, discussion and prospection of new channels of distribution, and especially by the planning, production scheduling, commercialization and joint marketing.

It was found that in 13 assemblies were treated with the associates, strategies to establish planning, production scheduling, and joint marketing of vegetables. This synchronization of the production of vegetables established between the members of ACEMPRE according to the quantity, diversity, quality and eras required by the distribution channels, it's certainly the biggest difference in order to guarantee access to market and economic sustainability. An important aspect was the establishment of contracts between producers and the association in order to enable access to new distribution channels. These coordinated actions through collective action allow small units to overcome production difficulties highlighted by Lourenzani and Silva (2006) as small production scale, technologies, management and logistical resources with disabilities by developing capabilities which would hardly have access individually. The adoption of this process allowed ACEMPRE to access important distribution channels outside the municipality of Marechal Cândido Rondon, such networks of retailers in Cascavel and municipal market from Curitiba.

Among the aspects of self-regulation the most relevant to the agenda of the association's actions were related to the quality and certification of organic production which were among the topics covered in 17 meetings held a total of 29. In this theme was observed originally a work of certification organic production through the Biodynamic Institute (IBD), then the changes for the participative certification process through the Ecovida's Network and also by differentiating the ACEMPRE directing the production system of its associated exclusively for agri-ecological products. Also stand out the discussions that led to the diffusion of organic products and the marketing of regional organic products with the collective mark ACEMPRE.

In relation to actions in partnership found that they represented 12% of subjects treated by the assemblies of the of the ACEMPRE, and it concerns the capacity processes and technical assistance to producers in partnership with the CAPA (Center of Support for Small Farmers) and EMATER'S Institute, joint action with the UNIOESTE for implementation and maintenance of laboratory for the production of natural enemies for

biological control of pests from the tomato and partnership with the Cooperative Credit System (SICREDI) and the Credit Union Solidarity (CRESOL) for the provision of working capital to members. Other partnerships that were emphasized in discussions were with the Agro-ecology Cooperative and Familiar Industry (COPERFAM) for purposes of commercialization of products and with the federal government and the municipality of Marechal Cândido Rondon to the trade of products with the institutional market of food, especially PAA (Food Acquisition Program of Family Agriculture) and PNAE (National School Feeding Program)

Finally through the detailed analysis of the minutes of meetings it was found that the claims made stocks represented 11.5% of the topics discussed in the assemblies or meetings. A significant part of which occurred between 1993 and 1994 after the constitution of the ACEMPRE in 1992. The concentration of unidirectional actions during this period resulted from the need for initial structuring of association with installations, equipments, vehicles, personnel and resources for costing. This way were performed claims directed to the municipal administration of Marechal Cândido Rondon, with a view to providing funding for installations, structure and funding. It was also deliberated by the elaboration of projects aimed at the Church Evangélica de Confissão Luterana. (IECL) to obtain resources for acquisition of furniture, equipments, acquisition of a van for transportation of products, operating expenses and personnel. An important aspect achieved by the association, with support from IECL was the creation of CAPA in Marechal Cândido Rondon. It is a non-governmental organization for technical assistance aimed at agro-ecological production which has become a reality in 1997.

After 8 to 10 years of constitution of the association, the list of demands focused on raising funds for investment in improving the production of its associates and expanding its physical bases for reception and marketing of production. Thus, through the EMATER'S Institute were elaborated projects for resources at lost funds along with the Government of Paraná State for implementation of greenhouses and shading acquisition for the vegetable production. It is also enabled, through projects directed to the state government, investments in fruit growing, homemade poultry and refrigerated counters for commercialization of perishable goods in the shop of the Association.

In 2005, the Association has received from the City Council of Marechal Cândido

Rondon the recognition as an entity of public utility, consequently facilitating the transfer of public resources by this municipality. It was established an agreement with the city, enabling the monthly financial transfers for the maintenance of the staff as well as deliberated for the elaboration of projects to obtain resources for parliamentary amendment seeking to build new headquarters.

It is also observed that the minutes did not allow to evaluate the background aspects such as the trust between the network members, group size and convergence of interests, however, it was possible to reveal that these elements were essential to ensure:

1. The planning of the production of vegetables among the various producers that have provided quantity, diversity, regularity and improvement in quality of the production necessary to meet the demands of the market (several minutes report these efforts);
2. Market access for institutional of food, made possible through Acempre and expansion of the distribution channels (especially retailers);
3. By associating the producers had access to the qualification and public technical assistance;
4. Recognition of the brand "ACEMPRE" in scope micro-regional (such as brand related to products free of pesticides and to the family agriculture);
5. Definition of internal regulations setting standards for the animal and plant production, especially vegetables, among the members of ACEMPRE. Preparation and distribution to members of a textbook with regulations and production standards (convergence of interests);
6. Definition of strategies as, for example, that each producer is responsible for providing up to 30% of the volume of delivery of each culture (for better security of supply and quality assurance of products);
7. Establishment of an ethics committee (members of the church, community, teachers unions from Unioeste, and a consumer representative);
8. Joint procurement of furniture, equipments, vehicles and constitution of revolving fund for costing of productive activity, and;
9. Viability of point common space for classification, packaging and products commercialization.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Collating this study data with the theoretical referential used, there was a significant predominance of self-regulatory character in the ACEMPRE, from the creation until the year 2010 such shares represented 76.4% of agendas of meetings and assemblies. It was observed that the leaders efforts toward transparency to the decision making process in addition, it was verified the existence of strong social relationships, similarity between the properties and in the objectives of the members, which were decisive characteristics in order for the organization non disintegrate in the face of multiple confronting challenges. Also the self-regulatory actions related to the production process allowed the production planning, quality improvement, cost reduction, certification of organic production resulting in a greater access to a number of distribution channels significantly expanding the volume of products commercialized and amounts received by the associated producers.

In addition to the actions of a self-regulatory character were also evidenced in partnership representing 12% of the decisions that focused on collaboration with other agencies to access resources for working capital and investment, new channels of distribution of the production, qualification of managers of the association and the associated producers. and technical assistance in agricultural activities.

Unlike many associations that bring together minor producers, the ACEMPRE not limited to dependence on other organs. Although there are indications of claims, these occurred concentrate in the initial structuring and later in the access to public policies for improving the production and facilities, represent only 11.6% of the discussed topics. It is observed however, that even in small proportion the relevance of the requests subject of the action in protest, they also played an important role for survival of the association.

The analysis of the data set allows us to conclude that the discussions of self-regulatory character and in partnership that totaled 88.4% of the agenda of the meetings and assemblies of the ACEMPRE demonstrate clearly that its leaders and associates reserved in such a dominant way an active role themselves in solving their problems.

As a method of conclusions it is evident from this study that for stability and growth of organizations of family farmers is fundamental the role active and coordinated of the

family farmers associations towards the solution of their problems are not focusing on claims that when taken care of timely manner, invariably create political dependence relation. However given the peculiarities of this social segment against the increasingly competitive environment of the agricultural sector, this does not mean that government units may exempt itself of providing public policies which guarantee a "safety net" for farmers less capitalized, with less specialization and insertion in the conventional markets.

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