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QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES BEYOND
CERTIFICATION

**BETWEEN THE PLATE AND THE TERRITORY: SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL
MEANINGS OF AGROECOLOGICAL FOOD CONSUMPTION IN SAPIRANGA
(RS)**

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The consumption of organic and agroecological foods in Sapiranga (RS) shows that eating is also a territorial, social, and moral act. In a context marked by the industrialization and standardization of food systems, agroecological farmers' markets become spaces that reconnect rural and urban worlds, articulating trust, identity, and belonging. Inspired by Woortmann (2013), this study understands food as a social language that produces symbolic boundaries and affective ties.

Based on participant observation and 35 interviews conducted in 2023–2024, the research examined how consumers and producers attribute meaning to the act of “eating from the farmers’ market.” The results reveal that agroecological food carries a territorial biography: it refers to the farmer, the family, the production practices, and the place of origin. For many consumers, the market is

a space of interaction, knowledge exchange, and reaffirmation of ethical values such as health care, trust, and responsibility toward the territory.

As Menasche (2009) observes, the search for local foods activates an imaginary of the rural at the table, in which proximity to producers reconfigures perceptions of nature, labor, and quality. These practices also express everyday forms of contestation against the dominant agri-food system, as argued by Sassatelli (2015): eating “without pesticides” and “from small farmers” becomes a moral, political, and territorial action.

Thus, agroecological markets function as hybrid territories and learning spaces, where consumers reconstruct notions of seasonality, time, and care for the land. When understood as a territorial practice, eating reveals symbolic and social reterritorialization processes that connect the plate to the territory and generate new ruralities. The study shows that eating is an act of belonging, ethics, and resistance—one that strengthens community bonds and values territorial markets as spaces of life and reciprocity.

Palavras-chave: food; agroecology; farmers' markets; territory; consumption.