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CARE AS PAID WORK IN RURAL URUGUAY

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Care policies in Uruguay are a recent development, although the country has been a pioneer in the region in recognizing care as a public policy issue and as a right guaranteed by the State. However, in rural areas there are still significant gaps between regulatory advances and the actual conditions of paid care work. In these contexts, care work is a job opportunity for women with few other options, but it's mostly informal, with low wages, limited professionalization, and a lot of job insecurity.

This paper aims to analyze the working conditions of paid care work in rural areas of Uruguay. The relevance of this approach lies in understanding how the social devaluation of care work and gender stereotypes continue to shape feminized, invisible, and precarious career paths, despite institutional advances in public policy.

Methodologically, a qualitative strategy is adopted that combines: (a) normative analysis of labor regulation and care policies; (b) analysis of thirty-three in-depth

interviews with paid female caregivers in rural areas; and (c) analysis of a dialogue of knowledge with caregivers on representations and practices of care in their territories.

The findings reveal a persistent set of precarious working conditions: undefined tasks, insufficient income, physical and emotional overload, lack of specialized training, and limited access to information on labor rights. These dimensions reveal tensions between the formal recognition of care as a right and the persistent informality in its provision. It is concluded that strengthening the social value of care and guaranteeing decent working conditions for those who provide it is a central challenge for advancing social justice in rural areas.

Palavras-chave: care work; feminization of care; paid caregivers; job insecurity; care policies.