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TRANSITIONS IN PUBLIC POLICIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN URUGUAY

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Between 2000 and 2025, rural development policies oriented toward family farming in Uruguay underwent significant changes in their policy orientations and instruments, within a context of broader socio-economic and political transformations. This paper examines these transitions from a public policy perspective, combining document analysis with semi-structured interviews with sectoral and governmental actors. The central argument is that the period is characterized by a dual dynamic: (i) the construction and consolidation of a dedicated institutional framework for family farming, and (ii) its subsequent reconfiguration through processes of budgetary retrenchment and discursive reframing. Between 2005 and 2015, policy expansion occurred through the establishment of institutional arrangements, technical and financial assistance programs, regulatory instruments, and participatory governance mechanisms. During this phase, “family farming” became institutionalized as a core policy category, articulating agendas of productive inclusion, access to land, and

territorial development. Grassroots organizations played a significant role in the co-governance of these policies. From 2016 onwards, without the formal dismantling of existing instruments, a shift in policy priorities can be observed, reflected in reduced state presence in rural territories, fiscal retrenchment, and the incorporation of policy frames emphasizing competitiveness and environmental sustainability. This period also entailed changes in modes of policy dialogue and state–society relations with rural organizations. The analysis shows that policy change did not occur through abrupt rupture, but rather through processes of institutional layering, whereby redistributive policies coexist with market-oriented approaches and emerging policy instruments associated with new devices linked to sustainable agri-food systems. The Uruguayan case provides insights into how small states manage tensions between equity-oriented interventions, market rationalities, and sustainability narratives, contributing to international debates on contemporary transformations in rural development policy in Latin America.

Palavras-chave: family farming; policy reconfiguration; state-society relations; uruguay.