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SUSTAINABLE RURAL FUTURE

**ACTORS OF THE TRANSITION? AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES AND
SUSTAINABILITY IN ARGENTINE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION**

Emilia Ormaechea (emiliaormaechea@gmail.com)

Maricel Massera (maricel.massera@uner.edu.ar)

In recent decades, agricultural cooperatives in Argentina's Pampas region have undergone profound transformations in response to changes in agrifood systems, market dynamics, and growing environmental demands. These processes have reconfigured both their economic role and organizational structures, intensifying tensions between cooperative principles, competitiveness-oriented strategies, and sustainability requirements. This paper analyzes how agricultural cooperatives linked to livestock production engage with the transition toward sustainability, and how market, community, and environmental logics are articulated and contested within these organizations.

Cooperatives can be conceptualized as institutions shaped by logics grounded in reciprocity and territorial embeddedness, operating in interaction with market rationalities. From this perspective, sustainability transitions can be understood

as processes of institutional reconfiguration, in which tensions emerge between market competitiveness, internal democracy, and environmental sustainability.

The study is situated in Argentina's Pampas region, which concentrates the bulk of the country's livestock production and slaughtering capacity. Using a qualitative multiple-case study design, the research combines semi-structured interviews with representatives of first- and second-tier cooperatives, public-sector technicians, and actors from the meat-processing industry, with the analysis of sustainability reports and social balance sheets.

Preliminary findings show that cooperatives adopt selective and heterogeneous sustainability strategies—such as carbon footprint measurement or the use of renewable energy—generally conditioned by criteria of economic viability. Moreover, tensions emerge between the strategic orientations of managerial teams, the short-term priorities of boards of directors, and the productive practices of cooperative members, which constrains their capacity to exert sustained influence over sustainability transitions within the beef value chain.

Palavras-chave: agricultural production; argentina; institutional logics; meat industry.