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SOVEREIGNTY AND WATER SECURITY: CHALLENGE AND POSSIBILITIES
IN THE CONTEXT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**COMMUNITY SEED BANKS: A TOOL FOR AGROBIODIVERSITY
CONSERVATION AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE IN LATIN AMERICAN
COTTON-FOOD SYSTEMS**

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In the current context of climate crisis and genetic loss, the agroecological transition in Latin America faces the critical challenge of reclaiming sovereignty over plant genetic resources, in this regard, community seed banks constitute a strategic approach to this challenge and to enhancing the stability in food availability and access. The study's objective is to analyze the strategic value of Community Seed Banks (CSBs) implementation and highlight the experience of their promotion within the framework of the +Cotton South-South Cooperation project (FAO/Brazil/Partner Countries) through literature review, data analysis and systematization of experiences. The study highlights the role of CSBs as germplasm reservoirs and vital mechanisms for cultural resilience and food security. Through a multiple case study focused on experiences in Bolivia,

Paraguay, and Brazil, the article examines how the implementation of these banks facilitates the rescue of native cotton varieties (*Gossypium barbadense* and colored *G. hirsutum*) and their agroecological association with food crops (corn, beans) in indigenous and peasant territories. Results show that CSBs operate under social technologies of the solidarity economy such as "loan and return" systems (2:1 ratio), thereby strengthening social capital and reducing dependence on external inputs. Furthermore, the recovery of native cotton is identified as intrinsic to the revitalization of cultural identity, access to locally adapted seeds, and water security, given the greater drought-resistant capacity of these varieties compared to industrial cultivars. Community banks act as catalysts for rural development by linking biodiversity conservation with the economic autonomy and food sovereignty of rural communities.

Palavras-chave: community seed banks; cotton; south-south cooperation; food security; sovereignty.