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**BEYOND THE MARKET: BEEF PRODUCTION FOR SELF-CONSUMPTION
AS A FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY IN RURAL AREAS
OF THE STATE OF SANTA CATARINA, BRAZIL.**

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Beef cattle farming is one of the main agricultural activities in the state of Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil, present in 72% of rural establishments, 60% of which are family farms. In this context, beef consumption transcends the nutritional dimension, integrating into food culture as a relevant material and symbolic reference. Although most production is for commercial purposes, self-consumption also plays a significant role, especially in areas where family farming predominates. This article analyses the socioeconomic importance of this practice, emphasizing its contribution to the food and nutritional security of farm families. To this end, data from the state's official veterinary service from 2010 to 2025 were used. The results show that self-consumption accounted for 14.8% of cattle slaughtered during this period, involving more than 50,000

producers annually. Of these, about 76% slaughtered up to two cattle per year, indicating the predominance of small-scale production. In 2025, this practice yielded 15,600 tons of meat, a volume that has remained relatively stable over time. The per capita availability from these slaughters reached 101 kg of beef per year within the producer households, a level considerably higher than the average annual consumption of the broader Brazilian population. This discrepancy can be attributed to several factors, particularly the distinct dietary patterns of Santa Catarina's rural setting. Furthermore, there are indications that, beyond domestic supply, some of the meat enters to community exchange networks and informal commercial channels, a practice more common among producers with higher slaughter volumes. It is concluded that slaughter for self-consumption has significant socioeconomic relevance in the rural context of Santa Catarina. It serves as a crucial source of animal protein for a large contingent of farmers and constitutes a complex social practice that reinforces their food security and contributes to their social reproduction.

Palavras-chave: self-consumption; food security; beef; cattle farming.