

IRSA - CONGRESSO MUNDIAL DE SOCIOLOGIA RURAL (01/10/2025 A
20/01/2026) - IRSA 03 - SOCIOLOGY OF FOOD

**SCHOOL GARDENS AND THE FORMATION OF FOOD CITIZENSHIP IN
RURAL SCHOOLS OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL**

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Food extends beyond a physiological necessity, becoming a social phenomenon embedded in culture, work, the environment in which people live, and routines. By promoting teaching strategies, schools act as experiential spaces that foster reflection and the development of behaviors that support fairer, healthier, and more equitable food systems. School gardens, originating in rural education, represent

one of such pedagogical strategies, with the potential to form what Lozano-Cabedo and Benito Gómez (2017) define as food citizens. This study analyzes how school gardens in public municipal rural schools in Rio Grande do Sul contribute to the formation of citizens who are more aware of food-related issues. The descriptive exploratory study, based on an online questionnaire composed of five sections, collected 42 responses, resulting in data from 26 schools with school gardens across 13 municipalities in two regions of Rio

Grande do Sul. The analysis of food citizenship employed the dimensions proposed by Lozano-Cabedo and Benito Gómez (2017), using evaluative item measured on six-point Likert scale and analyzed through descriptive statistics. The results show that 61.9% of rural schools have school

gardens, which are integrated into teaching strategies across basic education levels, in Science, Mathematics, Portuguese, and Geography. The findings indicate a high level of agreement regarding the contribution of school gardens to food citizenship formation in dimensions 1, 3, 4, and 6. Dimensions 2 and 5 also received positive evaluations, albeit with greater dispersion of responses. Dimensions 7 and 8 showed greater variability and more moderate levels of agreement. The results indicate that school gardens are essential in education for food citizenship, particularly in dimensions related to ethics, care, autonomy, and the right to food. However, they also highlight limitations and challenges in implementing structural and political aspects of food citizenship, pointing to the need for integrated and interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches.

Palavras-chave: food citizens; rural education; food; food systems.