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SUSTAINABLE RURAL FUTURE

**COOPERATIVE EDUCATION AND THE RURAL FUTURE: AN ANALYSIS OF
THE INTERNALIZATION OF THE FIFTH PRINCIPLE BY THE COOPERJA
COOPERATIVE**

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This study analyzed the internalization and implementation of the cooperative education principle at the Cooperativa Agroindustrial de Jacinto Machado (COOPERJA). The study investigated how educational development actions within the cooperative contribute to the sustainability of the enterprise and the development of rural areas. The central problem addresses the challenges of rural succession, the aging and masculinization of the countryside, aggravated by the lack of infrastructure and public policies that drive the exodus of young people and women. The research adopted a qualitative approach, configured as a case study. Data collection took place between July and August 2025, involving the analysis of institutional documents (social reports, cash books, and

a commemorative book), participant observation, and thirty-five (35) semi-structured interviews with managers and members. The data were processed via content analysis. The results indicate that the initiatives of the studied Cooperative, more specifically the programs under to "COOPERJA do Amanhã," strengthen the feeling of belonging, the sense of collectivity, concern for the community, critical awareness of reality, and democratic management. However, limitations were observed in the scope of actions in more remote communities and in the dependence on external incentives. It was concluded that cooperative education is a vital component for the internal sustainability of the cooperative and for improving living conditions in the countryside, and is essential to mitigating rural exodus. The research offers recommendations to improve the application of cooperative principles, aiming at the continuity of agricultural activities and the strengthening of rural areas.

Palavras-chave: cooperativism; perennality; rural succession; gender and youth; social transformation.