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SUSTAINABLE RURAL FUTURE

**DIAGNOSIS OF COOPERATION IN AGRARIAN REFORM IN
NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL**

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Cooperation in agrarian reform has gained increasing attention as a strategy for maintaining sustainable territories, particularly due to the socioeconomic gains enabled by collective action in the face of processes of disintegration and homogenization driven by global agri-food systems. These processes have contributed to rising inequalities, accelerated climate change, biodiversity loss, and other negative impacts. At the same time, organizations linked to agrarian reform face multiple challenges to ensure their continuity and strengthening. This study analyzes the functioning of agrarian reform cooperatives and associations in Northeastern Brazil, focusing on their organizational structures

and governance dynamics, with particular attention to the participation of women and youth in leadership positions and the implications for organizational sustainability and development. The methodology is based on interviews conducted with leaders of 46 enterprises affiliated with the National Union of Popular Agrarian Reform Cooperatives of Brazil (UNICRAB), part of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST). Data were collected during two national meetings held in 2024 and 2025, as well as through open-ended interviews carried out during fieldwork in the state of Ceará in December 2025. The findings indicate that these organizations face persistent challenges related to access to credit, insufficient rural extension and technical support, and limited specialization in enterprise management. Gender participation in leadership is close to parity, with women representing approximately 45% of board members. However, youth participation remains low, averaging around 12.5%, and falling below 5% in some states, pointing to difficulties in leadership succession. The study highlights the importance of public procurement policies for sustaining these organizations, while also emphasizing the need to diversify markets and expand public policies supporting production and agroindustrialization.

Palavras-chave: cooperativismo; popular agrarian reform; landless workers' movement (mst).