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

**AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS, SOIL AND WATER CARE:
CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES IN PERI-URBAN FAMILY FARMING IN
SOUTHERN BRAZIL**

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In recent years, agri-food systems have been increasingly challenged by climate change, ecological degradation, socio-economic inequalities and the erosion of rural livelihoods. These intersecting crises demand a rethinking of rural development pathways and the role of agriculture in producing food, conserving natural resources and sustaining rural territories. Agroecology has gained prominence in this debate, yet agroecological transitions remain complex processes shaped by multiple actors, power relations and territorial specificities.

This paper analyses agroecological transitions in peri-urban rural territories of Southern Brazil, focusing on the interconnections between soil and water care, food sovereignty and rural development. The study is based on ongoing interdisciplinary research conducted with family farmers in the Green Belt of Curitiba, a region characterized by strong urban pressure, environmental vulnerability and strategic importance for local food supply. Methodologically, the research combines qualitative fieldwork, participatory observation and socio-ecological analysis with soil and water assessments carried out in agroecological and conventional management systems. This approach allows linking farmers' practices and perceptions with biophysical indicators related to soil quality, water regulation and ecosystem functions. Special attention is given to agroforestry systems and diversified agroecological practices as key elements in enhancing soil structure, water retention and resilience to climatic variability.

Preliminary findings suggest that agroecological transitions contribute to strengthening food sovereignty by increasing farmers' autonomy over production, inputs and knowledge, while simultaneously improving soil and water conservation. However, these transitions are constrained by land access, market pressures, institutional fragmentation and limited long-term public support. The results highlight the need for integrated policies, extension frameworks and collective governance arrangements capable of sustaining agroecological practices beyond isolated initiatives. By situating agroecological transitions within broader debates on rural development, food sovereignty and water security, this paper contributes to understanding both the possibilities and limits of agroecology as a transformative pathway in peri-urban rural contexts.

Palavras-chave: agroecological transitions; food sovereignty; water security; soil management; rural development.