

## Right and agribusiness in Argentina and Brazil. Changes and continuities

### *Derecha y agronegocio en Argentina y Brasil. Cambios y continuidades*

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#### **Abstract**

*One of the most expanded forms of accumulation by dispossession in South America is the advancement of agribusiness. This neoextractivist logic has expanded in Argentina and Brazil even in the framework of the political alternations that both countries have experienced in recent years. However, it is possible to notice contrasts in relation to government policies for the agrarian sector according to the political sign that is alluded to: post-neoliberal governments versus the rise of the rights. Hence, the objective of this paper is to characterize the current rights in both countries in what makes the dynamics of agribusiness tending to a comparison with what were the policies implemented during the progressive governments. For such a purpose we resort to a methodological approach of qualitative type based on the bibliographic review specialized in the subject and the analysis of documents.*

*Among the main results, it is noted that although there is a consolidated agribusiness matrix in both countries (and as such it is still preserved in the framework of political alternation); This hegemonic logic of production, however, is deepened with the arrival in the government of Macri (Argentina 2015) and Temer (Brazil 2016). With these governments, state support areas for peasant agriculture are dismantled while stimulating the production of commodities and land grabbing by large landowners.*

#### **Keywords**

*Right, agribusiness, Argentina, Brazil, public policies, inequality.*

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## Resumen

Una de las modalidades de acumulación por despojo más expandidas en Sudamérica la constituye el avance del agronegocio. Esta lógica neoextractivista se ha expandido en Argentina y Brasil aun en el marco de las alternancias políticas que ambos países han experimentado en los últimos años. Sin embargo, es posible advertir contrastes en relación a las políticas gubernamentales para el sector agrario según el signo político al que se aluda: gobiernos posneoliberales versus ascenso de las derechas. De allí que el objetivo del presente trabajo sea el de caracterizar a las derechas actuales en ambos países en lo que hace a la dinámica del agronegocio tendiendo a una comparación con lo que fueron las políticas implementadas durante los gobiernos progresistas. Para tal cometido acudimos a un abordaje metodológico de tipo cualitativo basado en la revisión bibliográfica especializada en el tema y el análisis de documentos. Entre los principales resultados se advierte que si bien existe una matriz consolidada del agronegocio en ambos países (y que como tal la misma se conserva aún en el marco de la alternancia política); esta lógica hegemónica de producción empero se profundiza con la llegada al Gobierno de Macri (Argentina 2015) y Temer (Brasil 2016). Con estos gobiernos áreas estatales de apoyo a la agricultura campesina son desmanteladas al tiempo que se estimula la producción de *commodities* y el acaparamiento de tierras por grandes propietarios.

## Palabras clave

Derecha, agronegocio, Argentina, Brasil, políticas públicas, desigualdad.

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## Introduction

Neoextractivism is presented as a structurally anchored system in Latin American territories. It is a mechanism of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2005) that has an extensive trajectory of exploitation of bodies and territories, that is to say, it is registered as a long-term phenomenon, always to the detriment of the broad social majorities and that of natural goods. In this sense, when we talk about neo-extractivism we refer to a production system characterized by the use of techniques for exploration and exploitation of the environment that have progressively transformed the basic renewable natural assets for life into potentially non-renewable goods, at same time that converts them into commodities (Composto and Navarro, 2014).

Within the framework of neo-extractivism, agribusiness is inscribed as a logic that characterizes the agricultural production of Latin American cou-

tries, among which are Argentina and Brazil. Thinking about neo-extractivism and, in particular, agribusiness in a political tone requires starting from an interpretation regarding the political forces that govern both countries. A neoliberal wave seems to signal the current Latin American situation dragged by the electoral triumph or the imposition of political forces located to the right of the political spectrum.

The notion of “Right” as a descriptive, classifying and interpretive key of several of the Latin American governments, is not exempt from debates in the academy regarding whether we are facing right-wing forces whose forms and contents are allegedly novel (Giordano, 2014; Natanson, 2017; López Segrera, 2016), or rather, we attend political experiences that, beyond aesthetic/discursive aggraining, do not differ in essence from the authentic right-wing thinking (Ansaldi, 2017; García Linera, 2016; Sader, 2015).

Within this framework, the present work seeks to characterize these forces that today govern in countries such as Argentina and Brazil, paying primary attention to their policies related to neo-extractive, focusing especially on the agribusiness matrix. This productive system brings together the processes of land grabbing, expansion of agricultural borders, changes in land use driven by the so-called “commodity booms” and in the productive and technological systems (Gras & Hernández, 2013). At the same time, in many cases, it generates collective resistance from the populations that oppose the model.

Given the complex nature of the subject of study, we appeal to a multidisciplinary approach that favored, from the contribution of political science, sociology and economics, a broad approach to the subject in question. To carry out this work we turn to a qualitative methodology where we analyze, in an interpretive way, information from different sources such as official documents, journalistic notes and reports that allow us to address the object of interest from a broad perspective. This will enable us to see changes and continuities at the level of public policies and regulatory frameworks linked to agribusiness in both Argentina and Brazil.

It is important to clarify that this work takes up part of what has been exposed in the 8th Latin American and Caribbean Conference of Social Sciences (CLACSO)<sup>1</sup>, in which we also present the implications that these

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1 The work was titled “Agribusiness after the turn to the right in Argentina and Brazil.” The main objective of this work was to establish the implications that the policies related to agricultural activity unleashed in relation to the social movements responding to agribusiness.

changes in agribusiness generate in the social movements that answer to the hegemonic model of agricultural production.

## **Of governments and production logics**

### **Latin American Rights**

The political turns of recent South America graph, paraphrasing Álvaro García Linera (2016), the development of progressive and conservative waves that have crossed the region. After a first decade of the current century marked by governments with mostly post-neoliberal signs, today's South American societies are largely governed by right-wing expressions.

Even conceiving that the qualifiers "left" and "right" should not be interpreted in the absence of an analytical look in a relational way, especially when it comes to comparing political positions and, in general, public policies, we share that it is possible to distinguish "a priori" peculiarities inherent to each political expression. In other words, although left and right are defined in the plane of otherness ("to the left of" / "to the right of"), there would be "per se" fundamentals that characterize every force of right vis left vis.

We agree with Bobbio (1995) in stating that it is the equality/inequality binomial that distinguishes political forces. While those who strive for greater equality (we are not limited only to the economic orbit) are the leftist forces, the right instead opts for "the conservation of inequality" (Ansaldi, 2017, p. 31).

While the debate about how to characterize the political forces of the beginning of the century failed to be settled (post-neoliberal, progressive, left-wing, etc.), the ongoing governments bring forward new discussions around whether they are indeed new Rights or, in the other hand, they do not distinguish themselves from the Rights of yesteryear (Quiroga & Juncos Castillo, 2018). Even more, the recent regional political course seems to return to the debate over current rights to open the way to discussions about the shift towards extreme rights.

In this paper we will focus on two expressions of the right, that of the two countries of greater relative weight in South America, we refer to the cases of Brazil under the Government of Michel Temer after the dismissal

of Dilma Rousseff in August 2016 and the subsequent Assumption of Jair Bolsonaro in 2019 as well as that of Argentina after the arrival of Mauricio Macri to the National Executive towards the end of 2015. The proposal to inquire about the policies of both governments regarding the agricultural production matrix is a peculiar challenge as long as the characterization of both governments in this area cannot be made without considering the policies of the previous governments in order to reveal, from an exercise comparative analytical, the existence or not of contrasts.

### **Agribusiness, prevailing productive model**

In the current stage of the development of neoliberal capitalism, its predatory nature over underdeveloped countries is exacerbated<sup>2</sup>. Large companies dominate key sectors of production and distribution, as well as the used state-of-the-art technologies. The accumulation is explained by the export of nature and the privatization of common natural goods. It is an organization of the economy based on the dependence of intensive extraction of natural goods, with very low added value, destined for large-scale export and whose price is internationally set.

If we focus on the agricultural production model, it is possible to record, as of the 1990s, changes that imply profound transformations in the actors involved and in the organization processes, granting greater centrality to financial capital and positioning the activity as essentially business which enables economic action in an almost unlimited horizon (Gras & Hernández, 2013).

From the perspective of Gras and Hernández (2013), agribusiness is based on four fundamental pillars: technological, financial, productive and organizational. The implementation of new *technologies* (biotechnology, information and communication) used in agricultural production transformed agricultural production systems, the Latin American region currently is becoming the largest in transgenic crops in the world, with soy being the main crop. Producing under this system leads to an asymmetric dependence on global actors who determine the innovations that comprise the direct sowing

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2 On the predatory and exacerbated character of capitalism in times of neoliberalism see Boron (2004) "Hegemony and imperialism in the international system." Available at: <https://bit.ly/2YhEii0>

system, the transgenic seeds, the agrochemicals, the machinery and equipment, the labor organization and the business management.

The participation of the *financial* capital in the agricultural activity takes place through loans, financing offered by the banks, coverage of climatic risks or future price variations and investment funds. All of this financial activity grew over the years after the liberalization of the regulatory framework and the increase in production volumes from the 1990s. Subsequently, it also grew as a result of the increase in international commodity prices. Through these tools, financial capital speculates and influences the pricing and profitability of the sector in each of the countries of the region, primarily seeking short-term gains.

With respect to the *productive*, agribusiness generates changes in both land and work. The phenomenon of land concentration has deepened in recent decades because the greater efficiency of the productive system is achieved from large scales, the consideration that land is a finite resource and the participation of financial capital in the valuation of this asset.

On the other hand, the work linked to agribusiness has undergone two-way transformations. On the one hand, the outsourcing of some work from the expansion of contratism. On the other hand, each stage of the production process was assumed by a different economic actor establishing a network in the agricultural business. The managers of the network are those whose notion of work is based on cognitive-intellectual practices that require specialized training obtained within the formal education system. In the middle are those responsible for the companies that provide services, the owners or lessees of the lands and the financiers. At the other end of the network are those who perform physical work in agricultural tasks such as the tractor driver, the fumigator, the harvester's machinist, etc.

Regarding the *organizational* aspects, the logic of the family-owned business, has given way to the territory and the global economy that require other scales and knowledge. Family management led to modern management where the entrepreneur moves based on the changing needs of the system and stimulated by marketing, which allows a permanent recomposition of his organization under the business contexts and opportunities. In summary, knowledge and a wide range of competencies related to the global economy, new information, communication and biotechnology technologies, etc. are required.

The development of each of these pillars meant the consolidation of agribusiness as a prevailing production system in the Latin American South.

Likewise, for the strengthening of this productive logic, the deployment of an active construction of legitimacy regarding the benefits of agribusiness as a productive model was fundamental. Both in Brazil and in Argentina it is possible to see institutions that operated in that sense, such is the example of entities such as the Argentine Association of Producers in Direct Sowing (AAPRESID) and the Argentine Association of Regional Consortia of Agricultural Experimentation (AACREA) in Argentina and in Brazil, the Associação Brasileira do Agronegócio (ABAG) and the Federação Brasileira de Plantio Direto e Irrigação (FEBRAPDP).

## **Agribusiness in Argentina and Brazil**

The expression “*República Unida de la Soja*”<sup>3</sup> popularized in an advertising of the transnational Syngenta illustrates the reality of the Latin American Southern Cone and brings up a characteristic of agribusiness: it has no borders. This imaginary “Republic” is made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia.

By 2013, this region covered an area of more than 46 million hectares of transgenic soybean monoculture, fumigated with more than 600 million liters of glyphosate, this process implies the deforestation of at least 500 thousand hectares per year.<sup>4</sup>

Argentina, together with the United States and Brazil, are the three countries with the highest soy production in the world, around 80%. A report prepared by the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA)<sup>5</sup> in 2016 argues that soybeans are Argentina’s main crop not only for production, but for the area occupied. At that time, it represented 55% of the almost 37 million hectares that are sown, followed very far away by corn and wheat crops that, together, accounted for 26%, that is, less than half. In Brazil, meanwhile, the agricultural area monopolized by this oilseed occupies 36.72% while sugarcane (another of the representative crops of Brazilian agribusiness) reaches 13.41% (Guereña, 2016).

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3 United Republic of Soy.

4 Source: “La República Unida de la Soja recargada”, report prepared by GRAIN (2013) Available at: <https://bit.ly/2OwN7Aa>

5 Source: “Soy market statistical report”, report prepared by INTA. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2LTg3jF> (02/10/2018).

Both countries, on the other hand, have high rates of inequality in relation to land ownership. According to the report of the organization OXFAM (Guereña, 2016), the Gini coefficient marks for Argentina 0.83 and for Brazil 0.87. The large agricultural extensions in the hands of few owners registered in these two countries are framed within a subcontinental framework governed by similar patterns.<sup>6</sup>

Although the region has undergone a process of land grabbing throughout its history, it is during the first decade of the 21st century, more precisely since the financial debacle of 2008, that this process is accelerating since the Financial capitals find in the land an area conducive to the reproduction of capital (Frederico & Gras, 2017). The peculiarity of this phenomenon is given by the fact that, in the Latin American Southern Cone, the role played by mega-enterprises of Argentine origin as the gateway for international speculative capital to the region is crucial.

### **Agribusiness in Argentina. From Néstor Kirchner to Mauricio Macri**

Although in the 1970s a process of expansion of soybean production begins due to the preference of this agricultural product to the detriment of others (Giarraca & Teubal, 2013), it is in the mid-1990s when agribusiness begins to consolidate in Argentina when the GMO soy is released to the market. This change in agricultural production includes the implementation of a new technological package based on direct sowing and the massive and intensive use of agrochemicals, causing, at the same time, the expansion of the agricultural frontier and a strong socio-environmental impact - land clearance, loss of native forests, among others— (Gras & Hernández, 2013). This opens the way to the consolidation of agribusiness in Argentina, a system that also favors the control of key sectors of the Argentine agri-food system by large transnational companies. It is important to highlight that the incorporation of these new technologies occurs, according to Basualdo et al. (2013), practically at the same time as in developed countries, which makes Argentina a pioneer in the adoption of the agribusiness technology package.

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6 According to the aforementioned report, 1% of larger farms concentrate more than half of the agricultural area in Latin America. "In other words, 1% of the farms monopolize more land than the remaining 99%" (Guereña, 2016, p. 23).



In the Humid Pampa is where the largest soy production in Argentina is concentrated. This region includes the provinces of Santa Fe, Córdoba, Buenos Aires and La Pampa. Maldonado (2013) presents a series of characteristics of this region: concentration of the economic exploitation of the land; extension of the agricultural frontier through clearing processes; loss of productive diversity; application of technological packages provided by transnational companies that involve direct sowing, transgenic seeds and associated agrochemical packages; increasing prominence of figures of the financial order of association in the sector and decrease of the economically active rural population.

It is important to state that the transformations propelled in the 90s in agricultural matters have not only been maintained but even deepened. In line with the approval of various genetically modified seeds, year after year, the production of transgenics intensified in the area Pampas expanding even to extra-Pampas areas.

The data is not irrelevant when it is possible to verify the political-ideological alternation experienced in the country between a first period with neoliberal signs (governments of Carlos Menem and Fernando de la Rúa) and a political process of postneoliberal characteristics such as the one developed during the Kirchnerismo (governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández). That is to say, even with its economic differences (based on the first in a financial valuation regime in contrast to the internist market bet of the second) and geopolitics (bilateral relations with the United States during the menemism and the search for South American integration under Kirchnerism) The logic of agribusiness not only remained but even deepened. Hence, we agree with Martínez Dougnac (2013) in that:

Despite the novel sign of some of the official policies (...) the essentials of the structural reforms carried out by President Menem would remain. This continuity is particularly evident in the agricultural sector, where much of the inherited trends not only persist, but are also strengthened: agriculture, sojization, economic concentration, predominance of economies of scale (...). (Martínez Dougnac, 2013, p. 334)

In this sense, as the author maintains, in the context of post-convertibility, the characteristics of the dominant agrarian model were deepened. It is that, with a structure of relatively low costs as a result of the recession after the exhaustion of the neoliberal regime, in an international context in rising

commodity prices and a high exchange rate due to the strong devaluation of the national currency (The exchange rate was devalued in a ratio of 4 pesos 1 dollar), agricultural production focused on external demand found the favorable scenario for its expansion.

However, structural continuity regarding the agricultural logic of agribusiness, framed in global patterns of accumulation, should not overshadow public policies implemented during the Kirchnerist governments that enabled the emergence of certain contradictions (or at least tensions) within the hegemony of “Agro as a business”. That is, governmental decisions that, without altering the expansion of a productive logic based on the technological package of transgenics, enabled interpretations regarding conceiving the State in the terms in which Samir Amin (2005) interpreted it, that is, the State not only as the state of capital but also as the result of the dispute between capital and society.

With regard to this, it is feasible to identify at least four legislative provisions whose material scope, although variants, do not cease to mean, at least from the symbolic, controversial decisions for the logic of capital associated with agribusiness:

Law on environmental protection of the native forest (Law 26,331): This law enacted in 2007 establishes the minimum environmental protection budgets for the enrichment, restoration, conservation, exploitation and sustainable management of native forests and the environmental services they provide to the society. It also establishes a system of promotion and criteria for the distribution of funds for the environmental services provided by native forests.

The Agricultural Work Regime (Law No. 26,727) or better known as the “Statute of the Rural Peon.” Among other issues, this law establishes that the remuneration cannot be lower than the current vital and mobile minimum wage; the housing provided to the worker must be solid, built with suitable materials that guarantee an adequate standard of comfort and habitability; the food must be healthy, sufficient, adequate and varied; while the vehicles used for the transfer of rural workers must have been built to transport people. With regards to agricultural work, it must be carried out in adequate hygiene and safety conditions in order to avoid occupational diseases or accidents at work. Finally, this law also prohibits the work of persons under sixteen years of age in all its forms, whether or not there is an employment relationship, and whether it is paid or not.

Law No. 26,737 “Regime for the Protection of National Domain on Property, Possession or Tenure of Rural Lands” that was promulgated in 2011 has as its main objective to regulate, with respect to foreign natural and legal persons, the limits to ownership and possession of rural lands, whatever their intended use or production. Among other provisions, it establishes 15% as a limit to all ownership or possession of rural lands in the national territory to foreigners. This percentage will also be computed on the territory of the province, municipality or equivalent administrative entity in which the rural property is located. Under no circumstances may natural or legal persons, of the same foreign nationality, exceed thirty percent (30%) of that assigned percentage. Rural lands of the same foreign owner may not exceed one thousand hectares (1000 ha) in the core production area, or equivalent area, depending on the territorial location.

In the Law of Historical Reparation of family agriculture for the construction of a new rurality in Argentina (Law No. 27,118) of 2014, family, peasant and indigenous agriculture is declared of public interest for its contribution to food security and sovereignty of people, for practicing and promoting life and production systems that preserve biodiversity and sustainable processes of productive transformation.

This regulation establishes the creation of a Regime of Historical Reparation of Family Farming for the farmer and family farming and family businesses that develop agricultural activity in rural areas with the priority purpose of increasing productivity, food security and sovereignty, value and protect the essential subject from a productive system linked to the eradication of the family in rural areas, based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. In the same way, it establishes the articulation between the national Executive Power and the provinces to favor access to land, considered as a social good, destined for family farming.

Finally, it is unavoidable not to refer to the conflict between agricultural employers and the national government due to the increase in withholdings in 2008<sup>7</sup>. such conflict, as Javier Balsa (2013) points out, reintegrated a long absent debate on the public agenda in Argentina, the agrarian question:

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7 Agricultural employers reluctant to a mobility scheme in the percentage of the rate of export withholdings of commodities promoted by the national government developed an employer lockout of approximately four months to prevent its approval. During that period institutions such as the Argentine Rural Society, Argentine Rural Confederations, CONINAGRO and the Argentine Agrarian Federation carried out various protest actions to prevent the implementation of the resolution.

(...) it was only at the juncture of the conflict that emerged in public debates, that the discussion on the desirable agricultural development model for a democratic country was promoted, more collaterally than directly. Thus, ways of segmentation of withholdings were discussed according to the size of agricultural holdings, a lease bill that would slow down the concentration process and, among other issues, the rights of producer families, peasants and native peoples to access to land (Balsa, 2013, pp. 374-375)

Given that one of the first measures of the Government of Mauricio Macri was the reduction of withholdings on agricultural exports by 5% for soybeans and elimination for corn, wheat, meats, we at least allowed ourselves to ask if the debate around appropriation of agricultural income does not in itself constitute anything more than a quantitative variation of profitability within the agribusiness or if, on the other hand, state appropriation does not imply a constitutive tension with respect to the agricultural logic in question, especially when what defines it the current agricultural logic is the “business” (through private appropriation) over food production.

As of the rise of the *Cambiamos* Alliance, some laws and public policies promoted during the Kirchner government were modified. One case is that of Law 26,727 of Agricultural Work. In November 2015, just three days after the presidential election, the Supreme Court of Justice ruled in favor of a presentation made years earlier by UATRE (Argentine Union of Rural Workers and Dockers), led by Gerónimo “Momo” Venegas, who argued for the annulment of two articles of the new law that implied the creation of the state agency RENATEA (National Registry of Agricultural Workers and Employers) and the liquidation of the non-state public law entity RENATRE (National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers); and the transfer of functions, assets and personnel from the second to the first. After the dissolution of RENATEA, the Government re-established the old National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE), so that it can work again as of January 1, 2017. Given this at the end of 2016, 800 employees were dismissed at RENATEA. In this way, the decline in the rights of rural workers is evidenced.

In 2016, under the pretext of “enabling foreign investments” the Government made more flexible the acquisition of land by foreigners. Through decree 820/2016, he defined that a holder of “more than 51% of the share capital of a legal person” is considered a foreign holder. This changes the

norm that was in force, which defined as a foreigner who owns “a percentage greater than twenty-five percent (25%)”.<sup>8</sup>

As we said before, in 2014, the Family Agriculture Secretariat was created under the Ministry of Agriculture, on which the Undersecretariats for the Execution of Programs for Family Agriculture and Institutional Strengthening depended. In 2017, by decree 302/17, the president proposed a redefinition of the organizational chart of the Ministry of Agribusiness in which the elimination of the former Secretariat of Family Agriculture was formalized, which merges with that of Territorial Coordination and Development and, in fact, it tends to disappear.

Finally, under the government of Mauricio Macri the project has regained strength by the approval of a new seed law aimed at favoring the interests of the large companies that concentrate the production and commercialization of seeds worldwide; this to the detriment of the ancestral forms of agriculture in which the seeds constitute a common good therefore not subject to privatization. In this regard, recently, within the framework of the First National Agrarian Forum (May 7 and 8, 2019) hundreds of peasants and small producers questioned the progress of agribusiness and proposed agroecology as a superior alternative vis a vis the impulse of a comprehensive agrarian reform. The latter explains that the deployment of agribusiness is not free of conflicts and resistance by various groups that face the political decisions that deepen the dispossession mechanisms.

## **Agribusiness in Brazil. From Lula to Temer**

Broadly speaking, we could say that the general characteristics of agribusiness in Brazil bear marked similarities with what happens in Argentina. As we said before, Brazil is one of the most important agricultural producing countries in the world besides being the country with the largest area in Latin America, occupies approximately 8516 million km<sup>2</sup>.

According to the Agricultural Census conducted in 2006, of that total area 330 million hectares were used by the agricultural sector during the period 1996-2006.

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8 Source: <https://bit.ly/2LRUTSU> (10/10/2018).

In the 1990s, two important social conflicts occurred (Corumbiara, Rondônia, in August 1995 and Eldorado de Carajás, Pará, in April 1996) which, in the words of Lauro Mattei (2018), made the agrarian question take hold of the national political agenda at the end of the 20th century. From this it is that the then president Felipe Cardozo, creates the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) to meet the needs of the sector. But it is only from the government of Luis Ignacio “Lula” Da Silva (Workers’ Party) that policies of real scope in order to try to modify the agrarian structure of the country will be implemented.

During the Government of Lula (2003-2010) “the largest number of rural workers settled, representing 52% of the total historically made in the country” (Mattei, 2018, p. 296) responding to the demands of organizations and social movements regarding the need to democratize access to land.

Some of the largest programs under the government management of the Workers Party in terms of the powers of the Ministry of Agrarian Development were the programs of: Rural Worker Documentation (2004); Rural Women Productive Organization (2008); Agrarian and Funding Credit Reorganization (2003); Food acquisition (2003); Food and Nutrition security (2003).

Even within the framework of a notable expansion of agribusiness during the first decade of the 21st century, the aforementioned programs, framed in II National Agrarian Reform Plan (PRNA), meant a qualitative and quantitative contribution to a type of agriculture that endowed the Brazilian countryside of greater sustainability, of incentive to family agriculture and agroecological production.

On the other hand, during the Government of Dilma Rousseff (2011-2015), although it is possible to highlight, as Miguel Altieri points out, the importance of the creation of the National Policy of Agroecology and Organic Production,<sup>9</sup> the truth is that there was a slowdown in the number of settled families, drastically reducing the distribution of land for agrarian reform: “(...) throughout its management, approximately 25 000 families per year were settled on average, compared to a average of 76 700 families per

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9 Art. 1 The National Policy of Agroecology and Organic Production-PNAPO is established, with the objective of integrating, articulating and adapting policies, programs and actions that induce the agroecological transition and of organic and agroecological production, contributing to sustainable development and the quality of life of the population, through the sustainable use of natural resources and the supply and consumption of healthy foods. Source: <https://bit.ly/1hKM06C>

year during the two previous administrations of Lula (2003-2010) “(Guereña, 2016, p. 13).

This phenomenon, however, cannot be fully interpreted unless an integral analysis in relation to the future of the PT’s exercise of political power is carried out. As we have analyzed on another occasion (Forlani, 2019) there was indeed a shift in the economic policy of the government of Dilma Rousseff from a heterodox policy inaugurated by “Lula” Da Silva towards a certain orthodoxy of neoliberal characteristics. We assume that the Rousseff government considered that, by restarting a cycle of greater accumulation for the private sector (via rising interest rates, fiscal adjustment and guarantees to legal security), the pressures of the conservative sectors would cease and, in the heat of an increase in private investment, workers affected by the policies of transfer of resources would benefit from the spill of future economic growth. In other words “the neoliberal policies carried out after the electoral triumph undermined the bases of popular support for the PT while exalting the concentrated sectors of Brazil (...) which, seeing the weakness of the Rousseff government, finally arranged her dismissal” (Forlani, 2019, s/n).

After the coup towards the legitimate president of Brazil, the Government of Michel Temer operated in agrarian matters, dismantling the institutional framework that, beyond its objective limitations, sought to protect the logics and dissenting actors from the agribusiness model. This is illustrated by the destructuring of the food acquisition program and of the technical assistance and rural extension (Mattei, 2018).

Among the most important consequences we can observe, on the one hand, a deepening of violence and, on the other, a greater inequality: “(...) only in 2016 were killed 59 people involved in the struggle for agrarian reform in the country, a number that has not happened since 2003, when 71 people were killed “(Mattei, 2018, p. 305, own translation).

Likewise, the historically vulnerable sectors of Brazilian agriculture were not found in the priority agenda of public policies linked to the sector. Even more, official policy tended to further deepen their exclusion situation. In fact, during 2016 and 2017, no new family was settled, while no agrarian settlement project was created (Mattei, 2018). The administration during the Temer interval meant the destructuring of the state institutional orbit aimed at reducing inequalities in Brazilian agriculture. Programs, areas and technical bodies of assistance to small peasant units and/or small producers were emptied and dismantled, all as a result of a marked budget reduction.

During the first months of the Government of Jair Bolsonaro (took power on January 1, 2019) the situation regarding agrarian reality seems to express more continuities than ruptures. In fact, shortly after, the Ministry of Agriculture fell to Teresa Cristina da Costa who presided over the agribusiness bench in the Chamber of Deputies.

Concomitant with this, one of the first presidential decrees established the transfer of the main activities carried out by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) to the Ministry of Agriculture, activities that included the identification, delimitation and demarcation of indigenous lands. This would imply that these could end up under the ownership of large landowners to the detriment of the original peoples, expanding the structural inequality that this Latin American country suffers.

## **Conclusions**

In this work we made an overview of the policies related to agribusiness as productive logic promoted both in Brazil and in Argentina. For this, we turned to the main measures implemented by the governments linked to the Latin American progressive wave (Néstor and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina and Lula Da Silva and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil) and compare them with what happened with those policies when governments positioned to the right of the political spectrum (Mauricio Macri and Michel Temer) assumed the national governments of both countries.

The neo-liberal public policies promoted by right-wing governments in Argentina and Brazil enhance and deepen social and economic inequalities in both countries. These are decisions that favor the interests of large companies and landowners over peasants and small producers.

The right-wing policies of the analyzed countries in this work intensify the extractivist matrix of the development projects promoted during the “progressive decade” in both countries. However, unlike what happened in recent years, the income generated by the minimum withholdings imposed on these activities does not seem to be used in programs that favor the internal logic of production and consumption, nor for the generation of new sources of work or policies public that benefit the most vulnerable sectors of society. On the contrary, the measures adopted lead to a greater widening of the inequality gap in both countries.



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