

# QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES FAMILY FARMING INITIATIVE

SPECIAL EDITION

## QUILOMBOLA PEOPLE MAKE ARTICLES ABOUT GOOD PRACTICES OF FAMILY AGRICULTURE IN THEIR STATES

This issue features articles written by quilombola people regarding good practices of quilombola family farming at the national level and in each state involved in the Quilombola Family Farming Initiative: Bahia, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais, Paraíba, and in the quilombo Mesquita Territory (GO).

Since 2020, the Initiative has carried out actions aimed at strengthening and expanding family farming, with the preparation of analyses, surveys on public policies, mapping, and primers with information that supports the productive activities practiced in the quilombos. As part of the Macro Situational Diagnosis of Family Farming project, the initiative works through a partnership between [CONAQ](#), [Ecam Social Projects](#) and [Porticus](#).

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# GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY FARMING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

BY KÁTIA PENHA - COORDINATOR OF THE MACRO-SITUATIONAL DIAGNOSIS OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY FARMING BY CONAQ

## Climate Emergency through the Quilombola Experience

Every week the scientific community brings new facts and projections about the worsening and accelerating global environmental crises. With the deforestation, decline of biodiversity, pollution of the aquatic environment, and poisoning of organisms by agribusiness, a future is being created in which humanity and many other species will be doomed to extinction or suffering.

The quilombola farmers interpret these climate changes as a phenomenon that has been impacting their territories and ways of life, which have been theirs for decades. The perception of impacts due to global warming has been frequently reported by the communities, and is an important element to be addressed [in this diagnosis](#) of the CONAQ and ECAM project. In this work, we reflect upon the experience and knowledge of griots, describing this transformation and how they face and adapt to the current reality, especially in regards to what affects their agricultural, extractive, and fishing production model, causing a great impact on their food sovereignty.

Over the years, the quilombola territories have constituted their development model of a viable and sustainable agriculture for the preservation of the environment, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions  $\text{CO}_2$ . The quilombola territories are becoming an area of speculation for the carbon market, by several international companies that deforest and pollute the atmosphere, with their unbridled actions imposed by the economic power, causing great impact and generating a devastated increase in the ozone layer.

With this, several questions arise in the quilombola conversations about climate change: why are the periods of drought

prolonged? In the North and Northeast regions, when it rains, it always comes at completely different times than it used to! Changes that are taking place in all regions of Brazil; South, Southeast and Center-West. But why are these communities frequently asked to talk about environmental preservation?

"Initial surveys by the Ministry of Environment, which occurred in 2017, for the preparation of a booklet (Territorial And Environmental Management in Quilombola Territories), indicate that in the 279 territories which have boundaries defined through official procedures, 87% of their areas are composed of remnants of native vegetation. In addition, there are 162 quilombola territories over 110 areas that are considered a priority for conservation purposes, 50 of which are classified as extremely important for conservation, sustainable use, and sharing of benefits". Answered!

The information reinforces the need for CONAQ, together with quilombola cooperatives, associations, and partners, to create an alternative for the elaboration of a public policy that recognizes the contribution of quilombola communities to the conservation of biodiversity of territories and supports them with their land management based on their knowledge, protection of biodiversity, and habits.

In this sense, the search for environmental sustainability must be developed together with the social and economic ones of a diversified family agriculture and with specificity of biomes. CONAQ needs to map these experiences in this project.

It is known that most quilombola communities live off family agriculture, agro-extractivism, and fishing. In Brazil,

family agriculture is responsible for 70% of the food that goes to Brazilian households (IBGE, 2006). Through different forms of management, knowledge, and traditional practices, even with the current climate change, quilombola communities have historically guaranteed the use, maintenance, and adaptation of various species. This can be seen in the richness of extractivism, agricultural production, and in the diversity of medicinal and forest species in the seed banks in the quilombos. These productive systems leverage forms of solidarity economy and ethnodevelopment.

Therefore, the quilombola farming experience has several dimensions, which makes it think and act in its own time. Quilombola agriculture is adapting to climate emergency or climate change.

It was necessary to create alternatives for quilombola family agriculture, through experiences in the Brazilian states, to understand that it is necessary to adapt and recover the traditional models, with the addition of technology and using the science of the griots, to understand that we are in an emerging era and that the planet is asking for help! In this way, leaving aside the packages offered by the pesticide market, it is possible to develop sustainable agriculture, to recover springs, to preserve water, to make ecological corridors, and to produce agro-ecological food, preserving and recovering the fauna and flora, within the principles of climate-smart agriculture.

### **The experience of quilombola territories in ES**

Outside of national contextualization, where climate change affects all quilombola territories in the 26 states of the Federation and biomes, I am sharing some actions and results of experiences with this theme, in the biome where I live, in the Sapê do Norte territory.

Information about the good practices of quilombola family agriculture and interlocution actions in mitigating climate change are the resistance of

family agriculture to counteract the large eucalyptus monocultures that exist in all 32 quilombola communities. As I mentioned, the Atlantic Forest biome is one of the most damaged, where its land coverage area is only 12.4%, but which originally covered an area of more than 1.3 million km<sup>2</sup>, distributed over 17 Brazilian states, ranging from Rio Grande do Norte to Rio Grande do Sul.

However, there are several experiences that have worked very well in the quilombola communities in the state of Espírito Santo, through a project that generates income from the reforestation of degraded areas. Of course, some of these income-generating actions are based on the green market, where farmers are paid a fee to continue preserving nature. These actions happen in the southern and mountainous regions of ES, but do not include quilombola communities. The announcement of the goals and priority areas, as well as other information necessary for participation, takes place through the Seama/Reflorestar publication, in the second half of each year. The following documents are required: CPF and RG (Brazilian ID); Proof of residence; Certificate of Registration of Rural Property - CCIR or other document that proves ownership of the property to be served; Negative certificate of federal, state and municipal debts.

The Reforest Project is an initiative of the Espírito Santo State Government that aims to promote the restoration of the hydrological cycle through the conservation and recovery of the forest coverage, generating opportunities and income for rural producers, and encouraging the adoption of sustainable land use practices.

In the northern region, where most of the quilombola communities are located, the native forest has given way to sugar cane, eucalyptus, and pasture fields but at the same time there are experiences of family agriculture that oppose the agribusiness model. These adaptations are being managed by the resistance of a quilombola family agriculture to reduce the environmental, social, and economic impacts in the region.

Native forests have given way to sugar cane, eucalyptus and pasture fields, but



at the same time there are family farming experiences, which continue in resistance to the reduction of economic impacts.

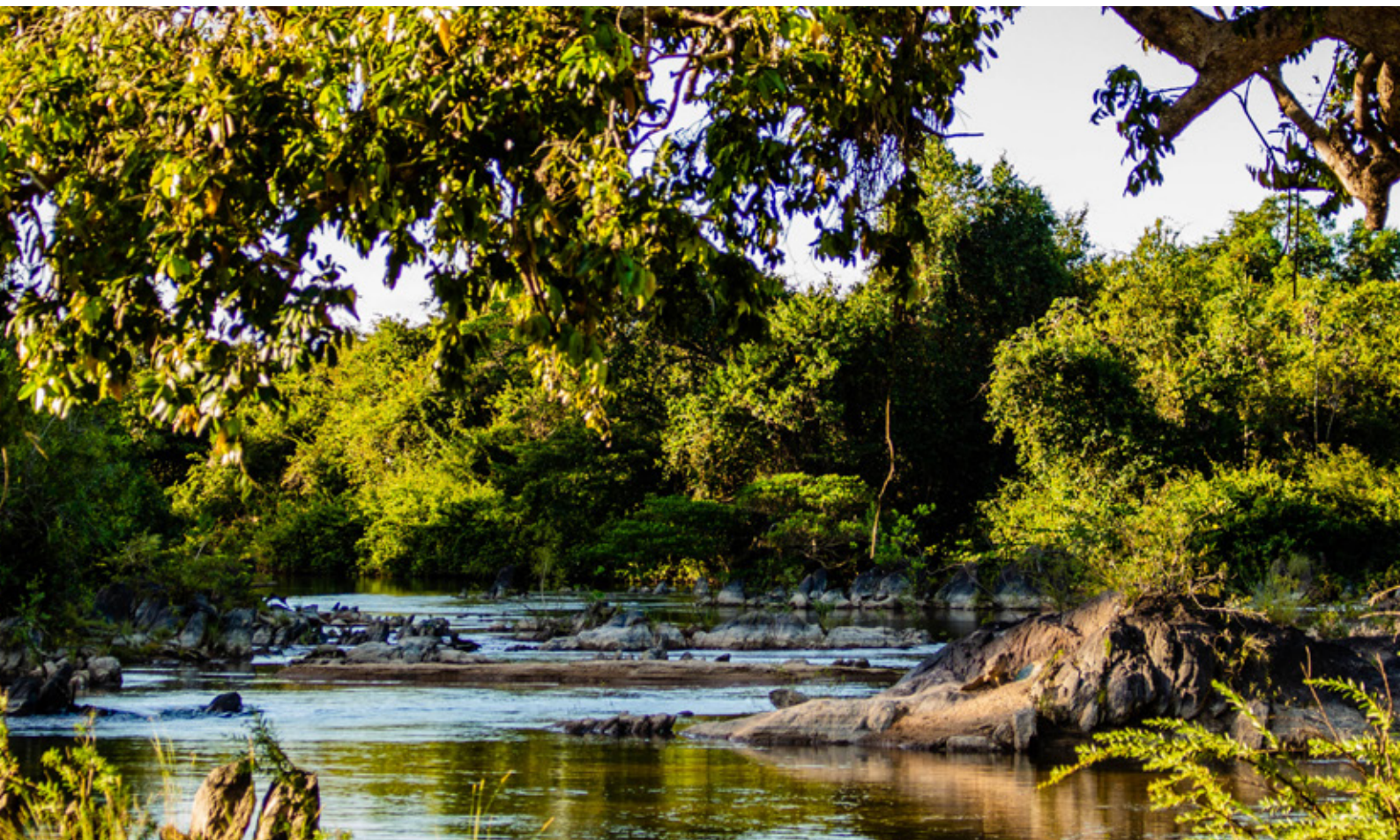
But the impact of climate change is still very visible. Each year, farmers notice the scarcity of rain, the temperatures that only increase, the long periods of drought, and even the catastrophes caused by rain at an adverse time - quite different from previous decades when the farmer prepared the land for planting at such a time, because it was the month of waters, and used the moon as a reference for the fertile period for germination. These and other ancient predictions are being lost in history as a result of climate change.

For example, there are communities that have had to change their activities and main sources of income because of a lagoon dried up. They have abandoned fishing and intensified cattle raising, which has degraded many areas of vegetation. Today, in every farmer's home it is rare not to have a rain gauge, an alternative to know the amount of millimeters that have fallen on the land, creating expectations of a good harvest.

Here, over the years, farmers have adapted and sought alternatives to face climate change, to ensure that their product reaches commercialization or direct consumer spaces. As a differential aspect from the conventional products which pervades much of the agroecological management, they use less agricultural inputs and opt for some techniques practiced by the (SAF) Agroforestry System.

The quilombola territories in ES are applying these initiatives to reduce temperatures and ensure productivity, still in the first year, from annual species (beans, rice, corn), edible greens, green manures (pork bean, guandu) and semi-perennial species (cassava, pineapple, banana, papaya), which can be marketed in the first 3 years on average. The productivity of annual and semi-perennial crops decreases as there is increased shading and competition with woody species, which are used for peppercorn stakes, fences, etc.

We have these initiatives in 20 quilombola associations in the Sapê do Norte Territories, with projects and partnerships with private companies, NGOs, and some of the farmers' own initiatives.



**BAHIA: GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY AGRICULTURE**

BY UILSON VIANA DE SOUZA AND JOSÉ RAMOS DE FREITAS - STATE ARTICULATORS

**Climate Emergency through the Quilombola Experience**

We understand agriculture as the practice of cultivating the soil and extracting food from it. From here, we can problematize a series of questions, considering the function of the land for those who cultivate and make a living from it. On the other hand, we can understand that, with technological advances, the land has taken on other functions, which are not necessarily to produce food, but to serve as a base for exploitative functions by large companies and large land owners. The soil in turn fulfills its productive function when it is worked, otherwise it is a non-productive soil from the point of view of its agricultural function - but from an agronomic point of view, it still has its productive physical-chemical properties.

This is a very present issue in Brazil, when it comes to the large land properties, which are based on misappropriation, with the process of land grabbing, and that end up causing damage to the soil through the improper use of pesticides, besides taking the land – the source of food – out of the hands of those who live and work on it.

But back to the concept, agriculture is classified through a broad conceptualization from its mode of usage. We will limit ourselves here to describe family and quilombola agriculture, understood as that which takes place through the involvement of a family and not an employer's practice in the cultivation and management of agricultural practice. In reference to "Family and Quilombola", it is understood that it is a practice where family farming takes place within a quilombo, thus differentiating by its practices – forged in the ancestry of each people – each quilombo and its way of cultivating the land and conservating the environment. We understand that, due to the ancestral relationship itself, the quilombola territories still have the largest areas of conserved land, where there is control

over the extraction and exploitation of its resources in a sustainable way.

The practice of agriculture dates back to the beginning of humanity, when nomads still moved from place to place, and stayed there until food was available in woods, rivers, forests, since they did not know how to cultivate. Over time, according to scholars, these men and women began to observe that the seeds that fell generated another seedling. We emphasize that this observation for the process of the birth of a new plant came from the women, since the men had to go out to get fruits, vegetables, animals, fish, and bring water. And as they stayed home, handling the food, they observed this movement of nature. From then on, the process of the first social technologies of soil management began, in order to cultivate the first pieces of land through the use of pieces of wood and animal bones. Then, more modern tools such as the hoe, the sickle, the machete, and animal traction will appear. Thus, they cultivated small fields with a diversity of plants for the sole purpose of feeding the family. They controlled the use of fire and thus maintained biodiversity in harmony with nature.

This was changed by the arrival of the Green Revolution, which was nothing more than the reuse of chemical inputs left over from World War II. The USA started to offer the poor and developing countries, like Brazil, agrochemical packages, under the argument of providing food for the population, since with the end of the war many areas were destroyed and many people went hungry. There was an interest in commercializing these products, thus disseminating a capitalist culture of more consumption and commercialization with the sole purpose of feeding.

Thus, agriculture moves from a pure



subsistence function to meet a worldwide call for large-scale production to feed the nation. The territory of Irecê in Bahia, for example, is undergoing this forceful transition, with the endorsement of governments and financial incentives, through projects financed by public banking agencies, such as Banco do Nordeste. Technical assistance agencies were created with the intention of maintaining the agricultural policy with the agroecological transition to monoculture, which gave the territory of Irecê in the early 60's and 70's the title of Bean Capital.

This is just one example to illustrate how this process changed from a production mode based on biodiversity and subsistence family agriculture to a large monoculture production pole, which took with it the virgin forests, the freshwater sources, and the families' way of working. With the arrival of agricultural machinery, *mutirões* (mutual help communities) are also disappearing - one of the practices that still exist in many Bahian territories between men and women, adjuncts, and all the ancestral practices and *griots* of the traditional quilombola peoples of this and other regions of the state of Bahia.

In addition to this, the agricultural technologies have provoked the displacement of an already existing labor force, being replaced by machines, hence the climatic changes resulting in the scarcity of rainfall in the semi-arid climate regions and the cerrado of Bahia. The culture of drilling artesian wells has compromised the water table as well, and we now have problems with the human water supply both because of the scarcity and the poisoning of the springs.

After more than half a century of this scenario, the current battle is for the rescue of these old and good practices of quilombola family agriculture. To reach this goal, the communities have sought to organize themselves into associations, cooperatives, unions, and movements, and dealt with the governments to access public policies that bring back the concern with the biomes, the springs, and with the correct use of the soil. We can cite as an example, the projects developed by NGOs,

associations, agricultural secretariats, and the state government, which have prioritized actions aimed at the cultivation of native seeds with the development of seed banks, collective organic vegetable garden projects, the creation of social technologies, such as production cisterns for the creation of productive backyards, the processing of family farming products, such as cassava, wild fruits, among others.

We understand that the state of Bahia is diverse and fits within it the various climates and biomes that coexist here, such as the Caatinga and Cerrado biome, located in the Northeast, Midwest, North, and West regions of Bahia, with its semi-arid climate, in addition to the humid and subsumed biomes of the South and Recôncavo regions of Bahia. Then comes the socio-political division of this state into identity territories, with agriculture as a mark of this dynamic and the culture of each people region. In this context, it also institutes actions and policies for quilombola family agriculture, seeking communication with the characteristics of each place. And in this biodynamic, we believe that it is not possible to mitigate drought or floods, or climate change, but to live with each climate, seeking to dialogue with governments about which practices and projects are feasible for each region.

We have noticed that the biggest obstacle today has been community organization, in which people still have difficulty in organizing themselves, and even where associations exist, most of them face difficulties with management and document regularization, which makes it difficult to access projects. In this sense, trying to organize the quilombola movement is a daily struggle to guarantee that our associations and communities have access to public policies, as well as the access of the quilombola territories to the process of land regularization, with their proper titles. These benefits enhance the local production process and contribute to mitigate the migration of our farmers to large urban centers or to the agro and hydrobusiness.

Even with such organizational difficulties, the quilombola family farmers

have their own way of organizing themselves, based on each way of life, but supported by their ancestry, which ends up linking them to another quilombo. Thus, the mean of production, in the case of Bahia, is supported by this diversity, both in terms of territory, climate, biodiversity, and local conditions. We are faced with diverse realities, from the point of view of consumption and production culture. In the semi-arid region, for example, there are farmers cultivating and producing both for consumption and for production in both dry and irrigated systems. There are local experiences of processing fruits from the Caatinga, such as umbu, acerola, mango, and passion fruit, which are processed in community kitchens or in the houses themselves and turned into jams, juices, and pulps, besides the processing of other crops, such as cassava.

These initiatives have contributed to the improvement of family income, mainly in what concerns women's autonomy, for being in charge of enterprises and initiatives, besides adding value to the production. Agro-ecological and organic production has been another growing alternative in Bahia. With the participative certification

process, organic family farmers have sought certification and have competed in institutional and conventional markets. The commercialization remains a great challenge for all these axes, but the commercialization programs and policies, based on institutional markets, have proved to be a strong catalyst for the improvement of this scenario, besides the quilombola fairs, exhibitions, exchanges, among other alternatives for the dissemination of quilombola family agriculture products. All this emerges as alternatives for rethinking the proposition and replication of public policies aimed at each context, without losing focus on the issues of identity, ancestry, and the conservation of our environmental preservation areas.

In the case of Bahia, we have a government that has an eye for family agriculture, but on the other hand, it has to deal with the lack of awareness for regularization of the restituted lands, which account for more than 80% and where many quilombola territories are, besides dealing with the bureaucratic process of registry office services.



## MARANHÃO: GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY AGRICULTURE

BY IVO FONSECA SILVA, CÉLIA CRISTINA DA SILVA PINTO AND GARDENIA MOTA AYRES - STATE ARTICULATORS

Quilombola communities have – in their ways of being, doing and living – practices that are considered traditional. Tradition here does not claim an association with temporality, the outdated, the archaic, or an obstacle to capitalist development. On the contrary, traditional involves respect for the sociocultural diversity of these groups, which is closely linked to territorial control and their abilities to consciously use and preserve natural resources. Therefore, the traditional practices of the quilombola communities are in conformity with the formation of specific territorialities, with the constitution of family units, with the forms of political mobilizations, and with the claims for rights that are (trans) formed from local dynamics.

The quilombolas fight for permanence in their territories, making their political interventions in search of the realization of their constitutionally guaranteed rights. The definitive titling of the collective territories is the main demand of the Quilombola Movement, which has its political organicity in the local, municipal, state, national, and international spheres. These organizations are supported by social, governmental, and non-governmental organizations that fight for collective territorial rights and seek instruments that help and expand the development of Quilombola Family Farming.

Among the practices of the quilombola communities, family farming, with its status of socio-cultural and socio-environmental activity, is central in defining the forms of appropriation of territory and use of natural resources, because it constitutes a collective and indispensable way of survival of the communities. The practice of family farming and its likely results, including environmental ones, is directly related to territorial and food security, transcending economic values since the conscience in the use of natural resources and in the ways of sharing fruits/seeds and exchanging labor, surpassing commercial values. The practice of family farming in quilombola communities ensures a set of interdependence and social relations among and beyond family nuclei and communities, indispensable for the recognition of collective

existence.

Farming is one of the most practice family agriculture activities in the quilombola communities in Maranhão. Roça (field/farm) is a word that we have known since our ancestors; it is knowledge passed down from fathers and mothers to sons and daughters. For us, the garden carries several meanings, among them: labor power, food, and income generation. The relationship of the Quilombolas with the field is the sustenance of our life security in all times. The basis of quilombolas' food production is the field, where the labor force is collective, by exchanging days, each day may have a group of five to ten people working in the form of a *mutirão*. The production belongs to the owner of the field and there is a rotation of jobs.

There is a step-by-step process for the preparation of the field, which is: marking the bush, making a path, weeding, burning the bush, cleaning and storing the wood, choosing the seeds, weeding, and slaughtering. All these activities, not only strengthen community organization and territory management, but constitute pillars of the productive chain of the quilombola communities. Therefore, the field is life. A life for respecting nature and living together collectively for the socioeconomic and cultural development of the Quilombo.

The so-called slash-and-burn field, with deforestation and subsequent burning, fencing, and cleaning of the land for planting, is still predominant. However, this practice is surrounded by care, in order to mitigate environmental damage. It is important to mention that the practice of burning the field for planting crops, promoted in the communities, has low environmental impact, if we consider the large extensions deforested and burned to meet the needs of agribusiness and the farming sector. Nevertheless, even with the low impact of the burnings, the studies on fireless fieldwork have advanced and are being experienced in Maranhão, as well as the groups' perception of soil depletion, climate change, and awareness of environmental impacts.

In the making of crops, we can list some practices that support actions to reduce the effects of climate change, noting that the calendar for making crops is directly influenced



by these changes, since it obeys and depends on the period and frequency of rainfall.

Be careful when choosing the place to plant the field, considering the resting period of the soil:

- The sites were chosen by taking into consideration the importance of not cutting down century-old trees, fruit trees, or trees in danger of extinction.
- During the fires, one takes care that the fire does not spread beyond the area demarcated for the field by making firebreaks.
- The fields must not be made in places that compromise the water sources, the course of rivers and streams.
- The fields respect the places dedicated to Afro-religious cults in the communities – as a rule, places with leafy trees and water sources.
- In order to cultivate the fields, the communities do not sacrifice areas of *juçarais*, *babaçal* and *buritizais*, sources of food and environmental resources that must be preserved.
- As a rule, the quilombola communities, in their family farming practices, do not use pesticides in their production and preservation of products and seeds.

Other agricultural practices such as vegetable gardens, backyard fields, planting beds for herbs and medicinal plants, as a rule do not require deforestation nor burning or using pesticides that contaminate the soil and water sources. As a rule, these fields are supplied with reused water from reservoirs.

Therefore, for the quilombola communities, it is very important to hold territorial control and have the security of collective property, to decisively demarcate interventions to reduce environmental impacts. In communities with disputed territories, where conflicts are more acute, one of the forms of violence, on the part of farmers or supposed owners, is the destruction of natural resources or preventing people from using essential resources such as drinking water, land for work, and the construction of decent housing. The community that has ownership of the land under its domain has autonomy in the management of the territory and is better able to preserve and make common and conscious use of the natural resources – which is

essential for the mitigation of climate effects.

In Maranhão, the women's struggle in defense of the babassu groves and the creation and approval of the Free Babassu Laws must be considered an unprecedented practical action to support climate change mitigation. The fight against private appropriation of natural resources, the defense of the babassu palm trees, without fences, without deforestation, has guaranteed the survival and forms of resistance of quilombola women, rural workers, extractivists, and babassu nut breakers.

It is worth mentioning that in relation to quilombola and rural communities, public policies operate favoring the classifications considered official to the detriment of specific identities. When it comes to the family farming scenario, this classification presents many reflections for the quilombolas, because public managers classify and publish the so-called Quilombola family farming programs, but between the lines there is no specific investment plan for these groups, we are included in programs with generic proposals. Planning is not shared, there are no financial resources and investments are insufficient. The programs are palliative, and technical assistance is sporadic. There is prejudiced notion that traditional practices do not go along with modernity, that they must remain manual, with slave-like reminiscences. The reproduction of racist stereotypes makes programs and projects not propose mechanization and large investments in quilombola territories, because they refuse to treat traditional practices associated with new technologies.

Finally, traditional communities have been singled out as being largely responsible for environmental conservation practices that can help in climate change mitigation. But, for this, quilombola family farming and its incentive programs must be thought and planned on the ground of the communities, accompanied by the political incidence of the quilombolas and their particular ways of doing things. The world needs to be understood and worked with the multiplicity of links and articulations between different social actors, economic agents, and sectors that operate in the various territories, because our traditional local practices can offer alternatives with repercussions on a global scale.

## MATO GROSSO: GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY AGRICULTURE

BY OILDO FERREIRA - STATE ARTICULATOR

I am Oildo Ferreira da Silva, son, grandson, great-grandson, and great-great-grandson of quilombolas. I was born and grew up in the quiet town of Nossa Senhora do Livramento, in the state of Mato Grosso. My parents are my inspirations, as well as my maternal grandmother, Mãe Rosa, and my aunts and uncles, to whom I owe all my obedience, because from these people I learned the craft of life, which is to work in the fields to guarantee our survival.

From a very early age, when I wasn't in school, my siblings and I accompanied my parents and grandparents in their work on the fields. Slash-and-burn agriculture was a predominant factor in the struggle for the defense of our lands. At the time, the landowner cut our production and we always persisted, even in face of so many difficulties, we always planted twice as much, as a means to intensify our permanence in the property, where our ancestors lived.

Quilombola family agriculture, although it is hard, is specific for us, because we work with slash-and-burn fields, where our survival comes from, and, therefore, we understand the value that these fields have here in the quilombo, considering that subsistence production in general, for my people, was the means of resistance to continue inside our properties, even in the face of negative attacks by landowners, wanting to usurp the quilombola areas that didn't belong to them.

Slash-and-burn farming is done with manual work, using several people in the process. The first step is to choose an area that had already been cultivated, and the families let it become a capoeira – a recovery area. So, after 05 years, they return to cultivate in this area. Once the place is chosen, people gather in muximum to cut down the trees that are in that place, using a sickle, axe, and even a chainsaw.

After felling, the trees are left to dry for a few days, and then collectively they make firebreaks around the field area, to

stop the fire from spreading when burning the bush. After burning the field, it becomes full of stumps, and once again, the muximum is important, because it brings people together to clean it, removing branches from the middle of the field. However, the stumps remain inside the fields, and it is then cleared by the quilombolas' own arms - done in a controlled manner, without damaging nature. The ashes, as well as the leftovers that stay on the fields, are used as fertilizer for the soil. With all the process done in the field, the seeds can now be sown.

My experience, as well as that of my family, begins with the work on the slash-and-burn fields, from which all our production comes to supply our needs – and we sell the surplus. Here on the farm, we always carry with us the teachings of our ancestors, in which the phase of the moon is predominant for us to be able to sow the seeds, harvest the produce, and especially prepare the soil. Although, currently, climate change has greatly interfered with production modes, as the increase in the greenhouse effect and the lack of rain have been predominant factors in interfering with production.

The preparation of the fieldwork always starts in May and lasts until September, when several families get together as a muximum (collective work), one helping the other, making it possible for their fields to be cleaned and prepared, as well as sown.

Here in the community we work with agroecology, including our seeds, which are native seeds, because we are seed keepers through the teachings of our ancestors - where we keep the rice in the jar, the corn in the barn, and the other seeds we mix with ashes so they don't get weevils. In this way, we have seeds that we grow from one year to the next. Here, we don't buy hybrid seeds, because we understand that the knowledge of our ancestors is important to keep them alive, passing the knowledge from generation to generation.

I point out that, in the Mutuca community, we have the famous criollo caiano corn, which has gained a very high visibility, because it is spread all over the state of Mato Grosso and outside the state - it is known mainly for its cobs, which are large and resistant.

Our knowledge is also connected to medicinal herbs. I learned with my parents the importance and the power of herbs, and we also use them in our fields to fight plagues, like the angico, to spray the beans, and among countless other situations that we can use, be it for medicinal purposes, food, or others. An example is when you break your arm, you use pink peppercorn syrup to heal the break. This has been our knowledge.

Last year, we had critical moments in relation to the fires in Pantanal, which harmed many families, because their fields were burned. Not to mention the climatic issue, which negatively interfered with production and made it impossible for families to get their own food, experiencing

difficulties. Instead of rain, we had showers of smoke, a sky covered with smoke. It was a very critical moment, because I had never experienced a situation like that. But at last the rain came, although every year it rains less and less.

Besides producing food, we still have the animals that have lost their habitat and end up coming to our fields and eating our production. In this sense, the Mutuca community and Fase, have recommended to FAO, the quilombola Muxirum as a system of traditional practices, because they understand that this knowledge is very rich and important for the quilombola population, because we do not destroy our areas, we just use what is essential for our food production and rotation processes, in which we let the area rest for about five years and then return to the area that had already been cultivated.

Finally, good production practices permeate, mainly, in the valorization of traditional quilombola ways and knowledge. We produce healthy food to satiate hunger and keep our ancestral knowledge alive.













## MINAS GERAIS GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY AGRICULTURE

BY MARIA NILZA AND ALCIONE MENDES - STATE ARTICULATORS

Report on the quilombola communities of Santa Cruz de Ouro Verde de Minas, Quilombola Community of Três Barras, Buraco, Cubas and the others located in the surrounding area.

A few years ago, many quilombolas decided to stop planting, and due to external influence, decided to raise cattle on tiny spaces of land. The families live in small properties for a large number of people, where there is often no way to have large crop fields, because we know that few quilombola communities have registered land. In addition, many people stop planting, in order to raise cattle, and – with hopes for higher income – provoke deforestation.

With this new reality, we had very visible and devastating impacts, such as a lot of soil erosion, rendering the roads often unusable. 2015 was the year that most evidenced this impact, with many resulting droughts, since several springs had dried up because of deforestation.

When the communities, through Vandeli, start the identification and certification process of the quilombola communities, a step is taken towards a new direction, seeking ways and alternatives for sustainability without harming the environment.

Unfortunately, capitalist society coined the idea that canned food was next best thing, and that the best vegetables and fruit were those with the most exuberant sizes and colors. This demotivates many farmers from planting and devalues small production without pesticides when it is taken to the street markets for sale.

After the certification of quilombola communities, there was more collective work, lectures, joint efforts, courses, fairs, such as the canjerê fair, held by CONAQ and partners, among other fairs and initiatives that made a difference throughout all this time. The access of many young people to federal universities has helped to change the way we act and think, because no matter how mechanical these universities are, there we get the dimension of the treasure we have and how poorly we use this potentiality.

About 5 years ago, the views of quilombola people have changed and with that, our environment as well. Although many still have a few cows, crop fields and vegetable gardens have gained more space. I often say that, in the Santa Cruz quilombo, 2020 was the year of highest agricultural activity and production. I believe it is an effect of the pandemic, because they stay at home more.

An example of this is my father, who works in São Paulo. I can't remember another moment when he stayed so long at home and in this pandemic he stayed home for 6 months. The family planted a lot, so we harvested beans, corn and peanuts. It has been a while since I have seen such abundance, but the main thing is that we have initiatives, organizations, projects, and entities that help us sell these products. Nowadays, soil erosion is much lower, consequently taking less earth to the roads and making our forests grow substantially.

In the courses, the technique of Agroforestry System was thoroughly explained. Many use the techniques of biodiversity in gardens, organic fertilization, intelligent use of some plants with natural insecticides, preservation and reforestation of springs, among other techniques that have helped both in production and in environmental conservation.

Associations and cooperatives are the biggest partners of these small farmers, because through them it is possible to sell their products. Therefore, we must value the associations and help the quilombos that are not up to date with their documentation, because only then they will only be able to advance with their associations. Entities and organizations that can contribute are of utmost importance, because in these Quilombos there are many agroecological products of high quality.

I believe that we need and can do more, we blacks and quilombolas are many, we must value our work, our products, our people, and the suffering of our people, even if sometimes our practices that are belittled or considered



useless, we will make a difference little by little. One example is in why we don't start valuing the product from our own quilombo or from the neighboring quilombos, instead of buying from other people? This act would make a lot of difference.

Land erosion cases were a frequent reality in various quilombos of MG. About seven years ago, we saw that when the rainy season started, the quilombos were isolated, roads were bumpy and other problems ensued. But from a certain time on, this reality has been changing for the better, because the quilombola farmers started to realize that what caused this was their own improper actions with mother earth. And, from that moment on, we started to change our actions. The soil erosion stopped when we started to make small dams, contour fields, and reforestation in degraded areas.

Another point to highlight are the exchanges, through which we can get to know experiences that worked in other communities and thus implement them in ours. Through the interchanges, the farmers become eager to get to know each other and exchange experience. I remember that when the quilombolas from my community of Três Barras and Buraco did an exchange program at the Quilombo Santa Cruz, in Ouro Verde de Minas, they came back very excited and very happy for having had the opportunity to get to know the territory and the fields of their quilombola brothers, even though they were very far away.

A good part of the quilombos know and perform many good quilombola family farming practices, which support climate change mitigation. This is because, as was pointed out above, many young quilombolas, who previously thought it impossible to enter a public federal university, have had this opportunity. This was very good because we are farmers' children and, with this training, we can help our family and our community even more. Even with all this info, we cannot forget that, unfortunately, this is not the reality of all quilombos. There are many quilombola communities that still need a lot of help in terms of rural technique assistance.

And as much as the communities use this agricultural practice, which does not harm our mother earth, I still see the need

for initiatives from entities that work with technical assistance for these communities. Unfortunately, a few entities foster practices that do not help mother nature at all. So I see that training sessions with farmers on agroecology and other good practices that do not harm our environment are still needed.

### **Complements**

In regards to agricultural production techniques, our quilombola elders know some very important practices. In the old days, when there were no tractors for plowing the land, our people used to plow with a device pulled by oxen, and the weeding is done in two layers where the dry weeds stay on top, serving as manure and cover for the land.

The quilombola people have the habit of planning and preparing the planting site, thus preparing the soil and also working on the intercropping of plants, e.g. corn and beans. This makes better use of the land. Our people also have the practice of giving the land a rest, that is, planting for about 3 years and then moving the fieldwork to another place, giving the previous land a rest so that it regenerates and recomposes itself with nutrients and native vegetation.

Our quilombola people do not use pesticides, the nutrients that the plants need are acquired through the ashes of the controlled fire: the dry leaves above the soil, the rotten wood, etc. In every harvest we separate a good part of what we harvest for the next planting, such as the cassava branches, corn seeds, beans, pumpkin, okra, etc. Thus, we make a selection of the best seeds to leave aside for the next planting, this makes the grains harvested in the next harvest better.

Our products from quilombola family agriculture are different from other products, because the negative impacts linked to the environment are minimal. Our quilombola people have a very special connection with the land, and the result of this is these very important production techniques, which we should value more and more, because they are practices that do not harm the environment. In addition, the method of production is sustainable. Our bananas, potatoes, pumpkins and all the production of

our quilombola people are healthy, without pesticides. These are healthy products ready for to go the table.

The production of quilombola communities are of incredible quality and very healthy. Besides the agricultural and vegetable productions, these quilombola farmers also make sweets, cookies, canned peppers, among other varieties of handmade products, which come from quilombola family agriculture, in which the whole process is handmade.

We need more projects like this one, which ECAM and CONAQ have been working on to give visibility to these farmers and these productions. It is necessary to really get to know the quilombola people and their incredible and healthy way of life, because many times these productions are lost, because there is no one to sell them to, or because they are sold at a low cost due to the low market valuation.

Everyone that is involved in this project needs to comprehend its importance and actually care for it. I really want to fight so that, especially, these most forgotten quilombos have dignity and appreciation for their means of earning a living, giving them conditions to live with dignity without leaving their place, culture, and family.

This overview is of utmost importance. I also understand that cataloging the products is very important for the quilombos and for neighboring towns so they know where to find healthy, quality products.

The Quilombola people have various techniques for the preparation of these lands and their production of crops. We saw some examples at the beginning of the text, where they try to respect and protect the land as much as possible, trying to account for the climate, the moon, the condition of the earth, among other techniques. An example of this to drive away animals that appear in the fields, even today they use scarecrows made of old clothes and plants with strong smells to drive away pests.

In conclusion, the wisdom of these quilombola farmers is extremely important. It comes from their ancestors, and they maintain the culture and the quality of the products of the environment to this day.









# PARAÍBA: GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY AGRICULTURE

BY JOSIEL ALVES - STATE ARTICULATOR

## Living with the semi-arid climate

Paraíba is one of the 10 states that make up the Brazilian semi-arid region, thus delimited by the Superintendence for Development of the Northeast – SUDENE, in view of its climatic and semi-arid circumstances. Over the years, the region has suffered several climatic effects, mostly caused by man, who sees a potential in the caatinga vegetation for animal feed and for cultivation, often of monoculture, causing fires and thus destroying the environment.

One of the concepts that has been discussed by popular movements, non-governmental organizations, and some governmental sectors is the coexistence with the semi-arid region - an important aspect to diminish the negative actions against nature, such as deforestation, removal/expulsion of animals from their areas, and interference in river streams and springs. The actions in the positive term, on the other hand, can be emphasized as an ancestral cultural cycle, something that for centuries human beings and nature lived in harmony, however, technological innovations and the expansion of single crops such as corn, soy, and sugar cane, have been taking over larger and larger spaces.

Our fauna and flora are gradually diminishing, due to climate effects. Our atmosphere is constantly being polluted by the dispersion of toxic gases from fires and factories. But, in small steps, farmers have been disseminating sustainable practices, in the sense of awareness, training, and production, showing that it is possible to have a relationship with nature based on exchange, and no longer a relationship of just taking raw materials from a certain space.

## Quilombola experiences in Paraíba and the protection of the environment

The quilombos in Paraíba still seek to preserve the fauna and flora of the caatinga, seeking to coexist with mother earth, whether in the production of seedlings native to the semi-arid region, linked to fieldwork in degraded areas; in the cultivation of traditional agriculture, linked to joint ventures; or by planting agricultural crops in the same space, such as corn, fava beans, beans, watermelon, jerimum, pumpkin, okra, cassava, yam, cará, and green leaves, legacies passed on from parents to children, and which predominate until today.

The care with the soil when planting is fundamental for plant development. In this sense, the quilombolas in Paraíba still have the tradition of sectioning the land by plowing with animal traction, the practice of turning the land over happens every 1 or 2 years, when a new fieldwork is going to be done. This practice has been going on since the old days; it minimizes soil compaction and thus prevent nutrient loss in the rainy season. However, this tradition has lost space to machinery, such as tractors that cause more damage to the soil.

On the other hand, farmers have planted in joint ventures and fertilized the soil with animal manure and leftovers from the old crops, so the soil is not as intensely degraded. The practices also include weeding, without felling or burning, where the use of bio-fertilizers, natural pesticides, grouts from plants, leaves or fruit are used to combat natural pests. In addition, the interaction of the plants that act as natural defenses do not cause many losses in the plantation, but we still notice the use of poisons in some productions, because these quilombola farmers think that it is an easier way to eliminate the pests from the plantations, without realizing the damage to their health

and to the land. In this sense, the formation in the associations and cooperatives has been the main point to take the knowledge to quilombolas to have a better production and to realize the negative impacts of pesticides.

Besides the care taken when sectioning the soil after planting, the agricultural crops begin to sprout, and so begins the manual cleaning, with tools such as the hoe, which consists in the arrival of more soil at the foot of the plant, so that it develops better, and for the removal of weeds that grow in the middle of the plantation, thus serving as green fertilizer in the soil. The animal-drawn plow is also used at this time, with another blade called a cultivator, which only removes those little plants close to the crops planted there and turns the soil closer to the stalks. The preparation of green edible leave gardens also goes through a similar process. The management of the inputs to prepare for fertilization has an organic origin, such as animal manure (chickens, goats, and cattle), dry grass for soil coverage, and even soils from riverbanks, rich in nutrients for the gardens.

An important practice that has been strengthened in the quilombos of Paraíba is the creation of collective native seed banks. This culture of storing seeds in plastic bottles has been passed down from ancestors and allows the seeds to be protected from small insects or moisture and be kept for a few years ready for planting. The farmers' seed rotation, or seed exchange, takes place with each new planting and harvest, preserving the native crops of that region.

Some public policies that have given great support to the farmers have been the construction of plate cisterns, with two stages: water 1, for home consumption, and water 2, which is the large cistern for storing water for animals and for growing vegetables and fruit. Water is an important element for the production and survival of quilombola farmers. It is possible to highlight initiatives, such as contour farming, which allows better water infiltration into the soil and also its preservation. The underground dams, as a

proposal for the planting of native forage plants and other agricultural crops, have the composition of a trench, covered with a specific tarpaulin for water storage, where it is covered by the soil itself taken from that trench, which enables the farmer to cultivate on top of it, because the rainwater will stay infiltrated underground. The recovery of river springs and the planting of native seedlings is also part of the care with the soil, because it is from the soil that the main resources for human survival are obtained.

### **The Challenge of Organic Production in Quilombos**

Organic production is a big challenge for farmers, specifically for quilombolas. The existence of problems for the execution of a large or small scale organic production is due to several factors, but I raise a main problem that is the lack of public incentive and financing policies for these productions which are necessary for the preservation of the environment. The policies of production, preservation, and commercialization can have a great positive impact on the semi-arid experience, because if they are functioning and well developed, it is possible to achieve a stronger awareness of preservation. With this, we enter another, more internal, factor, which is formation, where the revival of ancestral cultures sprouts again, as in small organic productions, which show the quilombola farmers the possibility of subsistence and income generation on their property.

The road is long to have healthy food on our tables and a dignified life for our people, but popular movements, non-governmental organizations, public institutions, and some private ones have begun training producers to start planting. The preservation of native seeds is one of the main points of discussion. In Paraíba, some quilombos have preserved their native seeds, creating seed banks and starting organic production for consumption and commercialization in open fairs and solidarity economy houses.



# QUILOMBO MESQUITA (GO): GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY AGRICULTURE

BY SANDRA BRAGA - STATE ARTICULATOR

Mesquita is a quilombola community located about 50 km from Brasília. Located in a rural area around the Federal District, the quilombolas struggle for their rural production roots. There are many challenges in these productions, because the urban environment is collaborating every day to change the way small farmers plant.

The origins of Quilombo Mesquita date back to the gold cycle, in the 18th century. The rush for the metal led to the creation of several villages in the interior of Goiás - among them Santa Luzia, founded in 1746, today known as Luziânia. Enslaved blacks made up the majority of the population in the region. The story goes that, with the decline of mining, the Portuguese captain Paulo Mesquita decided to abandon Santa Luzia and left a farm to three freed slaves. Over time, others joined the community led by the women - many of them slaves in search of refuge and who - to get there - traveled along the cattle roads that linked Goiás to Salvador and Rio de Janeiro.

After the 1988 Constitution determined the demarcation of quilombos, many communities mobilized to obtain the land titles. In Quilombo Mesquita, the first step occurred in 2006, when Fundação Cultural Palmares (subordinated to the Ministry of Culture) recognized it as a remaining quilombo community. Five years later, INCRA published the Technical Report of Identification and Demarcation of the community, defining its extension at 4.3 thousand hectares - the equivalent of 4 thousand soccer fields.

On the environmental issue, the Mesquita quilombo stands out in a few points. Environmental preservation has always been a role played by the residents, because their way of living has always been in communion with nature. In every backyard of the quilombo, there was always the presence of nature and small edible greens that were watered with the springs that rose

from the ground. Another important point to highlight in the issues that help in climate preservation, are the water channels that distribute water throughout the quilombo. Another important point to highlight in the issues that help in climate preservation, are the water channels that distribute water throughout the quilombo. This water is collected from springs located in some parts of the quilombo.

The canals were built by the first residents, more than 200 years ago, respecting nature and sharing this water resource with the other people that make up the territory, as well as with the animals that also use this water. With this technology, the climate is improved, because as water travels naturally, humidity ends up reaching all locations. Another point that the water gullies favor in family agriculture is that they serve as means of irrigation for vegetables, besides supplying the kitchens of some residents.

As mentioned, the quilombo has more than 270 years of cultural existence, and with the urbanization of the surroundings, several of the quilombolas' habits inside the territory have changed. About 40 years ago, our way of life was totally different, jobs were basically rural, but today this reality is totally changed, due to several factors. In the past, older people had other ways of cultivating their rural products. According to reports, land management for planting was done only with hoes to loosen the soil, without the need for organic fertilizers, because the soil fertility was very rich in nutrients.

Another point remembered was that the rains occurred over a long period, helping to conserve soil moisture. The quality of the seeds was also an important factor, as their quality was better than today's, because the products yielded in greater quantity and quality. To combat pests, the quilombolas used leaf tea, such as those made from tobacco and castor beans. Vinegar with

coconut soap and cow urine were also used; they were thrown on the crops and scared the insects away. And besides these products being used for the family's sustenance, they served as food for wild animals, because as there was a large amount of riparian forest around the plantations, the animals also enjoyed it.

Urbanization has a very negative influence, because there are many gated communities and country clubs that do not respect the environmental issue within the community. Deforestation is increasing and water pollution is getting worse every day, which ends up harming in part the management and agricultural production while conditioning climate change.

Another point that deserves attention is the presence of monoculture within the quilombo. Large soybean fields are planted irregularly, with authorization from local government agencies that should defend environmental preservation. All these farms are led by large landowners who are within Mesquita. The large amount of pesticides used in the farm directly harms the lives of the local people.

Reforestation measures with fruitful plants from the Cerrado and others for environmental recovery are carried

out within the quilombo. There is work being done so that people can plant and harvest these fruits to be sold in fairs and government programs - these actions aim to generate income and promote environmental conservation. This work requires perseverance, but as the current government constitutes the municipality, this work becomes more complicated, because they do not support us and preach against environmental preservation, unfortunately. Even with all this change in climate and space, many people within the quilombo continue producing their vegetables and planting crops while adapting to the new means of production.

Over time, changes in the management ways had to be made, but the essential point is that the organic product was maintained. Today, there is a need for the use of organic fertilizers on the land, which are made from chicken, cattle, and pig manure. To combat pests, the farmers still use leaf teas, and other organic products that are purchased by them. All these ways help the quilombolas to be highlighted in the organic fairs in the regions, having preference from buyers who know the natural and safe origin of the products.





# TOCANTINS: GOOD PRACTICES OF QUILOMBOLA FAMILY AGRICULTURE

BY DÉBORA GOMES LIMA - STATE ARTICULATOR

The state of Tocantins is almost entirely inserted in the Cerrado biome. The Cerrado vegetation is associated with the continental tropical climate, with one rainy season and another dry season. It consists of twisted trees, bushes, and undergrowth. Affected by the construction of Brasília and the highways that connect the capital, this biome has been rapidly degraded due to the growth of agriculture, soy and eucalyptus farms, and the increase of burning activities. Among the resulting environmental impacts are increased greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

The quilombola communities of Tocantins are allies in the conservation of the Cerrado, have been living there for a long time, and contribute to the reduction of environmental impacts and climate change. They are true alternative forms of free communal organizations, which live mainly from family farming and extractivism. The inherited practices and knowledge have been shared for years and help in the conservation of ecosystems, caring for biodiversity, the maintenance of nature's cycles, and low carbon emissions. The good practices are in how they take care of the water, the seeds and the soil, in how they plant crops and raise their animals, and how they relate in harmony with the environment that is necessary for the maintenance of life.

In this sense, we mention below some of the good practices, through quilombola family agriculture, that support the mitigation of climate change.

## Cerrado Defense

Known as the cradle of waters, the maintenance of the Cerrado biome is necessary for environmental balance. Quilombola communities, as one of the peoples of this biome, hold traditional knowledge of its biodiversity that contributes

to its preservation. They collect regional native fruits, nuts, oils, and animals through conscious hunting. The extractivists of these communities respect the ecosystem, and have knowledge that allows the conservation of water and biodiversity. Thus, they live in harmony with the biome, using the natural resources in a conscious way, reducing deforestation and fires, preserving the hydrological cycle, and reducing the use of agrochemicals.

## Riparian forest protection

A riparian forest is the vegetation that surrounds streams, rivers, and creeks and is a fundamental part of an ecosystem. They maintain water quality, soil stability, prevent erosion, and regulate the water and temperature cycle. Regarding the quality of the water, the riparian forest reduces silting caused by rain and prevents pollutants from entering the water, since the roots of the plants protect the soil. Quilombola communities conserve the riparian forests, because they understand that they are essential in biodiversity and are natural barriers to pests and diseases in agriculture. The conservation of these areas softens the thermal sensation, lowering the temperature and absorbing carbon dioxide.

## Policulture

This practice consists of producing many crops on the same land and, at the same time, integrating various types of trees, shrubs, and plants, as well as animal husbandry. Raising animals at the same time as planting increases the diversification of production, uses less land, and reduces the risks caused by climate change because they can capture more carbon with the trees. Besides not being an agent of deforestation, it is a natural fighter against pests and

diseases. The farm does not use fertilizers or pesticides and conserves the soil through crop rotation. So once the soil starts to become infertile, they move to another area hoping for a resting time. Therefore, we can say that it is a form of agroecology, because it protects the environment, avoiding deforestation. The communities continue to preserve the environment, the fauna and flora, and even though they farm the land, they have always done so in a sustainable way, taking from the land just enough for consumption and production. Quilombola communities have different types of fields, which are characterized by being traditional and with a concern for preservation, such as:

### **Slash-and-burn agriculture**

It consists of cutting down and burning a small part of the vegetation area, and then farming it for two or three years. All the vegetation removed in the felling – including trees, leaves and fruits – is used as much as possible. For instance: using the wood to make houses, firewood, charcoal, and using the foliage and roots as fertilizer. After the planting and harvesting period, this area is preserved by letting the vegetation grow back.

### **Ebb tide agriculture**

Its main characteristic is the use of strips of land that are close to rivers, dams, streams, and creeks. In the rainy season, these areas are covered with water until the drought comes. Once the area is cleaned up and ready for planting, one can do it on cone pits or flat pits. Cone pits are for planting cassava, sweet potatoes, carrots, and beets, which grow inside the soil. And pits in the field for short-term crops, such as beans and watermelon.

These are some of the most predominant types of farming in quilombola communities in Tocantins, free of pesticides, using what is offered by nature for local consumption and sale, everything in harmony from planting to harvest, 100% natural fertilizers, taking from the land only what is necessary, without bringing significant negative impacts. It is all taken into consideration: the periods of rain and drought, the moon, the sun and even the stars are fundamental. Everything encompasses the concept of agroecology and sustainable living, in which one receives from nature and gives back to it through respect and preservation. These mentioned practices are part of the traditional knowledge that is passed through generations.







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## Production



Coordenação Nacional de  
Articulação das Comunidades  
Negras Rurais Quilombolas

