

Sustainability, multifunctionality and local development: Agrifood System of chicken meat and egg production based on Nature Farming.

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This research study refers to the activities and relationships developed around a Brazilian agrifood company named Korin Agropecuária Ltda. With a peculiar origin, this company was founded with the purpose of putting into practice the principles, concepts and methods originated from the Nature Farming system. Nature Farming is an agricultural approach created and advocated by Mokiti Okada (Japan, 1882-1955). Okada emphasized the necessity of a perfect balance between human activities and the nature forces in order to achieve good results in the production, favouring food safety, nature interaction and respect, health, and the social-economic well-being of all players of this system. According to Okada, Nature Farming is one of the pillars of true civilization and an ideal society where health, prosperity and peace are predominant. Thus, while a productive method, perfectly fits in the idea of sustainable agriculture since its methodological aspects as the non-use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, antibiotics, growth promoters and other synthetic inputs, leading to a social-environmental approach to agriculture, with a focus on differentiated quality food. Regarding chicken meat and eggs regular production, we discuss the concerns about the overuse of antibiotics and growth promoters, showing the technical evolution of this particularly verticalized system where these substances are not used and the animal welfare is highly take into consideration. As a priority, we address in this work, sustainability from the point of view of the multifunctionality of agriculture¹ and also addressing the company's development from the perspective of Localized Agrifood Systems. Considering these approaches, we conducted a qualitative research on twenty eight integrated farmers who are linked to the company, applying semi-structured questionnaire. The objective was to explore and describe their attitudes, perceptions and experiences in relation to the company concepts and methods towards the environment, food safety, and their socio-economic conditions. With regard to corporate headquarters, located in a farm on a rural area, we present a study on the sustainability of the production system through a social-environmental indicator developed by Embrapa, named APOIA - NovoRural². This indicator was designed to analyse rural productive units with focus on the environmental management based on local context. The company have achieved an excellent sustainability³ index (0.87), due to its history for more than twenty years of Nature Farming's handling. Peculiarly this Nature Farming complex is inserted at the confluence of two conservation units of the state of São Paulo, called Environmental Protected Areas of Corumbataí and of Piracicaba, which reinforces the need to search for environmentally suitable models of agrifood production. The data obtained from this study with the integrated farmers have allowed us to verify that the dimensions of multifunctionality of agriculture are being recognized within this particular territory, streamlining and consolidating this agrifood localized system under a sustainability perspective in agriculture.

References

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