

Scenario and Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policies *directed to rural women*

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze public policies aimed at rural women, from the perspective of gender mainstreaming. We performed a bibliographic research with semi-structured interviews with women farmers who were part of public policies, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), Brazil's School Feeding Program (PNAE) and Brazil without Misery (BSM), in the municipality of Paula Cândido/MG, in the southeastern region of Brazil. Results showed that the gender perspective was contemplated in the analyzed public policies, since, in the perception of the women, there were no difficulties in accessing the programs, in addition to allowing the reconciliation of productive activities with domestic work. They consider that the participation in social movements and, mainly, the action of the extension workers of EMATER were facilitator elements of this process. Therefore, gender mainstreaming is associated with the human aspects of the programs, which direct land use and influence the marketing process, income generation and female independence. The major difficulties are excessive bureaucracy and irregularities in payments for the offered products. There is a limited perception about gender mainstreaming, requiring more integrated and sustainable actions, for equal social opportunities, in all policy decision-making processes.

Keywords

Family agriculture, Public policy; Rural area; Gender.

Introduction

Brazilian impoverishment and social vulnerability in rural areas has demanded that the government implement inclusive public policies, including a gender clipping. Gender is understood as the set of norms, values, customs and practices related to the biological difference between men and women, which is culturally signified. As SCOTT (1995) points out, the gender category is a constitutive element of social relations built on the perceived differences between the sexes. It is a social construction, a primary form of meaning of power relations, since such differences are configured as inequalities BANDEIRA (2004).

According to FARAH (2004), the concept of gender, by emphasizing the social relations between the sexes, allows the apprehension of inequalities between men and women, which have inequalities of power as one of its central components. For GONÇALVES (2006), the social construction of gender in the rural area occurs markedly from childhood, since, early on, girls begin to follow their mothers, learning from them domestic work, becoming responsible for the housework; while the boys follow the fathers in the works of the field.

According to STIEGLER (2003), gender mainstreaming consists of the reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of decision processes in all the work areas of an organization. The goal of gender mainstreaming is to incorporate the perspective of existing relationships between the sexes in all decision-making processes so that equal opportunities are considered. In other words, gender mainstreaming in public policies is understood

as the idea of developing a matrix that will guide a new vision of competencies (political, institutional and administrative) and accountability of public agents in relation to overcoming gender asymmetries, within and between different government spheres.

This view is shared by BANDEIRA (2004), stating that transversality should guarantee integrated and sustainable action among the various governmental bodies and, consequently, increase the public policies effectiveness, ensuring a more democratic and inclusive governance in relation to women.

Specifically in rural areas, as well as in urban areas, women have a subordinate position due to the sexual division of labor. In addition, their work usually seems like help, even when they work as much as men do or perform the same activities as men BRUMER and SPANEVELLO (2012).

FERNANDES (2008) corroborates this information, stating that the role of women in rural property has long been linked to behind-the-scenes activities, that is, activities that do not require women to move to public spaces. Despite this, the unmeasured work of women has been one of the main responsible for family prosperity.

HERRERA (2015) agreed with this statement, stating that the directly perceived effects of women's invisibility relate to the characterization of women farmers as "helpers" in agricultural production, as well as the absolute lack of recognition of tasks performed in the private sphere, related domestic work and care, as well as their activities

in production for self-consumption – which include work with houses, vegetable gardens, orchards and backyards – which, while essential for maintaining life, for biological and social reproduction and for welfare, are considered inherent "woman activities" and, for this reason, are not recognizable.

According to **SILVEIRA (2016)**, women possibility of having some control over their time and be able to dedicate themselves to paid work, but, with a reduction in domestic work overload and with the possibility of professional training, study or have some time for leisure and culture depends to a large extent on the State reviewing its gender approach in a very broad spectrum of policies.

However, **BANDEIRA (2004)** affirms that Brazilian public policies in general do not necessarily contemplate the gender perspective when made and addressed to women. According to the author, gender public policies undoubtedly consider the diversity of socialization processes for men and women, whose consequences are present throughout life in individual and collective relations.

In this context, this study aimed to examine the scenario of the rural policies/programs of assistance to women, from the perspective of gender mainstreaming.

Methodological Route

Quantitative-qualitative research used bibliographic research, which was complemented with semi-structured interviews applied to women benefiting from the following policies/programs: Food Acquisition Program (PAA), Brazil's School Feeding Program (PNAE) and Brazil without Misery (BSM). The researched public involved farmers included in the Rural Public Policies of the municipality of Paula Cândido, Minas Gerais, in the southeastern region of Brazil. The municipality is part of the mesoregion of Zona da Mata, with an area of 268,740 Km², with twenty rural communities, which shows the existence of a strong family farming predominance.

At first, we carried out a bibliographical research on the programs directed to rural women, especially PNAE, PAA and BSM. Then, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 36 women farmers who benefited from these programs. The dialogue occurred based on the interviews, based on the mediation/moderation concept established in this practice and that refers to the "conduction of discussion process", with active participation of the interviewees in the final product construction.

After interviews transcription, the women farmers' discourse was analyzed in order to understand how the insertion of the female segment occurs in the analyzed public policies and how they contribute to the empowerment of the rural women.

All the transcribed interviews were grouped into one single document (corpus), for textual analysis with the help of software Iramuteq. We used the Similitude analysis method. It presents a graph that represents the connection between the words of the textual corpus. From this analysis, inferring the construction structure of the text is possible, as well as the themes of greater significance.

Results And Discussion

Description of Policies/Programs on rural women assistance

Brazil's School Feeding Program (PNAE) In 1955, the PNAE was created to assist children from 7 to 14 years old, students of public and philanthropic schools. With its reformulation in 2009, at least 30% of the resources received from the National Education Development Fund (FNDE) to the PNAE should be used, compulsorily, in the purchase of food originating from family farming. Thus, through their work, the woman could produce new products to meet this policy demand, generating income for their family and changes in their social, economic, cultural and political position, which contribute to their empowerment process **BARBOSA (2017)**.

In analyzing the relationship between PNAE participation and empowerment of women farmers in the municipality of Viçosa, MG, **BARBOSA (2017)**, by participating in the PNAE, family farmers had improvements in income and, as a consequence, access to health services, transportation and education, being more socially included and with greater financial autonomy. However, participation in the program did not significantly change the social and political participation of women, who continued to have greater decision-making power at home. Thus, the author concludes that women still cannot make strategic choices in their lives, and for these reasons, they are experiencing an empowerment process, which is not fully concluded.

Food Acquisition Program (PAA) In general terms, PAA purchases food and seeds from family farming and donates to public food and nutrition equipment, social assistance organizations, families in a social vulnerability situation, as well as the formation of strategic stocks. The "innovation" brought by the Program that caused great interest consists precisely in articulating, in the same public policy, the support to the commercialization of family farming with food and nutritional food safety **GRISA and SCHNEIDER (2015)**.

PAA recently initiated a process of institutional incentives to promote and increase the participation of women and family farmers in situations of greater social vulnerability (beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família Program). In addition, to promote the participation of family farmers, PAA dismissed the use of bids as long as the prices were not as higher than those practiced in the regional market were. A wide range of products can be purchased from the same family unit, many of them previously produced with no commercial purpose, restricted to the spaces of the family consumption and reciprocity relations.

PAA contributes to the economic empowerment of rural women, as conditions are created for the disposal of products originated from activities traditionally carried out by women, which historically were not valued from an economic point of view. However, **MIELITZ (2014)** points out that the budget directed to PAA is very low compared to the size of the Brazilian budget, the problem itself and the Program's potential. In addition, the program range is limited, as it reaches only 4.2% of Brazilian family farmers.

GRISA and SCHNEIDER (2015) point out, as one of the positive aspects of PAA, the concern regarding the strengthening and visibility of women's participation, considering the PAA productive characteristics, especially in purchasing modalities with simultaneous donation notably to the workforces and products produced by women (legumes, bread-making, agro-industrialized, etc.). Significant normative changes were recently made to remove the "anonymity" of women's work, such as the requirement of minimum percentage participation in projects and the allocation of part of the budget, specifically, to women's organizations.

One of the PAA limitations, highlighted by GRISA and SCHNEIDER (2015), refers to the discontinuity of the projects. This fact affects everyone involved in the governance of the Program. For male and female farmers, in particular, it means the need to seek new temporary markets, the return to "traditional" markets, such as those negotiated by intermediaries and, in many cases, production loss. Another limitation pointed out is the difficulty of family farming to comply with sanitary standards and the classification of plant products.

Brazil without Misery Program (BSM) The intention of the Brazil without Misery (BSM) Plan is to overcome extreme poverty, identified by the income indicator, that is, those beneficiaries are those families in extreme poverty whose monthly income is up to R\$ 70.00 per person. For this and other programs be successful, technical assistance to rural women is of fundamental importance. As part of the productive inclusion of BSM, rural technical assistance actions aim to recognize women as subjects of rights, promoting their access to public policies and strengthening their protagonism as farmers in the healthy food production. Thus, the technical assistance services developed at BSM had two major challenges: promoting the economic autonomy of women, starting with the recognition of their identity as female farmers and guaranteeing their economic and social rights, as well as the transformation of the sexual division of labor, stimulating economic and environmentally sustainable activities, seeking to recognize domestic work and care as a fundamental basis for economic development and, therefore, the accountability of society and the State MELLO (2015).

According to the results obtained by LOPES and LANGBECKER (2018), in a municipality of Rio Grande do Sul, 92% of the beneficiaries of the program were female. However, the authors consider that this number does not reflect women protagonism, but is the result of bureaucratic issues of the program, which requires that the payment of the resource is done through the Bolsa Família card, registered in the name of women. This does not mean that it effectively drives the family in economic terms. This study makes clear the participation of women benefited by the program in activities of familiar livestock, which are considered as typical male activities. In this research, although actively participating in productive processes and perceived as beneficiaries of public policies, it is evident that women do not participate in the production commercialization and resource administration, which causes the program

effectiveness to be questioned in contributing to the rural women's empowerment.

Women's Perceptions on Rural Policies/Programs

Concerning women's perceptions of rural Policies/Programs, firstly, we examined whether "being a woman" would have influenced in some way the access of women farmers to local rural public policies. The interviewees were unanimous in saying that the fact that they were women was not a hindrance, and in some cases, it was perceived that this had contributed positively to the entry into public policies. The response of respondent's 1 is representative of the testimonies of the entire group:

"About that, there was no perturbation, not for being a woman." (RES 1)

In addition, women who belonged to some association or social movement could insert themselves better in public policies, as evidenced by the respondents 7 and 9:

"In my case, these projects are all in my name, as I checked. I had no problems. There are still many problems. We get it, but there is a lot of bureaucracy. In the case of the women's association, there is an extra easiness, but not in others. The women's association helps, right?" (RES 7)

"But it is not totally easy. Some people there helped me out. Because I do not know much. So I did not go there myself: I want to ... No, I caught the tail end. The staff ended up helping me. It was a good opportunity to grow up, right?" (RES 9)

The difficulties women farmers reported were more associated with the bureaucratic issue for joining these programs. Most of the women farmers had low schooling level, which may have contributed to the pointed out difficulties, as illustrated in the speech of respondent 19:

"Because they ask for a document, then ask for another one. They ask for one, then another. You have to do this, you have to do that, you have to do it. Jesus Christ! It is not easy." (RES 19)

It is evident the importance of the extension agents of EMATER in the operationalization of public policies, both as regards the policies dissemination, and to the indispensable help for the women farmers to meet all the necessary requirements for participation in public policies, as reported:

"Yes. I had help. The extension agent of EMATER, she supports a lot. She helps a lot, a lot." (RES 17)

"The extension agent met us here to talk to us. She found us through the single register at the Bolsa Família." (RES 18)

Several women farmers stated that participation in public policies brought improvements in their rural production due to the contact with the technical assistance of extension bodies. In the case of the beneficiaries of BSM, who built chicken houses on their properties, the respondent 18 states that the contact with extension agents was of fundamental importance, as stated:

"It helps a lot. Because as in the hens case, it helps us to understand better how to take care of them. To understand a little more about feeding, the hens' needs. So it helps a lot." (RES 18)

When asked if the expectations regarding public policies were met, only one farmer, a beneficiary of BSM, was dissatisfied and said that her expectations had not been met. According to her:

"To be honest. When we stop to think, well thought out, I did not like it. You know why? I chose the hens, but only after, I saw them. The hens do not lay eggs the way we thought it would be. They lay eggs and then stay for a long time without laying. They eat a lot and do not lay. Then... There is the cornmeal, the ration as well, all that. I'm not going to deal with it, no, I'm going to. I leave them there. Before we do something, we have to think about it. Because if we do not think about it, we get a big loss. We lose a lot. Because the laying hens eat day and night if you feed them. They do not stop eating. And there is not enough profit." (RES 19)

One of the reasons given for the reported dissatisfaction is that there may have been a communication noise between the extension agents of EMATER and women farmers, regarding the dynamics of laying hens. This generated the expectation of a continuous income, which ended up frustrating the producer due to the periods in which laying did not occur. As the number of extension agents is extremely low and farmer assistance is provided in the households, there is a workload for them. The need to visit several farmers, traveling long distances, even after working hours, with a shortage of time and resources, can jeopardize the individual service to each farmer, contributing to problems such as reported by the respondent 19.

All the other women farmers stated being satisfied to participate in the aforementioned public policies. However, some comments are about topics that contributed to their expectations not fully being met. The main reason for discontent concerns the delay in the payment of the products delivered to PAA, as reported:

"PNAE, for example, I take sweet there and receive the money. PNAE, yes, I take them sweet this week and issue invoice next week. PAA is more complicated. I delivered so many sweets that one day my children said, 'Mom, you better stop because they won't pay you'. I had entered the consortium of a car. The day I bid was the day I received eighteen thousand Reais from PAA at once. I delivered sweets in all the institutions and I was out of money. I used my salary to pay for sugar, because I owed money to everybody. And my boys would tell me, mom, stop it. And I kept praying. Oh my God, what if I lose all. Then one day I was paid only eighteen thousand Reais." (RES 10)

"The only bad thing is that it always takes a while to get paid. We wait. Especially when dealing with candy. There was a lot more expenditure with sugar, these things. Vegetables do not have such a high expenditure as candies. You have to invest and wait for the return. And it is not monthly. It varies a lot. Sometimes it is fast, sometimes it is not. When I produced candy, I got paid two times only. And then six months. Six months with nothing. Market, sugar, I stopped everything. Once I didn't get pay for eight months for the vegetables. And then I got paid at once." (RES 5)

One of the main benefits perceived by women farmers was the security feeling due to the guarantee of selling their agricultural products. Therefore, it is important to receive the payments in a more regular and less bureaucratic way, according to the statements of women farmers:

"For me it is a job. You are on your own, but every day you have to cultivate. You have to be in the garden every day. It is like I had a job, but it is on my own. It is better now. The moment I joined this program, it is one less concern. It is like I really had a job. You are responsible and you get paid. It is calmer. You go there, delivery it, it is more peaceful, right? Every month." (RES 9).

In the opinion of the women farmers, women are well contemplated by the public policies directed to the rural area. In many of the speeches, it is evident that the notion of meeting the needs of women relates to the ingrained concepts of the patriarchal society, where the sexual division of labor in the rural environment determines that women are responsible for the domestic and productive tasks considered lighter and which can be carried out in the vicinity of the house, reconciled with the household chores. The answer given by respondent 11 represents this reality well.

"I think it is better than for men. Women have more chance because they can have more types of activity. Men can only buy material, brush cutter, sprayer. But woman can grow a vegetable garden. Men, too, but if the women are interested, it is better for them, because a man is already out to work, and the woman can be in the yard." (RES 11)

Regarding the empowerment of rural women, the main contribution of the analyzed public policies was the possibility for the women farmers to become able to generate income from the sale of their agricultural production. In most cases, welfare related to the achievement of this economic autonomy translates into benefits for the family as a whole or for the home, so that there were no reports of fulfillment of personal needs or desires of women farmers. This reality is evidenced in the statement of the respondent 22 about the positive points perceived in public policies.

"Excellent. I have already worked with quail so I accepted it. When I was pregnant, my husband bought the quails. Then, you know, with the money I made from the quail I spent on my baby growth. And then I saved the egg money. It helps the family. It helped the family a lot." (RES 22)

One of the perceived benefits was growth as a woman. By "doing something", the woman recognizes herself as a transformative subject, an agent of change, no longer restricted only to home activities, which leads to an increase in her self-esteem, as illustrated by the speech of the respondent 7.

"It is good because we are always doing something, right? It helps to fill the time." (RES 7)

In the region where the study was conducted, there is a strong dominance of the coffee crop. Thus, many of the rural women have the only income source during the year the remuneration obtained from the seasonal services of coffee harvest, known regionally as "panha". At other times of the year, women in the region suffer from high unemployment levels. Thus, public policies provide an increase in women's independence, who are able to have a source of income within their own land.

"The good thing is that it is helping the family income. We can buy things more easily. Because this money comes from the 'panha' period, right? From the coffee 'panha'." (RES 17)

"I did not have work, I did not have anything, you see? As people say, I just get freelance jobs. It is good that now I have

pepper and hens to take care of. It is good. We have been planting pepper before, since 2010. But we always planted it on other people's land. We used to pay land rent and the medicine." (RES 11)

It is considered that, in order for public policies to succeed in promoting rural women's empowerment, in addition to achieving economic autonomy, it would be necessary for women to have greater access to the public space, increasing their social and political participation. One of the respondents stated that:

"Sometimes, just from attending a meeting, listening to a conversation, you also get distracted a bit, learn something. And you have fun, too." (RES 4)

Social and political participation are fundamental for women to emerge from subordination and to make decisions effectively about their own destiny. Therefore, although the analyzed public policies had good quantitative indicators, some of the women participated in the programs only due to the need to reach the quota targets for women. Thus, women enrolled in programs, but the real beneficiaries were their husbands or other men in the family. That is, women did not perceive benefits in relation to the greater access to the public space, having their life restricted to the domestic conviviality.

In this sense, one of the respondents, elderly and widowed, stated that, despite her name being a beneficiary in the program, her husband was responsible for the bureaucratic and the rural production, and that, after his death, her son-in-law started to do the activities. When asked about which public policy she was benefited, one of the women farmers answered:

"I do not know, my husband deals with that. It is him. My mind is not okay, my God. Why did he leave? I just help to harvest. If I had gone to the meeting, I could explain, but he is the one that goes. He planted it. Now we harvest together. I think he was okay with that." (RES 14)

Similarly, the respondent had difficulties answering the questions; her husband helped her to give the necessary information. When she was asked about the contribution of public policy to her growth as a woman, her husband answered:

"It has changed a lot. She bought some furniture. An extra income helps a lot. But she does not participate in the movements." (RES 3)

This response, given by the farmer's husband, is representative of a general view that the women's productive work in the countryside is just a help, and that, even taking part in production, women's lives remain very restricted to the domestic environment.

Thematic analysis on gender mainstreaming in rural policies/programs

In order to analyze women's perception on gender mainstreaming in rural policies/programs, we carried out a textual analysis of their interviews. With the help of the software Iramuteq, we generated an Analysis of Similarities (Figure 1), which provides an indication of the connection between the most evoked words in the corpus and an understanding of the groups of discourses, according to the proximity between words.

Source: Research Data, analyzed by software Iramuteq.

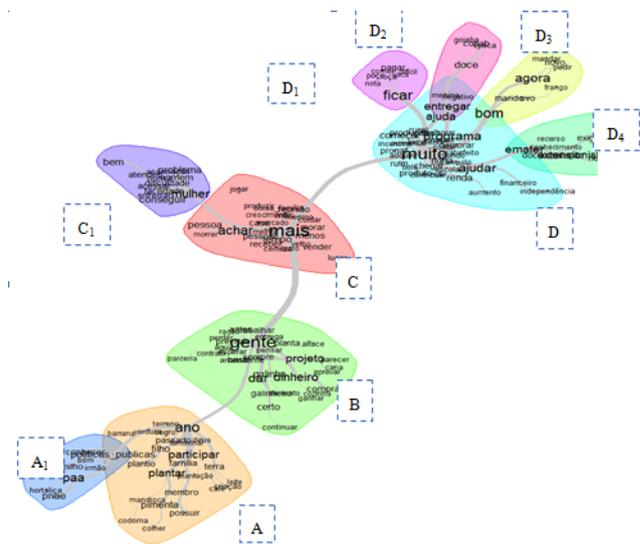


Figure 1. Analysis of Similarities on Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policies, Paula Cândido/MG, 2018

From the Analysis of Similarities, based on the graph theory, identifying the connectivity indications between the words is possible, helping in the identification of the content structure of the textual corpus, representative of the gender mainstreaming in the scope of assistance programs to the rural women.

The graph analysis divided and grouped words according to a "theme", based on women farmers' speech on rural public policies and gender issues. Figure 1 shows four groups of words, named Groups A, B, C and D; groups A, C and D present branches, called A1, C1, D1, D2, D3 and D4.

Group A and its A₁ branch originate from the word "Year". Some of the words branching from this group are "participation", "planting", "banana", "cassava", "pepper", "public policy", "PAA", "PNAE" and "BSM". That is, this group relates to land use, with emphasis on the agricultural products towards commercialization in the programs. Group A originates from the word "year", which shows the discontinuity characteristic of public policies. This was one of the main complaints of the women farmers, pointed out as a source of insecurity. They never know if a new project will be approved next year and whether they will continue to benefit. This insecurity ends up discouraging women farmers from investing in their properties, especially as regards the infrastructure required for the production of benefited foods such as sweets and breads.

Group B originates from the word "people". Some of the words branching from this group are "project", "money", "succeed", "purchase", "continue" and "partnership". Thus, this group relates to the human aspects of the projects, in terms of the farmers themselves, and the partnerships, which contribute for receiving money and the continuity of the policy. The positive words that make up this group show women's expectation that programs can "work out" and continue to be approved so that the benefits can extend for more years.

Group C and its C₁ branches originate from the word "Year". Some of the words branching from this group are "produce," "sell," "find it better," "woman," "ease," "meet well." Therefore, group C relates to women's access to rural

programs/policies, indicating that women, in general, feel well served, being able to produce more, with guaranteed production sale; finally, with "easier" access and growth.

Group D and its branches originate from the word "very". Some of the words branching from this group are "help", "get", "deliver", "Emater", "income", "increase", "financial", and "independence". This group has an indicative on the programs assistance for income growth, through the products delivery, allowing an increase of financial capacity and independence of the woman, as well as desire to stay in the field. In other words, in the women farmers' perceptions, the increase in income obtained from participation in the programs helped "a lot" in their growth, especially in terms of gaining greater financial independence from their husbands.

Nevertheless, group D has words such as "bad" and "delay", which show one of the negatives aspects, which is the delay in payment of the products. The branches related to "emater", "extension agent", "assistance", "deliver", "sweet", and "good" show the indispensable support of Emater technicians in order to enable the participation of women farmers in rural programs, to market products such as sweets, eggs and chicken.

Thus, the word "very" was evidenced strongly in Figure 1, since this word is directly and indirectly linked to several aspects experienced by rural women within the Rural Public Policies, as observed in the women farmers' statements:

"I never had problems accessing these programs just because I am a woman, it was **very** easy for me to be able to access them and Emater helps **very** much. We know women are well assisted with these programs. Tania helps us **very** much" (Respondent 1).

"I did not face any problem because I was a woman, but I had difficulties accessing it because there is **a lot** of bureaucracy and **a lot of paper**" (Respondent 2)

Therefore, the testimonies portray both positive and negative aspects, depending on the angle of analysis.

Final Remarks

According to the interviewed women, the gender issue was considered in the analyzed public policies context, since there was no limitation on access. They point out, however, that both participation in trade unions and associations, as well as the work of Emater were essential elements of support to be taken into account with the benefits offered by the programs; besides the possibility of being able to reconcile the domestic activities and the care of the children with a productive activity, getting their own income. The main difficulties associate with bureaucracy and the delay in payments of the products, which contributed to generate insecurity and discredit in relation to government programs.

In general, the analyzed public policies have limited gender transversality, focusing on access. Adjustments are necessary in the implementation of the programs, especially with regard to greater regularity in payments and approval of projects, technical assistance and greater women's competence of participating in the decision-making processes in the different government spheres.

This perception is reinforced in the Analysis of Similarities, since it aggregates a group of keywords related

to the following themes: "Woman", "Programs (PAA, PNAE, BSM)", "Very", "Assistance" and "Emater". Thus, the discourses refer to the programs to which women take part in, characterizing the types of crops or land use, which varies each year, according to project approval. They make reference to human aspects, considering both the woman/family, but mainly, the partnerships, with emphasis on Emater, which offers support and assistance to women farmers, which demonstrates the need to strengthen organs, such as Emater so that public policies can achieve their goals. They demonstrate the programs logic and how rural public policies contribute to the increase in rural production, growth and independence of rural women.

Women face problems regarding the entry and participation of Rural Public Policies. However, this is more directly related to the female profile, in terms of the lower schooling level, due to the difficulties faced to meet the documentary requirements, which were considered not associated with the fact of "being a woman". Thus, in the women's point of view, policies are neutral with regard to the gender perspective.

However, the female perception on gender mainstreaming is probably very limited to the issue of access to the policy/program, not considering other instances of the political decision-making process. Therefore, the objective of promoting gender equality proposed by the analyzed public policies was not fully achieved, since, although women had gained greater autonomy, their access to public space remained restricted and they remained in a subordinate position in society, so their productive work kept being regarded as help to men.

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