

Modern Servitude in Transnational Tobacco Industries' Practices in Southern Brazil

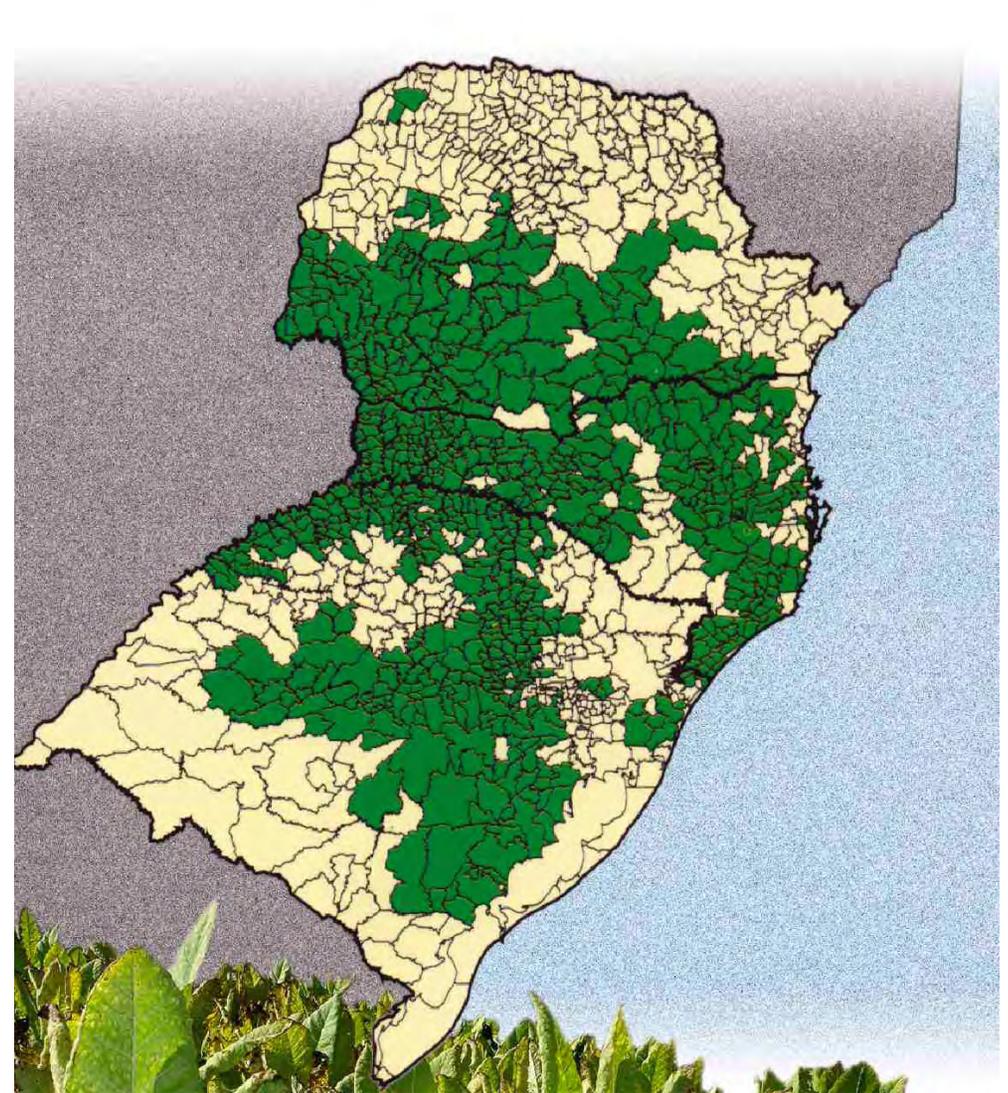
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Guilherme Eidt Gonçalves de Almeida
guilherme.eidt@terra.com.br

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Presentation Plan

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About 96% of the Brazilian tobacco production is concentrated in the Southern region of Brazil, in an area of approximately 44.000 hectares, involving about 800 municipalities.

- There are almost 200.000 families of tobacco growers in Brazil;
- 74.2% have a land property up to 30 hectares and 20% do not have property and rent or lease land in order to plant tobacco.
- It is estimated that about 910.000 people are directly involved in the cultivation of tobacco;
- 90% of these workers did not complete basic school, which in Brazil is of nine years.
- Average income of R\$6.500, less than U\$ 3.000 per family, per year.

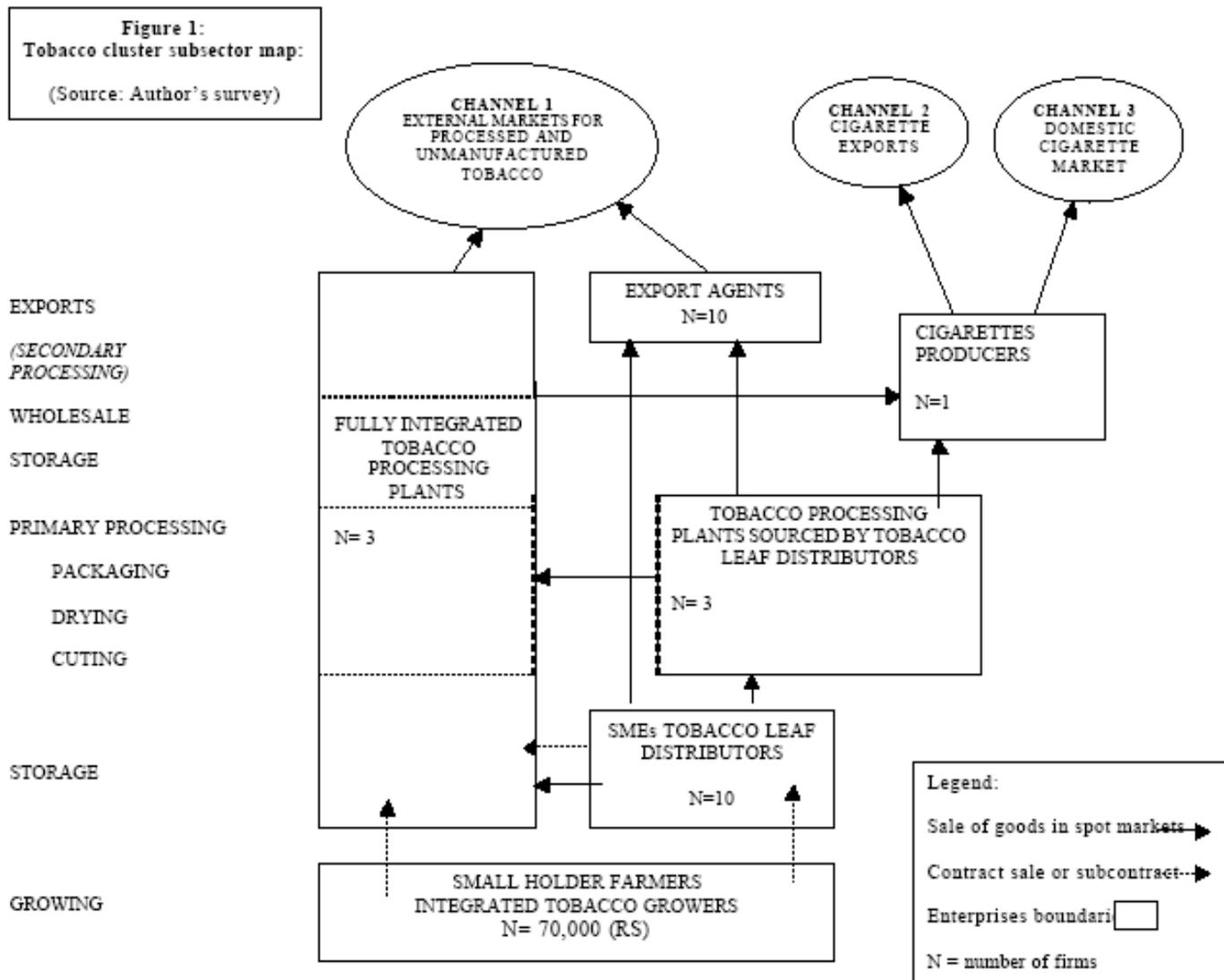
Source: Afubra (www.afubra.com.br, May of 2006)

The Tobacco Industries in Brazil



It's not a IRS industry





(Source: Vargas, *Forms of governance, learning mechanisms and upgrading strategies in the Tobacco cluster in Rio Pardo Valley – Brazil*. In: <http://in3.dem.ist.utl.pt/downloads/cur2000/papers/S22p05.pdf>).

Integration Rural System (IRS)

- It has been adopted in the cluster since the 1920s, but **it was in the 1970s that this system assumed a crucial role** in the reorganization and modernization of the tobacco cluster in the southern Brazil.
- The Integration Rural System IRS involves the establishment of **contractual obligations between smallholders and tobacco processing or retailing firms.**
- The smallholders are committed to **provide the firms with all their tobacco leaf production and to follow the technical guidance and price classification schemes** from these firms.
- In order to reach the competitive standards defined by the international markets, **the tobacco firms get to control both the tobacco varieties produced at local level and the quality and costs of such production.**

Source: Vargas, 2000.

The IRS Contracts

- It is of **atypical juridical nature**;
- It **works almost as a regiment**, stipulating rules that were defined by the strongest side: the one from the tobacco transnational corporations;
- The tobacco grower **accepts previously defined conditions and is committed to sell, with exclusivity**, the amount of tobacco estimated in the contract;
- It is a bounding contract that **imposes the acquisition of a Technological Package** with equipments and tools to begin or maintain the tobacco activity.

Technological Package

- Everything is financed by the IRS industries.
- The tobacco grower becomes a servant of the international tobacco capital: indebted when acquiring consuming goods.
- The guarantee of debt payment is the tobacco plantation itself, it was given in pawn through the IRS Contract.

The Programmed Indebting

- The IRS industries **control the time** that smallholders will need in order to pay their debts **manipulating leaf classification**, due to no public inspection and individuality.
- The tobacco grower can refuse the industry's conditions for commercialization. But, given that his production was given as debt guarantee, the IRS is able to get a **judicial order to arrest** the tobacco.

True Modern Servitude

- It's what is behind Brazil's lead on the sector: the subjection / submission of the smallholders to **a true modern servitude**.
- Servitude that is **institutionalized** through contractual relations that till some time ago were not questioned by public opinion, neither at the court justices.

Commodity Agribusiness

- The Brazilian option for commodity agribusiness leaves **typical products of family agriculture without market guarantees**;
- The tobacco productive sector has **political credibility** from the municipal, state and federal governments;
- It generates **surplus to the balance of trade**, given its high exports;
- It maintains families of small farmers in the rural areas, and it pays about R\$ 9.7 billions Reais in taxes, about U\$ 4.4 billion dollars.

Silenced Compliance

- This prestige almost acts as a mechanism of **ideological capture** of the tobacco grower.
- It makes the smallholder appropriate a form of material reproduction of existence that does not belong to that social group.
- It incorporates into the small farmer the logic of transnational tobacco industry and **assumes the discourse of the hegemonic rationality** of macro players of the economic globalization.

Perverse Inclusion

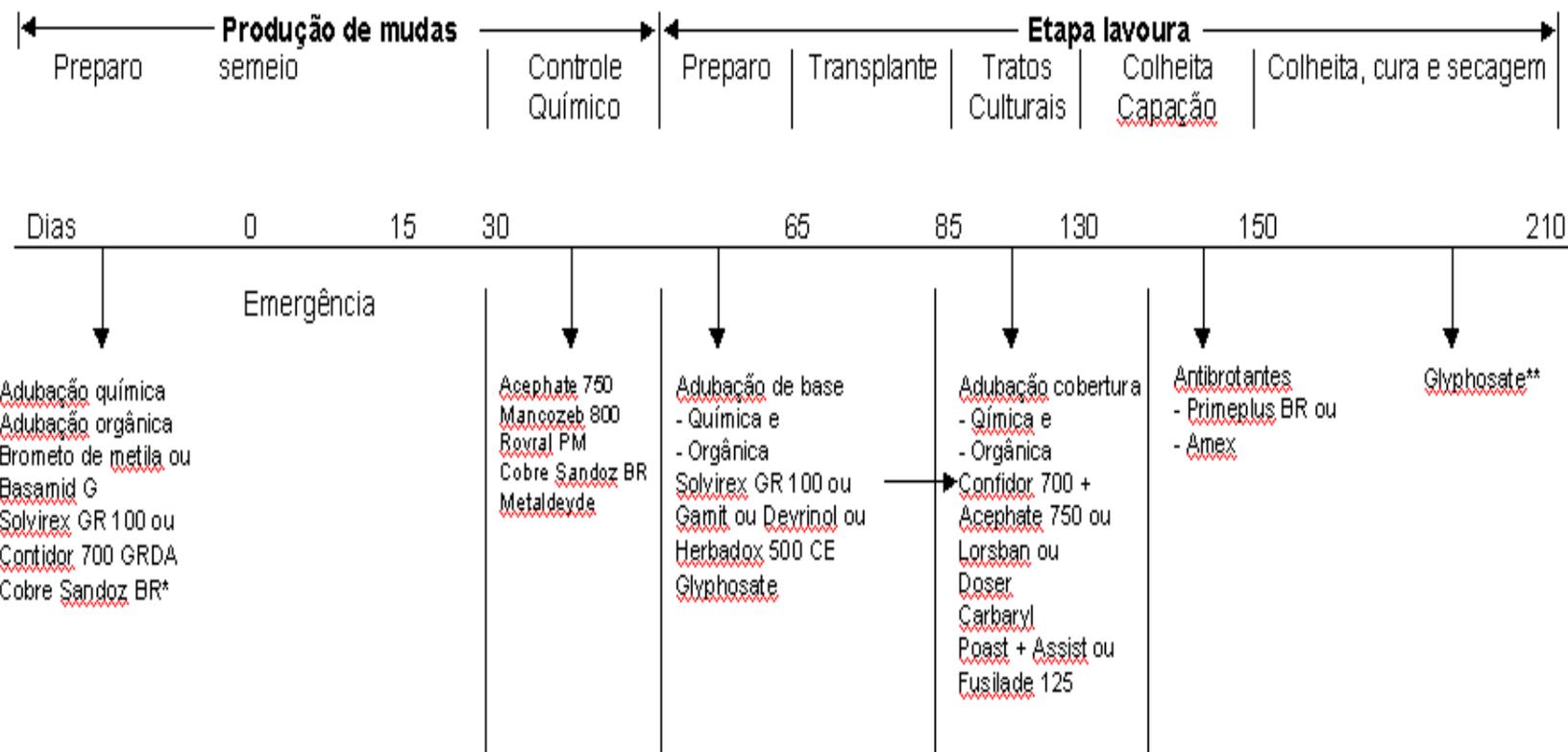
- Perverse inclusion **does not deprive in absolute terms**, it does not exclude in fact; **it simulates belonging in a reality of penury and deprivation;**
- The one who dares to question the practices of **“perverse inclusion”** by the IRS industries is isolated and soon pressured, labeled as crazy and dangerous by its social group.

Source: MARTINS, 2004.

Perverse Inclusion

- This pressure implies in the recognition of territorial submission; people offer their best virtues and efforts in favor of the IRS industry's profit.
- This social-economic pressure implies to admit child labor, even considering the clear consequences on the integral development of creative and human potential of children.
- It implies the denial of scientific evidence that points to the use of organophosphates and organochlorates chemicals as responsible for high rates on tobacco grower families, of cancer, skin diseases, bad congenital formation on new born babies, and depression, suicide.

CICLO VEGETATIVO E PRINCIPAIS AGROQUÍMICOS COMUMENTE EMPREGADOS NA CULTURA DE TABACO ESTUFA



* Produto específico para o Sistema *Floaf*

** Embora esse dessecante seja indicado para o uso em pré-plantio (cultivo mínimo e plantio direto) e pós-colheita, averigua-se o seu emprego antes do término da colheita, sobretudo em regiões altas.

Fonte: Lima (2000)

ILO and Child Labor

- The International Labor Organization, ILO “recognized the need to contribute to the elimination of the use of child labor in the tobacco-growing sector in order to provide children with an upbringing that would give them the best chance to succeed in all aspects of life”.
- Two basic principles were stated between ILO and ITGA: “that children have the right to schooling, a full family life and a safe and healthy upbringing; and that children under the minimum legal age or under the age recognized by the relevant ILO Convention should not be employed in the production of tobacco leaf ”.

(Source: ILO, *Employment trends in the tobacco sector: Challenges and prospects*, Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting on the Future of Employment in the Tobacco Sector. Geneva: 2003)

Worst Forms of Child Labor

- In September 12th, 2000, the ILO supports the regulation of the worst forms of child labor in Brazil, as a consequence of the Brazilian ratification of its Convention N. 182 and its Recommendation N. 190.
- In September 13th of 2001, the Brazilian Ministry of Labor prohibited labor under 18 years old “on the tobacco plantation, **except on field cleaning, leveling ground, sprout cutting**; harvest, processing or industrializing tobacco”.
- Then, ambiguously, the ILO and the Ministry of Labor in Brazil recognized phases within the productive chain where children could work, such as on handling tobacco leaves or handling chemicals, which means exposure from pesticides and nicotine on the tobacco fields.



Photo Source: Almeida, 2005

Cultural meaning of Child Labor

- Child and juvenile presence on the tobacco work is seen as a form of protection and education;
- It is a “being together” in order to take care of child safety and a way of orienting the work in the field;
- A way of providing the lacks from formal schooling regarding rural space.
- This position comes from a perspective of perpetuating the family on the property working the land and also of transmitting a legate, heritage to the children. It comes from the notion of land property and family group survival.

Distortion of the Peasant's Sense

- There are **circumstantial acts that induce work over-exploitation** of family members, including children.
- The small farmer demands more from himself and his group, **brutalized by the effects of the unequal established relations** with the transnational tobacco corporations.
- At this moment the presence of child labor at the rural environment acquires a violent connotation, **degrading the human condition**. It is not any further a result of peasant victory and land settling with the perspective of maintenance of the family nuclei, but an **evidence of distortion in the sense of cultural participation of the children on caring for the land**. It is promoted in favor of capital interests of a very few corporations.

Final Appointments

- It is a question that involves **unequal distribution of socio-environmental risks** and impacts of productive activities.
- It is about the **necessity of strengthening democratic processes** that take countries from the periphery to accept economic activities that **degrade territory and deteriorate social local arrangements** in favor of a “**dependent development.**”
- It is about rescuing territorial virtues and **reverting the perverse logic of national space construction**, favoring endogenous strategies of socio-economic integration.

Final Appointments

- It does not matter to have a promising discourse if **the social base does not have the material means to break the dominant ideology** and continues to reproduce its own materiality according to.
- It is **necessary to offer viable economic alternatives** so the tobacco growers leave this activity.

On the contrary we will be, as pointed by Felix Guattari on the book *Molecular Revolution: political pulsation of desire*, “goldenizing the pill”, being moved by the pulsation of the ideological dominant culture, which takes us by the skin and take us to the worse stupidity, to the worse repetition and tends to makes us always defeated, even on the already trailed paths.



Foto: AFUBRA



Photo Source: Cartilha da Fetraf sobre a Fumicultura na Agricultura Familiar, 2006.
http://www.deser.org.br/publicacoes/Cartilha%20Fumo%20Fetraf_jan2006.zip?id=85