

Preface

Decio Zylbersztajn

Como citar: ZYLBERSZTAJN, Decio. Preface. *In:* LOURENZANI, Ana Elisa Bressan Smith *et al.* (org.). **Agribusiness, development and the 2030 agenda:** interdisciplinary contributions. Marília: Oficina Universitária; São Paulo: Cultura Acadêmica, 2025. p.21-25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36311/2025.978-65-5954-620-6.p21-25>



All the contents of this work, except where otherwise noted, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Todo o conteúdo deste trabalho, exceto quando houver ressalva, é publicado sob a licença Creative Commons Atribuição-NãoComercial-SemDerivações 4.0 (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Todo el contenido de esta obra, excepto donde se indique lo contrario, está bajo licencia de la licencia Creative Commons Reconocimiento-No comercial-Sin derivados 4.0 (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Preface

TO WHOM THE BOOK IS DIRECTED:

The book I have the pleasure of prefacing represents the consolidation of the efforts of the group of Professors and Researchers from the Graduate Program in Agribusiness and Development (PGAD) of the São Paulo State University at the Tupã Campus. The reader should not be mistaken in thinking this is an occult work aimed only at the academic audience. As I read the material, I understood its usefulness for defining public policies focused on agriculture, agribusiness, and regional development and formulating private strategies, whether for rural producers and agribusinesses or collective entities like cooperatives and producer associations. Additionally, I believe that the chapters that make up the book can attract the public's interest in contemporary issues involving the environment, social organization, and governance of complex organizations.

For professionals dedicated to academia like myself, the work demonstrates the vigor of a group of researchers who succeeded in establishing a postgraduate program focused on Agribusiness and

<https://doi.org/10.36311/2025.978-65-5954-620-6.p21-25>

Development, embracing the challenge of interdisciplinarity. It follows that this work is also a celebration of the qualification of researchers from UNESP in Tupã, who dedicated themselves for a decade to training masters and doctors with a defined focus of skills. The results obtained reflect the broad relationship maintained with research groups in Brazil and abroad and the dedication to themes applied to agribusiness and development. For those who know the challenges of research in Brazil and the work of research groups and universities abroad, the message remains of the competence of Brazilian scientific achievement, which on the one hand has challenges to overcome, on the other demonstrates that there are possibilities to be explored by researchers dedicated to academic work.

ASPECTS TO HIGHLIGHT IN THE WORK:

I believe five elements deserve to be highlighted in the work, directly or indirectly.

The first element is the use of the concept of agribusiness according to its original, scientific conception, untainted by ideological values. When Professor Ray Goldberg, together with John H. Davis, published the book “A Concept of Agribusiness” in 1957 at Harvard University, they embraced a systemic view they called Agro-Industrial Systems, coining the term “agribusiness,” then a neologism. The term was and still is used to study phenomena occurring in Agro-Industrial Systems regardless of the type of rural producer, whether large, small, family organization, or investor corporation. Reflecting on the book, it is clear the authors, and the graduate program itself, are concerned with the fragility of agriculture as part of a value-generating system. This concern magnifies the importance of the UNESP program, and the results composing the work reflect an integrated concern between society, the environment, and governance, focusing on small-scale production, which is an integral part of agribusiness, a fact often overlooked by many.

I highlight the courage of the UNESP research group, which was not intimidated by the undue erosion of the concept of agribusiness, incorrectly associated only with large-scale, corporate, and capital-

intensive activity without concern for social and environmental aspects. Such a stereotype does not align with the original scientific concept of the term. This characteristic alone would value the work, but it goes beyond it.

The second element I highlight is the research program's concern with humanistic and social aspects, emphasizing medium and small-scale agriculture. The themes addressed in the first section, chapters 1 to 4, illuminate the social theme through topics such as: people management, satisfaction of rural workers dedicated to production, organizational culture and climate, governance, and sustainability on rural properties. The concern with the governance-society-environment triad is emphasized in the second part of the work, in chapters 5 to 11, which present the results of studies conducted by the program's researchers. I emphasize that in this second part, besides conceptual aspects, the studies are concerned with incorporating the impacts of digital technologies and technological infrastructure. It should be recognized that an element present in the studies is nourished from the core, that is, the central element of the concept of "agribusiness": the shared responsibility for achieving strategies such as environmental goals, involving all links in the production chains, including the responsible consumer. Agriculture, therefore, is not an isolated sector but organically connected to other sectors that make up the Agro-Industrial Systems.

The third element I highlight is the alignment of the PGAD proposal reflected in the book's content with the primary characteristic of UNESP, which was born with the sense of organizing research-teaching and extension considering the territory of the State of São Paulo. The applied studies, components of the work, are based on global trends and apply to regional problems where the research was conducted. The concern with local problems amplifies the importance of the obtained results, as the problems and themes are repeated in other agricultural production areas, and the results can be used in other areas. A good example is the concern with water management.

The fourth element I highlight contrasts with the previous one; it deals with the concern with global problems and challenges, in this case related to the 2030 agenda. The interesting counterpoint of the local

focus with a global vision reflected in the sustainable development goals to which Brazil is committed appears clearly in the themes addressed by the studies. I highlight some elements reflecting the concern with the millennium goals: Clean Water and Sanitation, Decent Work, Sustainable Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, Responsible Consumption and Production. The graduate program in Agribusiness and Development, by considering the concerns defined in the 2030 agenda, demonstrates that regionality can and should be aligned with the broad global movements characterizing the 21st century.

To conclude, I elaborate on the fifth element of highlight characterizing the work in question: interdisciplinarity. I preferred to leave this dimension as the concluding element of this preface because I consider it the most relevant and difficult to implement. When most graduate programs in different disciplines excel in unidisciplinary advancement, UNESP's Agribusiness and Development Program refocuses, challenges the academic environment, and proposes a project that seeks to explore interfaces and build connections between the hermetic bodies of scientific knowledge. Such an attitude is courageous and aligns with the thinking of important academic figures who advocate for an interdisciplinary approach. I affirm it is courageous because the evaluation structures of graduate programs have long privileged and induced hyper-specialization. Scientific journals, for the most part, do not accept submissions of articles not aligned with the specialized elements of a particular field of knowledge. By reading the work and understanding the graduate program proposal, it is worth praising the institutions that supported its implementation over a decade, considering that the program explicitly states its intention for an interdisciplinary approach.

The interdisciplinary proposal has the endorsement of thinkers like Edgar Morin, who defines it as the only means to tackle the complex problems faced by contemporary society. The same author argues that excessive specialization can lead to a fragmented view of reality and elaborates on how different fields of knowledge can be connected to allow problem comprehension. According to Morin¹, multidisciplinary allows

¹ Edgar Morin. *O Método: conhecimento do conhecimento*. Editora Sulina, 2008, 286 p.

overcoming the limitations imposed by knowledge segmentation, crucial for facing contemporary complex challenges.

In conclusion, I consider that the present text represents not only the celebration of a decade of a graduate program, which certainly required a critical look from the authors at the work carried out since its implementation but also a sincere exposure of the researchers involved to society, which will have access to content generally circumscribed to restricted groups of readers connected to academic journals. I am certain that the next decade will still be a period of harvesting results, and I wish the researchers involved to maintain their focus on tackling the highly complex problems on the horizon.

I congratulate the Faculty and Students of PGAD and wish the readers to make use of the rich material made available here.

Decio ZYLBERSZTAJN