

Presentation

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Presentation

The Graduate Program in Agribusiness and Development (PGAD) was created in Brazil in 2014 and belongs to the “Agrarian and Environmental Sciences” Thematic Chamber of the Interdisciplinary Area of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). PGAD is based at the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Unesp, Campus of Tupã, and offers both Master’s and Doctoral academic courses.

Currently, PGAD comprises 21 permanent faculty members, one collaborating faculty member, and two international collaborating faculty members, one from Italy and the other from the United States. The multidisciplinary nature of the faculty’s education and activities (exact sciences, humanities, and biological sciences) and the diversity of the students’ and graduates’ backgrounds support the interdisciplinary dialogue in teaching, research, and extension of the Program.

Interdisciplinarity implies a “process of interrelation of processes, knowledge, and practices that overflow and transcend the field of research and teaching concerning strictly scientific disciplines and their possible

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articulations” (LEFF, 2011, p. 311), being necessary for the analyses of agribusiness, seeking a broad vision for investigating responses to complex themes and solving multidimensional problems.

In this sense, the mission of PGAD is to promote the qualification of people guided by ethical and humanistic principles through interdisciplinary research in agribusiness, contributing to sustainable development.

The structure of PGAD presents a concentration area in “Agribusiness and Development” and comprises two lines of research: Competitiveness of Agro-industrial Systems (CSA), which aims to develop analyses that promote agro-industrial systems from the perspective of productivity and economic, managerial, social, and environmental efficiency, contributing to the improvement of competitiveness and sustainable economic development of productive systems, organizations, and institutions; and Development and Environment (DMB), which aims to contribute to economic, social, environmental, and institutional development from the perspective of the sustainability paradigm, innovating methodologically in the production of interdisciplinary knowledge to support decision-making by public and private managers.

Through different theoretical and methodological approaches, the research developed at PGAD permeates the complexity of agribusiness and development within an interdisciplinary approach. The dynamics of the courses promote the problematization, renewal, and transformation of knowledge through different areas of knowledge. These experiences transcend disciplinary boundaries and are developed by researchers (faculty and students) through discussions in research groups, the development of research projects, participation in scientific events, and collectively constructed intellectual productions.

Thus, the vision of PGAD is to be a reference in the formation of people and interdisciplinary research in agribusiness and its contribution to sustainable development. The principles of the Program are based on excellence, ethical conduct, commitment to society, and the scientific nature of knowledge.

In 2024, PGAD celebrates 10 years of operation, during which more than 150 graduates, including masters and doctors, have been trained. The

objectives and mission of the Program, as well as the defended dissertations and theses and the projects developed by PGAD researchers in national and international scientific and technological cooperation, are strongly aligned with the Institutional Development Plan (PDI) of Unesp, the priority technological areas of the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovations (MCTI), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The results of a recent survey conducted with the Program's faculty show that, in general, SDGs 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production, 2 – Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture, and 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth were the most associated with the themes of the defended dissertations and theses at PGAD. Following these were SDGs 9 – Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; SDGs 4 – Quality Education; and SDGs 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation.

In this decade-long trajectory, the academic maturity of the faculty is marked by great dynamism in seeking to train people committed to societal problems and generating interdisciplinary research capable of impacting sustainable development in agribusiness.

Finally, it is important to highlight the regional impact of PGAD, as it is the only public postgraduate program in Agribusiness and Development in the state of São Paulo and plays a relevant role in training people, especially for the Alta Paulista region, contributing to regional and national development from a sustainable perspective.

It is in the context of the consolidation and strengthening of PGAD that this work was elaborated to bring together research results developed by the program's faculty and students, giving visibility to the works and initiatives carried out in recent years. The guiding thread of this work was delineated into three major parts, each containing a set of chapters addressing themes that converge on common issues.

The first thematic block is composed of the initial four chapters and seeks to represent the three most important pillars in the current economic development debate: social, environmental, and governance actions. In the context of this work, the first pillar – social – is represented by chapters addressing aspects of work and people management in agribusiness, dealing

with issues such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, and climate in rural properties and enterprises. The aspects related to the second pillar are directly linked to the social, as it is in the environment that people carry out their professional and daily activities. Seeking environmental sustainability tied to social development is fundamental for balancing people's needs with environmental assets, and in this sense, chapters addressing water issues and environmental preservation are presented, generating significant debates, especially in the context of agricultural production. There is also a third pillar in this dynamic, represented by governance actions in organizations. Decisions and strategies increasingly demand transparency, professionalization, and compliance, and in this sense, the first part of this work concludes with a chapter on governance actions aligned with sustainable practices in agribusiness.

The second part of this collection comprises a block of six chapters (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) presenting theoretical and practical results from studies on problems derived from the intersection of factors associated with the three pillars represented in the first part of this work: social, environmental, and governance. This block emphasizes the relationship between technological infrastructure and digital transformation with new forms of diversification in agricultural production and means of marketing and consumption. Its effects reach all links in the production chain, from increased productivity to the emergence of innovative forms of marketing and responsible consumption, all fundamental for achieving sustainability. It is in this part of the work that the roles of the main actors directly involved in the dynamics of agri-food production chains are highlighted, including producers, agribusinesses, input suppliers, service providers, and final consumers.

The pursuit of sustainability extends through all links in the production chains in agri-food systems and depends on the development of new technological resources and the proposition of innovative practices, usually associated with market agents, as presented in the second part. Thus, the third and final part of this work brings together a block containing the last five chapters, addressing the role of other actors adjacent to the chains but essential for this dynamic: the Government and Academia. The responsibility for proposing new technologies and innovations that provide sustainability to agri-food systems should not rest solely on the

market. In the national scenario, the public sector and universities are extremely relevant in ensuring this dynamic, whether through institutions like Embrapa, rural extension bodies, research institutes, or laboratories located in the country's main universities.

Regarding the public sector, the third part contains two chapters that discuss government programs for rural development, such as marketing assistance and school feeding. The academic responsibility is represented here by three other chapters showcasing initiatives from the Graduate Program in Agribusiness and Development at the College of Science and Engineering, UNESP/Tupã. Thus, the last part of this work consolidates the guiding thread that establishes relationships with the other axes – the fundamental pillars and economic agents, not neglecting the role of the Government and the University, which must act synergistically for rural development tied to the SDGs, either by providing scientific evidence for public policy formulation or through the relevance of public funding for the research developed.

With this collaborative portfolio of theoretical and practical research, this work takes shape and will continue the journey of promoting the dissemination of accessible and high-quality scientific knowledge, valuing the joint efforts of all those involved in PGAD, whether faculty or students. With much gratitude, we welcome the important reflections presented here, resulting from studies converging from different scientific domains to contribute interdisciplinarily to the evolution of Brazilian agribusiness.

Enjoy the reading.

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