Family farming in açaí production in Igarapé-miri

Living and working conditions, production, marketing, and cooperativism

MINISTÉRIO DO TRABALHO E EMPREGO

GOVERNO DO BRASIL DO LADO DO POVO BRASILEIRO

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Promotion Document No. 2/2023
Note: The texts do not necessarily reflect the position of the Ministry of Labor and Employment.

Cover and back cover photos: DIEESE files

SUMMARY

Family farming in açaí production in Igarapé-miri: living and working conditions, production, marketing, and cooperativism

Presentation

This paper presents the results of a study conducted by DIEESE (Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies), in partnership with the Brazilian Ministry of Labor, focusing on the living and working conditions of açaí extractive producers. The research used the Igarapé-Miri region, in northeastern Pará, as a case study and is part of a project aimed at analyzing extractivism in Brazil.

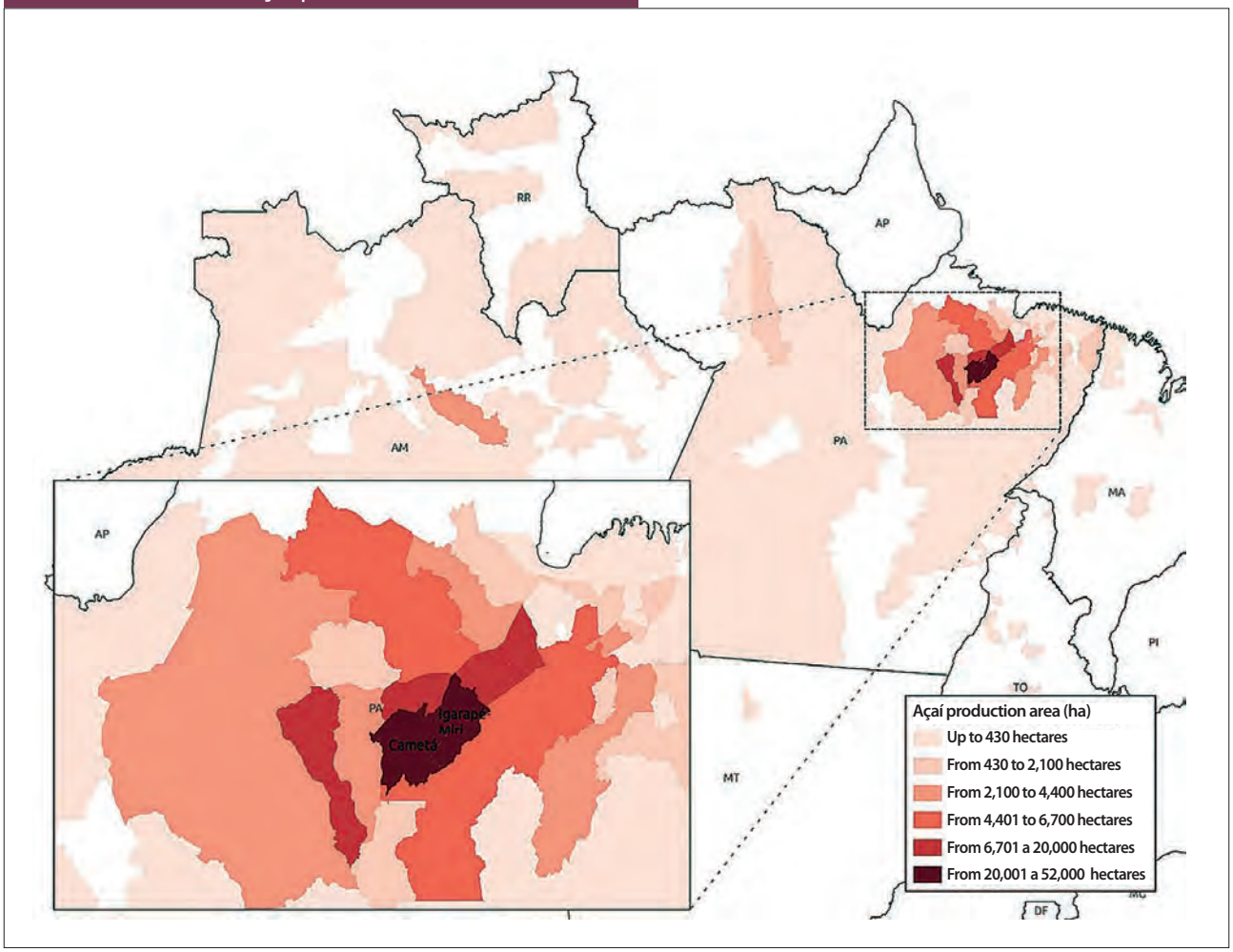
Açaí: a tradition that became a business

Açaí, the fruit of the palm tree *Euterpe oleracea*, native to the Amazon region, traditionally consumed by indigenous and riparian populations, has undergone an accelerated process of commercial expansion in recent decades. From a culturally enrooted food, it has become a product of a global value chain, involving diverse social actors and significant transformations in the methods of cultivation, processing, and marketing.

Between 2020 and 2022, Brazilian açaí production grew from 1.4 million to almost 1.7 million tons per year, generating more than 6.1 billion reais in 2022, equivalent to 0.7% of the value of Brazilian agricultural production. The state of Pará leads with 94% of national production, with Igarapé-Miri responsible for more than a quarter of the state's total value, which gives it the title of World Capital of Açaí.

In 2022, according to data from IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), the harvested area for açaí production throughout Pará was equivalent to 224 thousand hectares, of which 23% (52

Harvested area of açaí production (2022)



Source: IBGE Municipal Agricultura production Creation: DIEESE
Caption: Area of Açaí Production in hectares

thousand hectares) were in Igarapé-miri, the city with the largest area registered in cultivation.

Despite its economic relevance, much of production still occurs within family farming, with informal employment relationships and low statistical coverage. Açaí cultivation is deeply integrated into the social and cultural life of producing families, shaping routines, relationships, and food traditions. As a cooperative producer reports: "If there was no açaí, there was no food, no one would feel good."

The study, conducted by DIEESE in partnership with the Brazilian Ministry of Labor, focuses on the living and working conditions of açaí extractive producers, a case study in Igaraté-Miri. The research adopted a qualitative approach, with observation and field interviews, seeking to capture the perceptions of social actors themselves about the challenges and potential of promoting decent work in the açaí productive chain.

Getting to know Igarapé-Miri: the place where the study took place

The city of Igarapé-Miri, located in the northeast of Pará, in the Tocantins Integration Region, has around 65 thousand inhabitants (2022) and a territory of almost 2

thousand km², bordering Abaetetuba, Moju, Mocajuba, Cametá, and Limoeiro do Ajuru. Its geography is marked by areas of dry land and floodplains – known as islands or interior – crossed by rivers and streams such as Meruú, Mamangau Grande, and Maiauatá. In these flooded areas, favored by natural tidal irrigation and the organic composition of the soil, the production of native açaí is concentrated, making the municipality a reference in the quality of the fruit.

The local economy is heavily based on public administration and agriculture, with an emphasis on family farming focused on açaí cultivation. In 2022, the city recorded a GDP of 627 million reais, and açaí production reached 1.6 million tons. Despite its economic relevance, the labor market is marked by informality, with only ten formal jobs registered in the production of the fruit.

Açaí cultivation occurs in different systems – agroforestry, native monoculture, and planted monoculture – all classified as

> Açaí is more than a product: it is sustenance, identity and memory for riparian families.

commercial extractivism, even when there is human intervention. Local producers report that, due to the natural abundance of the palm tree, much of the territory has been transformed into açaí stands, especially native ones. The water cycle and biodiversity of the region contribute to the sustainable development of the crop.

In addition to cultivation, the productive chain includes processing the fruit, initially through the extraction of "açaí wine" (nonfermented thick juice) and, more recently, through the production of frozen pulps aimed at the national and international markets. Local factories operate mainly during the harvest season, reflecting the seasonality of the activity.

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> Açaí gives us income, but it also gives us a sense of belonging. This is what keeps us here.

In the field of public infrastructure, 2022 data reveal significant challenges. The healthcare sector has 42 units, 29 of which are linked to the SUS (Brazilian public healthcare system), but the proportion of inhabitants per unit (1,544) is higher than the state and national average, indicating low coverage. Most of the equipment is concentrated in the urban area, with only six units outside downtown.

As for education, the municipality presents a more positive scenario. There are 132 school units, with an average of 491 inhabitants per unit – better than the rates in Belém, Pará, and Brazil. In 2023, there were 110 basic education schools, of which 83.6% were in rural areas. In spite of their numerical predominance, urban schools are better equipped, with sports courts, laboratories and accessible restrooms, resources lacking in rural units. Internet access is less unequal, although rural elementary schools still face limitations.

The public education network accounts for more than 98% of enrollments, with emphasis on the municipal network (81%). Most students are enrolled in rural schools, totaling 11,920. Educational indicators reveal advances, such as the reduction in the age-grade distortion rate, which fell from around 30% (2014–2020) to 18.9% in 2023. Even so, the municipality remains below the state and national averages. The IDEB (Basic Education Development Index) of Igarapé-Miri in 2023 was 4.0 – lower than the national average (5.7) – although it represents a significant improvement in relation to the 2005 index (2.3).

In the area of public security, SINESP (National Public Security Information System) data indicate 31 serious incidents in 2023, a lower number than that recorded in previous years. Despite this reduction, the municipality has one of the worst homicide rates in the state, with 64 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 2022 – almost twice the state average.

This set of information reveals a municipality with a strong productive and cultural identity linked to açaí, but which faces structural challenges in health, education, security, and infrastructure. These elements are fundamental to understanding the social context of families, who live from agro-extractivism, and guiding public policies aimed at promoting decent work and sustainable development.

The voice of producers and the path of research

The research adopted a qualitative approach, based on in-depth interviews conducted using semi-structured scripts. This methodology was chosen considering the objectives and scope of the study. The interviews followed a script of open-ended and reflective questions, with flexibility to change the order of the questions and include new topics as the conversation progressed, seeking to capture the specificities of each interviewee's experiences and perceptions.

The work strictly respected DIEESE's ethical principles. All participants were informed

about the research objectives and signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), authorizing, when applicable, the use of names, images and recordings for research purposes only. The right to interrupt the interview or stop answering any question was guaranteed, preserving the autonomy and safety of the interviewees.

Different itineraries were developed for two profiles: families and entities representing açaí workers. The interviews, lasting between one and two hours, took place in two field stages – from April 21 to 26 and from June 3 to 7, 2024 – with the support of local coordinators.

Community and family characterization

The families of Igarapé-Miri present a variety of arrangements, from small groups to extended families living close together, reflecting solidarity and daily cooperation. Mauro and Dedê, cooperative producers, report: "One part lives there, another in Igarapé-Miri, another in Macapá, another in São Paulo, you know? (...) All here. I have a sister who lives on the other closest river, that's all. The other sisters all live here, we are five siblings, my mother lives here...". Nelson adds: "Here it's just one family, what one eats, everyone eats", while José Raimundo observes: "We have a great sense of belonging, we know everyone, we get involved in their lives. Life away from big cities allows us this."

Education is valued as hope for the future. Elielton says: "I want her to study, to graduate, to have a better education (...) I only studied until the third year of high school and then stopped." Pedro, representative of the entity, reinforces: "The greatest legacy we can leave behind is knowledge, because no one will take that away from them." Despite the logistical barriers, there is pride in the progress: José Raimundo reports that his son "finished high school (...) has a dream of taking the entrance exam for medicine", and Nelson celebrates: "Today they have an opportunity that I didn't have (...) yesterday, my daughter was approved in the civil service exam." In addition to formal education, cultural and

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musical activities are encouraged, as Liduína observes: "She takes music lessons (...) participates in the Parish project", and José Raimundo adds: "My son is a musician (...) he plays in bands and also at church."

The housing combines masonry and wood, many on stilts due to the flood-prone areas. José Raimundo highlights: "Açaí provides us an income, this income allows us to take care of certain things (...) On this small island alone, 56 houses were built." Harmonious coexistence does not require fences, as Givanildo comments: "There's no way to build a wall, no (...), but we understand each other." Insecurity, however, is a concern: "We live in fear, too. Actually, we live under lock and key," says Caci. Public policies have improved infrastructure, water, and electricity, as Mauro recalls: "Today our family has a pump, a water tank, a refrigerator... and under Dilma's government we got an artesian well."

The water supply is guaranteed by artesian wells and the Mutirão Project: "We lived off the river water, right? But due to pollution [...] we dug an artesian well [...] and the Mutirão Project supplies Vila Maiotá with drinking water", report Mauro and Dedê. Electrification brought comfort, food preservation, and new opportunities for study and work, as Nelson states: "The lives of riparian dwellers have improved greatly with the arrival of electricity." Cooking gas has progressively replaced firewood and coal, but they remain in traditional uses, preserving customs.

Working with açaí structures the routine, following the cycle of the tides and the harvest. Dedê describes: "During the harvest, the work increases, because we have to harvest and we have to make food for him, for the boys who harvest [...] we cook ourselves, wash the clothes, we do everything." In the off-season, the family has other productive activities. The work is collective, involving men, women and youth, with women increasing their participation in education, health, and

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> Igarapé-Miri accounts for more than a quarter of the value of açaí production in Pará – the true Capital of Açaí in the World.

production. Dedê talks about women's collectives: "We meet once a month to talk, have tea, do a raffle... it's good because we connect and help each other."

Community life remains active, with festivals, religious celebrations, and community outreach strengthening bonds. Dinho comments: "Every year we have to do a lot of work in the community to get things ready before the festival... we are united." Infrastructure improvements integrated traditional and modern elements into a demanding routine, marked by solidarity, faith, and coexistence.

The emotional bond with açaí dates back to childhood, symbolizing sustenance, identity, and memory. Elielton recalls: "I had a dream of learning how to harvest açaí (...) it was great fun." Dedê reinforces: "From açaí, the trading of açaí improved, the price improved, and life improved. Because during the harvest you can pay your bills, go to the doctor, buy clothes, improve your home." Mauro highlights the organization of trading: "We took 400 cans of açaí. It was the first time (...) One fine day, Sambazon, a US company, called us, wanting to buy açaí. We closed the deal. From then on, we started delivering açaí to Sambazon." Technological development has also transformed fruit processing, replacing manual labor with electric machines.

Açaí became a source of subsistence, income, identity, and community. Dinho summarizes: "First of all, açaí is everything to us today. [...] Today, without açaí I would be nothing. A few years ago, I started working with açaí, from that moment on we managed to achieve something." Collective harvesting strengthens community relations, maintaining solidarity among producers and the hope of better sales conditions in the future.

Thus, it can be concluded that the affective side of memories with açaí not only shapes the identity of the interviewees, but also serves as a catalyst for their current struggles, uniting past and present in the search for a promising future for the region.

Associations and cooperatives

The associative initiatives in Igarapé-Miri, coordinated by the Rural Workers Union (STR/Igarapé-Miri), cooperatives and local associations, played a central role in socioeconomic development and in improving the quality of life. Founded in 1968, the union was initially managed by political interests, without effective representation of workers. As of 1980s, with the decline of the sugarcane cycle – which reduced from 54 mills in 1975 to just nine in 1983 – , leaders committed to social organization emerged. Rural exodus and poverty led to the creation of a union opposition that took over leadership in 1988, promoting projects aimed at strengthening family farming and local development.

The new management sought to organize the bases, promoting training, technical assistance and productive diversification, with emphasis on açaí, a symbol of

During the harvest season, work increases; in the off-season, creativity guarantees income.

subsistence. Initiatives such as the Mutirão Association and cooperatives, such as Coopfrut, emerged, which served as a laboratory for future ventures. In partnership with the Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (FASE), production groups received training, technical assistance and access to financial resources, developing activities such as poultry farming, increasing local income. Despite current challenges – such as labor reform (Act 13,467/17), fragmentation of production and precariousness – the union remains key in the advocacy of workers' rights, with around 3 to 4 thousand members and 28 bases, "even non-members still come to the union when they have problems", say the leaders.

The Mutirão Association, created in the 1990s, expanded the representation of communities, guaranteeing credit, training, income, and collective services, with an emphasis on the role of women. "Part of the financing was used to acquire a 345-hectare collective property, where the first açaí crops were planted and the Mutirão Association is located," the representatives reported. The association transformed açaí production, promoting hygiene, safety, and sustainable management, allowing the fruit to be exported from 2003 onwards. Social projects like "Água é Vida" provide clean water to 80–100 families, while cultural festivals strengthen identity and a sense of belonging.

The women's movement gained strength with the Igarapé-Miri Women's Association, promoting participation, income generation and strengthening family farming. The need to expand actions led to the creation of the Amazon Communities Support Association, focused on training and developing sustainable projects. In 2005, the Agricultural Cooperative of Popular Entrepreneurs of Igarapé-Miri (CAEPIM) was created, founded by 33 members originally from Mutirão. The cooperative was quickly strengthened, attracting domestic and international buyers, investing in infrastructure – such as an açaí loading port – and training for its members. Currently, with 140 members, it participates in programs such as PNAE (National School Feeding Program) and PAA (Food Acquisition Program), regularizes rural properties and develops products derived from açaí, being a pillar of local development.

The Igarapé-Miri experience shows that associations and cooperatives are essential for rural agro-extractive communities to negotiate better, access resources and technologies, promote sustainability, and build fair prospects. As the leaders summarize: "Collective and organized work strengthens local production and transforms lives."

The Emanuel Settlement, on dry land, illustrates the collective struggle for better conditions. Created in 2008, it sought to expand local organizations in the face of growing demand for settlements. Initially without a response from the government, the workers guaranteed income by selling products to the PNAE and, later, to CONAB (National Supply Company). In 2023, the

land was regularized, allowing access to public policies such as Bolsa Verde and Fomento Mulher. The settlement faced challenges, including adapting to Health Surveillance regulations, but is now licensed by Adepará and sells fruit pulp and flours.

Recently, a solar energy system was implemented, providing savings and autonomy. With 278 families, management is collective, reinvesting surpluses in infrastructure and production. The Mutirão Association collaborates with training in sustainable agricultural practices, strengthening the autonomy and quality of life of settlers.

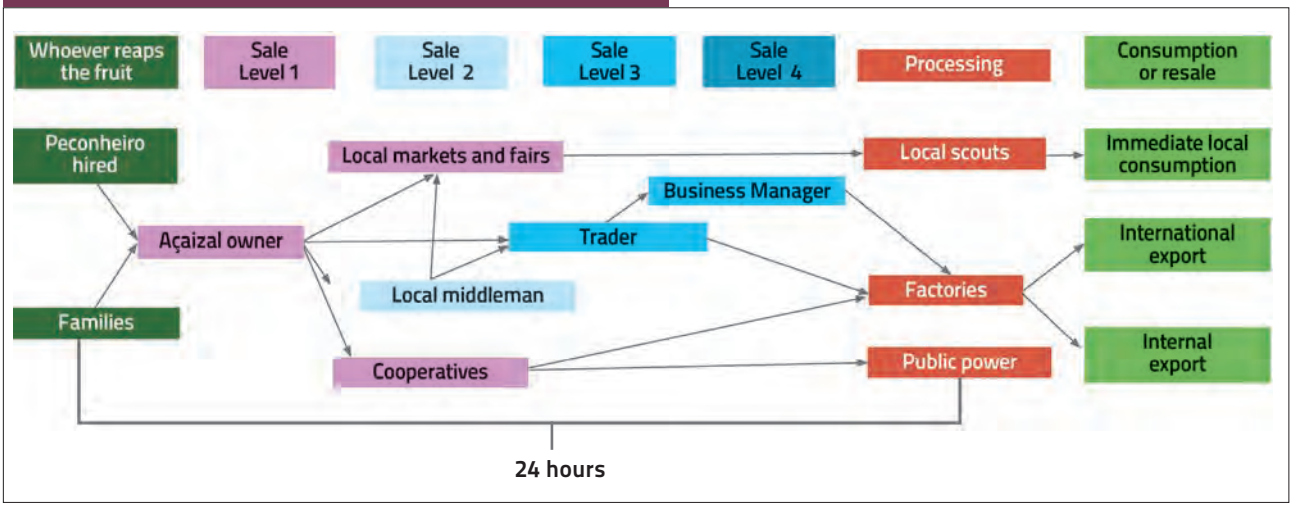
The work in the açaí productive chain in Igarapé-miri

Açaí production in Igarapé-Miri is structured in four stages: agro-extractive production, distribution and trade of the fruit, processing and trade of the final product, mainly as frozen pulp or "açaí wine". The basis is family farming, often supplemented by informal contracts for the collection and maintenance of açaí palm stands, with eventual formalization according to RAIS (Brazil's Annual Report of Social Information). The cycle is seasonal: harvest from August to December and off-season from May to July.

Production distribution depends on intermediaries – market traders and intermediaries – who buy the fruit directly from producers, usually on riverbanks. Cooperatives and associations play an important role, replacing intermediaries and sharing profits, although processing initiatives, such as CAEPIM (Igarapé-miri cooperative), are still under development. Logistics depend on river tides, heat, and the perishability of the fruit, which must be processed within 48 hours. As the riparian dwellers explain, "the river does not rise at the same time every day – each day, it happens one hour later."

The harvest involves "peconheiros" (harvesters), loaders, drivers, entrepreneurs, and factories. Peconheiros, harvesters who climb palm trees with their "peconha" (climbing foot loop), are essential: "It's a job that requires a lot of strength, endurance and determination" (Elielton).

Açaí Sale Chain



Creation: DIEESE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Payment is based on production, generally 30% of the price of the fruit, and the yield varies depending on the harvest. During the harvest period, 70 to 80 trees can be climbed per day. Traditionally a male work, there are reports of women also participating. Over time, the use of hired peconheiros replaced the full-time family model: "in the last 20 years, this system has changed." Financial balance is illustrated by Mauro, a cooperative member: "The year has 12 months, but we have 5 fat months to feed the 12. (...) 30% goes to the harvester, even though we work as a family."

The scarcity of peconheiros is a challenge, as many young people seek other occupations. Despite the informality, work is valued: "in the summer it is difficult to find workers to renovate houses, because everyone prefers to collect açaí" (Givanildo). The harvest follows the rhythm of nature, between 6am and 11am, and transportation depends on the tides: "We need to leave here at six in the morning, catch the fresh air of the day. (...) If I start at 6:30, I'll finish in 11 hours at the most" (Zé Raimundo).

The accident study reveals high risks, including falls, machete injuries, and boat accidents. According to the Peabirú Institute, "the vast majority (of harvesters) climb palm trees without adequate clothing or any personal protective equipment, and with a knife or machete between their teeth" (2016, p.23). Despite advances with brush cutters, harvesters and regular pruning, many accidents are normalized, demonstrating underreporting. Security training and courses offered by cooperatives like CAEPIM have contributed, but informality and a lack of public policies limit protection.

The payment method influences the choice between intermediaries and cooperatives. Intermediaries offer immediate collection and payment, albeit at a lower price. Cooperatives pay better, but require transportation and await payment, subject to payment from factories or public agencies. As José observes, "the cooperative pays a higher price, a little higher. But [...] I prefer to sell mine here at the port." The profits of intermediaries are concentrated in a few links, while cooperatives redistribute profits: "CAEPIM [...] it takes a percentage to share with its partners [...] the middleman does not share his profit with anyone".

Production is marked by seasonality and vulnerability: high yields during the harvest and shortages in the off-season. Loans and cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*) cultivation help to smooth out fluctuations: "the year has 12 months, but we have 5 fat months to feed these 12" (cooperative member). Producers also highlight the importance of agroforestry systems (AFS), combining açaí with other species, to preserve soil, fruit quality, and economic sustainability: "açaí has to be associated with something else" (union).

Proper palm tree management, pruning, land clearing and the use of modern equipment increase productivity and safety. Technical training, courses, and partnerships with universities reinforce sustainable production, while informality and multiple intermediaries hinder traceability and compliance with labor and environmental standards. Processing plants emerge as central elements, operating during the harvest and generating employment: "it employs everyone (...) and drives the local economy" (cooperative member).

> Electricity arrived, and with it the possibility of studying at night, storing food and dreaming bigger.

Despite market expansion, there is inequality in the distribution of gains: "Those who get the biggest percentage are the companies that sell abroad" (cooperative member). The perishability of the fruit encourages speculation and dependence on producers. Child labor is a memory of past generations: "Back that time, there was no such thing as being underage to work, we had to help our parents" (producer). Nowadays, children attend school, and work in the açaí plantation is reinterpreted as a cultural and educational practice: "our children study, they go to school" (CAEPIM). Programs like PAA contribute to income and food security, transforming the activity into a central element of identity and community development.

Public policies

Public policies appeared in the interviews both through direct questions about areas such as health, education, social security, and social benefits, and spontaneously in the statements of rural workers. The narratives reveal how these policies impact the daily lives, work, and future of açaí-producing families, highlighting advances, weaknesses, and the centrality of union and community organizations.

The topic of retirement arises with different perceptions depending on the age of the interviewees. Youth and adults recognize

the role of rural unions in mediating access to retirement, but many have not yet joined because they do not see themselves as close to the age to claim the benefit. As one producer said:

> *"It's easier to retire there, through the workers' union. (...) I'm not a member because I think I'm too young. When I'm about 40, I'll think about it."* (José, non-cooperative producer and middleman)

Rural retirement, which is more flexible in terms of proof and contributions, contrasts with urban retirement, which requires long periods of contributions. Despite this, union support is still insufficient to encourage continued youth engagement. Among older people, there are those who see retirement as an achievement and financial security, as well as those who see it as a new cycle of social engagement:

> *"My dream is to click on the INSS (Brazilian National Social Security Institute) and retire. (...) I have no plans to say: 'I'm going to stop fighting.'"* (Bena, entity representative)

Reports indicate that retirement is a complex topic and unevenly embraced across generations. There is a lack of information and long-term planning, and strengthening professional associations is essential to expanding social protection for rural workers.

Social programs, especially Bolsa Família, appear as one of the main sources of family income, especially during the off-season. In 2023, more than 68% of families registered in Igarapé-Miri received the benefit, considered essential for the survival and permanence of children in school.

> *"There are still other types of income, but social programs, such as Bolsa Família, are very important."* (Elivelto, entity representative)


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Other programs, such as Bolsa Verde and Pé-de-Meia, were also mentioned, the first as an incentive for environmental preservation and the second as support for youth education. However, not all families have access to the benefits, and there is criticism of the bureaucracy and the overlapping of categories (fishers, farmers, special insured workers), which make access to the closed season insurance difficult. A producer sums up this difficulty:

> *"I joined the association, then I said no, I'm not a fisher, I'm a farmer. Then I left the association (...). At the time I was thinking about profit, but now I'm thinking about joining, because we're producers too."* (Elielton, non-cooperative producer and middleman)

These statements reveal the importance of social policies, but also the need to improve management and integration between programs, avoiding exclusions and encouraging collective organization.

Public health is seen as one of the biggest challenges in Igarapé-Miri. The number of inhabitants per healthcare unit (1,544) is higher than the national average, indicating a lack of infrastructure. Reports highlight long waits, a lack of doctors and the need to travel to other cities.

> *"My wife went to schedule exams through the SUS, she had to wait about three months. Either you do it privately or you have to go to another city."* (José, non-cooperative producer and middleman)

There is recognition of some recent improvements, but access difficulties persist, especially in riverside areas, where the lack of units and community agents exacerbate vulnerability.

> *"In our river here, there is no more health agents. (...) at off hours, when the problem is more serious, sometimes there isn't a taxi to take you."* (Liduína, cooperative producer)

Collective and organized work strengthens local production and transforms lives.

The statements highlight the urgent need for investment in infrastructure, expansion of units, and the appreciation of community agents, whose work is fundamental in the prevention and monitoring of riparian families.

The municipality of Igarapé-Miri has faced serious public safety problems for years, recently aggravated by the presence of organized crime. According to data from the National Public Security Information System (SINESP), from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, in 2022 the municipality had the highest homicide rate in the Tocantins Integration Region – 64 cases per 100,000 inhabitants – , a rate is almost twice the state average. Reports collected from within the municipality reveal an environment of constant fear and a feeling of abandonment by public authorities, marked by violent assaults, home invasions, and threats. Residents report that the peaceful routine of the past has been replaced by an atmosphere of apprehension, which "increases during the harvest season because there are a lot

of boats, a lot of money going around, they keep an eye on it (...). But it's not only at these moments that this type of violence occurs. In people's homes they don't just look for money, they look for whatever they have" (M., entity representative).

The açaí harvest season has become especially critical, with producers and street vendors being targets of armed robberies on rivers and roads. Even during the off-season, the criminal factions continue their actions, imposing "security fees" and attacking beneficiaries of social programs and fishers after the closed season insurance has been paid. Criminals know the river routes, payment periods, and financial transactions, demonstrating organization and territorial control. Cases of extreme violence, including assaults and kidnappings, have led many families to abandon their homes in the country and migrate to city in search of protection. A producer describes: "We had to leave because no one could handle it, I was already psychologically ill. Lots of robberies, they lock us in the house at night (...). It's something we'd like the government to do something about, because if everyone leaves the country, there won't be any living conditions in the city." Another account reinforces the collective trauma: "They were forced to leave their homes, their crops, everything they survived on, to go and live in Igarapé-Miri (...). They create a trauma that makes it impossible to stay there any longer" (Nelson, cooperative producer).

The lack of police presence in rural and riverside areas, combined with difficult access and a lack of infrastructure, makes state action ineffective in the face of the advance of gangs, often made up of local youth. Violence also affects the economy, discourages investment, and prevents families from improving their living conditions, as asset ownership may attract criminals. The population demands greater security and government presence, arguing that actions to combat crime should be accompanied by policies to generate income, educate, and strengthen rural communities, the only ones capable of breaking the cycle of fear and vulnerability.

Another central challenge faced by producers is land regularization. Most

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families live on land without definitive documentation, which places them in a position of legal vulnerability. Although some have the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) or the Brazilian Registry of Family Farming (CAF), these documents do not guarantee ownership, but are essential for accessing public policies such as the PAA and PNAE. "We are settlers, we have a collective CAR, an individual CAR, and a purchase and sale receipt (...). Then INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform) came and an island was formed here. We have these documents that govern us" (Mauro and Dedê, cooperative producers). The growing value of açaí has sparked the interest of large businesses in the region and increased the risk of traditional farmers being expelled, as one leader warns: "Ninety percent of our population is made up of occupants without land title (...). They become easy prey in the hands of big capital. The guy throws a drone, does the CAR and that is enough to expel the farmer" (Elivelto, entity representative).

Partnerships between INCRA, ITERPA (Institute of Lands of Pará), EMATER (Brazilian Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company), and local organizations have sought to advance this issue, with the creation of settlements and the issuance of titles and registrations. CAEPIM, for example, implemented actions to facilitate cooperative members' access to the CAF, an essential document for institutional trade: "We hired a technician and brought him here to issue the CAF for the people (...). This is a document that gives access to the PAA and PNAE" (CAEPIM). Even so, interviewees recognize

> From the river to the global market, açaí carries the invisible work of thousands of Amazonian families

that progress is limited given the territorial dimension and the complexity of the land situation.

Public insecurity and land tenure are deeply interconnected and constitute the two main areas of vulnerability for açaí-producing families in Igarapé-Miri. The absence of the State, both in protecting life and guaranteeing land ownership, has generated displacement, productive disruption and a widespread feeling of helplessness. Overcoming this situation requires integrated security, land regularization, and sustainable rural development policies that strengthen institutional presence and guarantee communities the right to live and produce with dignity in their territories.

An analysis of the dreams and aspirations of interviewees reveals a sensitive portrait of the hopes that drive the riverside communities of Igarapé-Miri. The search for a more dignified and safe life is a transversal desire that guides its personal and collective projects, reflecting the desire for basic conditions of well-being, access to public services and economic stability. As one resident put it, "the greatest wealth we give our children is education," demonstrating that education is seen not only as a path to social advancement, but also as an instrument of liberation from the historical difficulties that mark the region.

> Without security and regularized land, there is no future in the country.

Hopes and expectations

One the most frequent aspirations is to provide children and grandchildren with a life offering greater opportunities, whether in the country or in other professional activities. Some interviewees hope that new generations can pursue studies and achieve "more qualified careers," while others express pride and hope in seeing their descendants continue the traditional work with açaí, a symbol of local identity and survival. "My dream is to see my daughters working with açaí. And run the business forward," reported a producer, highlighting the symbolic and affective value of the continuity of agro-extractive knowledge.

Public safety appears as a central and urgent theme in the narratives. Increasing violence has limited families' daily lives and work, instilling fear and a reduction in productive activities. "Public safety is a dream for almost every riparian dweller today (...). In the past, our parents used to leave the door opened. Today, we have to stay locked in our homes while many criminals are out there," complains a community representative, summing up the feeling of vulnerability that permeates the riverbanks.

Financial autonomy and the desire to provide with dignity for one's family also stand out, along with the search for new sources of income and productive diversification as paths to independence.

Land is perceived not only as a means of subsistence, but as a space of belonging, memory, and resistance, while the community represents the place of solidarity and mutual support, where social bonds sustain collective life.

The dreams of interviewees, therefore, are multifaceted: they mix individual and collective desires, immediate and long-term, material and symbolic. They reflect both the concrete conditions of inequality and lack of services and a profound hope for transformation. Dreaming, in this context, is also a political act– a way of claiming the right to live with dignity and affirming that the desired future depends on guaranteeing public policies that ensure education, health, security, infrastructure, and recognition of agro-extractive work.

Final considerations

The reports collected reveal that turning these dreams into reality is not an isolated task; it requires coordination between different actors and continuous efforts to create better living conditions for communities. Expanding access to education and valuing technical and professional training are fundamental to expanding opportunities and breaking the cycle of poverty. Investments in public safety and violence prevention programs, especially targeting young people, are equally urgent. Strengthening primary healthcare, expanding infrastructure, and supporting land regularization also stand out as essential conditions for a better life.

Finally, strengthening local organizations – associations, cooperatives, and community entities – emerges as a concrete

strategy for sustainable and autonomous development. These forms of organization increase negotiation capacity, promote more sustainable and supportive practices, and strengthen the social ties that sustain communities. Thus, the dreams of riparian families are revealed not only as individual expressions, but as collective projects for the future, which demand recognition, security and dignity in the Amazon territory.

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