Globalization and Transformation in Rural Brazil: Agribusiness, Rural Labor Unions & Peasant Mobilization

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Questions

- What is globalization in rural Brazil?
- How has agricultural work been transformed by the process?
- How have rural workers responded to these changes?
Globalization: Agribusiness Model

- Deregulating to accept direct investment and imported food
- Recognizing intellectual property in genetic technology
- Trading access for open markets abroad,
- Generating nearly 40% of GDP
Transformation

- Expanding agricultural lands
- Intensifying production through technological changes
- Increasing TNC control over political economy
- Increasing dependence on exports
Impact on Rural Work

- Dispossession of small farmers
- Reduction of seasonal labor, minor expansion of skilled labor
- Decline of female participation
- Increase in forced labor (slavery)
Responses

- Decline and fragmentation of rural union structure into SER and SAF
- Growth of rural poor organizations, particularly those in Via Campesina-Brasil
Polemic: Food Sovereignty v, Food Security

- Via Campones – bottom up theory of development, produce 60% of food consumed, employ 70% of rural labor, ecological, small and inadequate investment makes future uncertain.

- Via Agronegocio – trickle down theory of progress, land and power concentration, against global trends of decline in commodity share of market, questionable sustainability.

- Battle over agrarian policy: manifestos produced by both sides, allies in state.
Findings

- **Globalization**: deregulating to accept direct investment and imported food, pressuring to open foreign markets, recognizing intellectual property in genetic technology.
- **Transformation**: expanding agricultural lands, intensifying production through technological changes.
- **Impact on rural work**: dispossession of small farmers, reduction of seasonal labor, minor expansion of skilled labor & decline of female participation, increase in forced labor.
- **Response**: decline and fragmentation of rural union structure into SER and SAF, growth of rural poor organizations, particularly *Via Campesina-Brasil*.
- **Polemic**: *Via agronegocio* and *Via Campones* – food security vs. food sovereignty.