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Hemp as a functional crop to promote food security in Quilombola communities in the Brazilian São Francisco valley: a Case Study

Master's thesis in the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences

by

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Abstract

The Sertão region, located in the North-eastern part of Brazil is subject to uneven semi-arid climate and is currently facing a six year drought, with devastating consequences on food security, ecosystems and to the local economy, combined with the country deepest economic recession. Despite some national programs for combating poverty and food insecurity have been developed by the government, food insecurity is still present in 40.1% of the rural households.

Among those affected, traditional communities such as Quilombolas - subsistence communities of slavery origin - are good examples of the rural population struggling with food insecurity, mainly because of their remote locations, lack of access to markets, resources and their substance production system. Such communities rely on agricultural and supplementary income activities.

Despite the social stigma attached to it, hemp has been historically interwoven in this region's development, well established to the dry climate of the region since its arrival three centuries ago but subject to narcotic criminality activities nowadays, being a major social problem for the local population.

Within a Cannabis regulation scenario in Brazil on the next years, this crop could be used to provide an additional source of fiber, seeds, forage to increase income. This thesis aims at investigating the structural causes that perpetuates hunger in the Brazilian Sertão and how hemp can enhance food security through its use as a functional crop by traditional communities in the research region.