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+ Corresponding author: rafael.venancio@ufr.edu.br
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School Farm: Training for students and small rural producers

João Vitor de Oliveira Mota, Ana Luiza Pereira dos Santos, Lucas Soares de Carvalho, Paula Fernanda Silva Souza, Felipe Farias Cavalcante, Juliana Santana Barros Martins, Yasmin Dourado Pirani, Rafael Venâncio de Araújo

Universidade Federal de Rondonópolis [1]

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Abstract. The School Farm project is in its fifth year of execution, having as a pillar the partnership signed between Chácara Marajá and UFR. This place has been used for the development of teaching, research and extension activities. Currently, it has an apiary and eight nurseries for fish production, which are being used for field days, research and family farming development activities. The objective of the project for 2025 was to promote field days focused on training rural producers, participation in agricultural fairs, and academic weeks and high schools to bring knowledge beyond the university and disseminate the project's actions. The results of these actions were the organization of two field days that took place at Chácara Marajá, aimed at training rural producers in beekeeping and fish farming. Lectures and practical activities were also held within the same theme, at the UFR 2025 Course Exhibition, at the Major Otávio Pitaluga State School and at the Home for the Elderly. The organization of the events was conducted by students who were part of the project, as was their participation in practical field activities. This type of action has a significant effect on the training of students, as it allows them to experience the day-to-day life of family farms and apply in practice the knowledge acquired in the classroom. It also affects social transformation, considering that extension activity, through rural training, contributes to increasing the quality of life of rural families.
Keywords: Family farming, Beekeeping, Fish farming.

Introduction

The curriculum of the animal science course is composed of general, basic and professional training disciplines, and approximately 25% of the workload of professional training disciplines is defined in the Pedagogical Project of the Course as practical activities. Currently, only part of this practical workload has been developed within the university due to the lack of physical structure for its realization. The partnership between the university and a rural producer aims to integrate the university with the countryside, raising an appropriate place for the development of teaching, research and extension activities. On the other hand, the University, represented by professors and students, acts in the transfer of technology, professional training, technical assistance and planning. The open doors of a property
private partnership, allows the realization of field days and mini-courses that will act in the training of traditional communities, small rural producers and students in the area of agricultural sciences. By attracting this audience, the proposed actions promote a relevant social impact through the interaction between beneficiaries and the project.

The family farming segment assumes a socioeconomic role of great importance in Brazilian society, considering that its development is understood as one of the preconditions for an economically more efficient and socially just society. There are a number of factors that significantly affect the performance of rural enterprises, such as deficiencies in production management and professional training, which are fundamental items for the development of external communities that live from family farms (LOURENZANI, W. L, 2006).

According to the statistical yearbook of family farming (2025), Brazil has 3.9 million family farms focused on agriculture, which occupy only 23% of the land but are responsible for 10.1 million jobs (67%). Family farming accounts for 23% of the gross value of Brazilian agricultural production and for the economic dynamism of 90% of Brazilian municipalities with up to 20 thousand inhabitants

(68% of the total)". According to Lima & Wilkinson (2002), family farming creates local job opportunities, reduces rural exodus, diversifies production systems, enables economic activity in greater harmony with the environment and contributes to the development of SMEs.

Notably, rural extension is one of the branches of Agricultural Sciences that is concerned with providing formal education services of a continuing nature for rural and fishing areas; assisting and promoting processes of management, production, processing and commercialization of activities; and agricultural and nonagricultural services, including agroextractivist, forestry and artisanal activities (HECTOR, C. B. L, 2022). Rural extension is also understood as "a process of extraschool, or nonformal, education, whose objective is to contribute to raising the quality of life of rural families and, as a consequence, to the well-being of society as a whole" (GLAUCO, O., 2010).

In this way, the main objective of the work is to transfer technology in partnership with rural producers and society; provide innovative and high-quality education, articulated with research, extension and the provision of services; and form ethical professionals, with a general culture, technical competence, intellectual flexibility and social commitment. In addition, through efforts external to the university, it seeks to offer support services to students and professors linked to agricultural activity, developing teaching, research, extension and the provision of services for the benefit of the internal and external community.

Methodology

Maintenance of the existing structure: Scholarship students and volunteers involved in the project were responsible for maintaining daily activities and guiding employees who provide services to Chácara Marajá. The action groups were divided according to the expertise of each of the scholarship holders responsible for coordinating and managing the activities. Two scholarship holders developed work involving the fish farming sector and two others in the maintenance and management of the apiary. At the end of each activity carried out, the scholarship holders made a partial report that at the end of nine months will serve to compose the final report of the extension project. This action was continuous throughout the duration of the project, thus ensuring the proper functioning of the installed activities.

Training: Two field days and lectures aimed at training family farmers were held. During the Academic Week of Animal Science, an event open to the participation of the external community, a mini-course on "basic beekeeping" was held taught by the project coordinator with the support of scholarship students and volunteers. Part of the mini-course was held on the premises of the Federal University of Rondonópolis and part at Chácara Marajá, where practical field activities were carried out. Another mini-course on basic fish farming and a lecture are planned to be held until the end of the project's term.

Dissemination Of The Project's Actions: The project's actions were disclosed at the Exposul 2025 agricultural fair, during the 2025 Course Exhibition, at the Major Otávio Pitaluga State School and during a visit to the Paul Percy Harris Home for the Elderly, exposing its activities to the local community at the UFR Animal Science Course booth. Issues related to honey and fish production were addressed with the face-to-face practical training of those involved. All the proposed actions were duly proven with an attendance list and photographic records.

Results and discussion

In this year of development of the actions foreseen in the School Farm project, there was even greater involvement on the part of the students in the production sectors of Chácara Marajá. This effort promoted greater interaction with rural producers, thus contributing to the training of students to act in a more applied way in their profession. The results of the actions were presented to the external community at agricultural fairs, institutions, schools and events within the university itself, giving back to society, in the form of extension practices, as part of the investment made by all citizens who contribute to the professional training of a university student. In addition, the technical contribution made by the university and the partnership signed between the parties made it possible to complete a fish production cycle, providing employment and income to the local community, as well as training in the production of bee products that resulted in a harvest of approximately 500 kg of honey. On the other hand, with the structure available on site, it was possible to hold field classes of the disciplines of the animal science and agronomy course. This integration allowed students to experience the day-to-day life of family farms, contributing significantly to their personal and professional development. The sustainable development goals met in this extension action were poverty eradication, zero hunger and sustainable agriculture, decent work and economic development, a reduction in inequalities, responsible consumption and production, and life below water.

Final Considerations

This exchange of experiences improves the development of the undergraduate student, who has the possibility of experiencing the reality of practical activities in the day-to-day life of the field, bringing a greater sense of responsibility and commitment, and preparing future professionals for the job market. In addition, it provides the external community with professional training, technical assistance and quality professional guidance, which are fundamental requirements for the sustainable development of any zootechnical activity.

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