

TERRA. Revista de Desarrollo Local

e-ISSN: 2386-9968

Número 12 (2023), 100-125

DOI 10.7203/terra.12.25482

IIDL – Instituto Interuniversitario de Desarrollo Local

# **The peri-urban as a local food system in the south of Santa Fe (Argentina)**

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## **The peri-urban as a local food system in the south of Santa Fe (Argentina)**

*Abstract:* The growth of many Argentine cities is verified territorially in a space called "peri-urban" by several authors. The ones devoted to its study agree in defining it as a marginal strip of urban-rural transition which is partially assimilated by the process of urban dispersion and preserves typically rural attributes. This space emerges as a result of a haphazard process of urban growth, which makes irregular advances among different points of the city, thus generating a heterogeneous pattern of land use that, in general, characterizes this strip of land. The peri-urban is characterized by situations of speculation, diversity in the use of the land and the development of the dispersed habitat, frequently lacking the necessary services and equipment. In these transitional spaces, relevant socio-environmental tensions and problems arise from the expansion and growth of the cities and the main methods of agricultural production. It shows a high dynamic and its fast transformations account for the limitations of its study as if it merely were a dichotomy between rural and urban. This article intends to compare socio-productive proposals within the framework of local development for the management of the peri-urban in localities in the south of Santa Fe Argentina in the period 2010-2020, which include changes in production practices. The methods used are a comparative table in the economic, social and environmental dimensions and the MESMIS framework, which allows to identify the characteristics of the management systems in a transition process towards the production of agroecological food, which will contribute to achieve a growth in harmony with the environment, to reduce social inequalities and to develop the economies of cities and towns in the South of Santa Fe.

*Key words:* alternatives, production, sustainability

Reception: 21/10/2022

Acceptance: 30/04/2023

*Citation:*

Aradas Díaz, María Elena (2023). El periurbano como sistema alimentario local en el sur de Santa Fe (Argentina), *TERRA. Revista de Desarrollo Local*, (12), pp. 100-125. DOI 10.7203/terra.12.25482

## IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

1. El periurbano, objeto de estudio, es el espacio entre el campo y la ciudad, con características propias.
2. Los procesos organizativos productivos integran aspectos productivos, ambientales, sociales y económicos para el desarrollo local.
3. La producción de alimentos es una responsabilidad colectiva porque garantiza nuestra alimentación.

1. The peri-urban area, the object of study, is the space between the countryside and the city, with its own characteristics.
2. The productive organizational processes integrate productive, environmental, social and economic aspects for local development.
3. Food production is a collective responsibility because it guarantees our food.

1. El periurbà, objecte d'estudi, és l'espai entre el camp i la ciutat, amb característiques pròpies.
2. Els processos organitzatius productius integren aspectes productius, ambientals, socials i econòmics per al desenvolupament local.
3. La producció d'aliments és una responsabilitat col·lectiva perquè garanteix la nostra alimentació.

## ENG EXTENDED ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

The growth of many Argentinian cities is verified territorially in a space referred to by several authors as "peri-urban". It has its own characteristics in regions of Argentina, which emerge from its relationship with the urban and the rural, through flows of factors related to land use and agricultural production. This production should contribute to sustainable territorial planning in the south of the province of Santa Fe. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study poses whether it is in this important productive space where the food needs of the cities can be provided for and whether the rural space can contribute to sustainable forms of production.

This paper seeks to explain, through comparative methods, socio-productive proposals in the framework of local development for the management of peri-urban areas. These proposals are the result of territorial research at local scale with the methodology of participatory action research or PAR (IAP according to its Spanish Acronym), located in towns in the south of Santa Fe, during the period 2010-2020 in the framework of a Local Development Support Project or LDSP (PADL according to its Spanish Acronym) of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA according to its Spanish Acronym).

The socio-productive proposals represent five case studies of transition to agroecology: 1) integrated pest management or IPM (MIP according its Spanish Acronym); 2) urban-rural borders (BUR according to its Spanish Acronym); 3) productive systems in agroecological transition, peri-urban management; 4) socio-economic-environmental transition process with a model of proximity agriculture and 5) a reference case. Each case implements different production practices until reaching agroecological and local food production.

The cases were developed prior to this article, using mixed methodologies (data from the project documentation, surveys, technical reports, interviews, fieldwork, workshops and observations). Subsequently, they were organised considering the following aspects: context, objectives, methodology, development, achievements and contributions, with the aim of contributing to the description of the specific characteristics of each case.

The methodology applied in this work is based on the study of comparative cases, for which each of them is considered a unit in itself, integrating the three dimensions of sustainable, economic, social and environmental development. For the comparative analysis, a synthesis of similarities and differences in the results is made in a table containing the three dimensions on the horizontal axis and the cases to be analysed on the vertical axis.

At the same time, the methodology of the Framework for the Evaluation of Natural Resource Management Systems incorporating Sustainability Indicators (MESMIS) is applied. This methodology is used to evaluate, through the comparison of a set of factors identified for each of the social, economic and environmental dimensions, the functioning of reference and alternative socio-productive systems.

Based on the identification and a list of factors, these were adapted from a bibliographic search of indicators for extensive and intensive sustainable production, which characterise the three dimensions. Each of the factors is weighted as high (6-10), medium (2-5) and low (1). This weighting takes into account the practices that are carried out in each of the cases and that are displayed in each dimension.

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<sup>1</sup> Traducción exclusiva de los autores / Authors' exclusive translation.

As there is more than one factor per dimension, the weighted value of each factor is averaged within the dimension. Then, three values are obtained (one for each dimension in each case). In this way, the comparison of the factors of the socio-productive proposals, using a triangle diagram, makes it possible to identify differences in the dimensions of sustainability in relation to a reference situation.

These methodological processes make it possible to characterise management practices over a ten-year period within the framework of projects supporting local development. It can be noticed that there is an increase in complexity, ranging from practices applied to a single crop to an integrated approach to local agro-ecological food. But regardless of the complexity of the proposals analysed, it is possible to identify social, economic and environmental processes that characterise each of the cases as a unit.

The methods of production in peri-urban or local areas have to consider sustainable practices that ensure food production. The agro-ecological approach includes strategies of quality seals, participatory guarantee systems, open fairs and local markets. These forms make it possible to link producers with consumers, consolidating local food systems and ensuring the right to food for communities, which will contribute to achieving harmonious growth with the environment, reducing social inequalities and developing the economies of cities and towns in the south of Santa Fe.

These local/territorial scale processes are scalable challenges for local governments, productive sectors and citizens, enabling the supply of safe and healthy food, contributing to food safety and sovereignty.