

Farmers' expectations of farmers' organisations in Minas Gerais, Brazil: Extension rhetoric or practice?

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Abstract

Research conducted into the nature of participation in farmers' organisations in Minas Gerais included a survey on farmers expectations from association to answer the question why farmers often prefer to carry out production and marketing activities by themselves. The farmers' attitudes towards participation in farmers' organisations were examined including their perceived training and skills needs. Implications of the findings for rural extension and related rural services are also examined in this paper. A total of 122 formal interviews were conducted with different categories of farmers: the associations' committee members ; farmers who market their production through rural associations; farmers who are not association members;, and the local extensionists in two rural communities in the south of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The comparative analysis of two case studies showed that socio-economic characteristics were not very significant in determining the farmers' level of commitment to the association. The abilities of the management committee members, mainly the directors, emerges as one of the most important factors in the success or failure of farmers' organisations. The presence of private competitors can also greatly determine the direction and destiny of the whole process. Another relevant conclusion is that farmers are more predisposed to participate when the organisation/association offers additional benefits such as tractor services and sale of inputs. However, technical assistance during the production process is also highly appreciated by the farmers. The research findings show that the role of rural extension should be one of providing more advice on participatory activities and management techniques to farmers' organisations. Rural extension services and other institutions involved in the development of rural communities and farmers' organisations, should put more emphasis on providing knowledge to local people in the technical aspects of managing collective businesses. It is essential to prepare directors and potential leaders to carry out administrative activities, especially in highly market-orientated communities. One of the roles of rural extension should be that of teaching techniques of management and marketing, instead of providing advice related exclusively to the farm daily activities. Written procedures and legal and bureaucratic know-how are crucial factors in the successful management of a collective business activity. Rural extension services can also assist in the creation and maintenance of a cooperative mentality among farmers and help to overcome farmer individualism in rural communities through the use of participatory methodologies.

Key-words: Rural extension, cooperative associations, skills and needs , marketing

1. Introduction

Strategies of development in many countries, including Brazil, have traditionally been based on the modernisation of the rural sector through capitalisation of the productive sector and economic growth. However, since the 1970s, these strategies have been questioned by politicians, researchers, and others

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involved directly or indirectly in the development process. The emergence of social movements in urban and rural areas, the growing income imbalance, and the difference between the costs and benefits perceived by the local population have brought about the redefinition of the earlier development model.

In this context, participation emerged as a mechanism of consensus to include the local population in development strategies with the expectation of bringing in more benefits for this excluded sector of small and poor farmers. The need to include farmers as producers and 'subjects' of their own histories, and not only as simple consumers and 'empty objects' in development strategies was the main assumption underlying the recognised importance of participation. Many participatory strategies have been implemented and participation has become an object of research and practice in different parts of the world. From the perspective of this paper participation is still an essential ingredient in the implementation of programmes, which aim to improve the quality of life in the rural sector.

Another important aspect within development strategies relates to the management of farmers' organisations. Associations and co-operatives formed in order to facilitate the development of farmers' activities, to increase their income levels, and consequently to improve the standard of living in rural areas, require farmers to act in a participatory mode to improve their production and marketing processes, which in turn are supposed to benefit the whole community.

Research studies have examined the positive and negative issues involved in creating and sustaining farmers' organisations. Some authors place emphasis on participation while others are more committed to technical issues involved in the growth of the organisations themselves.

Rural extension plays an important role in assisting farmers to sustain themselves, their communities, and their organisations: while private consultancy is now common in richer countries, the majority of 'small' farmers in many countries do not yet have the financial means to pay for private help. This paper identifies the nature of participation in farmers' organisations, with a particular focus on the skills and needs of farmers in collective/cooperative business, and discusses the changing or extended role of rural extension services in supporting such associations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Farmers' organisations

To understand what is involved in the development and maintenance of farmers' organisations one approach is through review and definition. According to Garforth & Munro (1995: 28) in general terms 'organisations are structures of recognised and accepted roles established and performed by and for members'. This definition may appear to be simple, however it is very complex. As structure is performed by and for members, the formal and informal interaction between the roles and the people involved in the performance of these roles is crucial. The collaborative form of participation is also extremely important because people are perceived as 'beneficiaries' in the system. For Oakley (1985) and Midgley (1986) collaborative interaction is both feasible and desirable in situations that involve people. The process of 'empowerment' postulated by Oakley may be developed in rural communities and farmers' organisations through this interaction.

2.1.1. Characteristics of rural organisations

There are many models of organisations acting in the rural sector ; they may be grouped into two distinct categories, conventional and participatory, as defined by Oakley (1990). The conventional or

traditional organisations are able to bring tangible benefits to the farmers because government, which emphasises economic growth, supports them. They are formally structured, have a large membership, and they normally have a professional management orientation. Their members support them with an emphasis on internal economic growth. On the other hand, participatory organisations usually have a small membership and the leadership depends on a collective basis. They are more focused on social development issues rather than on economic growth.

In Brazil, rural unions such as Rural Labour Unions, which emerged in the 1980s, are examples of participative organisations acting in the rural sector (Oakley & Marsden, 1980, and Oakley, 1990). According to Gaifani et al (1996), this movement emerged as one type of spontaneous political organisation formed by farmers and activists to resist unwanted changes and to promote their own vision of development.

2.1.2. Types of farmers' organisations

Farmers' organisations or associations may be categorised by other terms. The most common type, the cooperative, has a long history from the nineteenth century. According to ILO (1966), cited in Garforth & Munro (1995: 37), a cooperative is:

'An association of persons who have voluntarily joined together to achieve a common end through the formation of a democratically controlled organisation, making equitable contributions to the capital required, and accepting a fair share of the risks and benefits of the undertaking in which members actively participate'.

ILO (1981), cited in Oakley (1990: 12), states that rural workers' organisations present similar characteristics, including their formation process.

'A rural workers' organisation is a trade union or a trade union type organisation of, for and by rural workers... A rural workers' organisation is formed by the coming together of a number of workers in an association established in a continuing and democratic basis, dependent upon its own resources and independent of patronage, the purpose of which is to further and defend the interest of members'.

Other types of rural organisations also exist: such as farmers' groups, pre-cooperatives, farmers' associations, federations, farmers' unions, agricultural cooperatives owned and controlled by the members, and chambers of agriculture with a general assembly elected by farmers (IFAP, 1992).

Independent of the kind of organisation, they exist to offer services and benefits to their members. In a study conducted in Saint Lucia, the most common services provided by the 16 institutions analysed were farm inputs, information, training, technical assistance, credit, research, and marketing activities (La Gra et al, 1989). The organisations, in principle, provide a responsive service, reacting to the needs of their members. The members should determine these services on a participatory basis, but this has not always happened in practice.

There are many arguments in favour of promoting rural people's organisations: these vary through a range of theoretical and ideological points of view including arguments from efficiency, equity and social/political development through the act of participation, self-determination and group action.

2.1.3. Creation of local organisations

Rural organisations have been created with a specific purpose and have become important to many people. In spite of this, they sometimes face problems related to costs and sustainability (Goldey, 1980; Esman & Uphoff, 1984; Uphoff, 1992; and Bebbington et al, 1994). Leaders usually prepare a plan of

financial resources to minimise economic problems in their organisation, and to visualise its situation, which also helps to avoid dependence on external assistance. The main sources of finance considered in cooperatives and associations are membership fees, income generating activities, and buildings (IFAP, 1992).

Organisations, which have been created as part of a development project, with external help, have often failed. Here, there is neither the motivation nor the local social and economic context to allow them to survive. The organisations do not achieve sustainability, because development assistance may act as an instrument of dependency. If rural organisations survive this first set of problems and manage to keep going, they may still face other problems during their lifetime. La Gra et al (1989) have identified three significant categories of problems in the associations studied relating to agricultural production, marketing, and management. In the first group, there are problems related to poor cultural practices, and insufficient capital. In the second category, one may find problems related to prices, lack of transport and storage facilities, lack of communication, and lack of a secure and guaranteed market. In the final group, when the associations are member-driven only few farmers understand the system of management, thereby placing a lot of responsibility in a very few people's hands.

Souza (1995) studied the dilemmas of collective management in small farmers' associations in the south of Minas Gerais. She considered participatory management to be a set of articulated intentional actions implemented to democratise the management process. The interest of people in organisational growth leads to the creation of instruments or tools that allows members' participation in the management process. She observed that the Poço Fundo Association has shown, in practice, that the organisation has grown stronger through participatory management and through the members' articulation, with regards to both short and long-term actions. The association's orientation is translated into committee members' and advisers' concerns in ensuring an educational process where 'everybody' has the opportunity of deciding the association's destiny.

2.2. Farmers' participation

According to Oakley (1985), Farrington & Martin (1988), and Mosse (1995) participation is a 'tool' that enables people to be involved with their own needs and problems through the decision-making process. Participation is a long process, which sees awareness as a fundamental pre-condition and not as an end in itself. As a result, participation needs to be developed, step by step, by the people, direct or indirectly, involved.

Effective or 'real' participation has its roots in the process of decision-making. The first step in the decision-making process is to identify the problem (McCracken, 1988). This identification may be carried out in a variety of ways: through an informal survey, group discussion, case studies, chain interviews, or intra-household analysis (Farrington & Martin, 1988). After this, the people concerned will try to find possible solutions, sometimes with external help, by identifying the causes of the problems and by pointing out possible solutions.

Mosse (1995) postulates that there are some social pre-conditions for participation in planning and it is possible to say that these pre-conditions may be applied in the development of other stages of organisational and community development. The process of working pre-conditions is similar to that of decision-making. The analysis of the problems is the most important pre-condition. The following step is to search for solutions with the help of other people involved in the problem. Finally, a co-ordinator or 'facilitator' should prioritise the items discussed, with the help of some participants, normally using one sort of ranking diagram.

Participation is, in the first place, a collaborative means of obtaining information about the local conditions, skills, needs, and attitudes. Without this information development programmes, projects, even the creation of farmers' organisations, can have problems of sustainability when external support stops. People are more likely to identify themselves with the project and see it as their project if they are committed before its inception. This is also important for getting local assistance in the construction or maintenance of the project. These two reasons are indirectly supported by IFAP (1992) which stresses the importance of avoiding external dependence in self-support associations. For some, the involvement of people in their own development is considered to be a basic democratic right.

2.2.1. Forms and models of participation

From the 1970s to the present, researchers have been investigating the forms and models of participation, aiming to develop theories about the ways in which farmers and others become involved in particular activities. Oakley (1989: 27) identified three different forms of participation:

- i) Spontaneous: 'based on local initiatives which have little or no external support'.
- ii) Induced: 'is arguably more common, results come from external initiatives seeking support or endorsement for external plans or projects'.
- iii) Compulsory: 'people are mobilised or organised willy-nilly to undertake activities in which they have had no say and even which they have no control'.

Oakley's emphasis is upon rural social development and the forms of participation more concerned with rural development programmes, however, they are normally present in the creation and development of local organisations.

2.2.2. Stages in the participatory process

The process of participation can also be divided into stages. The stages vary according to the level of people's involvement in activities developed over a certain period of time. Oakley (1989) identifies three stages in the participatory process. In the first stage, participation is considered 'marginal' because people's participation is considered 'limited' and 'transitory'. At this stage people have little direct influence on the outcome of the activity carried out around them. 'Substantive participation' is found in the second stage when people are actively involved in the determination of priorities. People also carry out activities, although they are externally controlled by sponsors' institutions and other outsiders directly or indirectly involved in the process. Thirdly, when participation becomes 'structural' people have an active and direct involvement in the activity. At this stage, people have the power to ensure that their opinions are taken into consideration. In following this principle, one goes from the 'marginal' to the 'structural' participation discussed above, helping people to develop a structure and think about issues such as resources, decisions, skills, purposes, and publicity instead of trying to persuade them to implement a package of decisions drawn up by external agents. These considerations are relevant in linking social participation and the development of farmers' organisations.

2.2.3. Origins and levels of participation

In Brazil, Community Development Programmes supported by the governments of the USA were implemented in the 1940s: they usually offered subsidies for the creation of technical assistance and rural extension, rural education projects, and national plans of development (Amman, 1980; Sales et al,

1987; Demo, 1993; Costa, 1994; and Souza, 1995). The early programmes have been criticised as superficial and in general did not help people to achieve social participation nor political participation.

According to Bordenave (1987), participation can be situated at two different levels and conceptualised as 'symbolical' or 'real'. Symbolical participation occurs when there is a minimal influence on the decisions and the people involved seem to have power, however it is only an illusion. On the other hand, real participation exists when the individuals can affect and influence all the institutional processes. He also adds that the influence can be "expressive" when artistic and philosophical aspects are involved or "instrumental" if the emphasis is placed upon theoretical and professional aspects.

Valadares (1995) further identifies two concepts in analysing the level of involvement and participation of a cooperative educational committee in the formulation of politics and objectives, and in the operationalization and control of the services offered by the cooperative to its members. In his study, 'passive participation' occurs when the involvement of the members consists only in being beneficiaries of the cooperative assets and recipients of the offered services. On the other hand, 'active participation' means involvement as owner or co-owner of the cooperative business. The active participation of members in cooperatives, discussing everything from simple to complex matters, constitutes an institutional form of pressure upon orders and counter orders from the prevailing structure.

3. Methodology

The research conducted in Minas Gerais examined participation in farmers' organisations: to identify the nature of participation; farmers' attitudes towards participation; the factors which facilitate the participatory process; and problems which interfere with and inhibit the participatory process in farmers' organisations.

The research was based on a bibliographic revision, direct observation, documentary analysis, formal and informal interviews and fieldwork. A total of 122 formal interviews were carried out with the associations' committee members, farmers who market their production through rural associations, farmers non-members, and the local extensionists in two rural communities in the south of Minas Gerais, Brazil in 1998. This municipality was chosen because of the importance of strawberry crops for the economic growth of the region (SEAPA, 1998). The formal interviews provided the most relevant data and were compared with data from informal interviews and secondary sources of information.

A conceptual framework was set up to assist in answering the following research questions: (i) Who is participating in farmers' organisations and why are they participating? (ii) How is participation occurring in the social context? (iii) How do farmers' organisations affect the production process? (iv) How do farmers participate in the management of farmers' organisations? It also identified the main factors that facilitate the participatory processes in farmers' organisations, and the main problems faced by farmers which interfered in the participatory process.

4. Major Findings

4.1. Strawberry production in Pantano and Cruz Alta

The strawberry crop was introduced into the Pantano community in the middle 1980s. Up to that time, the community had been very poor and farmers used to rely on subsistence crops and temporary work to sustain their livelihoods. Nowadays, the majority of farmers are involved in strawberry production. It is

very labour intensive and even children are welcome in performing different services such as picking and packing. The strawberry yield is normally high as each plant produces more than a kilo of strawberries during the harvest season and the resultant income can be considered high when compared with other common agricultural or livestock activities (SEAPA, 1998). Unlike other traditional agricultural activities, strawberries are easily perishable, cropping them requires many different abilities, and the harvest season last normally 6 months.

The creation of local organisations, which really was a challenge for new farmers, was soon accepted and implemented by them to improve marketing. The Pantano association is succeeding very well in its enterprise. The Pantano association is a new organisation, founded at the end of 1992, by a group of 25 farmers. In 1993, the first year of its operation, the association marketed 194 tons of strawberries from 65 farmers. In 1997, when the fieldwork was carried out, the association had 120 members effectively marketing their strawberry production through the association, and the quantity marketed was 650 tons. However, its best performance occurred in 1996, when the quantity marketed reached 780 tons. The association owns a 200 square metre headquarters built on a 440 square metre piece of land, a Massey Ferguson tractor, another 800 square metre piece of land, a computer, and furniture. All the association's belongings were bought with the 3% paid by members and the *quota* paid by partners, excluding the land where the headquarters was built, which was donated.

The figures above show that the association has been performing very well in this short period of time. It has a relatively high number of members and is marketing a considerable amount of strawberries. This association has a stable marketing system and is managing to offer additional benefits to members so it has not only attracted farmers but also has kept them committed to the organisation. The association sells inputs and delivers them to the farms, offers cheaper tractor services, and indirectly provides technical assistance. The directors also have a good educational background, and they have received technical support from the local extensionist to create and manage the business. These factors, along with the positive involvement of the community and loyalty of members have contributed to the growth of the organisation.

Nevertheless, the organisation located in the community of Cruz Alta, known as APROMOPA (The Strawberry Association of Pouso Alegre), where the strawberry crop was introduced earlier, has faced many problems over its 15 years of existence. These problems are mainly related to lack of capital and administrative knowledge in providing benefits to farmers, and a high sense of independence among the community. As a result, it is a small organisation in terms of membership and marketing. In 1992, the association had 73 members, but this number dropped to less than 30 members in 1997, and the trend is to decrease further unless a dramatic change happens in both the internal and external environment. The association marketed 116 tons of strawberries in 1992, 131 tons in 1995, which was its best performance in the last decade, and only 66 tons in 1996.

Another problem, which has affected the performance of the Cruz Alta association, is the presence of many private companies marketing strawberries in the community. Members and other farmers in the community have never been effectively committed to sustaining the organisation as they were always competing among themselves. The association had a brilliant start, with a farmer donating a piece of land and the extensionists helping to get funds to build its headquarters, but the management committees did not manage to offer constant benefits to members as most of the private companies usually do. The benefits offered by private companies include money loans to buy inputs and prepare the soil, and free boxes for packing the product. The disputes and constant rivalry did not allow the farmers to pursue a common objective. As a result, a considerable number of farmers, including the capitalist ones, have achieved a relatively high standard of living but many farmers, mostly peasants and neo-peasants, still rely on external help to grow their crops and market their products.

4.2. *The nature of participation*

The nature of participation in the communities studied in Minas Gerais is summarised below, in reference to the conceptual framework developed for the research (Vilas Boas, 2000:77). There were not many differences between associated farmers and non-associated farmers. Thus, this paper will address only the main characteristics of the farmers engaged in the associations and their attitudes to participation and related aspects.

- The community of Cruz Alta has specialised in strawberry production for a longer time. The farmers' characteristics are therefore different because the strawberry crop was introduced first into this community. The farmers tend to be older, to have lower educational levels, to own larger strawberry crops, and this in turn affects land tenure. Furthermore, they still tend to crop the same subsistence products, receive the same annual income, and work on the same size of lands. The personal and professional characteristics do not seem to be very important in determining the level of farmers' participation in organisations marketing agricultural products because non-members also have similar characteristics.
- On the other hand, how the organisation influences the production process seems to be directly related to the level of farmers' commitment to cooperative organisations. The Pantano association assists the farmers indirectly in planning, organising, directing, and controlling their production; thus Pantano's farmers are more involved in the association than the farmers of Cruz Alta.
- Few ordinary farmers of Pantano are involved in the association's management activities while members of APROMOPA have not helped the directors to manage their business. Analysing this information in context, it is possible to say that participation in the management process is more likely to occur when the organisation interacts with the production and marketing processes in the community.
- The Cruz Alta association was initiated with an induced form of participation and it is still marginal for different reasons, while spontaneous participation was one of the bases for the collective business in Pantano. People's involvement seems to be a step ahead in Pantano and it may develop from a substantial to structural participation in the future. Both internal and external environmental issues, such as the marketing mentality and infrastructure of the community, the kind of assistance received, and the technical knowledge of the directors, have affected the bases of participation both positively and negatively.
- The levels of participation are different in both communities. Pantano farmers are much more involved in the association than the majority of Cruz Alta farmers who wait passively to receive advantages from the collective business.
- With regard to the characteristics of participation, direct and formal participation is more proactive and effective in Pantano than in Cruz Alta. Farmers attend more meetings and lectures in that association and they positively contribute with their points of view to improve the association's activities. They are also more receptive to advice on improving their own activities. The same applies to indirect and informal participation because the effects of these types of participation have been positive in Pantano and negative in Cruz Alta. The Pantano community is generally more positive about its organisation. Cruz Alta farmers however who market their produce independently and also some private companies are not totally in favour of the presence of an association.

In summary, farmers of Pantano have developed a cooperative mentality with regard to their involvement in the association and other community activities. Organisational groups, such as directors, have a positive image in the society and consequently the organisation itself has benefited from the

loyalty of both directors and members. In addition, the organisation has brought improvements to the strawberry crop and seems to have stimulated young farmers into getting involved in this crop. However, the organisation of Cruz Alta has neither helped farmers in the production nor marketing of their produce; thus some directors and committee members have a negative reputation within certain sectors of the community. This organisation is now weaker than the association of Pantano because the majority of community farmers do not have a cooperative mentality and there is a fierce competition among strawberry buyers in the community.

Theories about farmers' organisations and participation have been to a large extent 'proved right' in both case studies. Understanding the nature of participation in farmers' organisations is a very complex issue in which researchers should look at many distinct aspects simultaneously in both the internal and external environment.

4.3. Rural extension: related aspects

Farmers' need for rural extension in the communities under study is spread in different areas and they require assistance before, during, and after the production process. Most of the information required is related to the purchase of inputs, technical matters during the production process itself, and advice in marketing. Farmers also need to improve their skills of collective management, including decision-making.

4.2.1. The role of rural extension in developing farmers' organisations

In the two case studies, individual farmers as well as associated farmers have received more advice in Pantano than in Cruz Alta. More than three thirds of the Pantano associated farmers received technical advice to help with their farming activities and about half of all non-members also received technical advice in 1997. Although the assistance in both cases is directed more to the production than to the marketing process, members involved in farmers' organisations seem to receive more assistance than non-members. The local extensionist usually visits the farmers on their own farms, but he also offers a great deal of advice in the local association. In this case, members are more willing to attend lectures and meetings than non-members. On these occasions, the most relevant techniques adopted by the extensionist to deliver assistance are explanation, demonstration, and the distribution of leaflets.

A very few farmers receive technical advice from the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company (EMATER), the governmental organisation which is in charge of providing rural extension in Brazil and about half of members and non-members did not receive any kind of advice in Cruz Alta, in 1997. Although some farmers complained about the poor quality of the services offered by the local extensionist, the majority of the farmers interviewed agreed that they already have sufficient experience with the strawberry crop and do not need any external assistance. A 32 year-old-man stated that 'I just uproot sick plants and throw them away instead of looking for technical assistance'. This attitude is not advisable and farmers should be instructed to search for help at any time, mainly during the production process.

Agricultural stores provide another source of technical assistance and farmers usually get advice from the salesmen. These salesmen usually assist farmers in choosing fertiliser, insecticides, and pesticides, but do not help at the marketing level. This source of advice is more available among the farmers of Cruz Alta than Pantano. The findings are in accordance with the studies of Carter (1999), Zijp (1998), and Bisalial (1994); they state that farmers have searched for advice in different spheres including the

private sector and 'fellow farmers'. In Pantano, as well as in Cruz Alta, the farmers also have access to other sources of private advice such as agribusiness and fund suppliers.

The findings also have shown that the community, which has benefited from public extension, is better equipped to sustain its own organisation. The extensionist has worked as an intermediary between the farmers and the association, and has provided orientation about the role of cooperative groups in marketing agricultural produce. Group advice offered by the extensionist has created a very positive and strong link between farmers and the association. This method also helps to increase awareness about participation in organisational activities.

5. Conclusions and Implications for Action

Fruit growing is usually very demanding and employs a considerable number of people. Consequently it brings many positive results, not only in terms of contributing to a decrease in the level of unemployment in the rural sector, but also by increasing the income level of rural families (Almeida (1998), Pozo & Gomes (1997), Ferreira (1997), and Ferreira (1996)). In this context, the strawberry crop was introduced into Pouso Alegre in the 1970s and it brought many benefits to the region. Farmers, who had previously dealt with corn, beans, rice, and milk, demanded external help to learn about the new production process and marketing system.

Rural extension played a positive role in this endeavour and a few years later extensionists assisted farmers to create their own organisations to market their produce and provide more benefits for themselves, instead of selling to private companies and merchants. One organisation was founded in 1984 and another in 1992. The first was created according to a more assistencialist philosophy and the second seems to be more professional or business oriented. However, the farmers' socio-cultural characteristics also contributed to this differentiation.

The major implication of the research findings for public rural extension and other institutions involved in the development of rural communities and farmers' organisations, has to do with placing more emphasis on providing knowledge to local people on the technical aspects of managing a collective business. It is essential to prepare directors and potential leaders to carry on management and marketing activities, especially in highly market-orientated communities.

One of the roles of rural extension should be to teach management techniques and the process of marketing instead of providing advice related exclusively to farmers' daily activities. Traditional farmers usually learn how to deal with new crops quickly but it is still hard for them to apply good management techniques. They do not usually have written control of their activities and this is one crucial factor in succeeding to manage a collective activity. Contacting NGOs, local schools, or university staff to produce lectures and short courses for potential leaders, innovative farmers, and even extensionists is a useful method of introducing administrative techniques into the rural sector.

Rural extension services should also aim to create and sustain a cooperative mentality among farmers through the use of various participatory methodologies such as Development Education Leadership Teams in Action (DELTA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and Theatre for Development to improve the levels of farmers' participation in collective businesses such as associations and cooperatives. (Brito & Gomes (1997)). These strategies may also be helpful in raising farmers' awareness in identifying and avoiding manipulative actions from other agents involved in the fruit marketing system.

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