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RURAL CONSULTANCY AS A TOOL FOR RURAL EXTENSION

CONSULTORIA RURAL COMO FERRAMENTA DE EXTENSÃO RURAL

CONSULTORÍA RURAL COMO HERRAMIENTA DE EXTENSIÓN RURAL

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Abstract: Brazil is one of the world's largest beef producers, holding about 12% of the global herd. Additionally, the country has a significant competitive advantage: pasture-based systems. However, this advantage is not always converted into higher productivity due to the level of pasture degradation and the lack of management and resource management on the property. Rural management is a fundamental piece for efficiently increasing productivity; therefore, it can be said that production and management go "hand in hand." In this sense, the objective of this study was to evaluate the impacts of rural consulting (Terra Desenvolvimento) as a rural extension tool for advising rural producers. Terra Desenvolvimento®, located in the municipality of Campo Grande/MS, is a franchise of the Instituto Inttegra, offering various services such as the Managerial Recovery Program (PRG), the Metryx software, and a platform for the specialization and training of its contributors and clients. The consulting conducted allows for the transfer of technical information in a simple, concise, and assertive manner. Additionally, the training courses allow producers to become more independent, enabling them to execute their objectives with greater precision and, consequently, increase their income. Furthermore, rural consultancies can be considered extension activities, as there is a sharing of information, ideas, and experiences, as well as greater autonomy for producers. Rural extension is present even in the corporate environment, thus appearing as an activity that can be carried out by different people and institutions.

Keywords: Livestock management, rural advisory, training.

Resumo: O Brasil é um dos maiores produtores de carne bovina no mundo, e detém cerca de 12% do rebanho mundial. Além disso, o país possui uma grande vantagem competitiva, os sistemas à pasto. Todavia, essa vantagem nem sempre é convertida em maior produtividade, dado o nível de degradação das áreas de pastagem, somados ainda à falta de manejos e gestão dos recursos da propriedade. A gestão rural é peça fundamental para o aumento eficiente de produtividade, logo, pode-se dizer que a produção e gestão andam “lado a lado”, nesse sentido, objetivou-se com o presente trabalho avaliar os impactos da consultoria rural (Terra Desenvolvimento) como ferramenta de extensão rural para o assessoramento de produtores rurais. A Terra Desenvolvimento®, localizada no município de Campo Grande/MS é uma franquia do Instituto Inttegra, oferecendo diversos serviços, tais como o Programa de Recuperação Gerencial (PRG), o software Metryx e uma plataforma para especialização de capacitação de seus contribuidores e clientes. A consultoria realizada permite um repasse de informações técnicas de forma simples, concisa e assertiva, além disso, os cursos de capacitação permitem tornar os produtores mais independentes, possibilitando-os de executar com maior precisão seus objetivos e, consequentemente, sua renda. Além disso, as consultorias rurais podem ser consideradas como ações de extensão, uma vez que, há um compartilhamento de informações, ideias e experiências, além de uma maior autonomia para os produtores. A extensão rural se faz presente mesmo no ambiente corporativo, logo, figura-se como uma atividade que pode ser realizada por diferentes pessoas e instituições.

Palavras-chave: Assessoria rural, capacitação, gestão pecuária.

Resumen: Brasil es uno de los mayores productores de carne bovina del mundo y posee alrededor del 12% del ganado mundial. Además, el país cuenta con una gran ventaja

competitiva: los sistemas de pastoreo. Sin embargo, esta ventaja no siempre se traduce en una mayor productividad, debido al nivel de degradación de las áreas de pastoreo, sumado a la falta de manejo y gestión de los recursos de la propiedad. La gestión rural es fundamental para el aumento eficiente de la productividad, por lo tanto, se puede decir que la producción y la gestión van "de la mano". En este sentido, el objetivo de este trabajo fue evaluar los impactos de la consultoría rural (Terra Desenvolvimento) como herramienta de extensión rural para asesorar a productores rurales. Terra Desenvolvimento®, ubicada en el municipio de Campo Grande/MS, es una franquicia del Instituto Inttegra, que ofrece diversos servicios, como el Programa de Recuperación Gerencial (PRG), el software Metryx y una plataforma para la especialización y capacitación de sus colaboradores y clientes. La consultoría realizada permite una transferencia de información técnica de manera simple, concisa y asertiva. Además, los cursos de capacitación permiten que los productores sean más independientes, posibilitando que ejecuten con mayor precisión sus objetivos y, en consecuencia, aumenten sus ingresos. Además, las consultorías rurales pueden considerarse como acciones de extensión, ya que hay un intercambio de información, ideas y experiencias, además de una mayor autonomía para los productores. La extensión rural está presente incluso en el ambiente corporativo, por lo tanto, se presenta como una actividad que puede ser realizada por diferentes personas e instituciones.

Palabras clave: Asesoría rural, capacitación, gestión pecuaria.

INTRODUCTION

According to a survey conducted by the Brazilian Association of Meat Exporting Industries (ABIEC), the Brazilian herd in 2023 was estimated at 197.2 million head, with a total of 41.96 million head destined for slaughter (ABIEC, 2024).

Furthermore, the Brazilian commercial herd is one of the largest in the world, totaling approximately 12% of the global herd, which gives Brazil a prominent position in the world market. In addition, pasture-based systems provide Brazil with a competitive advantage in the meat market.

However, despite this favorable reality and competitive advantage, the state of Brazilian pastures does not reflect this. According to a survey by Carlos et al. (2022), of the 170 million hectares of pastures, approximately 62% of these areas are in some degree of degradation, with 41% in intermediate degradation and 21% in severe degradation.

One of the alternatives to reduce these alarming scenarios of pasture degradation would be the adoption of new technologies and management practices. Among these practices, the adoption of management techniques stands out, especially considering that productive intensification goes "hand in hand" with management.

For El-Memari Neto (2020), management is simply monitoring what is happening, observing whether the results are within what was previously planned, and taking action

based on these results. Furthermore, the author also emphasizes that for good management to occur, it is necessary to define four cardinal points: Where am I, where do I want to go, how will I get there, and what measurements should I adopt.

The management of a rural property can be carried out in two ways: one where the owner performs the control, and the other through companies whose product is advisory and consulting services for these properties. In addition, some companies also provide courses and lectures to train producers, in order to make them more independent in all processes on the property.

Terra Desenvolvimento is a franchise, part of the Inttegra Institute, which offers performance diagnosis services, implementation of control management, strategic planning, and managerial development for rural properties. In addition, the company provides the product called the Managerial Recovery Program (PRG) and training courses for clients and employees.

The PRG is a program focused on the productive and financial management of rural properties. Currently, the program controls 20 properties located in Mato Grosso do Sul, as well as in Paraguay and Bolivia.

In this sense, the present work aimed to elucidate the benefits of rural consulting (Terra Desenvolvimento®) as a rural extension tool for advising rural producers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Terra Desenvolvimento Agropecuário is headquartered in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil (Figure 1), located at the geographic coordinates 20°26'48"S and 54°35'56"W. However, the company also maintains offices in several other strategic locations across Brazil and South America, including: Goiânia/GO, Ribeirão Preto/SP, Cuiabá/MT, Araguaína/TO, Araguaiana – RS, Assunción/PY and Santa Cruz de la Sierra/BO.



Figure 1. Headquarters of Terra Desenvolvimento Agropecuário in the city of Campo Grande/MS.

In addition to the aforementioned programs, the Inttegra Institute maintains a platform offering specific "lessons" on various topics (Figure 2), with the aim of providing training for both employees and producers who acquire the company's service packages. This platform serves as a key component of Inttegra's strategy to enhance knowledge and skills within the agricultural sector.

Among the diverse lessons available, the course entitled "Farm in Numbers" ("Fazenda em Números") stands out. This lesson focuses on conveying specific indices crucial for effective farm management, utilizing data from the farm itself. The core objective is to impart this practical knowledge to producers, empowering them to independently monitor their operations and subsequently increase productivity.

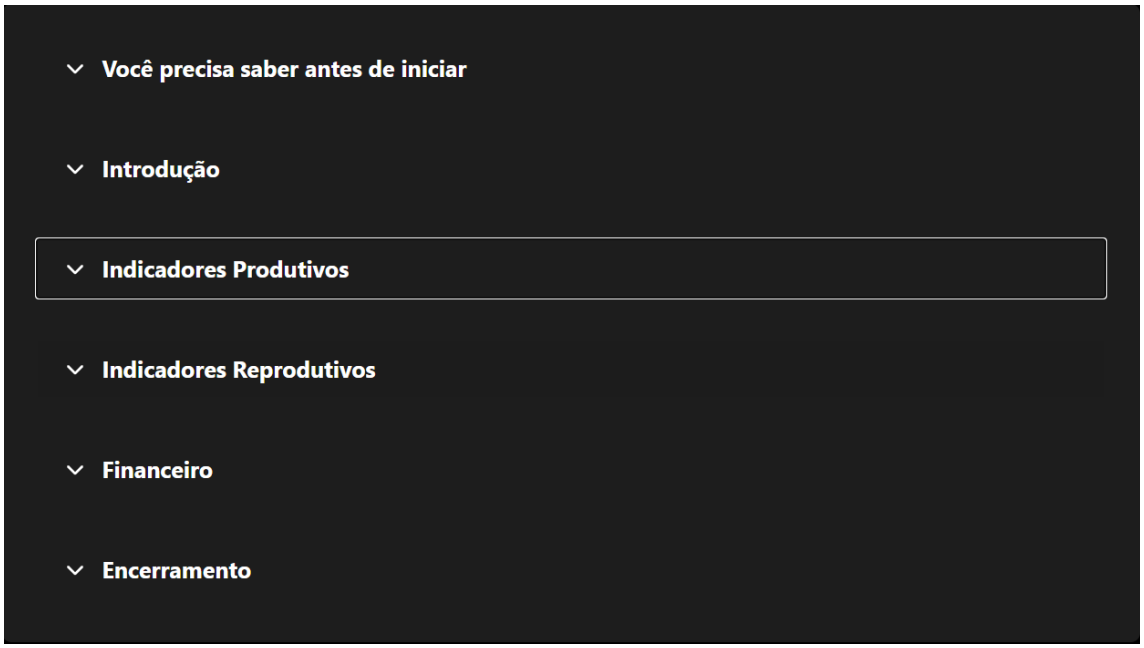

Figura 2. Lessons covered during the "Fazenda em Números" (Farm in Numbers) course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the various tools comprising the PRG, there is software called "Metryx" (Figure 3), which is populated with data collected from the monitored properties. It is important to note that the database is populated by company employees who receive "raw data" from the properties and input it into the software.

In some properties, data entry is performed directly on the platform by the property staff; in these cases, company employees only verify the data.

For data input into the software, producers collect data such as birth rates, mortality rates, animal purchases and sales, category transfers (calf, heifer, cow, etc.), and other movements.

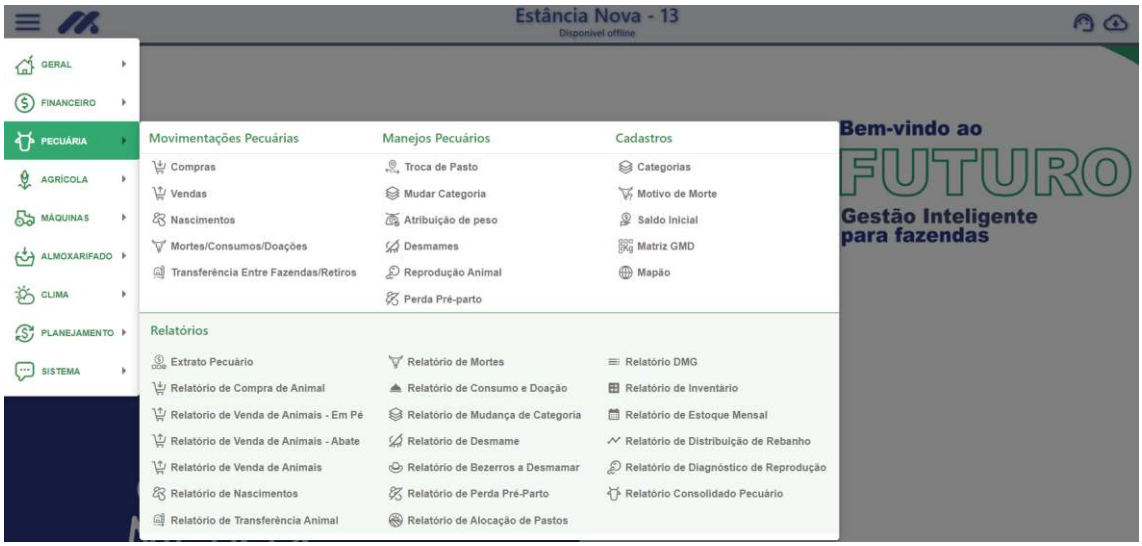

Figura 3. Demonstration of the livestock module in the Metryx system.

It is also important to highlight that the software allows for the input of machine control, implement movement, and supply data (e.g., fuel, inputs). This functionality empowers producers to exercise comprehensive control over farm operations.

Furthermore, this comprehensive property control facilitates a macroscopic view of the operation, enabling the monitoring and analysis of expenditures. The objective of this control is to verify whether expenditures are within previously established budgets.

This information is compiled and summarized in the Planned vs. Actual Project Report (Figure 4), which serves as a basis for presenting producers with the costs incurred for each project.



RELATÓRIO DE PROJETOS PREVISTO X REALIZADO

METRYX

MOEDA: REAL

Fazenda Estância Nova

DESCRIÇÃO	PREVISTO	REALIZADO	DIFERENÇA	VARIAÇÃO	CUSTO / HA PREVISTO	CUSTO / HA REALIZADO
DESPESA	**95.562,75**	**90.010,50**	**5.552,25**	**5,8 %**		
24/25 - Cercas	**95.562,75**	**90.010,50**	**5.552,25**	**5,8 %**		
Aceiro de cerca	34.715,52	5.330,00	29.385,52	84,6 %		
OLEO DIESEL S500		5.330,00				
Manga 40M x 60 M	5.675,01	0,00	5.675,01	100,0 %		
Manutenção de cercas	7.500,00	1.680,00	5.820,00	77,6 %		
OLEO DIESEL S500		1.680,00				
Novas cercas - Convencionais 24/25	11.630,37	23.187,67	-11.557,30	-99,4 %		
CONSTRUÇÃO DE CERCAS		12.760,14				
DIESEL S10		766,08				
MATERIAIS ELÉTRICOS		1.040,00				
PRODUTOS DIVERSOS		8.621,45				
Novas cercas - Elétricas	30.841,86	59.812,83	-28.970,97	-93,9 %		
ARAME LISO		46.875,00				
CONSTRUÇÃO DE CERCAS		6.892,45				
GASOLINA		141,80				
MATERIAIS PARA CERCA ELÉTRICA		1.887,58				
OLEO DIESEL S500		2.666,00				
PRODUTOS DIVERSOS		1.350,00				
Retiradas de lascas/esticador aceiro	5.199,99	0,00	5.199,99	100,0 %		

Figura 4. Demonstration of the Planned vs. Actual Project Report.

In addition to all the management control tools, the company also provides training courses, which can be taught by Terra Desenvolvimento itself or by partner companies, always aiming at the training of employees and clients.

As an example, the company annually offers a course on livestock business management, where producers participate in lectures on different topics. The 2024 edition covered six modules (MODs), which were: MOD1: Introduction to management and calculation of zootechnical indicators; MOD2: Analysis and calculation of results; MOD3: Performance diagnosis and implementation of controls; MOD4: Strategic planning; MOD5: People management; and MOD6: Case study (Figure 5).



Figura 5. Livestock Business Management Course.

However, the company's focus is not solely on data control of the properties. Newly established businesses receive on-site support, which includes implementing management practices on the property, in addition to surveying the farm's processes.

It is emphasized that all information collected by the employees is passed on to the property's responsible professional, so that they become proficient in both data collection and the proper execution of management practices.

As an example, a property located in Corguinho, Mato Grosso do Sul, a new client of the consulting firm, received technical assistance involving on-site monitoring of management practices, assisting the farm's employees. During one visit, Terra's technicians performed the tagging of animals with identification ear tags, as well as vaccination and deworming of the cattle (Figure 6).



Figura 6. Management practices carried out on the property in Corguinho/MS.

This "tagging" was carried out using electronic ear tags, with the aim of individually registering each animal. After attaching the ear tags, a test was performed in the Metryx system, where, in one of the tabs, individual animal monitoring is possible.

Following this management practice, the team conducted a survey of the entire farm to analyze the development of the pasture and the animals in general (Figure 7).



Figura 7. Inspection of pasture and animals in the field.

After the survey, the team formulated several options to present to the farm manager, including making some changes to the pastures (lots) and identifying which areas would require more immediate attention.

This step of formulating options demonstrates a consultative approach, seeking personalized solutions for the specific needs of the property. The suggestion of pasture rotations and prioritizing areas for initial attention indicates an analysis focused on optimizing management and available resources.

During the property check and evaluation, photographs were taken to later provide a complete report to the client, so that they could observe the current development of the property. The use of photographic records reinforces the transparency and objectivity of the evaluation, allowing the client to visualize the state of the property and monitor the progress of the work.

The delivery of a complete report demonstrates a commitment to clear and effective communication of the consulting results.

At the end of all the management practices and farm observation, farm management charts are prepared and delivered to the responsible employees, facilitating information sharing between both parties so that they have an understanding of the property's development, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement (Figure 8).



Figura 8. Preparation of the Map and Information Exchange with the Responsible Party.

The information sharing provided by rural extension agents is a key element for producers. One of the main objectives of extension activities is to promote the growth of agricultural production in an assertive, economical, and sustainable manner (DE FARIAS; DE OLIVEIRA & SOARES, 2022).

Furthermore, according to Menegat et al. (2019), extension involves actions that include group organization, formation of collectives for the implementation of activities, bringing together energy and strength to work on different scales and fostering camaraderie among participants in various stages of the process.

This information sharing is a two-way street, where both parties benefit, as highlighted by Andrade (2024). By being in the field, it is possible to acquire new knowledge through contact with farm owners, their managers, and employees.

On-site monitoring is essential for productive success; therefore, the technical visit to the property is an indispensable step before developing a consulting proposal. This stage allows the consultant to perform an in-depth analysis of the farm's conditions,

identifying strengths and weaknesses, and based on this information, the consultant can develop a personalized and more effective work plan (LEONEL et al., 2024).

In addition, one of the pillars of rural extension is the training of producers so that they are not entirely dependent on these contacts/actions. This training should be carried out through the sharing of technical information, thus inferring greater autonomy for producers (DE FARIAS; DE OLIVEIRA & SOARES, 2022).

With this, the importance of rural extension to assist producers is further emphasized, in order to make them more productive and capable in their activities. Furthermore, this work demonstrates that rural extension is not something that remains fixed only to educational institutions, but can also be carried out by companies and corporations.

CONCLUSION

The monitoring and training of rural producers is a valuable rural extension tool. Rural extension is present even in the corporate environment; therefore, it is an activity that can be carried out by different people and institutions.

Business management processes on a rural property, combined with technical visits and training courses, can be considered rural extension. After all, the purpose of this "package" is to make the producer more independent and productive in their activity.

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