


**TRADITIONAL MEMORIES, FLAVORS, CULTURE AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY:  
THE FREE MARKETS AND THE DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT  
THE EATING BUSHES** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.001-012>**Anizia Santos Nascimento<sup>1</sup> and José Raimundo Oliveira Lima<sup>2</sup>.****ABSTRACT**

The street markets are powerful spaces for sales, food promotion, they are configured as a builder of stories, culture, affective memories, consolidation of bonds of friendship and relationship of trust between customers, customers or even occasional visitors. As a space for social interaction and resignification of eating habits, it is an environment in which different people circulate daily. Due to its relevance as a disseminator of popular knowledge, ancestral knowledge, it was sought to investigate its contributions to the commercialization of eating bushes and the promotion of food security. This research has the general objective of promoting the debate on food security and sovereignty, as well as the appreciation of food culture from the sale of weeds to eat in open markets. This objective unfolds into three specific objectives: i) to verify which are the eating bushes that are sold at the fairs, ii) to promote the dissemination of the eating bushes, highlighting their contribution to a healthy diet free of poisons. As for the methodological instruments, an analysis of research carried out on street markets was carried out, through a bibliographic review based on searches of academic articles on google scholar, in the Brazilian Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). As a result, we observed that the weeds are sold in some free and agroecological markets in Brazil, this perspective was evident in the studies carried out. We conclude, therefore, that these foods are powerful for confronting food insecurity, an alternative for replacing industrialized food products from a homogeneous food system that follow patterns and influence the food culture of diverse populations and communities.

**Keywords:** Fairs. Traditional plants. Food culture. Food security. Eating bushes.

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## INTRODUCTION

The open market is configured as a space of resistance and struggles against the current hegemonic form of capitalist production, which has caused a distance between human beings and nature and contributed to a systemic crisis in which we live in this globalized world. It is present in large urban centers as well as in cities in the interior, it is a possibility of income generation for families, a place of convivial experiences, collectivity, rhythm, walks, meetings, a place to see friends, families, life stories and a place where politics is done (Pereira, Brito, Pereira, 2022)

The etymology of the word fair originated in the Latin meaning "feast day". The term free refers to the location in public places, such as municipal markets, streets, squares. In these environments, people circulate freely, among them are street vendors, buyers, marketers, regulars or passers-by, which differs from conventional commerce because it takes place in private places (Pereira, Brito, Pereira, 2017).

In this way, the open market, in addition to being an eclectic space, is a symbol of resistance to the changes that have been occurring in society. The aforementioned authors present it as a space where the past and present meet. The social and commercial relations present in the fairs are perceived by social movements, researchers and the State as legitimate strategies of stimulus, but also as an alternative to conventional markets.

The fairs have diversified characteristics and are presented with different typologies such as popular and solidarity economy fairs, agroecological or organic products that also take place in public spaces of social and cultural interaction, consisting of the trade of family farming products in an organic system of agricultural production. They stand out for the protagonism of rural and urban subjects in the interactive relationship of sale and purchase (Ribeiro, 2020).

The street markets are powerful spaces for sales, dissemination of food, which are configured as a builder of history, culture, affective memories, consolidation of bonds of friendship and relationship of trust between customers and customers, as well as occasional visitors. Thinking about the amount of food that circulates daily in these spaces and perceiving it as an important disseminator of popular knowledge, as responsible for the diversity coming from food cultures, and how it can influence changes in people's consumption habits, it is relevant to understand the different possibilities of local food offers that sell in this place.

Despite the availability of food, it is still scarce or little commercialized the eating matos that are products consumed in a traditional way. In view of this, we seek to

understand if there is commercialization of the bushes to eat in the open markets and can contribute to the guarantee of food sovereignty and the population's access to healthy food, free of poison.

In this context, the general objective of this research is to promote food security and sovereignty and the appreciation of food culture through the sale of weeds to eat in open markets. In this perspective, I have the following specific objectives: i) To analyze which are the eating bushes that are sold in the fairs ii) To disseminate the eating bushes highlighting their contribution to a healthy diet free of poisons ii) To strengthen the regional food culture through the offer of the eating bushes in order to guarantee the food sovereignty of the local populations.

To carry out this article, a bibliographic review was used, with a google scholar search, in the Brazilian Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), in which keywords were used, such as Free market, eating bushes, Non-Conventional Food Plants (PANC), within a time frame from 2019 to 2024. The theoretical framework was made up of authors who discuss the theme of open market and agroecology, Non-Conventional Food Plants (PANC), food. The most used studies for this work were by authors such as Menasche, followed by Ribeiro (2020), Nascimento et al (2018) among others.

The results of the research found that the weeds have potential for commercialization in open and agroecological markets, which was evident in the studies carried out. These foods are powerful for confronting food insecurity, an alternative to replace industrialized food products from a homogeneous food system that follow patterns and influence the food culture of the populations. It also highlighted the relevance of farmers as disseminators of traditional knowledge in open markets, by transforming the bushes to eat into food and disseminating them at the fairs.

Structurally, this research is composed, in addition to this introduction and the final considerations, of the analyses, discussions and reflections contained in the axes that give substance to the theoretical framework in the following themes: the eating bushes; the perception of food in traditional food culture; the commercialization of the weeds to eat in conventional and agroecological fairs, as well as the methodological aspects of the research.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### THE EATING BUSHES

The eating bushes, also known as traditional plants, are spontaneous plants, socially neglected and are not produced on a large scale, so they are not easily found in

supermarkets, they are found in nature called by science as Non-Conventional Food Plants (PANC), it has one or more edible parts, which are not commonly used, they can be fruits, leaves, flowers, rhizomes, seeds and other structures, being nutritionally rich, and can be spontaneous or cultivated, native or exotic (Menasche, 2016; Nascimento et al, 2018).

In Brazil, there are about 3 thousand species of plants with potential for food, the greatest biodiversity in the world with approximately 15% to 20% of the planet's species, as shown (Kelen et al 2015; Borges and Silva, 2018; Paiva, 2024). However, we use only 20 species of vegetables, including rice, beans, wheat and maize, which corresponds to a total of 90% of our diet (Kinupp and Lorenzi, 2014; FAO, 2019). In this way, most of the foods that should be part of the nutrition of Brazilians are despised by the majority of the population. Not infrequently, due to lack of specific knowledge of their food culture or deliberate misinformation, the one that throws weight of communication on industrialized foods or foods produced on a large scale by large productive organizations.

According to Paiva (2024, p.23) the nutritional composition and effects of these foods on health, although limited, existing studies indicate that many of these plants have a high nutritional and even therapeutic value. As an alternative source of food and necessary nutrients, they can replace the conventional plants that we use in our daily lives, in addition, they have advantages in the cultivation of species because they have characteristics of adaptation to different habitats, more hostile (Borges and Silva, 2018).

Borges and Silva (2018, p.2), also consider the need for knowledge about the properties and functions of food plants so that they can be introduced into the diet and function as nutritional resources for families who wish to consume them, especially for those who live in poverty and social inequality, having a diet poor in nutrients. They also suggest that the understanding of scientific knowledge about the benefits caused by the food use of these unconventional plants for the improvement of human health should be disseminated.

The eating bushes have already been part of the popular diet, from the transition from traditional agriculture to the modernization of agriculture with its technological packages characteristic of the Green Revolution movement that began in the 70s in Brazil, consequently, influenced the changes in eating habits resulting from the process of food industrialization, its use as a food source ended up in a decrease in its use (Nascimento, et al 2018).

The modernization of agriculture and the standardization of food, in the context of industrialization, generates changes in the eating habits of the population at a global level. In the twentieth century, knowledge and practices in food production that were restricted to

family environments were replaced by industry. In this way, the industrial process promoted the denaturalization and desocialization of food, transferring its production from the natural and social environment, produced, marketed, and consumed in a traditional way, to factory spaces, away from the eyes of consumers (Menasche, 2024).

According to Dutra's (2013) ideas, the replacement of traditional food with products from industrialized culture entails serious threats to the food sovereignty of families living in rural areas, as a result, people start to depend more on external food with high financial costs, contributing to the food insecurity of these populations. As the DHAA-SAN (2013) demonstrates, if the price of food increases and the population's income does not keep up with the increase, low-income families tend to decrease the quantity and/or quality of the food purchased. By committing part of its budget to the purchase of food, the family can generate food insecurity among its members, as it is not uncommon for the family income, generally eroded by the inflationary process, to be not enough to keep up with the food service machinery that accompanies industrialized foods.

The FAO (1986, p.2) defines "food security as the physical and economic access of the population to safe, nutritious and sufficient food to satisfy dietary needs and food preferences, in order to lead an active and healthy life".

Regarding food sovereignty in Ferreira territories, Felício (2021) defines it as an autonomous system of food production, which must start from the teachings of older people, having as the principle of everything, the seed, each base of nucleus with earth, cannot be disconnected from the relationship of freedom with seeds. Food sovereignty needs to be built with the elders who are the guardians of the seeds of traditional knowledge, who have the knowledge about the varieties of species planted in the territory, in that region, who cultivated the seeds, who know the right time for production, in addition to the permanent agroecological protection of these to avoid hybridization.

## THE PERCEPTION OF FOOD IN TRADITIONAL FOOD CULTURE

Food is a reference for building the identity of different peoples, culture, places and belonging. "It is constitutive, of our place in the world. If we are what we eat, what happens when we don't know what we eat? (Menasche, 2024).

However, according to data from the Human Right to Adequate Food (DHAA) and the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) (2013), the determining factors of food and eating habits are of a nature (economic, psychosocial, ethical, political, cultural) foods are chosen based on individual taste, it is related to culture; quality at price, with the people we share meals with (groups, family, or alone); the availability of time; through

ethical and political convictions. These factors can promote food and nutritional security, or contribute to hindering access for a certain population.

Ramos, Krone, and Menasche (2021) attribute the incorporation of food into our body as a real and imaginary act, and human food implies symbolic values. Understanding that eating is a basic need of human beings, therefore food consumption is based on regulations based on moral, political, economic and religious classifications. This means that food does not only encompass biochemical characteristics of food, but the moral values that are absorbed intrinsic to it, permeated by positive or negative issues. The interactions and practices involved in the act of eating are learned throughout the life of each person, influenced by historically constructed cultural and social issues.

For Menasche (2024) food is related to the culture of each society, what can be edible in one place may not be in another. The meaning of food does not restrict only the food of the body itself, but also of the soul, it is related to affections, memories, the idea of family, community, it is a language through which it tells stories and from food it can study a group, seek to understand the experiences and social relations in certain societies. And still in the author's view.

good food is, from this perspective, that which provides the necessary nutrients for the body to maintain its vital functions, good foods: here, they are those rooted in the histories and cultures of different social groups, throughout the country (Menasche 2024, p.145).

In this way, Nascimento and Menasche (2017) attribute the act of eating as a political act, the new issues that arise in society also influence the decisions made about food consumption, this implies processes that involve the production and distribution of food, builds new markets, generates culinary trends, transforms packaging products, contributes to technological innovations and also in the orientation of public policies. The act of eating is contributing to the emergence of other critical issues today, such as the environment, nostalgia, health, food security.

The understanding of food is based on its communicative dimension with memory, it constitutes the narrative of a community, it has the power to tell stories, it can be apprehended and learn the knowledge of a given society (Ribeiro, 2020). For Menasche (2024, p.150) "Food tells stories from different perspectives of what good food is, from different ways of dealing with scarcity and building possibilities for the future. There are different stories of flavors, memories and resistances".

However, we are experiencing a certain distancing from what food is when the agri-food system goes through the process of homogenization with the creation of large



supermarket chains and the arrival of the so-called "*fast food*", this puts in doubt what we are really consuming (Nascimento et al, 2018). What is observed is the loss of food sovereignty and the food that contributes to well-being, its access is being limited and being replaced by industrialized foods.

## THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE WEEDS FOR EATING IN CONVENTIONAL AND AGROECOLOGICAL FAIRS

Conventional street markets are made up in part of family farmers, in some cases by farmers who are not part of the category of producers. In conventional food production, the use of poisons is common, which makes it a health concern for producers, but, considering the low yield of ecological production, the producer continues his agricultural practice using poisons. In this two-way street, conventional vendors, for social and cultural reasons, in addition to being sellers, are also consumers even though they are aware of the dangers of pesticides, even if they unconsciously risk using them for economic advantage only (Ramos, Krone, and Menasche, 2021).

In view of what the author presents, the influence of capitalism on the means of food production in the countryside is perceived, in which economic advantages are placed in precedence over health and quality of life, the reflection of a hegemonic capitalist society, which homogenizes food systems and establishes standards on food and its forms of production. they colonize our way of life, knowledge and practices to the detriment of profit.

Contrary to the conventional system of commercial production of food that uses unprecedented poison, we have the agroecological transition that has been gradually mobilizing society to change eating habits, proposing a healthy consumption of poison-free food. In this way, this model of ecological agriculture contrasts with the conventional model (Barros, 2021). In this category, agroecological fairs are great allies for a new conception of consumption and food production.

These fairs consist of a model, in which producers are ecological, sell food without the use of agrochemicals produced based on the principles of agroecological production, considering the climatic conditions of the type of soil and nutrients, in these spaces can be found fruits, vegetables and legumes according to the seasonality of the season, season of the year (Ramos, Krone and Menasche, 2021)

In the ideas of Ramos, Krone and Menasche (2021), the relationship of organic producers with food is differentiated, it says a lot about the image that subjects make of themselves, this implies the sharing of knowledge about food and its main qualities and

forms of production, it evidences the moral relationship with food. For Barros (2021), the participation of farmers in agroecological fairs contributes to the generation of income in the commercialization of products, in addition to providing greater social interaction between consumers and producers, actions in these dimensions strengthen the ties of the food chain.

For Ramos, Krone and Menasche (2021), the symbolic representation of the food sold at ecological fairs can influence and modify the eating behavior of visitors, due to the sharing of knowledge that occurs in these spaces, it can drive the stallholders and customers to changes in food modernity constituted by the practicality of consuming super-processed foods disconnected from local identity. The stallholders and customers are perceived as agents of social transformation that modify the dominant relationship of consumption of ready-made, unhealthy foods from the point of view of health promotion and Food and Nutrition Security (FNS). Through dialogue, the producer can contribute to changing the habits and values that sustain people's practices and relationships with food.

One of the ways to contribute to the changes in eating habits and the valorization of food crops affected by modernization, in which we can suggest, is the insertion and dissemination of food from traditional cultures, such as the eating bushes, also known as PANC, in open and agroecological markets, which has already been occurring, as shown by studies carried out in this regard. Studies of this nature "have been gradually unveiled, as the access of a small number of people to healthy food of significant quality are factors that strongly support research in this area" (Borges e Silva 2018, p.2)

According to data from the ethnographic research carried out by Ribeiro between 2017 and 2020 at the ecological fairs in the Tristeza and Bom Fim neighborhoods, in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil on the commercialization of traditional plants, the interest of those people who are consumers in the fairs was verified. In this context, farmers are protagonists in promoting the dissemination of knowledge about these plants. Because they have knowledge and practices that involve the preparation and consumption of plants, when transforming these foods, neglected by the population into food in the imagination of consumers at fairs. Although the plants have a nutritious character, they are not perceived as eaten by market goers, until they are transformed into preparation and consumption techniques, shared in workshops that take place near the stalls.

In addition to the sociocultural diversity presented by the subjects who circulate through the fair, the exchange relations are carried out in this place, which also include the eating bushes. This movement is also emphasized by Barros (2020, p.32) when he points out in his research that the stallholders seek to sell the surplus of their production, also



use part of this food for their food, in addition to exchanging with other farmers some fruits and vegetables that they do not have on their property.

Traditional food plants or eating bushes were already present at this fair even before they were known as PANC, which shows the relationship of ancestral knowledge involved between generations and that has been perpetuated when these foods are offered at the fair. The knowledge of this term happened from the visibility of the discussion of the PANC theme having been given by the media, from spaces that discuss health, food, well-being, socio-biodiversity.

For some farmers, some of these plants are perceived as everyday and/or traditional food and, therefore, they were eventually taken to the fairs for commercialization, such as potatoes, nasturtium, various flowers, mountain guava, mastruz, ora-pro-móbeis, peixinho-da-horta, they are usually at this fair, according to seasonality (Ribeiro, 2020). These are edible, very nutritious plants, conventionally considered as 'bush' and not cultivated, including nasturtium, nettle, ora-pro-nóbis, bertalha, lulo, jacaratiá and capote tomatoes are sold at ecological fairs, Barros (2021).

As Ribeiro approaches; Menasche (2019) that the circulation of these traditional foods as a commodity from the rural context to the consumers' table reveals the social contexts in which they are inserted and the way in which the study participants perceive and relate to these plants. The dissemination of the use of Food Plants is related to family issues, that is, knowledge passed from an older person to younger people and thus knowledge becomes continuous, or if based on the power of reference that consists of the use of species and the transmission of knowledge. Other forms of dissemination would be exhibitions, fairs, books, and even a guide to the endemic species of the region (Borges and Silva, 2018).

In the study carried out by Paiva (2024) in Ouro Preto-MG, it was shown that all the stallholders know at least one of these traditional plants, the best known by the city's stallholders are ora-pro-nóbis, taioba, blackberry, mustard and fern sprout and the most commercialized by them are ora-pro-nóbis and taioba.

What has made it difficult to commercialize on a larger scale is the access to the respective plants. In view of the trend of restricted distribution of cultivated plants, it is necessary to disseminate more about the theme in order to expose their nutritional richness and encourage their commercialization.

According to the author, these objectives can be achieved through visits to community gardens that have non-conventional vegetables as their strong point, which teach the population to identify the different species and their uses in food. In addition, the

main motivation is the appreciation of the regional culture of the species and the food and nutritional diversity, in addition to the preservation of natural resources.

The results found in the research carried out by Santos et al (2024) at the Serrinha-BA street market, at the Municipal Market and access streets of the Serrinha street market. A total of 26 PANC were identified, including the following varieties: sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) in the white, purple and carrot potato varieties; tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) in the cherry, tomatinho and cabacinha varieties; andu (*Cajanus cajan*) in the green, pintado and purple varieties; gherkin (*Cucumis anguria*) in the smooth and thorny varieties; mangalô (*Lablab purpureus*), cow's tongue (*Talinunu triangulare*); caxixe (*Lagenaria siceraria*); dwarf cucumber (*Coccinia grandis*), ora-pro-nóbis (*Pereskia aculeata*); noni (*Morinda citrifolia*); Wind chayote (*Cyclanthera pedata*); pine cone (*Annona squamosa*), custard fruit (*Annona mucosa*); tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*); caja (*Spondias* sp.); and quioiô (*Occimum* sp.). Among the foods found, the most frequent offered at the fair are andú, mangalô, sweet potato and gherkin.

According to studies carried out by Nascimento et al (2018) in Dom Pedrito-RS in relation to the commercialization of traditional plants. For the family farmers who participate in the open market, the lack of demand from the consuming public, that is, the non-existent demand and their own lack of knowledge about plants with food potential become impediments to the trade of these plants. The authors conclude in the present research that there is currently no commercial potential for this type of food in the open market.

In this way, it is considered that there is still a potential to be discovered and explored by a large part of the population; However, a priori, work must be done on the dissemination of its potential, scientific research and methods of insertion in cooking.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research was motivated by the discussions carried out within the scope of the curricular component Popular and Solidarity Economy and Local Development, of the Graduate Program in Territorial Planning of the State University of Feira de Santana - PLAN TERR/UEFS, as well as in other discussions in the Graduate Program in Environmental Sciences, of which we are a member. The Interprogram relationship, without a doubt, provided an in-depth contact with critical aspects of the debate on local production and culture, serving as a basis for articulating theory with practice in this research.

This research has a qualitative and exploratory approach, to carry out this article a bibliographic review was used, with a Google scholar search, in the Brazilian Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), in which keywords were used, such as Free market, eating woods, Non-Conventional Food Plants PANC, within a time frame from 2019 to 2024. For the term matos de comer in BDTD, no results were found from this search, which demonstrates that the plants used by traditional communities are socially disseminated by the scientific denomination, or acronym (PANC).

In this survey, 940 (nine hundred and forty) results were found for this search, of these numbers of articles that appeared, we chose 25 (twenty-five), for an exploratory reading in order to verify their correlation with the theme and objectives of the research. Among the readings made, we chose 12 articles for a more in-depth analysis, on the subject of the sale of weeds for eating in open and agroecological markets in Brazil. Then we select the main discussions addressed by the authors and record the information for the execution of the writing.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This work showed that the commercialization of weeds is a practice that, although it happens in an isolated way, has already been occurring in some open and agroecological markets in Brazil. As shown by the research already carried out on this theme. This requires greater investments in incentive policies to boost the cultivation and sale of these products, in order to value traditional food crops and ensure food security for the populations, in addition to promoting the generation of work and income for the producing and selling families involved.

It is observed that in the research analyzed, with the exception of the study carried out by Nascimento, et al(2018) in Pedrito-RS, in which the stallholders have no knowledge about this type of food, species of the type ora-pro-nóbis, taioba, blackberry, mustard and fern sprout are sold in the fairs and the most commercialized by them are ora-pro-nóbis and taioba. The crem-potato, nasturtium, various flowers, mountain guava, mastruz, ora-pro-nóbis, peixinho-da-horta.

One of the challenges presented by the researchers, which the stallholders have faced is the low demand except by consumers and access to these foods, which has made it difficult to enhance the sales of the weeds to eat at the fairs.

Understanding the role of farmers and marketers in the transmission of knowledge about food crops related to the food bushes, when taking them to the market is a way of disseminating traditional knowledge, a form of survival against hegemony and resisting the



food standardization imposed on society by the capitalist system that forces people to distance themselves from their territories and their identities.

In fact, we understand that the actions of these farmers contribute to the generation of changes in the eating behaviors of the people who attend the fairs and to the strengthening of the food culture.

The results of this research are relevant to understand how the commercialization of traditional foods is happening in street markets and to point out possibilities for greater dissemination and reinsertion of these foods in people's daily lives as an alternative to conventional foods that have contributed to the invisibility of traditional knowledge, and generating food insecurity for many families. In view of this, considering the relevance of this theme, it is necessary that other research such as those mentioned continue to be carried out, to strengthen these practices that are necessary to guarantee the perpetuation of traditional food culture and ensure food security.

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