Brasilia University and MST advance in cooperation for the creation of a Brazil-China family farming research center

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With the articulation of the International Association for Popular Cooperation, Baobab, the University of Agriculture of China (CAU) is developing partnerships with the University of Brasilia and the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in the areas of bioinputs and agricultural machinery for family farming.

In early November, the rector of the University of Brasilia (UnB), Márcia Abrahão, was in China with a delegation of the MST in the Asian country to continue the construction of the Brazil-China Center for Research, Development and Promotion of Technology for Family Farming.

Demonstration Center for the Treatment and Use of Urban and Rural Organic Waste in Linhu, in the city of Suzhou - Mauro Ramos

The binational center has three axes: the exchange of students that will include, in addition to academic activities, experiences in rural communities in Brazil, such as quilombola territories and MST settlements; the testing of agricultural machinery for peasants, and research on bioinputs for agriculture.

Abrahão, who is also president of the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (Andifes), says that one of the surveys that is already being carried out jointly between the institutions is on the production of fertilizers from rock dust and also from kitchen waste.

The director of the Institute of Organic Recycling of the CAU, Li Ji, says that in addition to cooperation in research and technology sharing, it is necessary to support the development of the bioinput industry in Brazil.

"It is important to help in the growth of Brazilian technical and managerial personnel, because, ultimately, the equipment will need to be located and serve local production," says Li Ji.

Bioinputs gain ground

In Brazil and China, biological inputs have been acquiring an increasing importance in recent years.

In the case of China, in 2015, the government launched a plan to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers by 2020. The consumption of these inputs went from another 60 million tons in 2015 to less than 50 million tons in 2022, representing a drop of more than 15%.

At the end of last year, the Chinese government launched two new plans to reduce chemical fertilizers and pesticides by 2025. Among the measures planned is the increase in the proportion of the application area of organic fertilizers by more than 5 percentage points.

In Brazil, Bill (PL) 3.668/2021, which regulates the chain of bioinputs, is in progress. In September of this year, the Senate Environment Committee approved the bill that aims to encourage the reduction of the use of pesticides in the country. As the approved project is a substitute, it will vote again in this committee, and if approved again, it will go to the House.

At the level of popular movements, one of the pioneering experiences is that of Cooperbio and the Small Farmers Movement (MPA), based in Seberi (RS), but interconnected to peasants from more than 60 municipalities in the region.

In 2020, the MST inaugurated its first bioinputs factory at Cooperativa Da Terra in the Pirituba settlement, in Itaberá, southwest region of São Paulo. This year, the Ana Primavesi Bioinput Production Unit (in honor of the pioneer of agroecology) was inaugurated during the 20ª Agroecological Rice Harvest Festival, in Viamão, Rio Grande do Sul.

The national coordinator of the Collective of Bioinputs of the MST, Andreia Matheus, who was part of the delegation that came to China, states that the movement has been developing biofactories and bioinput production units in an integrated way, involving biodefensives, biofertilizers and biocomplete compounds.

One of the projects that the MST aims to strengthen with the new partnership is the implementation of a bioinput factory in São Leopoldo (RS), which "has done an efficient process of waste management," says Andreia Matheus. The

factory will use part of the organic solid waste to transform into organic fertilizer, based on Chinese technology.

At the CAU Organic Recycling Research Institute, located in Suzhou, the first Demonstration Center for the Treatment and Use of Urban and Rural Organic Waste was created around Lake Taihu, which is the third largest in China.

The plant processes more than 14,000 tons of food debris per year, and has an annual production capacity of 4,500 tons of organic fertilizers and 146 tons of oil for different uses such as cosmetics or fuel.

The main products of processing in the Center are organic fertilizers, which are destined for agroecology.

Li Ji states that the project helps to guide residents in the classification of waste, creating a circular economy, "important for the conservation of national resources, the protection of the environment, the promotion of sustainable ecological agriculture, the preservation of the soil and the defense of public health".

For the national coordinator of the MST Bioinputs Collective, China has become a reference in relation to the production of bioincomes "because it is part of a state and country strategy".

"This country strategy involves solving the environmental problems of the country integrated with other sectors of society, such as food production and energy production," he concludes.

Edition: Leandro Melito