

## Sowing cooperation for farmers in the South

By IAPC

On the morning of 8 September 2022, the sun began to rise in [Recife](#), Brazil, and illuminated the Government Palace of Pernambuco. Fifteen thousand kilometres away, the same sun was setting in the afternoon in [Beijing](#), over the China Agricultural University. Both places were the scene of an important moment for Brazil's northeastern family farmers. Chinese and Brazilian authorities there signed the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in agricultural mechanisation and energy.



Above: Representatives of the signatory parties in China (IIIAESA, CAAMM, IAPC).  
Below: Representatives of the Northeast Interstate Consortium and representatives of the family farming sector.

Four parties are involved in the cooperation. On the Chinese side, two institutions are involved: the International Institute for Innovation in Agricultural Equipment and Intelligent Agriculture (IIAESA) and the China Association of Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers (CAAMM). The first one is an international cooperation and innovation platform led by the China Agricultural University (CAU), focusing on the needs of the agricultural industry in the countries of the Belt and Road Initiative. The second one is an industry organisation voluntarily formed by China's leading agricultural machinery manufacturing enterprises.

The Brazilian side is represented by the Interstate Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Northeast, a union formed by the states of Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe.

The fourth party is the International Association for Popular Cooperation (IAPC), which promotes cooperation between the parties. IAPC is a non-profit association that functions as an exchange platform for the community of the Global South, promotes technical training for farmers and aims to improve the living conditions of impoverished sectors of the world's population.

Initially, IAPC researchers surveyed the machinery needs of family farmers and built bridges with possible Chinese solutions. The process continued with a series of technical discussions in the form of webinars, where Chinese speakers, such as Professor Yang Minli (IIAESA) and Professor Wang Fengde (CAAMM), addressed topics such as the development of agricultural mechanisation in China, government support policies, history, current situation and trends in the Chinese agricultural machinery industry, among others.

In June 2022, the IAPC also participated in the first Family Farming and Solidarity Economy Fair of the Northeast in the city of [Natal](#), Brazil. Farmers, representatives of small cooperatives, members of peasant movements and civil servants visited the stand, leaving their concerns, raising concrete needs and showing interest in the linkage process initiated.



I Family Farming and Solidarity Economy Fair of the Northeast, in Natal, Brazil.

All this led to, but did not end with, the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The signing parties were accompanied during the ceremony by representatives of the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture, the Chinese General Consul in Recife, the Deputy Party Secretary of the CAU and its President, directors and researchers of the same institution, representatives of Brazilian family farming, and were covered by the national and international press.

Brazil is the country with the largest surface area in Latin America and is also known for being one of the leading countries in terms of agricultural production in the world. According to the 2017 Agricultural Census, family farming in the country represents 23% of the total area of agricultural establishments and produces 70% of the food consumed on the dining table of Brazilians. The development of this sector has significantly increased the demand for agricultural machinery for small and medium-scale production.

Meanwhile, during the thousands of years of agricultural development in China, family farming has always been predominant. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, agricultural mechanisation developed rapidly. By 2021, China's agricultural mechanisation level had increased to 72%. Currently, there are more than 1,600 agricultural machinery enterprises providing technical support and equipment to ensure food security. Internationally, the development of Chinese agricultural machinery in countries along the Belt and Road is on the rise, as the articulation between them is deepening.

Due to the development characteristics of Chinese agricultural machinery for small and medium-scale production, it can contribute to changing traditional

production methods, improve efficiency and reduce production costs for Brazilian family farming, promote Brazil's modern agricultural process and increase farmers' incomes.

The participation of family farming in this cooperation is fundamental. As mentioned, this sector is responsible for producing food in quantity and quality, which is indispensable for the food security and sovereignty of the countries of the Global South. At the same time, taking advantage of the existing complementarities in terms of agriculture between China and Latin America is key for the joint development of our peoples.

Sow cooperation and you will reap solidarity!