

Characterization and Analysis of Fair Sellers in the Municipality of Janaúba in the North of Minas Gerais, Brazil

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Abstract

The objective of this work was to characterize and analyze the marketers who market their products at the Janaúba free trade fairs regarding the socioeconomic profile, business management, marketed products and difficulties in marketing. The research was descriptive. The data were collected by means of field survey in the main points where the free fairs in the municipality of Janaúba occur. The obtained data were analyzed through the distribution of frequencies and tables. Farmers are mostly family farmers who do not receive any kind of technical assistance or training to run the crop. They apply their own resources to cover the expenses and investments in production, having as a limiting factor the expansion of the business. Most do not control profitability, and of the percentage that does, only 7% use spreadsheet, do not have financial reserves in case of unforeseen occurrences. The values of the products marketed are almost always uncertain, since 81% of the marketers say that prices are negotiable. The main products marketed are fruits and vegetables, not being processed. Among the difficulties pointed out by the fairgrounds for the execution of the activity are the production costs. Regarding the structure of the Municipal Market, the main negative points were the lack of assistance (32%) and the lack of cleanliness (31%). The main improvement point was the availability of drinking water and the construction of bathrooms.

Keywords: free trade fairs, informal commerce, sustainability

1. Introduction

Among the oldest forms of commercialization, free fairs can be highlighted, which still play a relevant socioeconomic role (Morel, Rezende, & Sette, 2015). Free fairs are spaces where direct sales between merchants and consumers occur, featuring a short supply chain.

This type of direct relationship facilitates the exchange of information, allowing the merchant to diagnose the main preferences and requirements of his clientele, while the consumer, in turn, has the opportunity to obtain

information about the product he is purchasing. Such proximity gives free markets a differential, causing many people to opt for this type of trade, instead of grocery stores and supermarkets.

The fair, when analyzed as a form of business, represents for many an important means of obtaining income, and is in many cases the only alternative for those who cannot, for different reasons, enter the formal job market. The questions pertinent to free fairs go beyond economic viability, and extend to rural development.

In these spaces, products from family farming are marketed, which do not have characteristics such as regularity of supply and standardization, prerequisites established by other marketing institutions such as CEASAS and supermarket chains (Godoy & Anjos, 2007) act as a distribution channel for agricultural products, generating employment and enabling an increase in income for the family farmer (Pereira, Brito, & Pereira, 2017).

Despite the great importance of this activity, up-to-date information about the reality of Janaúba marketers is limited or non-existent. Characteristics such as their socioeconomic profile, the main products sold in these places and factors limiting the growth of activity according to the opinion of the stallholders, are important to guide the implementation of public policies and actions aimed at expanding and improving this form of commerce.

In view of the above, the objective of this work was to characterize and analyze the stallholders who sell their products at the free fairs of Janaúba in terms of their socioeconomic profile, business administration, products sold and difficulties in marketing them.

2. Method

The research is characterized, in terms of its nature, as applied, with a qualitative and quantitative approach to the problem. Regarding the typology, the research is descriptive, according to Gil (2010), research of this type allows the description of the characteristics of a given population, phenomenon or the establishment of relationships between variables. As for the method, the research is identified as inductive. Regarding data collection, this step was carried out in the field.

For the execution of the field research, the application of pre-structured questionnaires and observation in loco were selected as techniques. The pre-structured questionnaires were composed of closed questions covering the socioeconomic aspects of the interviewees, products offered at the fair and problems experienced by traders in the sale of products. The on-site observation carried out during the visits enabled the researcher to analyze the profiles of the stallholders, as well as their working conditions.

The visits and application of the questionnaires took place from January 17 to 22, 2019, through field surveys at some points where free fairs take place. Three free fairs located in the municipality of Janaúba were visited: “Feirinha da Linha” held on Rua Porteirinha, “Feira da Avenida Brasil”, located in the city center and “Feira do Mercado” which takes place in the Municipal Market located on Rua Cirilo Barbosa, where there is a covered structure.

Sixty-eight stallholders were approached, the criterion for choosing them was their presence on the day of the visit and availability to respond to the questionnaire, thus characterizing a non-probabilistic sampling for convenience. The data obtained were analyzed through the distribution of frequencies, making tables Software Office Excel® version 2013 from Microsoft®.

3. Results and Discussion

It was observed that the free fairs visited are commercial environments in which the stallholders demonstrate pleasure in attending, and even a willingness to make friends, creating a relationship with their customers.

Regarding the structure and operation, the “Feirinha da Linha” takes place on Tuesdays, between the hours of six in the morning until six in the afternoon, some stalls stay longer, and others less, this depends on the movement of each stall. The “Feira da Avenida Brasil” also takes place on Tuesdays, from six in the morning to noon, the stalls or cars are exposed on the sidewalks serving the open air.

The “market fair” takes place on Saturdays, it is one of the largest fairs in Janaúba, most stallholders have stalls, they start organizing the fair from three in the morning and can remain in place until three in the afternoon, in the inner part of the market spices are sold, while in the outer part A variety of products are marketed. According to the data collected (Table 1), it was observed that most of the stallholders are female, the age range of the interviewees is between 45 and 60 years old, they work eight hours a day,

are motivated to carry out the activity because they have no other option for subsistence, they live in the municipality of Janaúba. They have a family nucleus of 4 people, their own house and need other activities to supplement the income obtained from the fair.

Data similar to the present work, on education, were found by Dias et al. (2017), in the municipality of Janaúria, most interviewees (35.71%) have incomplete primary school and age range between 45 and 60 years.

Table 1. Socioeconomic profile of Janaúba stallholders

Variable	Results in (%)
<i>Sex</i>	
Masculine	43
Feminine	57
<i>Age</i>	
0 at 15	1
16 at 30	16
31 at 45	26
45 at 60	34
> 60	22
<i>Education</i>	
Illiterate	13
Elementary school 1	35
Elementary School	18
High school	32
University education	1
<i>Hours worked daily</i>	
4	29
8	43
10	21
> 10	7
<i>Factors that motivate the execution of the activity</i>	
Choice	35
Lack of option	50
Others	15
<i>City where you live</i>	
Janaúba	71
Others	29
<i>Family nucleus</i>	
At 4 peoples	72
5 at 6 peoples	24
7 at 8 peoples	3
9 at 10 peoples	1
<i>Type of housing</i>	
Own	91
Others	9
<i>Income sources</i>	
Only the fair	37
Complementary sources	63

Data related to the merchants' commercial profile and financial management were collected (Table 2).

Table 2. Commercial profile of traders and financial management

Variable	Results in (%)
<i>Profile</i>	
Family farmer	69
Middleman	31
<i>Technical assistance</i>	
Yes	19
No	81
<i>Receive any training to run production?</i>	
Yes	26
No	74
<i>Production costing</i>	
Own resources	72
Government programs	28
<i>Perform profitability control</i>	
Yes	28
No	72
<i>Electronic resources</i>	
Spreadsheet	7
Manual	21
None	72
<i>Do you have financial reserves for unforeseen events?</i>	
Yes	46
No	54
<i>Pricing?</i>	
Fixed prices	19
Negotiable prices	81
<i>Factors that hurt sales</i>	
Climatic factors	40
A lot of supply little demand	21
Price	7
Competitors	32

As shown in the table, the stallholders produce their products through family farming, characterized by small-scale production and the use of the family as a workforce. The data obtained agree with Pereira, Brito, and Pereira (2017), according to these authors: “Fair markets are an important commercialization channel for family farming, of irrefutable relevance, in which they present a true web of relationships making them a social exchange place”.

Some data in Table 2 reveal weaknesses in the production and marketing systems of these stallholders, 81% of them do not have any type of technical assistance and 74% have not received and do not receive training to carry out the cultivation of their products. For Silva and Haetinger (2017): The lack of technical assistance and training for stallholders may be associated with this lack of articulation. The decision for any of the types of collective action organizations should come from the stallholders themselves, with a more in-depth study of each one of them, glimpsing what would be most interesting for the moment, and which one would allow greater return to their needs. It is worth mentioning that, through a collective action, the stallholders will be able to obtain greater facilities in obtaining technical assistance, training, including admission to one of the fourteen rural development programs in the municipality.

Added to these difficulties, there is also the financial limitation for the cost of production. It is observed that 72% of families use their own scarce resources to pay for production expenses and investments, with this as a limiting factor for business expansion.

When it comes to financial control, 72% of respondents do not control their profitability, and of the remaining percentage that do, only 7% use electronic spreadsheets as the main form of control. More than half (54%) of the stallholders do not have financial reserves in case of any unforeseen events. The data also show that the values of the products offered are almost always uncertain, since 81% of the stallholders say that the prices are negotiable. In research carried out by Morel, Rezende, and Sette (2015), it was found that most prices practiced at the fair are fixed without any type of guidance.

These are areas that can be worked on, as possible points that can be improved were observed so that the stallholders have a standard control, enabling an understanding of their business. Morel, Rezende, and Sette (2015) state that: Due to the fact that free fairs are made up of a large number of small farmers, who do not have the conditions to promote the fair to attract new consumers, nor the conditions to organize themselves without the action of public agencies, initiatives in favor of development and valuing these workers are very pertinent.

According to the merchants, the factors that most harm their sales are climate variations, competitors, excess supply and low demand and low demand and prices. The main products sold at the fair were also verified (Table 3).

Table 3. Characterization of the products sold at the fair in the municipality of Janaúba, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Variable	Results in (%)
<i>Marketed products</i>	
Fruits and vegetables	63
Medicinal plants	4
Vegetables	12
Breads/ bagels/ biscuits	9
Cheeses and cottage cheese	6
Meat	4
Clothes	1
<i>Product undergoes some kind of processing</i>	
Yes	12
No	68
<i>Product quality check</i>	
Check by appearance	88
Does not check	12
<i>Product destination</i>	
Fair	56
Fair and others	44

According to reports from a large part of the interviewees, the vast majority of traders work with the same products. The main products sold are: fruits and vegetables, vegetables, breads/rolls and biscuits with a smaller percentage of cheeses and curds, meats and medicinal plants and clothes.

Most respondents claim that the products do not undergo processing, in addition, they check the quality of the product using only the visual aspect. Part of the producers produce exclusively for the fair, and the rest carry out the production for the fair and also pass it on to other fairgrounds or supermarkets and derivatives.

Inquiries were made about the main difficulties for carrying out trade at the street market and the main points to be improved at the Municipal Market. Special attention was devoted to aspects related to the Municipal Market, as it houses an immensely larger number of stallholders than the other fairs surveyed. All stallholders were very willing to respond to the questionnaire, in some cases establishing a relationship of trust with the researcher to the point of reporting on their lives, in addition to the questions asked.

Most of the stallholders reported satisfaction with the activity in question, not pointing out difficulties related to its execution, based on the collected data and reported situations, it is clear that they are used to dealing with great difficulties, not considering minor obstacles as problems. The second reported difficulty was production costs, most of the interviewed stallholders do not participate in government promotion programs as previously

reported (Table 2), lack of recognition and tiredness came in sequence, transport and competitors were reported less frequently, in addition, 7% of respondents did not know how to answer.

In the research carried out in Januária, Dias et al. (2017), found that most of the stallholders live in the urban area, only a small part lives in the rural area, a similar fact occurred in the work carried out, due to this reason transport was not considered difficulty for most marketers.

About the structure of the Municipal Market (Table 4), the main negative points pointed out were the lack of assistance and the lack of cleanliness of the places, this situation makes the stallholders feel devalued, as this is a basic aspect that directly interferes with the quality. The main point of improvement suggested was the provision of potable water and the construction of bathrooms. Traders point out that there is no way to use the bathroom or clean yourself during the entire period of the fair, they also point out that it is a type of convenience that would make customers more interested in attending the fairs, taking into account that it is an environment where the sale of some products for direct consumption.

Table 4. Main difficulties pointed out by the stallholders for the execution of the activity.

Variable	Results in (%)
<i>Main difficulties faced in carrying out the activity</i>	
Costs	25
Tiredness	12
Lack of recognition	15
Competitors	4
None	28
Don't know how to answer	7
Transport	9
<i>Negative points in environments where fairs are held</i>	
Lack of cleanliness	31
Lack of assistance	32
Lack of banking	7
Don't know how to answer	16
None	13
<i>What could be improved in the market?</i>	
Banking	6
City hall support	12
Organization	18
Availability of water and toilets	34
The whole physical structure	13
Don't know how to answer	7

The same need related to the availability of bathrooms and water was pointed out by the stallholders of Santa Maria (RS), according to Silva and Haetinger (2017): "This lack proves to be harmful not only for its consumption, but also for, hand hygiene and spot cleaning.

From the visits made to the free fairs of Janaúba/MG, it was possible to perceive that they are moved mostly by family farmers who produce for their own consumption and sale at fairs. Because of the free fair, the stallholders provide part of the family's support, being necessary to add other services to complement the final income.

According to the stallholders, they have a special concern about the cultivation of products, emphasizing the importance of organic production, being a relevant point to differentiate them from those sold in supermarkets.

Through observation during visits to fairs and collected data, it was found that the stallholders do not have training carrying empirical knowledge, requiring technical advice so that from training they can have real chances of growth in the business. A point to be emphasized is that the class must be guided on the importance of managing, registering information generating control over the production and sale of products, aiming at profits that guarantee more than subsistence, pointing out that the form is ahead of competitors it is for the producers to produce with balance and technique, guaranteeing quality and creating a differential in their sales.

The aforementioned actions do not have a deterministic character, but seek to be paths that condition the sustainability of the enterprises, extending to free fairs. Such measures aim to enhance and revitalize the fairs, and in particular, provide support and recognition for their work and family farming to the stallholders.

4. Conclusions

It is concluded that most of the stallholders are female, their age range is between 45 and 60 years old, they work eight hours a day, they are motivated to exercise the activity because they have no other option for subsistence, they live in the municipality of Janaúba. They have a family nucleus of 4 people, own house and need other activities to complement the income obtained from the fair.

Most of the interviewees produce their products through family farming, do not receive any type of technical assistance or training to carry out the cultivation. It applies its own resources to cover production expenses and investments, having this as a limiting factor in the expansion of the business. Most do not have any control over their profitability, and of the percentage that does, only 7% use a spreadsheet as the main form of control, they do not have financial reserves in case of any unforeseen events.

The data also show that the values of the products offered are almost always uncertain, since 81% of the stallholders say that the prices are negotiable. The main products traded are fruits and vegetables, not being processed and their main destination is the fair.

Among the difficulties pointed out by the marketers for the execution of the activity, are the production costs. Regarding the structure of the Municipal Market, the main negative points mentioned were the lack of assistance and the lack of cleanliness of the places. The main point of improvement suggested was the availability of potable water and the construction of bathrooms.

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Authors Contributions

PCS, DFGSP, MJM, IOS, ICCB, RMA, SNMB, GMP, DSM, JCF, NCN, WGSL and PDSS were responsible for study design and revising. LLMP, LGAS, HSNS, IPSS, RCFR, AMSSD and GBO was responsible for data collection. SGVS, TJPS, CMB, MPF, CARM, LKLM, FCR and FCR drafted the manuscript and revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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