

The Project "Nossas Arvores": An Experience about Interaction between Academic Knowledge, NGOs and Small Farmers in Southern Bahia, Brazil

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The Atlantic Forest of southern Bahia (BA), Brazil, presents one of the greatest diversity of tree species in the world, with high levels of endemism. Currently, a significant number of species are endangered in the region due to intense deforestation, habitat fragmentation and selective logging. Efforts are being undertaken by various governmental and non-governmental organizations to protect the remaining forest fragments and establish ecological corridors for their connection. Two of these efforts include gallery forest restoration and encouraging the use of low impact agroforestry systems. The project "Nossas Arvores" (Our Trees) was created in 2007 in the "Universidade Estadual de Santa Cruz" (www.uesc.br), Ilheus, BA, Brazil, aiming to extend the knowledge directly to the community. This is carried out through lectures and training courses given to farmers, technicians and students. Presently, four courses have been taught, involving 147 participants. A survey conducted by small farmers who participated in the first course indicates that approximately 80% are producing seeds and seedlings, with 100 thousand seedlings already sold for forest restoration projects. Another important result is the training provided to technicians from non-governmental organizations, who play a key role in providing continuous support to small farmers to ensure the species' genetic conservation and meet the standards required by Brazilian law.

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