

RURAL LABOUR MARKETS (RLMS): WHY ARE THEY NEGLECTED AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRODUCTIVE STRUCTURE IN MOZAMBIQUE?¹

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Introduction

The rural areas of Mozambique are still home to the majority (about 70%) of the country's total population.² They record the highest levels of monetary poverty in the country, with a trend that has been on the increase (from 55.3% in 2002/2003 to 56.9% in 2008/2009) (INE 2009; GoM 2011).

There is now an interest in the question of rural labour markets (RLMs) after long periods when they were regarded as absent from the dynamics of employment, accumulation and poverty in Africa. However, the way in which this question has been conventionally analysed in Mozambique has proved too limited for a coherent approach.

The relevance of a deeper analysis of the patterns and dynamics of labour markets is enhanced when we consider that the workforce is not a simple asset, and that labour markets are central in the productive structure and system of accumulation. This, among other reasons, is because of the linkages they stimulate between different agents and activities in the economy in specific socio-economic and structural contexts.

¹ This paper is based on a more general analysis developed and discussed in the text of Ali 2013.

² According to the 2007 population census, the total Mozambican population is 20 632 434 – INE 2009.

From an analysis of the current debate and of the literature on the prevailing forms of labour in the rural areas of Mozambique, one notes a contradiction concerning the importance of wage labour. On the one hand, in the conventional analysis, resting on a dualist perspective, the incidence of rural wage labour is regarded as marginal, reflecting the assumption that the countryside is dominated by the subsistence-oriented production of small peasants dependent on the labour force of household members who do not participate systematically in the labour market. Underlying this vision are public policy documents in which much of the analysis is based on data from large-scale official surveys.

On the other hand, independent studies show that rural wage labour, often taking temporary forms (casual and seasonal work) and under differentiated, multiple and precarious conditions, is predominant and relevant in the Mozambican rural areas. Most of this evidence is supported by field studies and/or by independent statistics.

Hence it seems crucial to investigate this contradiction in order to understand what is really happening.

It is argued that the method of analysis (analytical approach and the method of data collection and analysis) underlying distinctive approaches may make it possible (or not) to understand real rural patterns, where specific forms of labour happen and are developed. From a perspective of the system of accumulation and its link with social reproduction, it is argued that this understanding may have implications for the development of the productive base, of the dynamics of accumulation and of poverty in Mozambique.

The paper is organised into five sections. Following this introductory note, the second section analyses the evidence on RLMs in Mozambique, and particularly on their importance. The third section reflects on why there are gaps in the evidence on RLMs. The fourth section discusses the implications of the negligence of the RLMs for the productive structure in Mozambique, and the last section deals with the conclusions.

A look at the evidence on the RLM in Mozambique

The way in which information is gathered and handled can influence the understanding of real dynamics, such as the incidence and the relevance (or not) of rural wage labour. Two sources of information are considered: (i) large-scale official surveys, and (ii) data from field studies and from the statistics of independent studies. The first source of information indicates that the incidence of wage labour is marginal and is not relevant in the rural areas of Mozambique, while the second

source points towards the predominance and importance of various forms of rural wage labour (mainly undertaken under temporary conditions) in Mozambique.

What do the official statistics show?

According to a series of official statistics which collects information on rural patterns and dynamics, including characteristics of employment, the main economic activity of the majority of the rural EAP³ is agriculture, as shown in Table 1. The rest of the rural EAP (a minority) is shown as linked to another ‘main activity’ such as services, industry, transport, construction, trade or others.

Table 1: Percentage of the EAP with agriculture as its main occupation in the rural areas of Mozambique

Official survey	% EAP with agriculture as its main occupation in the rural areas
IAF 2002/2003	93%
IFTRAB 2004/2005	93%
IOF 2008/2009	94%
Census 2007	89%
1st quarter INCAF 2012/2013	88%

Source: INE, various surveys and census

Information on employment in Mozambique has generally been captured from some modules included in the official surveys, particularly the IAF⁴, the IOF⁵ and the INCAF⁶, given the lack of a continuous official survey focused on characteristics of employment and making it possible to analyse the patterns and trends associated with the labour market. The survey on the labour force, IFTRAB⁷ 2004/2005, is the only one that exists. At national level, the estimates of IFTRAB 2004/2005 show that the majority of the EAP undertake work for their own account and as unpaid household labour (62% and 25%, respectively), and that only about 13% are waged. In regional terms, the south of the country shows more of the EAP involved in wage labour (27%) than the centre (10%) or the north (8%). This figure for the south of the country may reflect the fact that, for more than a century, the dominant source of employment in this region has been migrant labour to South Africa.

As for the rural areas of the country, the official surveys of IAF, IFTRAB, IOF and INCAF, which are, inter alia, conventionally used to analyse dynamics of rural employment, reflect a similar picture with regard to the occupational situation,

3 Economically active population (15years old and above); 87% in total and 94% in the rural areas – INE 2011.

4 Household survey.

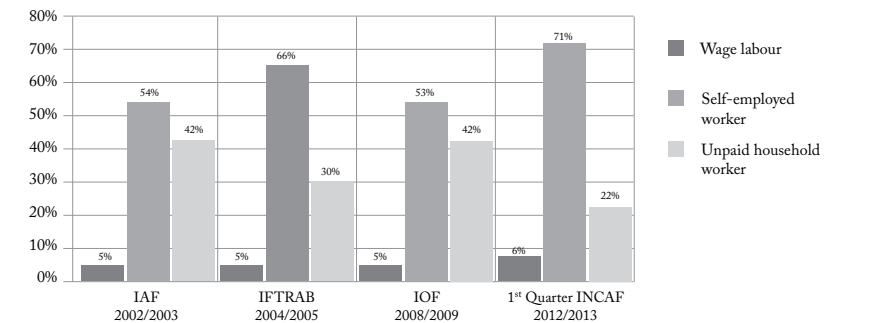
5 Household budget survey.

6 Continuous household survey.

7 Integrated labour force survey.

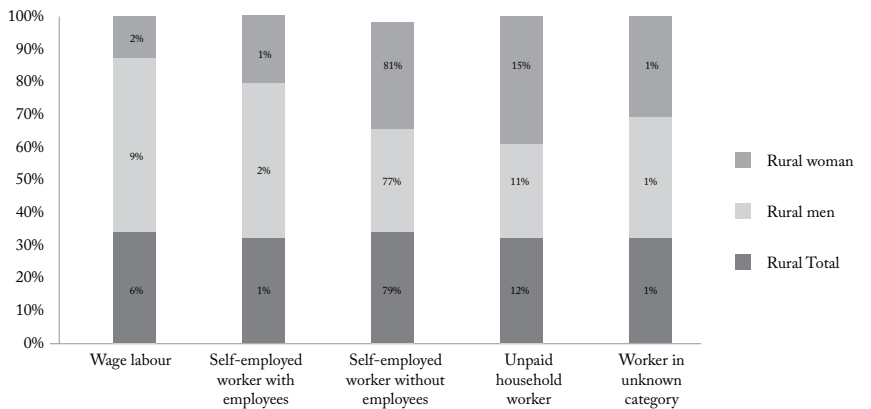
where the incidence of wage labour is minimal (only about 5%) (INE 2003, 2006, 2011, 2013). This wage labour is indicated as of little importance for most of the rural population, which, according to these estimates, has as its dominant forms of work self-employment (mostly in agriculture) and unpaid household labour (see the graph in Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of the EAP by occupational situation in rural areas of Mozambique



Source: INE, various surveys

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of the EAP by occupational situation in the rural areas of Mozambique – 2007 census

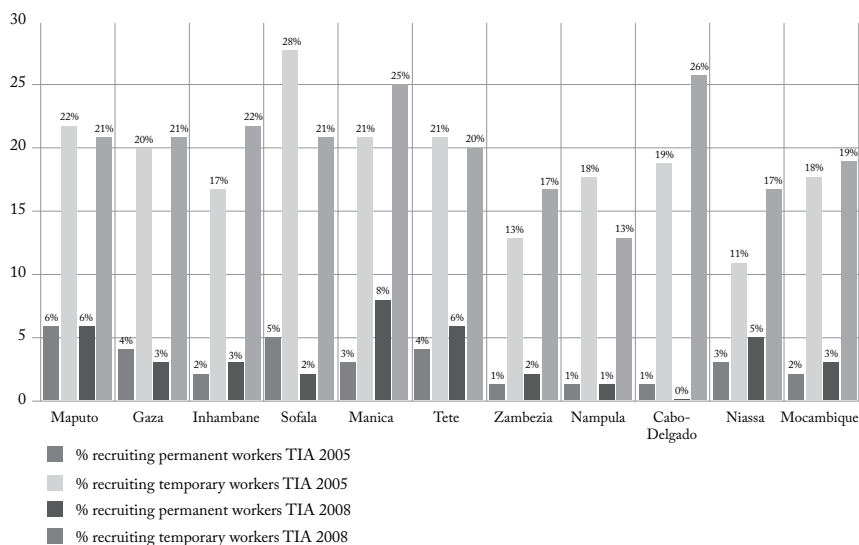


Source: Author's estimates from 2007 census data; INE 2009

In addition, the 2007 population census suggests that wage labour is uncommon among the majority of the rural population, which is shown as either self-employed without employing anyone else and/or comprises unpaid family workers. The small proportion of the EAP in wage labour consists mostly of men.

Women dominate the forms of self-employment without employees and unpaid family labour (see the graph in Figure 2) (INE 2009).

Figure 3: Recruitment of wage labour by small and medium farm holdings (SMFs) in Mozambique – TIA 2005 and TIA 2008



Source: Author's estimates from TIA 2005 and TIA 2006 databases

Compared with the official surveys mentioned above, the TIA⁸ shows a broader incidence of the recruitment of the workforce, although the percentage of farmholdings (small, medium and large) which hire labour is marginal. Small and medium farms account for the majority of farms in the country. The data from TIA 2002 show that about 40% of the employers on large farms recruit temporary wage labour (in addition to those workers hired full-time). Small and medium farms recruit temporary wage workers (18% on the small and 42% on the medium farms) and permanent workers (3% in the case of the small farms, and 31% for the medium ones (Massingarella, Nhate & Oya 2005). The data from TIA 2005 and TIA 2008 show that, both at national level and when disaggregated by provinces, there is a use of wage labour (both permanent/full-time and temporary) which is recruited outside of the households for agricultural and livestock activities (INE 2005, 2008). However, there is a differentiation by provinces and in the forms of recruitment where the temporary forms of labour are those most recruited (see the graph in Figure 3).

⁸ The TIA (National Agricultural Household Survey) is an agricultural and livestock survey with employment modules. It also gathers information on employers (large, medium and small farms).

Hence, the picture from this range of evidence from the official statistics reflects the conventional approach or method of analysis which points to a rural subsistence economy in which most of the population has little resort to wage labour and where self-employment (normally in agriculture) and unpaid household work are predominant. These estimates may reflect that employment patterns are hidden, either because they are not predominant (with the influence of the method of analysis) or because of limited regional disaggregation, or even because of possible errors of measurement that inhibit the quality of the data, which results in underestimating them.

In this panorama, rural households seem to be treated as if they were a homogenous, isolated and static group, with little stratification. However, some contradictions and questions emerge. Is there homogeneity in the characteristics of rural households and in the activities undertaken by them in the context of different regional accumulation pressures and dynamics? Is it realistic to think that most of the rural population are simply peasants? Is it possible to develop agricultural activity necessarily relying only on household labour? How have these rural households obtained their financial resources? Does this section of the population produce all that it consumes? Does the mere involvement and dependence on subsistence agriculture as suggested make it possible to cover expenditure on basic non-food services, such as health and education?

What do the independent studies and statistics show?

The evidence from a range of independent field studies and statistics contrasts with the official statistics presented in showing that RLMs are prevalent, diverse and crucial in the context of the dominant mode of accumulation and in the livelihoods of many Mozambican rural households.

The rural economy is organically and structurally linked to the national and regional labour markets. Labour markets are structurally formed, reproduced and transformed in a differentiated and complex manner, depending on the specific context in which different socio-economic relations interact (Fine 1998). The rural areas of the Mozambican economy seem to be the basis of capital accumulation in the country. Historically, the rationality of the production process in Africa was linked to the structural processes of capital accumulation which are associated with proletarianisation (Sender & Smith 1986; O'Laughlin 2001). In the colonial period, the dominant mode of accumulation rested on the expropriation of the peasantry (mainly the poor and medium peasants) on whom depended much of the country's exports of surplus cash crops (such as tobacco, cotton, sugar, tea, sisal, and cashew, among others). This peasantry provided a cheap workforce and allowed

the reproduction of the workforce achieved below the social cost of reproduction in a context of differentiated regional patterns (in the south as a reserve of labour for the South African mines, in the centre, dedicated to the plantation economy, and in the north, as a producer of commodities) (Wuyts 1978). Family agriculture and wage labour finance each other mutually, so that, given the dependence on monetary income for the consolidation of the peasantry, it supported the costs of its own reproduction. This strong dependence on the pattern of accumulation among the peasantry in Mozambique, acquired in the colonial period with weak internal linkages (as an example, the Mozambican economy specialised in the production of unprocessed primary commodities for export), and the mode of social organisation of production and work of a fragmented group of peasants seem to have been maintained after independence.

Since the late 1990s and up until now, as shown by Castel-Branco (2010), the extractive nature of the pattern of accumulation of the Mozambican economy was strengthened in a context of exporting primary commodities with little processing, of the appearance of mega-projects with investments directed towards extractive activities and infrastructures linked to these activities with few linkages in the economy (not forgetting the lack of fiscal linkages), and of the lack of connection with the productive base. The Mozambican economy is an extractive economy where investment is concentrated in productive activities, services and infrastructures that are of an extractive nature, as shown by Castel-Branco (2010). There is an expansion of the concentration of industrial production around the export of primary commodities with little processing (such as coal, timber, ginned cotton, sisal, natural gas, leaf tea, unrefined sugar, tobacco, unprocessed cashew nuts, prawns, hydroelectric power, aluminium) and a high dependence on the consumption of imported processed goods.

This fact seems inconsistent with the idea of a rural economy dependent on subsistence family agriculture, but consistent with the dominant pattern of accumulation in Mozambique, in that households seem incapable of producing a great part of what they need for their subsistence (such as cooking oil, salt, kerosene, clothing, bicycles and cement).

Most rural households have diversified livelihoods and are involved in a multiplicity of activities, including wage labour, in order to deal with day-to-day consumption, build an investment fund, and respond to shocks.

Some academics point out that, historically, monetary wage earnings, apart from meeting subsistence needs, expenditure on basic social services (such as health and education) and finance for building a house, for example, are an important basis for investment in household production through acquiring means of production (pumps and water tanks, agricultural tools, etc.) and can allow

resources for food production to be released to cover possible periods of scarcity and/or to sell in these periods, instead of depending on their current consumption (O’Laughlin 1981; Castel-Branco 1983a, 1983b). Similarly, wage earnings in kind can allow the ‘release’ of peasant production for the market.

Furthermore, wage funds can allow a basis of accumulation to prevent shocks such as: breaks in household sustenance (funerals, illness, school fees and other unexpected items of expenditure), market ruptures, an increase in prices of inputs or transport, wage funds to assist as a source of investment in alternative activities, adjustment to local crises or conflicts over resources, among other shocks. The explanation underlying this analytical method seems consistent with the reality of some vulnerable Mozambican population members who are displaced to less productive land as a result of competition for water and land with projects of agro-business, mining, tourism, etc., and need funds to obtain food commercially, while the possibility of alternative sources of income are not consolidated (Castel-Branco & Mandlate 2012).

The research by Cramer, Oya and Sender (2008), based on a wide ranging survey of RLMs (MRLS 2002/2003⁹) in the central and northern provinces (Manica, Nampula and Zambezia) provides evidence for heterogeneous livelihoods and a diversity of occupations linked to wage labour (mostly irregular forms) of many rural households (particularly the poorest strata). This study shows that the rural individuals interviewed were working in a variety of wage labour occupations, including small plantations, market shops, bars, market stalls and large plantations of crops for export (which employ thousands of temporary workers).

The need to be involved in wage labour and the supply of labour do not in themselves guarantee the demand for wage labour. In the search for job opportunities in more dynamic RLMs, some population groups find themselves obliged to migrate (internally – between provinces or regions – or internationally) (Standing, Sender & Weeks 1996). For example, MRLS 2002/2003 shows cases of the need for mobility of some household members for seasonal work on medium and large farms where harvesting or weeding is taking place. A further example is the case of the sugar-cane cutters in the Xinavane Sugar Company, many of whom come from provinces in the centre of the country (Manica, Zambezia, Sofala and Tete) and who travel, some of them out of despair, from their places of origin during the cane-cutting season, returning at the end of the campaign (O’Laughlin & Ibraimo 2013). Most of these migrants are young men, often with some secondary education, who are unable to find jobs locally.

9 This research was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

In the context of the multiplicity of activities among rural households, there is evidence for the influence of a varied and differentiated basis of different household members. For example, the research of O’Laughlin and Ibraimo (2013) indicates that the women and children, in households without any source of income linked to wage labour in the Xinavane Sugar Company, worked locally for neighbours and relatives in exchange for remuneration in kind, such as food. From this study, one can also note the dependence of some rural households (including the elderly) on remittances from migrants working in South Africa. Furthermore, some women and older children in rural households at the Machubo administrative post, in the south of the country, where the head of the household is a migrant worker in South Africa, find themselves undertaking seasonal work. However, there are heterogeneous opportunities between them and those wives of wage workers who are working in Maputo (Castel-Branco 1983b). The elderly and some adolescents who have greater difficulties in travelling to the plantations, according to a research paper on ‘tea plantations and peasant economy in Upper Zambezia’ (entitled ‘Plantações de chá e economia camponesa na Alta Zambézia’), are involved in casual wage labour (known as ‘ganho-ganho’) within the family agriculture among peasants of the region, in exchange for remuneration in cash or kind (school exercise books, food, kerosene, etc.) (CEA 1982). In addition, Sender and Oya (2007), in their research on rural employment markets in the centre and north of the country, indicate a heavy weight of divorced/separated women or widows in waged agricultural labour, a fact which is underestimated in the official statistics. The life stories of these women show that wage labour, even in temporary or irregular forms, is a vital resource for them. They are often in despair at having to sustain their children and themselves.

The emergence of rural wage labour has been associated with socio-economic processes of differentiation and with different regional dynamics of accumulation, and, consequently, the emergence of fragmented groups and unequal opportunities between regions and over time. The households are structurally differentiated and, as Oya (2010a) shows, the less poor groups generally contain a larger number of members with access to more regular jobs and more stable sources of income than the poorer strata. Rural households are not only differentiated, but they also vary over time, and from region to region. The various phases of the development of the household may, on the one hand, neglect its importance, but, on the other, allow (or not) a fund of accumulation for other household members. For example, over time, households may change due to migration, which may have a different influence on investments (in production or other areas) by the rural households during the absence of the migrant and on his definitive return.

From the analysis of the various sources of information presented in this section, it seems that forms of rural wage labour are predominant and important in the dominant social system of accumulation in Mozambique, although they have been neglected in the framework of conventional analysis and by official statistics. The conventional approach and methodology are questioned when we consider a contradiction about the real patterns and dynamics which this approach does not explain.

Why have RLMs been neglected in Mozambique?

Methodological problems are suspected because of the neglect of patterns of RLMs in the conventional analytical framework and by the official statistics (IFTRAB, IAF, IOF, INCAF, the population census and TIA)¹⁰.

The analytical method and data-collection methodology may affect both the statistics and the research, calling into question the analysis of the links between RLMs, the productive base, poverty and development. The analytical framework on which the survey used rests may influence the type of questions asked and may limit the response that this information can supply to other questions. For example, the evidence analysed seems to indicate a link between the analytical approach and the method of data collection. The official data seem to reflect the method of conventional analysis resting on a dualist vision of a rural subsistence economy where the incidence of rural wage labour (even temporary) is marginal; this characteristic is inconsistent with the observed reality. The independent studies and statistics, by pursuing the research into RLMs in a broad context of the social system of accumulation, show a predominance of heterogeneous forms of rural wage labour (mainly irregular forms), often under precarious conditions which are consistent with the extractive nature of the dominant accumulation pattern.

There is a lack of a continuous survey focused on broad patterns and dynamics of RLMs in Mozambique. Since IFTRAB 2004/2005 is the only survey in existence focused on characteristics of employment in Mozambique, it does not allow us to analyse changes. It also possesses some inconsistencies in the modules of rural employment, which are too limited to study the complexity of labour dynamics.

Information on the RLMs is not captured in a broad and consistent manner in the conventional surveys and censuses. The way in which the information is treated, from the design of the surveys to interpretation, is crucial for ensuring

10 For a deeper analysis on RLM methodological data issues, see Ali 2013.

the quality of the data and the understanding of reality. An example of problems in the methodological structures is the type of research question contained in the official surveys. The research question is structured in such a way that it restricts, for example, the ‘hypothesis’ that rural households are linked to diversified RLMs; that is, only two options concerning the type of activity undertaken – ‘main or secondary activity’ – in the last seven days are included in the official surveys (and centred on the first). This may imply a poor interpretation of the question and that the majority of the respondents report only the activity of long duration which they remember and classify it as, for example, ‘work on the farm’ (usually called ‘machamba’, the local word for farm), since it was the most regular in the reference period (in the last seven days, rather than in a more inclusive period such as 12 months), although it might not be the only activity, or might be undertaken in a context of combination with irregular sources of rural wage labour.

One aspect that should be mentioned concerning problems of interpretation is the general idea or assumption about wage labour. This is often associated with regular forms of work and with the ‘formal economy’ and/or urban areas (regarded as stable), and so few people are classified as waged/paid workers, particularly in agriculture.

Asking an individual who owns his own farm (or ‘machamba’) about his ‘main occupation’, and whether he is a casual or seasonal worker, seems rather useless, since the irregular nature of this activity rarely appears as the main one.

Furthermore, the official surveys (IFTRAB, IAF, IOF, the census and TIA) suffer from some conceptual inconsistencies which compromise the quality of the data, thus leading to the neglect of rural wage labour. For example, the concept of household used could lead to bias in the data collected about RLMs. The official surveys are based on a residential concept of a household (which considers as members of the household those who have regularly slept or eaten in the residence of the household interviewed at the time of the survey). This may ignore, for example, potential members who contribute actively to household expenses, although they do not reside, or reside at irregular intervals, in the residence of the household interviewed.

Possible implications of the neglect of the RLM for the productive structure

The rural areas of the Mozambican economy seem to be the basis of capital accumulation in the country. The rural economy is organically and structurally linked to national and regional labour markets. The social organisation of

household production was historically influenced by the interests of capital. Due to a series of blockages, such as the conditions of the social reproduction of the work force, the peasantry, differentiated and with a fragile organisational structure, finds itself structurally integrated into wage labour.

The peasants, who are differentiated (poor, middle and rich), may produce food crops and cash crops for sale and for their consumption (resorting or not to hiring additional labour), but they may also offer their own labour to agricultural plantations and/or be involved in non-agricultural activities, often as wage workers, depending on their social stratum and socio-economic relationships and context.

From this perspective, some questions arise. How are the processes and relations of production, distribution and reproduction interlinked in the context of the dominant mode of accumulation? How are the dynamics of accumulation, industrialisation and proletarianisation related? What implications do they pose for the social organisation of production, for work and for the productive structure?

The development of the productive base may be compromised if the base of accumulation of rural households is overshadowed. How should the productivity of companies be addressed on the one hand, and the economic and social security of the workforce on the other? For example, if some firms desire to increase their productivity through mechanisation, what implications does the mechanisation alternative pose to the profitability of the firms themselves, taking into account that an immediate consequence of this alternative would be a reduction in the size of the workforce? Restrictions on the employment which often constitutes the basis of the accumulation, financing and survival of households may put at risk the capacity of households to acquire goods. To what extent could restrictions on the source of income of households for acquiring goods limit the demand for goods offered on the market, and imply a reduction in the number of clients for the firms?

Furthermore, the expansion of the firms may, at particular stages of their consolidation, need more labour, as, for example in the case of the boom in the mining industry. This workforce may be recruited locally or through migrant labour. One may question the pressures that this need places on the demand and supply of labour and on labour and institutional relations in terms of the availability of labour, the sustainability of forms of labour, and living and working conditions among other economic and social pressures.

A further aspect which should be mentioned and which has often been overshadowed is the influence that the type of activity, of crops and of agricultural seasons (in the case of agricultural activities) may have on differentiated RLMs and their implications for the firms. Hence it is contradictory that, for example, in the case of the production of primary commodities for export, resting on monocultures that are labour-intensive (mostly casual and seasonal labour), rural

wage labour is neglected in the framework of the conventional analysis. How is it possible to speak of monoculture, and of contract farming, and neglect the RLM? This puts pressure on organisational and institutional capacity.

Furthermore, considering the multiplicity of activities in which rural households are involved, if the non-agricultural activities, for example, prove more lucrative, and the workforce pulls out of other, alternative sources of income, including agriculture, then this activity could be prejudiced, particularly at peak periods during harvest time.

Final considerations

The study shows that several implications arise from the neglect of RLMs for the productive structure and the possibilities of accumulation in Mozambique, considering that the workforce is not a simple asset and that the labour markets are central in the productive structure and the accumulation system, *inter alia*, because of the links they stimulate between different agents and activities in the economy.

The reflection in this study challenges the conventional analysis, resting on a dualist perspective, according to which the incidence of rural wage labour is marginal, reflecting the assumption that the countryside is dominated by subsistence production by small peasants dependent on household labour which does not participate systematically in the labour market. The study indicates that family agriculture and wage labour finance each other mutually so that, given the dependence on monetary income for the consolidation of the peasantry, this supports the costs of its reproduction.

Rural labour markets in Mozambique are prevalent, complex, multiple and heterogeneous, and develop in a context of socio-economic differentiation. Wage labour exists at various levels and in various activities. There are those who are 'waged' but at the same time hire wage workers in some of their activities, those who are only 'waged', and those who only hire wage workers, depending on their socio-economic stratum, economic and social processes and relationships, as well as on the activities and livelihoods involved.

The way in which we think of and look at reality can influence efforts to analyse it, transform it and call into question development objectives. How can the productive structure, distribution, pattern of living and working, and the development of the productive base be thought about and addressed without addressing the nature of the RLMS in the broad context of the dynamics of accumulation in which they develop?

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