



## Preserving biodiversity in the Colônia I Settlement in Brazil

The Colônia I agrarian reform settlement was created in 1996 and is comprised by 23 families. Over the years, the environmental sustainability of the settlement by means of several productive system initiatives proposed by mediators have failed due to the lack of collective work skills, technical assistance, lack of water in the settlement during droughts and problems with production sales that led families to debt.

The settlement is located in the Cerrado biome, the most diverse savanna in the world and one of the biodiversity hotspots. Each family has a native Cerrado area and makes sustainable use of its fruits and seeds.

In 2005, the project supported by the GEF Small Grants Programme helped 13 families to improve the sustainable use and management of the Cerrado and the production systems for organic farming as a strategy to preserve biodiversity, avoid deforestation and increase their income through a set of activities including capacity-building, strengthening sustainable production, and improving the environmental and social management skills of the organization.

### CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The project enhanced the capacities of the community in agroforestry, permaculture, organic fertilizing and water resource management. The women from Sabor do Cerrado Group received training to strengthen product marketing, cooking and catering. Implementation of a Citizenship and Information Technology in partnership with other sources developed the capacity of many settlers in information technology.



### RESULTS

The project started the transition from organic production to a more complex sustainable production system, adding value to the products and providing catering services through a well-equipped industrial kitchen.

In terms of biodiversity, the production of organic products from either vegetables or native species offered a sustainable alternative to deforestation, avoiding pollution from fertilizers and pesticides and its negative effects in native biodiversity and water resources. The use of better soil management techniques adapted to the local environmental conditions have significantly improved soil conditions and reduced land degradation. The consideration of water resources and availability in the production process has created awareness and equipped the community with better water management skills.



This settlement is now an example of successful on the ground solutions to sustainable organic production and biodiversity conservation; and is frequently visited by government, schools, universities and consumers. A key component of the project has been to raise public awareness and influence policy, for this reason the project has partnerships with the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company, the Agricultural Family School, the Ministry of Agrarian Development and the Ministry of Environment to ensure proper dissemination of the results and influence public policy.

The good example of the project helped to influence the agrarian reform movement by providing sustainable solutions to communities that in turn help avoid the sale of the land to ranchers and the migration to frontier areas, which could cause vast biodiversity damage.

In addition, the delicious products prepared in Padre Bernardo are served in events in Brasília demonstrating the great potential of the Cerrado for income generation and raising public and governmental awareness about the Cerrado in the national capital of one of the most important countries in terms of biodiversity.

More importantly, SGP Brazil has been able to influence national policy with regards to the conservation of the Cerrado. Reduction of deforestation in the Cerrado is now part of national climate policy and the change can be traced to SGP and the collective action of its grantees.