



**Slow Food Foundation
for Biodiversity**

Safeguard biodiversity, encourage dialogue

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The G.Lo.B (*Governança Local para a Biodiversidade*) project, co-funded by the European Commission, aims to strengthen the capacities of the local authorities in three Portuguese-speaking countries (Brazil, Angola and Mozambique), helping them to define and adopt public policies that promote the safeguarding and development of biodiversity, improving the quality of life of local populations and reducing the vulnerability of socioeconomic actors in the three partner countries.

In Brazil, the project is run by the Bahia state government, represented by the Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Rural (SDR) and a number of local actors—the Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada (IRPAA), the Serviços de Assessoria e Organizações Populares Rurais (SASOP) and the Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (EMBRAPA) of the semi-arid region, with the participation of Italian partners, namely the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, the Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti (COSPE), the Region of Veneto and the Fondazione di Venezia.

The project's actions in the country are carried out in the Sertão do São Francisco territory, in the far north of the state of Bahia. The territory is made up of 10 municipalities, with a strong rural concentration and characterized by great sociocultural diversity. There are many traditional communities in the area: shore-dwelling communities, *quilombolas*, groups of small-scale farmers. This area has been included in the G.Lo.B. project due to the presence of one of Brazil's most fragile biomes, found in the Sertão do São Francisco: the Caatinga. According to figures from the Brazilian Environment Ministry (MMA), this biome has suffered accelerated deforestation in recent years, with the destruction of 46% of its surface area. The causes can be found in the consumption of unsustainably exploited native timber, the conversion of land to pasture and large-scale crop cultivation and climate change, which is causing long periods of drought that endanger the local fauna and flora.

Given the context, the project's specific objectives were defined in such a way as to strengthen the initiatives of social movements in the Sertão do São Francisco and to establish an exchange of experiences and knowledge with the other countries involved in the project, Angola and Mozambique. The partners' interventions include the mapping of local agrobiodiversity, an analysis of the local context, the identification of products and the organization of "idea workshops." Activities began in 2014, and, particularly in Brazil, the pilot project is currently in the definition phase.

The results of the activities carried out so far by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity have shed light on the threats to local biodiversity. An "area profile" was prepared, offering an overview of the socio-economic and environmental situation in the Sertão do São Francisco. The next action was a

mapping of the local agrobiodiversity, extremely important to the collaboration between the G.Lo.B. project and the local communities. The work was carried out in seven municipalities in the Sertão do São Francisco, drawing on the partnership with the IRPAA following technical visits to communities, families and associations in the area.

In the opinion of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, this phase revealed a strong feeling of belonging in the local communities and their relationship with the local tangible and intangible heritage. These factors helped with the compilation of “product profiles” which proved ideal tools for highlighting the animal and plant species, traditions and artisanal products at risk of extinction in the local area. It also led to the inclusion of five new products in the Ark of Taste catalog: the [Mandaçaia](#) (*Melípona mandacaia*) and [Munduri](#) (*Melípona asilvai*) native bees, the native fish [pacamã](#) and [surubim](#) and [queijo coalho](#) (goat’s cheese with rennet).

These results created the conditions necessary for the project partners, the socioeconomic actors and the local authorities to come to a common agreement on the analysis of the context, identifying two production chains as priorities: Caatinga passion fruit and artisanal fishing. These chains will be analyzed during the idea workshops, evaluating the feasibility of initiatives and the public policies.

[Caatinga passion](#) fruit has been an Ark of Taste product since 2011, and, based on the progress achieved, is currently being established as a Slow Food Presidium. A production protocol has been drawn up, promoting good, clean and fair food, giving visibility to the communities that have preserved the fruit and the sociocultural and environmental aspects linked to its production. The protocol was drafted at the IRPAA headquarters, with a participatory dynamic that saw around 20 representatives from the communities and operators from the Unidades de Beneficiamento do TSSF (Sertão do São Francisco processing units) involved, as well as the local authorities, G.Lo.B. project partners, research institutes, experts and representatives from the academic world. Representatives from the Uumbu Presidium also took part in the work, through the COOPERCUC, an important local actor, due to the promotional activities for umbu and Caatinga passion fruit carried out over the past decade.

With the aim of realizing sustainable development interventions and projects, able to produce an improvement in standards of living throughout the area, the SDR, as the local authority, has responded to the challenges of the communities by creating a series of public tenders for projects for the socio-productive inclusion of local biodiversity. The G.Lo.B. project has played a fundamental role in strengthening the dialog between local authorities and socio-economic actors in the Sertão do São Francisco. In December 2015, a public tender was announced for artisanal fishing and, in March 2016, another will be announced for fruit growing, with funding aimed at strengthening Caatinga passion fruit production. As well as the tenders, other activities have been included in the agenda of the meetings held with the local authorities, universities and research institutes, such as technical assistance, training, marketing development and fruit-growing projects that include the creation of nurseries.

According to feedback from the communities involved, the G.Lo.B. project has been of great help to the local area, triggering various activities in response to the difficulties of safeguarding and marketing the local products.