

# AGRARIAN REFORM TURNED INTO VOTING MACHINE JAIR BOLSONARO AND HIS ALLIES AUCTIONED

INCRA AND USED LAND TITULATION FOR ELECTORAL PURPOSES, WHILE GOVERNMENT DISMANTLED AGRARIAN REFORM





Observatório do agronegócio no Brasil

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Agribusiness Watch (De Olho nos Ruralistas) is a non-profit organization dedicated to research and investigative journalism about the social, environmental, political and economic impacts of the agribusiness industry in Brazil. From deforestation to human rights violations against indigenous peoples, peasants and other traditional communities. From pesticide overuse to the influence of landowner politicians in the Congress. Founded in 2016, as a website, and formalized as a private association in 2017, it is coordinated by Alceu Luís Castilho, journalist and author of "Partido da Terra - como os políticos conquistam o território brasileiro" (Contexto, 2012).

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#### **KEY FINDINGS**

- → Incentivado por Bolsonaro, o garimpo ilegal avança na Amazônia, principalmente nos territórios indígenas.
- → Jair Bolsonaro's policy for the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) focuses on job exchanges, so that his support basis in the National Congress can make nominations according to their economic, political and electoral interests.
- → De Olho nos Ruralistas has mapped twenty seats occupied by civil servants nominated by deputies and senators – from the presidency of INCRA to superintendencies and local offices. Among the patrons, sixteen are members of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA). A table shows who are the political patrons and their parties.
- → The main mechanism that allows personal advantages given to electoral candidates in the states, through the regional superintendencies, involves a land titulation program named Titula Brasil. This program facilitates public land privatization, making it available to the private market in order to benefit agribusiness agents.
- → Jair Bolsonaro uses Titula Brasil in his campaign for reelection: since September 2020, the president has traveled at least fifteen times to participate in land deeds delivery ceremonies.
- → Other candidates that campaigned in 2022 have used the state apparatus lately, among them Tereza Cristina, former Agriculture minister and former FPA president, who won a spot in the Federal Senate representing the state of Mato Grosso do Sul.
- → Most of the parliamentarians that nominate directors and superintendents are directly involved in distributing land deeds together with their nominated affiliates.
- → INCRA's budget has shrunk from R\$ 930 million (U\$ 180 million) to R\$ 12 million (U\$ 2,32 million), from 2011 to 2020. After that, the state agency has to rely on secret budget "rapporteur amendments" from Congress to be able to still operate.
- → The Bolsonaro Administration has imploded agrarian reform in Brazil by limiting INCRA's scope of action and purview, transforming the agency in order to legitimize land grabbing, by granting title deeds to great ilegal land throughout the country.

# FOREWORD

How could it be possible that a government is setting a record in the number of land title deeds given to beneficiaries of agrarian reform while also presenting the lowest level of land expropriations of the last 30 years?

In his 2018 presidential campaign, Jair Bolsonaro has promised to confront rural social movements, especially the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST). Four years later, his government has frozen the investment to create new settlements, has weakened the collective organization of settlers and has drained the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) budget until it has announced, in May 2022, that it would cease its activity due to lack of funding.

Meanwhile, the state agency responsible for agrarian reform in Brazil has issued over 370,000 individual land titles, turning the ceremonies of land deeds delivery into true political rallies. Most of those events have had direct participation from Bolsonaro, his ministers and his political allies. They were also attended by the parliamentarians who have nominated directors and superintendents in INCRA, a flagrant conflict of interest.

What has led to this takeover by interest groups in INCRA, and the agency's deterioration?

This report presents the politics behind the fundiary policy adopted by Bolsonaro's government, whose main goal is to skew INCRA's historical mission and to invert the agrarian reform's logic, making it possible to expand the land market in favor of agribusiness.

Under Bolsonaro, INCRA has become a business counter for the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA), that dominates nominations for public office trust positions and regional superintendencies. Besides the explicit horse-trading nomination dynamics, this report also details how the main actors in this process move through their electoral basis, together with Federal government policy-making that seeks to implode the agrarian reform in Brazil.

# 1) WHO IS WHO IN INCRA?\_



Next to Tereza Cristina and Bolsonaro, INCRA's president Geraldo Melo Filho hands land titles in the state of Pará. (Credit: Isac Nóbrega/PR)

#### Agribusiness lobbyists in charge

The National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) is a federal state agency with the priority mission to execute agrarian reform and to conduct the national fundiary ordering. Created in 1970, in the beginning of the military dictatorship, the institute operates in all Brazilian territory. Nowadays, the agency is organized in 29 regional superintendencies and 49 advanced units, as well as in partnerships with states and cities aiming to broaden the access to its services.<sup>1</sup>

This decentralized administrative structure was important to amplify the National Agrarian Reform Program under Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), when the institute designated a total of 68.4 million hectares to create settlements, an area equal to Afghanistan in size.<sup>2</sup> The regional superintendencies are responsible, among other functions, for analyzing, approving and referring certification requests within their scope of action; emitting Certificates of Rural Land Registration (CCIR), Certificates of Agrarian Reform Settler, among other rural property documents; executing registration and cartography fiscalization of rural properties; and preventing and solving rural land conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

Up until then, there was a triple list of nominees selected to chief the regional superintendencies, composed with names of public officers who held a permanent position in INCRA, based on technical criteria and professional merit and approved by the agency's Directorial Board. In "exceptional cases", the list could contain public officers from other federal branches or people without any direct ties to the public administration, in case they could prove "technical and administrative experience".<sup>4</sup> Even though political nominations continued to occur under the pretense of "exceptionality", the system would be able to refrain the parliamentarians' more immediate needs.

It all has changed since Jair Bolsonaro became president. In the beginning, INCRA was handed out to the military wing of the government, under the command of General João Carlos Jesus Corrêa, who initiated a series of measures seeking to restrict INCRA's actions and, consequently, to paralyze the previous rural land policy. The state agency has stopped fiscalizing the social function of the land, after the Land Obtainment Board and the socioproductive development agenda were extinguished.

In October 2019, Bolsonaro appointed Geraldo José da Camara Ferreira de Melo Filho as president of INCRA, a member of Brazilian Association of Zebu Breeders (ABCZ), who is also the son of former governor of Rio Grande do Norte state and former senator, Geraldo Melo. Melo was General Superintendent of the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA), from 2001 to 2009, and a partner in Seleção Guzerá Agropecuária Ltda, an enterprise acting in livestock raising in Bahia and Minas Gerais. The Melo family owns 17,000 hectares in Rio Grande do Norte, most of which are of unproductive land.<sup>5</sup>

Under his management, INCRA has suffered a complete restructuration. Few months after he took charge, Melo Filho participated in the editing of a series of norms and decrees that changed the agency's framework. Among those, we highlight the Presidential Decree 10.252/2020, that has shifted positions of trusted civil servants and extinguished the Board responsible for the National Program of Agrarian Reform Education (PRONERA), and the Decree 10.207/2020, that abolished the need of a triple list of candidates to be indicated to chief regional superintendencies.<sup>6</sup> The new structure has cleaned up the pathway so that Bolsonaro's allies could take over. Since those changes, his supporters have commanded nominations for positions inside INCRA. Besides being ideologically flexible, the parties' that integrate the Bolsonaro core support in the Congress all share a history for acting in the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA), the most powerful interest group in Brasília and the leading organization among agribusiness lobby in the country.<sup>7</sup>

De Olho nos Ruralistas' research center has mapped out twenty positions held by parliamentarians' choice of nominees, from the agency's executives to regional superintendencies and advanced units' chiefs. Among the political sponsors, sixteen are a part of FPA. Luiz Antônio Nabhan Garcia, the special secretary for Fundiary Regularization within the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA), is responsible for receiving and filtering the nominations given by ally parliamentarians. It is under his secretariat's jurisdiction that INCRA operates. It was also his decision that made effective General Jesus Correa's exoneration from the agency's presidency, after he found out Correa was not doing enough to promote the massive handout of land deeds — what would become the general rule under Geraldo Melo Filho, who was appointed by Nabhan himself.<sup>8</sup> Together with the general's exoneration, other three members of the military said goodbye to their trusted public office positions.

"We fell because we bothered Nabhan Garcia and his group", said one of the people who was laid off, talking to another INCRA's public officers in a Whatsapp Group who was obtained by Revista Crusoé.<sup>9</sup> "We were in the process of dismantling a complex scheme in INCRA's superintendencies. In some of those, there are true criminal organizations", said one of the texts who was signed by Jesus Corrêa himself. Nabhan Garcia, former president of Ruralist Democratic Union (UDR), was investigated in 2005, during the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee for the Land, under suspicions of leading and financing weaponry for a rural militia that operates in Pontal do Paranapanema, located in the west of São Paulo state.<sup>10</sup> The militia's primary goal was to fight occupations lead by MST, that grew rapidly in the area. It was not a coincidence that Nabhan Garcia and Geraldo Melo Filho interrupted the former policy in INCRA who sought to dialogue with social movements, initiating an "individualized" agrarian reform.

Bolsonaro himself has already explained this strategy, during one of his traditional talks with his supporters in the fences of the Alvorada Palace. "You do not hear about MST anymore", he celebrated. "When Fernando Henrique was president, every day there was an invasion. In our government, there are four invasions every year. We gave land deeds to over 360,000 settlers, making them leave MST to become good people".<sup>11</sup>





INCRA	Nominee	Position	Patron	Party
INCRA Nacional	Geraldo José da Câmara Ferreira de Melo Filho	Presidente Nacional do Incra	Secretário de Assuntos Fundiários/MAPA Nabhan Garcia e a ex-ministra Tereza Cristina	Progressistas
INCRA Nacional	Udo Gabriel Vasconcelos Silva	Diretor de Gestão Estratégica	Deputado Federal Fábio Reis, Sergipe	<u>psd</u> °
INCRA Nacional	Eleusa Maria Gutemberg	Diretora de Governança Fundiária	Deputado Carlos Gaguim e Senador Eduardo Gomes, Tocantins	
Acre	Sergio Antônio Pereira Bayum	Superintendente do Acre	Deputada Mara Rocha (MDB-AC)	MDB
Alagoas	Wilson César de Lira Santos	Superintendente de Alagoas	Presidente da Câmara, Arthur Lira (PP-AL)	Progressistas
Amapa	Fábio da Silva Muniz	Superintendente do Amapá	Senador David Alcolumbre (UNIÅO-AP)	
Amazonas	João Batista Jornada	Superintendente do Amazonas	Senadores Eduardo Braga (MDB-AM) e Omar Aziz (PSD-AM)	<u>MDB</u> PSd <sup>®</sup>
Bahia	Paulo Emanuel Macedo de Almeida Alves	Superintendente da Bahia	Deputado Paulo Azi (UNIÂO-BA)	
Ceará	Luiz Fernando Castro de Paula	Superintendente do Ceará	Deputado Dr. Jaziel (PL- CE)	PL
Golas	Alexandre Rasmussenn	Superintendente de Goiás	Deputado Lucas Vergilio (SD-GO)	SOLIDARIEDADE

Mato Grosso do Sul	Humberto César Mota Maciel	Superintendente do Mato Grosso do Sul	ex-ministra Tereza Cristina (PP-MS)	Progressistas
Paré Nordeste (Belém)	Miguel Fernando Veiga Gualberto	Superintendente de Pará - Nordeste (Belém)	Deputado Éder Mauro (PL-PA) e Senador Zequinha Marinho (PL-PA)	PL
Pará Oeste (Santarén)	Francisco de Sousa	Superintendente de Pará - Oeste (Santarém)	Deputado Júnior Ferrari (PSD-PA) e Senador Zequinho Marinho (PL-PA)	
Para Sudeste (Marabá)	Leonardo Lopes Santana	Superintendente de Marabá (PA)	Deputado Joaquim Passarinho (PL-PA) e Senador Zequinha Marinho (PL-PA)	psd° PŽ
Paraná	Robson Luis Bastos	Superintendente de Paraná	Presidente da FPA, Sergio Souza (MDB-PR) e Deputado Osmar Serraglio (PP-PR)	Progressistas
Piaur	Thaís Silva Pires de Moura Nogueira	Superintendente de Piauí	Deputado Júlio César (PSD-PI)	<b>psd</b> °
Rio Grando do Sul	Gilmar Tietböhl	Superintendente de Rio Grande do Sul	Alceu Moreira (MDB-RS) e Luis Carlos Heinze (PP-RS)	Progressiatas
Rondónia	Mário Moacir de Almeida	Superintendente de Rondônia	Deputado Lúcio Mosquini (MDB-RO)	MDB
Santa Catarina /	Nilton Tadeu Garcia	Superintendente de Santa Catarina	Senador Dário Berger (PSB-SC)	PSB40
Sergipe	Victor Alexandre Sande Santos	Superintendente de Sergipe	Deputados Fábio Reis (PSD-SE) e Bosco Costa (PL-SE)	psd° 2

#### Bolsonaro's allies lead nominations



Eleusa Gutemberg, Head of Fundiary Governance in INCRA, was affiliated to Republicanos party by deputy Carlos Gaguim. (Credit: AF Notícias)

Under Geraldo Melo Filho, political nominations became routine in INCRA. In October 2021, Eleusa Maria Gutemberg took over the Head of Fundiary Governance — one of the most important areas in the agency. She was appointed by two parliamentarians: federal deputy Carlos Gaguim (União Brasil) and senator Eduardo Gomes (PL), both allies of Jair Bolsonaro, from the state of Tocantins. Eleusa was already the INCRA regional superintendent in that state. In 2021, she announced she was invited by Gaguim to become an affiliate to Republicanos party.<sup>12</sup> The affiliation, however, fell through, and both of them joined União Brasil party. Under Fundiary Governance there are strategic areas such as the General Coordinations for Rural Registration, Fundiary Regulation, Cartography and Quilombola Territories Regulation.

Gaguim is a notorious defensor for the occupation of MATOPIBA, a region in the Cerrado biome that embraces the last preserved grassland areas of states such as Maranhão, Tocantins, Piauí and Bahia.<sup>13</sup> In the Chamber of Deputies, he was vice-leader for Michel Temer and Bolsonaro administrations (in the latter, he has occupied the post until July 2020) and was a contender for reelection in October. Eduardo Gomes, who has also supported Eleusa's nomination, was the government leader in the Senate until June 2022, when he took a leave of absence from his position — he has an elective mandate until 2027 — to coordinate his political allies' campaigns.<sup>14</sup> Both of them integrate FPA.

The Strategic Management board creates guidelines, goals and strategies for INCRA's practice, and it is under the command of Udo Gabriel Vasconcelos Silva, who was nominated by the federal deputy Fábio Reis (PSD-SE). One of his

attributions is to analyze the Brazilian land market tendencies, having a fundamental role in consolidating programs such as Titula Brasil. In March 2022, Reis has participated in a property title handout ceremony held in Poço Redondo (SE). The event was attended by several politicians, among them, the former chief of MAPA, Tereza Cristina, who was elected for a seat in the Federal Senate.<sup>15</sup> Besides five state deputies who travelled to the municipality of Alto Sertão, there were also present the federal deputies Fábio Mitidieri (PSD) and Laércio Oliveira (Progressistas) – candidates to State Government and to the Federal Senate, respectively – and Bosco Costa (PL) who, together with Fábio Reis, was responsible for the nomination of Victor Alexandre Sande Santos to Sergipe's regional superintendency in Sergipe.<sup>16</sup>

On that same month, Reis organized a second ceremony of title handouts in Canindé de São Francisco (SE), one of his electoral strongholds. That time, besides Tereza Cristina, Geraldo Melo Filho, president of INCRA, was also present, illustrating one more example of Bolsonaro electoral use of INCRA.<sup>17</sup>

# 2) THE AUCTIONING OF INCRA



Bolsonaro transforms a land deed delivery cerimony into a rally in the state of Pernambuco. (Credit: José Dias/PR)

Auctioning state positions nationally, on the one hand, is a way to paralyze agrarian reform and to distort INCRA functions, in a manner that also makes possible the expansion of agribusiness over public lands. On the other hand, the goal of splitting regional superintendencies politically is to distribute power among the main articulators of "bolsonarism", Bolsonaro's set of ideologies, and to strengthen his electoral platform.

The main mechanism which allows this explicit favoring in the regional superintendencies involves a fundiary regularization program named Titula Brasil, created by Bolsonaro's administration through the Joint Decree n. 1, in December 2020, by the Special Fundiary Matters Secretariat and INCRA.<sup>18</sup> The program allows municipalities to implement fundiary regularization centers to act with INCRA powers within the agrarian reform settlements and public lots that are viable for regularization. According to an article published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Titula Brasil points to two pathways to fundiary regularization in the country: first, the municipalization of public policies, broadening the mayors and local agribusiness actors' influence; second, the simplification of regularization processes, with the possibility of the interested parties presenting their documents without previous evaluation of ownership conflicts.<sup>19</sup>

In a wider context, Titula Brasil is part of a series of actions whose goal is to include new areas in the land market, expanding agribusiness on Legal Amazon

territory — where nowadays are located most of public forests undestined stock — and on federal settlements, which is considered the biggest land grabbing offensive since the end of the military dictatorship.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, Titula Brasil has become the main electoral currency uniting mayors and Congress members, specially those with ties to "bolsonarism".

De Olho nos Ruralistas' research center has identified the electoral use of land deeds distribution in at least ten states where there has been direct indications for regional superintendencies.



#### Agribusiness politicians influence INCRA in Rio Grande do Sul

Senator Luis Carlos Heinze and Tarso Teixeira at INCRA headquarters in Rio Grande do Sul. (Credit: Facebook)

Since Jair Bolsonaro's inauguration, the Porto Alegre INCRA superintendency has been transformed into a branch for the Agricultural Federation of Rio Grande do Sul (Farsul), the main organization that represents rural producers in the state. With the support of senator Luis Carlos Heinze (Progressistas), now a candidate to the state government, and federal deputy Alceu Moreira (MDB), the veterinarian Tarso Teixeira has taken office as regional superintendent.<sup>21</sup>

A historical oppositioner to agrarian reform in Rio Grande do Sul, he has come to the spotlight as a lead voice in Farsul, becoming vice-president of the organization by the time he was nominated to INCRA. As he took office, Teixeira announced he would sift through the settlements in the state, that take up to 294,000 hectares, spread over 98 cities.<sup>22</sup>

Moreira, as well as Heinze, have already presided over the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA) and they defend this "individualized" version of fundiary regularization represented by Titula Brasil. In 2021, Heinze has acted in

the Agriculture and Agrarian Reform Committee in the Federal Senate in order to approve amendments to the Anual Budget Law Bill of 2022, giving financial resources to INCRA to fund regularization and settlement consolidation.<sup>23</sup> Moreira supports the measures taken towards fundiary regularization. He was one of the lead negotiators behind the law bill (PL) no. 2633/2020, whose nickname given by oppositioners was Land Grabbing Bill, which reinforces the amnesty given to irregular occupation on public lands that was granted by the Provisional Presidential Decree (MP) n. 910/2019.<sup>24</sup> Edited by Jair Bolsonaro, the decree lost its effect in May 2020, the expiration date to be voted by the Chamber of Deputies.

When Teixeira died of Covid in January 2021, Moreira and Heinze paid homage to him. "The ruralist and friend of many fights Tarso Teixeira has left us", the senator lamented.<sup>25</sup> Four months after his death, a new superintendent was appointed, Gilmar Tietböhl Rodrigues, who was a public servant of Banco do Brasil, by then retired, he had ties to the Farsul for at least twenty years.<sup>26</sup> His relationship with Heinze also happened through their party: in 2006, he was a candidate to federal deputy in PP, nowadays turned Progressistas, the same party of Heinze.

During his inauguration ceremony as superintendent of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Rodrigues stated that his main goal was the handout of permanent property deeds to the settled, "reaching the biggest possible number of beneficiaries". He has emphasized this item as a lead guideline in INCRA and also during his predecessor administration, Tarso Teixeira. "Although the pandemic has imposed some difficulties, I expect that we can accelerate Titula Brasil", completed the new superintendent.<sup>27</sup> Rodrigues was secretary of Agriculture in Rio Grande do Sul in 2010 and state superintendent of the Rural Learning National Service (Senar).

According to accounts given by anonymous INCRA public officers, Rodrigues and his team have been accelerating title deeds processes so that they can wrap it all up until October, when the elections take place. The federal deputy Alceu Moreira (MDB), former FPA president (da CPI da Funai e do INCRA), is particularly interested in this process. He runned for reelection and has promised, before his official campaign started, to hand out titles to 126 families in Fazenda Perseverança, in São Francisco de Assis (RS).<sup>28</sup>



#### FPA leader uses land deeds as his campaign platform

INCRA's president Melo Filho (right) in a meeting at FPA headquarters, in December 2021. (Credit: Agência FPA)

Federal deputy Sérgio Souza (MDB-PR), current president of FPA, has participated in numerous ceremonies for land titles distribution in Paraná state hinterlands, alongside Robson Luís Bastos, the state superintendent Souza himself appointed. As a part of his strategy for reelection, the parliamentarian went to the city of Goioxim, in May 2022, and posed for pictures that showed him handing over property deeds to families of settles.<sup>29</sup> In June, in Ivaí Valley, located in the city of Jardim Alegre, Sérgio Souza has also attended to a property deed distribution ceremony for farmers of 8 de Abril Settlement.<sup>30</sup>

During the first semester of 2022, Souza had three meetings with INCRA president, Geraldo Melo Filho. The first meeting happened on February 23<sup>rd</sup>; the second on May 18<sup>th</sup>, only a few days after the ceremony in Goioxim. The final meeting took place on June 21<sup>st</sup>, and was also attended by the general attorney of the state agency, Renata Silva Pires de Carvalho, by the Director of Settlement Projects Development and Consolidation, Giuseppe Serra Seca Vieira, and by the Director of Fundiary Governance, Eleusa Maria Gutemberg. The subject of those meetings were not made public.<sup>31</sup>

Melo Filho has reciprocated Sérgio Souza's diligence. On February 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2021, INCRA president participated in one of the traditional lunches in FPA headquarters — a luxurious mansion in Lago Sul, the richest neighborhood in Brasília — where members of the agribusiness bloc gather every Tuesday to discuss their priorities for the legislative agenda. During the official launch of Titula Brasil, Melo Filho introduced himself to parliamentarians. "INCRA is not giving up on the control of the processes", he explained to the audience, which included the former minister of Environment, Ricardo Salles. "INCRA continues to play its part analyzing, instructing and deciding about fundiary regulation

processes, but now as a partner to the mayor's offices who wish to do so". It was the first time a member of government publicly acknowledged the connection between Titula Brasil — that outsources to municipalities the duties regarding federal public lots regularization — and the Provisional Presidential Decree n. 910/2019, known as Land Grabbing Bill, whose guidelines would be directly transplanted to PL n. 2.633/2020. "Therefore, part of the innovations described in this Bill of Law, which is still being analyzed in the Chamber of Deputies, are already included in the program", declared INCRA president.<sup>32</sup>

Later on, on December 2021, Melo Filho has returned to the ruralist mansion to report on his management of the state agency responsible for implementing the agrarian reform in Brazil, accompanied by the ministers of Agriculture, Tereza Cristina, of Citizenship, João Roma, and of the Environment, Joaquim Leite, who succeeded Salles.<sup>33</sup>



#### Arthur Lira nominated cousins for INCRA and CODEVASF in Alagoas

Chamber of Deputies' President Arthur Lira appointed his cousin to INCRA's superintendency in Alagoas. (Credit: Isac Nóbrega/PR)

The president of the Chamber of Deputies, Arthur Lira (Progressistas), who has shelved over one hundred requests to impeach Bolsonaro, appointed two of his relatives to head state agencies who lead the budget for projects regarding river basins and land titling processes in Alagoas. Two of his cousins are the current regional superintendents of INCRA and of the São Francisco and Parnaíba Valley Development Company (CODEVASF).<sup>34</sup>

CODEVASF administers a great portion of the budget destined by the Regional Development Minister to Alagoas. Lira and his father, the former senator Benedito de Lira (Progressistas), appointed João José Pereira Filho to head the agency, known as Joãozinho Pereira, former mayor of Teotônio Vilela. In April 2021, Pereira took over the superintendency, acknowledging his cousin's patronage: "We are here in CODEVASF in order to develop our state, relying on total support from our deputy Arthur Lira". About a month later, the newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo denounced the "tratoraço", a part of the "secret budget" worth R\$ 3 billion (U\$ 570 million), distributed by Bolsonaro to his allies through the Regional Development Ministry and CODEVASF. The Alagoas state has received R\$ 114.6 million (U\$ 22 million), used in suspicious purchases of overpriced tractors and bulldozers.<sup>35</sup>

Wilson César de Lira Santos, known as César Lira, was nominated to be INCRA regional superintendent already in 2017, during Michel Temer 's presidency.<sup>36</sup> At that time, Alagoas only received R\$ 3,948.00, in order to forward seventeen processes for the titling of Quilombola lands. In 2020, INCRA considered unproductive a property owned by Arthur Lira and his father in the city of Major Isidoro, previously occupied by MST. In times of Titula Brasil, César Lira has already certified 209 families in 2020 and plans to reach the number of 800 families up to the end of 2022.<sup>37</sup>

#### In Pará, Bolsonaro's allies share three regional superintendencies



Éder Mauro, Zequinha Marinho and Bolsonaro in a ceremony of Titula Brasil program in Paragominas, Pará. (Credit: Instagram)

There are three INCRA regional superintendencies in Pará. One is located in Belém, the state capital, and comprises the northeastern portion of the state; another one is in Marabá, in the southeast; the other is in Santarém, in the West. This territorial distribution makes INCRA in Pará a very attractive agency for political nominations. All of the agency's superintendencies in the state have direct support from senator Zequinha Marinho (PL).

In June 2021, Marinho was in Marabá with Bolsonaro and other ministers, launching Titula Brasil. On the occasion, they handed over 50,000 symbolic land titles.<sup>38</sup> A year later, in March 2022, Marinho traveled with the president to Paragominas, on the state's northeast, to distribute more 30,000 titles, accompanied by the federal deputies Éder Mauro and Joaquim Passarinho.<sup>39</sup> Together with the special secretary for Fundiary Regularization, Nabhan Garcia, the senator articulated a public hearing to discuss fundiary regularization in western Pará, in August 2019, the beginning of Bolsonaro administration.<sup>40</sup> Vice-president of the FPA, Marinho is commonly appointed as the main articulator of wood loggers land invasions to Indigenous Land Ituna-Itatá, considered the most devastated of the country in 2019. In January 2020, the senator published a video in which he classified Brazilian Environment and Renewable Natural Resources Institute's (IBAMA) public officers as "criminals and scoundrels" after a judicial action that identified illegal wood logging inside the indigenous territory.<sup>41</sup> In June 2022, Alexandre Saraiva, a Federal Police chief officer, pointed to Marinho as a leader in the "crime bloc" in the Amazon. According to Marinho, this allegation is pure slander.<sup>42</sup>

Éder Mauro (PL) integrates the "bullet bloc", a group of politicians that lobby for fewer controls over gun possession, and is a former chief police officer. He was responsible for the appointment of Miguel Fernando Veiga Gualberto at the Northeastern Pará INCRA superintendent. The former superintendent, the former state deputy Neil Duarte (PSD) was also appointed by the politician. During his administration, Éder, who was candidate to reelection in the Chamber of Deputies at the time, handed out land titles in Limoeiro do Ajuru (PA), in June 2021.<sup>43</sup> The current superintendent Miguel Gualberto is supported by both Éder Mauro and the wood logger, former mayor of Paragominas and former Pará state secretary Sidney Rosa (MDB), accused for environmental crimes and slave labour.<sup>44</sup>

A considerable share of municipalities in the so called Deforestation Arc is under INCRA Marabá superintendency jurisdiction, currently run by Leonardo Lopes Santana. He was a city council in the neighbor city São João do Araguaia, affiliated to the Green Party, and was also accused for favoring the mining company Vale while acting as judicial specialist in a public-interest civil action against the company filed by the Bayprã Xikrin People of O-Odja Indigenous Defense Association.<sup>45</sup> Another specialist in his team was IBAMA's superintendent in Pará, Rafael Angelo Juliano, who owns a consultancy company that renders service to soy and livestock farmers who were indicted by the environmental state agency.<sup>46</sup>

It has not been long since Leonardo has joined INCRA. He stepped in after Aveilton Souza left his post to run for state deputy. Before Souza started his campaign, he used INCRA and Titula Brasil as his electoral platform, nominating himself as "agro's man".<sup>47</sup> Aveilton is supported by federal deputy Joaquim Passarinho (PSD), one of the lead supporters of PL 191/2020, that legalizes mining activities inside indigenous lands. Barred by the opposition in the Chamber of Deputies, the Bill of Law was forwarded by a task force coordinated by Passarinho, advocating a revision of the Mining Code.<sup>48</sup>

The recurring federal interventions have produced a heavy climate among public officers who work in INCRA in the South of Pará. In February 2020, during a public hearing in the Municipal Chamber of Marabá, geographer Ivone Rigo, who is a public officer in INCRA, questioned the special secretary for Fundiary Regularization, Nabhan Garcia, who attended the meeting, regarding improvements of work conditions in the state agency. Garcia felt bothered by the question and attacked Rigo, morally harassing her. On that same day, the acting superintendent João Itaguary Milhomem Costa opened up a process to investigate Rigo's "ethical conduct".<sup>49</sup>

In western Pará, the superintendency is headed by Francisco de Sousa, former city council affiliated to PSDB. The nomination was made by Junior Ferrari (PSD-PA), a bolsonarista deputy aligned to Helder Barbalho (MDB). Although the governor of Pará did not support Jair Bolsonaro's campaign to reelection, Ferrari has been participating of Titula Brasil ceremonies side by side with Zequinha Marinho, such as an event that took place in March 2022, in the city of Rurópolis, in the southwestern portion of Pará. Among the parliamentarians, regional mayors and regional superintendent of INCRA from Santarém, there were also other two executives from the agency present: Eleusa Gutemberg, Fundiary Governance Director, and Giuseppe Serra Seca Vieira, Settlement Development and Consolidation Director.<sup>50</sup>



#### In Rondônia, Lúcio Mosquini guarantees budget funds for title deeds

Mosquini coordinates the Agricultural Technicians Parliamentary Front. (Credit: INCRA/RO)

In the state of Rondônia, where the agricultural frontier advances over the Amazon rainforest at a rapid pace, the deals between congressmen and the federal government also involve granting land title deeds. Regional superintendent Mário Mocir de Almeida was appointed to the position by senator Marcos Rogério (PL) and federal deputy Lúcio Mosquini (MDB), formers leader of the government in the Senate and vice-leader in the Chamber of Deputies, respectively. In December 2021, both were with former minister Tereza Cristina in Ji-Paraná to deliver 14,000 land title deeds.<sup>51</sup> Bolsonaro's official candidate in the Rondônia gubernatorial race and judicial coordinator in the FPA, Rogério is an open supporter of treating land occupations enacted by social movements in name of agrarian reform be classified as terrorist acts.<sup>52</sup>

Mosquini, in his turn, is the coordinator in the Fundiary Rights in the Agricultural Parliamentary Front, and also coordinates the Agricultural Technicians Parliamentary Front.<sup>53</sup> For the last three months, the politician made a tour in the state delivering land title deeds accompanied by the governor in office, Military

Police colonel Marcos Rocha (União Brasil). The governor ensured the hiring of 32 temporary public servants by the state of Rondônia, to be allocated in the INCRA, all paid by federal funds granted by a bill of the congressman's initiative.<sup>54</sup>

As did Arthur Lira, Mosquini was part of the group of congressmen that led the transfer of funds in the "secret budget". In sum, the deputy handled R\$ 8 million (over US\$1.5 million) in funding bills, of which R\$ 359,000 (US\$69.5 thousand) were appropriated in tractor purchases. There were signs of overpayment, given that market prices for the tractors are not over R\$ 100,000 (just over US\$19,000) according to a report by Estadão.<sup>55</sup>

#### As minister, Tereza Cristina delivered deeds in the state she is a candidate



Deed delivery ceremony in Ponta Porã, Mato Grosso do Sul, attended by Jair Bolsonaro, Tereza Cristina and Nabhan Garcia.

(Credit: Canal do Boi)

In Mato Grosso do Sul, superintendent Humberto César Mota Maciel is an old acquaintance of federal deputy Tereza Cristina (PP), former Agriculture minister. He was an INCRA superintendent between 2016 and 2019. In the early days of the Bolsonaro administration, he switched to the agency's board of Fundiary Governance. He was then relocated to superintendence of Mato Grosso do Sul in October 2021, by indication of Cristina, just before the current electoral campaign started.<sup>56</sup>

During her tenure as chief of MAPA, Tereza Cristina toured the country awarding land title deeds, accompanied by Nabhan Garcia and, on some occasions, Jair Bolsonaro. In Mato Grosso do Sul, from where she was bidding for a Federal Senate seat, she was in person in at least two occasions: in the city of Terenos in May 2021, and in Ponta Porã, in March 2022.<sup>57</sup> According to the politician, the state had received over 12,000 deeds by early 2022.

#### Evangelical pastors infiltrate superintendencies in Bahia and Ceará

In some cases, political influence over appointments of regional offices of INCRA didn't start with the Bolsonaro administration. In July 2016, just a month after Michel Temer (MDB) took over the presidency on a interim basis, in the start of impeachment proceedings against Dilma Rousseff (PT), federal deputy Paulo Azi (União) nominated his party colleague Helder Almeida to the agency's superintendence in Bahia.<sup>58</sup>

Former mayor of Camaçari, Almeida was then president of DEM's local chapter – in 2022, the party would merge with PSL to form União Brasil, whose state presidency is now occupied by Azi.

President of the Chamber of Deputies Ethics Commission and former vice-leader of the government in the legislative house, Azi was responsible, in that same year, for the reopening of a INCRA post in Vitória da Conquista, appointing the office coordinator, former city councilman Arlindo Santos Rebouças.<sup>59</sup> Joining him in support for the nomination was state legislator Luciano Ribeiro (União).

Paulo Azi is also responsible for the latest appointment to the regional superintendent of INCRA in Bahia. Paulo Emmanuel Macedo de Almeida Alves took office in September 2020 and, since then, has been surrounded by controversy. Just a few days before taking charge, he was seen by residents of settlement Jaci Rocha, in the city of Prado, inside of a white vehicle being escorted by two Military Police vehicles. The convoy was trying to get in the area to investigate an allegedly internal conflict between a family of settlers and members of MST, who organized the settlement. A week later, responding to a direct request by secretary Nabhan Garcia, Bolsonaro authorized sending National Force troops to the settlement – an episode that was marked for being the first time INCRA was used to criminalize social movements that fight for land rights.<sup>60</sup>

Under Emmanuel, the Bahia superintendence would hit the news again in June 2022, after signing a license for the evangelical church Assembleia de Deus Rais de Jessé, based in Simões Filho, to be contracted by INCRA's housing credits program. Intermediate for the church, pastor Nelson Carmo da Silva is the owner of a construction company, NE Construção e Pavimentação Ltda. After the launch of a probe by the Federal Court of Accounts, the license was revoked.<sup>61</sup>

In August 2021, accompanied by deputy Paulo Azi, Emmanuel traveled to the town of Ipirá, located 91 kilometers from Feira de Santana, to sign contracts for rural housing in the settlements Dom Matias, Oásis, Aldeia e Sítio Novo.<sup>62</sup> In May 2022, he once again was with the congressman visiting Vila Izabel Settlement, where he signed a joint cooperation agreement between INCRA and the city government of Ibicacaí, in the south of Bahia, for implementation of the Titula Brasil program.<sup>63</sup>

The connection between evangelical pastors and INCRA is not limited to Bahia. Sponsor of Luiz Fernando Castro de Paula nomination for superintendent of Ceará, federal deputy Dr. Jaziel Pereira (PL) is the author of the bill no. 484/2022, which aims to award a land title deed to any religious entity that occupied land, urban or rural, starting December 2016. Apart from being a physician, Jaziel is a pastor in the Assembly of God and one of the leaders of the fundamentalist lobby in Congress.<sup>64</sup>

#### Amazon's politicians campaigned on the regions' settlements



Davi Alcolumbre reinforced his influence over INCRA in the state of Amapá. (Credit: Valter Campanato/ABr)

Former president of the Federal Senate, Davi Alcolumbre (União-AP) is the main political patron and also responsible for the indication of Amapá regional superintendent, Fábio da Silva Muniz. Running for reelection, the senator has been advertising this resource articulation to benefit the state's agrarian reform settlements.<sup>65</sup>

The Alcolumbre family is known for their intimate relationship with land grabbing in Amapá. In a joint effort with The Intercept Brazil, De Olho nos Ruralistas has published that Salomão and "Salomãozinho" Alcolumbre, respectively the senator's uncle and cousin, have declared to own public land when they were running for public office in the state.<sup>66</sup>

In 2019, Alcolumbre took over as acting Brazilian president when Jair Bolsonaro was traveling, and signed the decree that regularized transferring Federal Lands to the state of Amapá. As a result, over 1 million hectares were given to the state until April 2022, totalizing 8 lots that would be administered by Amapá's Land Institute. The law 14.004/2020, sanctioned by Bolsonaro in order to enact the decree, determines that those lands should privilege agriculture and livestock activities, sustainable development (agricultural or not) or fundiary regularization.<sup>67</sup>

Moving to the west, in Amazonas state, the current candidate to state government, senator Eduardo Braga (MDB-AM) is another politician from the Amazon that has been visiting settlements to announce land titling. In May 2022, he went to Parintins, on the Vila Amazônia Settlement Project, where he promised the delivery of over 300 property titles in the following months. On the occasion, Braga announced he would invest R\$ 70,6 million to pave ways to access the settlement. According to the candidate, the resources come from "parliamentary amendments" he has authored.<sup>68</sup> Alongside his Senate colleague Omar Aziz (PSD), Braga has articulated the nomination of the public officer João Jornada to INCRA's Amazonas superintendency, in November 2019. By that time, the nomination brought about some controversy: Walter Cruz Junior, a retired Military Police colonel was supposed to be appointed to the job, so he published on his social network a video in which he accused the senators of being behind his being replaced for another nominee.<sup>69</sup>

To the south, the candidate to Acre's government, affiliated to MDB, Mara Rocha, has been visiting numerous settlements in the state in order to promote land deeds handing out ceremonies. She acts vigorously to defend the agribusiness agenda in her state, being also one of the authors of Bill no. 6024/2019, which intends to flexibilize the environmental preservation regime of Serra do Divisor National Park, also seeking to reduce the Chico Mendes Reservation's limits, both located in state of Acre.<sup>70</sup> She took initiative to appoint the lawyer Sérgio Antonio Pereira Bayum to chief the state's INCRA superintendency. Bayum leads the Liberal Party (PL) party in Acre, and became known after he put a sign on the building's entry prohibiting women with mini skirts or "exaggerated" cleavages to have access.<sup>71</sup>

Besides those politicians from the Amazon, a survey made by De Olho nos Ruralistas' research center has identified another use of land deeds handover ceremonies. In February 2022, the federal deputy Lucas Vergílio (Solidariedade) met with Alexandre Rasmussen, Goiás state INCRA superintendent, and Geraldo Melo Filho, the agency's president, in order to celebrate the fundiary regularization results in the state.<sup>72</sup> Before taking charge on his post in INCRA, Rasmussen was a parliamentarian advisor to Vergílio.<sup>73</sup>

# 3) THE IMPLOSION OF AGRARIAN REFORM IN THE BOLSONARO ADMINISTRATION\_\_\_\_\_



Under his government, Jair Bolsonaro converted public lands into private ownership. (Credit: José Cruz/ABr)

"This administration is yours". It was this way that president Jair Bolsonaro summarized his relationship with the agribusiness lobby in a breakfast offered to members of FPA in early July 2019, in Brasília.<sup>74</sup>

According to nomination for INCRA regional superintendencies, the administration created the conditions by which the agency was taken over by agribusiness interests, distorting the agrarian reform principle in the name of the sector's expansion. Such expansion is dependent upon a constant supply of new lands in the market, hence the importance given to nominating people to key offices of the agency by the president's allies.

For this tactic to be effective, in addition to blocking the appropriation of new lands as part of the agrarian reform, demarcation of indigenous people lands or the creation of quilombola territories, a strategy of conversion (or reconversion) of public lands to the private sector was established. For this, the Bolsonaro administration elected two priorities: the commercialization of settlers lands and the opening of indigenous areas to private enterprises.<sup>75</sup>

There are, in Brazil, three ways of concession of public land title deeds. The Usage Concession Agreement (CCU) transfers the rural property to the beneficiary of the agrarian reform on a provisional basis. The Interest of Usage Concession (CDRU), on the other hand, occurs when the land remains public but with usufruct by the settlers. Such a possibility is, historically, the instrument advocated by the MST and other land rights movements, for assuring the land will remain under public domain, being maintained by the settled families for generations and prohibiting its commercialization.

At last, there is the Domain Title (TD), consisting in the instrument that transfers the rural property to the beneficiary of the agrarian reform in finality, when is found that the usage concession agreement clauses have been fulfilled and the settler has the means and conditions to cultivate the land and pay for the property title in 20 annual installments at maximum. In this case, the land, once it is in permanent ownership of the family settled and has been paid off, can return to the land market and be bought and sold such as any other private land.

This last type is the one adopted by the current model of fundiary settlement, started in 2017. Back in the Temer administration, meeting claims by the FPA, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply slashed requirements for permanent title deed awarding, with the goal of speeding up the process of making these lands available in the market. Continuously, Bolsonaro created instruments for the privatization of public land to be performed. The Titula Brasil program, which transfers to mayor's offices oversight attributions previously restricted to INCRA, fits the case, given that it issues definitive land title deeds.<sup>76</sup>

#### INCRA became a real estate agency for landowners, says MST

De Olho nos Ruralistas talked with Alexander Conceição, member of the national coordination of the Landless rural Workers Movement(MST), concerning the role of INCRA and the current state of public policy for agrarian reform. In his view, INCRA now is a machine directed to the destruction of agrarian reform. According to him, the current closure of federal channels of communication with organized members of society has only occurred in dictatorial regimes.

"INCRA was transformed into a real estate agency for landowners", says Alexandre. In his assessment, Jair Bolsonaro coming to power emancipated old latifundia thinking, "rotten in the past." In his view, there was a rise in harassment and pressure from these groups - in from INCRA itself - to the settled families, taking from settlers their land rights.

The MST coordinator advocated that, in the last three and a half years, a series of measures were adopted that show the hollowing out of INCRA, which currently operates almost without funds. "Money is missing even for a cup of coffee, imagine for the areas that deal with agrarian reform", the director criticized.

The Titula Brasil program was created in December 2020. A little over a year later, in February 2022, INCRA had already installed over 600 Municipal Centers for Fundiary Regularization.<sup>77</sup> These centers are created by the mayor offices that adhere to the program to "reduce bureaucracy" in the title deed awarding process, conceding autonomy to municipalities to register properties, do inspections, occupational supervision, document receiving, processual analysis, and other inherent activities of INCRA staff. This autonomy creates a situation where local power might influence the process and the title deed awarding may be politically appropriated, notably for electoral interests.

In July 2022, Bolsonaro celebrated the milestone of 370 title deeds delivered by the program to settlers who had, according to him, left MST. However, the president omitted that, in his administration, only 9,928 landless families were settled, against 540,705 in the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration, 614,088 in the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and 133,689 in the Dilma Rousseff administration.<sup>78</sup>

In April 2022, De Olho nos Ruralistas and O Joio e o Trigo published a joint series of reports showing the conflicts of interests related to the implementation of the Titula Brasil program. By giving city halls the obligation to survey and do georeferencing of federal lands, the program gives big land owners the management of land conflicts. From Maranhão to Mato Grosso, a land strip that comprises the Deforestation Arc, the report identified violations of human rights against indigenous peoples, peasants and rural workers involving mayors and public servants directly in charge of the Municipal Centers for Fundiary Regularization. In total, seventy municipalitie adhered to Titula Brasil in the region.<sup>79</sup>

Beyond masking the privatization of public lands, by the way of title deeds, the policies of the Bolsonaro administration include the worsening of anti-agrarian reform actions, such as stopping acquisition of new areas and waiving of expropriation proceedings of areas already destined to settlement projects. Adding up to this agenda is the slashing of funds for the agency, with brutal effects in actions of surveying and financial reparations for quilombola territories and settlements, which simply makes unfeasible the fulfillment of INCRA's mission to enact the agrarian reform.<sup>80</sup>

With a reduced budget, INCRA ends up being dependent on rapporteur amendments in Congress to keep its structure operational. In May 2022, the agency determined the suspension of awarding rural deeds and other activities for lack of funds. According to the agency, the rapporteur of Federal Budget, deputy Hugo Leal (PSD), had not made available the resources from rapporteur amendments from which INCRA's president says the agency depends on to fulfill its "ultimate objectives". A portion of this budget comes from amendments already provided for; however, other portion is part of the so called "secret budget", which totals R 16.5 million (US 3.2 million) and is distributed by the Chamber of Deputies president Arthur Lira.<sup>81</sup>

The cataclysmic situation does not, however, prevent that title deeds keep being used by Jair Bolsonaro as one of his reelection campaign assets. In total, since September 2020, the president has made at least fifteen trips around the country to land title deeds award ceremonies. During one of these in Teixeira de Freitas (BA), the president likened the Titula Brasil program to a "manumission letter" affirming that these deeds would always be delivered to humble people who "know to live only by cultivating the land with the sweat of their own faces".<sup>82</sup>

Bolsonaro has been in municipalities in the states of Maranhão, Rio Grande do Norte, Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraná, Pará, Acre, Goiás and Minas Gerais. In São Paulo, the president was in Miracatu, located in the Ribeira Valley, where his brother Renato Bolsonaro acted as Chief of Staff, having received R\$ 10 million (U\$ 1.9 million) in federal funding from the so-called "secret budget". The connection between Jair and his brother with the region is the subject of the first chapter in the Bolsonaro Dossier: "The Banana President".<sup>83</sup>

# 4) CONCLUSION



Agrarian reform is the path to overcome INCRA's implosion. (Credit: CODEVASF)

As described in this report, the political trade of directive posts in INCRA, wide as it is now, seeks to paralyze agrarian reform actions while distorts the agencies' true role, in a way that facilitates agribusiness' expansion over public land. The political division of the regional superintendencies, on the other hand, fulfills the main articulators of bolsonarism demands for power redistribution and helps to promote their political electoral platforms.

The organized civil society, the social movements and the opposition parties, however, have shown some resistance to their moves. They question the current state of INCRA's ineffectiveness through a direct action for the declaration of unconstitutionality in the Federal Supreme Court, in December 2020. This process is a result of an alliance between MST, the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Contag), the National Confederation of Family Farmers (Contraf-Brasil) and the parties PT, PSOL, PCdoB, Rede Sustentabilidade and PSB. The rapporteur in this process was originally Supreme Court minister Marco Aurélio de Mello; but, since he retired, the process fell under André Mendonça, a judge who was indicated by Bolsonaro and who has shown to be deeply aligned with the president's ideological political agenda.

Under Bolsonaro's administration, however, it is noticeable that the agrarian reform in Brazil has been dismantled. Through the limits imposed on INCRA's actions and jurisdiction, this project has been executed, along with the elimination of historical missions, the land titling ceremonies and legalizing great irregular properties all through the country. Budgetary dehydration has made the

agency depend on parliamentary amendments, which impose the agenda of interest groups over technical issues of the agency's true mission.

At the same time, Bolsonaro transformed INCRA into a personal advantage mechanism and election platform to parliamentarians who are allied to his government, who also have been eliminating fundamental rights and reasonable conditions for social reproduction of family farmers, quilombolas and indigenous, whilst the hegemony of agribusiness in Brazil deepens.

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