

Cerrado no Prato: experience with the Kalunga community

Located in the heart of Brazil, Cerrado occupies 22% of the Brazilian territory. It is estimated that currently about 51% of the biome has already been deforested and anthropized due to the expansion of the agro-food sector in the region and the continuous conversion of land into production of agricultural commodities (soybean, sugar cane, corn) and livestock. The biome concentrates 5% of the planet's biodiversity. Due to the high rate of deforestation, it has become a blacklist of 34 hotspots that are under threat and require urgent action to address endemic biodiversity loss. The Cerrado is considered the water reservoir, as it feeds Brazil's main river basins. At the same time, it is an important biological corridor, as it links four other Brazilian biomes (Amazon, Caatinga, Mata Atlântica and Pantanal).

It is estimated that human occupation in the central plateau region occurred more than 13,000 years ago. This long period reveals an adaptive journey to the Cerrado. Indigenous peoples, such as the Quilombolas, have extensive traditional knowledge associated with the sustainable use of biodiversity. The territory of the Kalungas, the largest quilombola community in Brazil, covers 261,000 hectares where families plant for consumption and sell the surplus. Isolated until the 1970s, the Kalunga community has retained its identity and its preserved traditions. They maintain knowledge of the nutritional and medicinal properties of indigenous fruits and local biodiversity. Sesame, crushed rice, "coconut babaçu" nut oil and other products are part of the daily diet. In response to this, the "Cerrado no Prato" project, which brings together chefs and researchers, is exchanging experiences with the community in order to make better use of the products and enhance their value in gastronomy. With this exchange, we intend to highlight the community's products as well as its culture and traditional uses. Is the beginning of a work that, however, has no continuous results to present, just intentions.

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