REVISTA
INTERDISCIPLINAR DE
DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL
ISSN 3086-7401

RIDES

14 YEARS OF PPGDRS-UNIOESTE: TRAJECTORY, CONSOLIDATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 2030 AGENDA

14 anos do PPGDRS-UNIOESTE: trajetória, consolidação e contribuições para a Agenda 2030

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How to cite: ZONIN, Wilson João; WEIRICH, Samuel Felipe; HANSEL, Cleiton Rodrigo. 14 anos do PPGDRS-UNIOESTE: trajetória, consolidação e contribuições para a Agenda 2030. **Revista Interdisciplinar de Desenvolvimento Sustentável**, [S. l.], v. 1, n. 1, 2026. DOI: 10.48075/4vpybh95. Disponível em: https://e-revista.unioeste.br/index.php/rides/article/view/38251.

Abstract: This study analyzes the consolidation process of the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) at the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE) over its fourteen-year trajectory, considering its institutional development, human resource training, scientific production, internationalization, and alignment with the 2030 Agenda. This qualitative, documentary, and descriptive study is based on institutional, regulatory, and scientific documents covering the period from 2012 to 2026, examined through content analysis and source triangulation. The results demonstrate the consolidation of an interdisciplinary identity grounded in the integration of teaching, research, and extension, as well as in academic governance, self-evaluation, and strategic planning. As of August 2026, the Program had 324 graduates, including 203 Master's graduates, 110 doctoral graduates, and 11 researchers who had completed postdoctoral training, in addition to 170 students and researchers currently in training. Other highlights include the expansion of cooperation networks, the International Graduate Seminar on Sustainable Rural Development (SIPGDRS), and the PCI/MINTER UNIOESTE–UNIBOL. The study concludes that the PPGDRS represents a consolidated experience in interdisciplinary graduate education, integrating advanced training, internationalization, academic governance, and sustainable territorial development, while contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Sustainable Rural Development; Academic Governance; Graduate Studies; Interdisciplinarity; Internationalization.

Resumo: *O presente estudo analisa o processo de consolidação do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável (PPGDRS) da Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná (UNIOESTE) ao longo de quatorze anos, considerando sua trajetória institucional, formação de recursos humanos, produção científica, internacionalização e articulação com a Agenda 2030. Trata-se de pesquisa qualitativa, documental e descritiva, baseada em documentos institucionais, normativos e científicos referentes ao período de 2012 a 2026, examinados por meio da análise de conteúdo e da triangulação de fontes. Os resultados evidenciam a consolidação de uma identidade interdisciplinar fundamentada na integração entre ensino, pesquisa e extensão, na governança acadêmica, na autoavaliação e no planejamento estratégico. Até agosto de 2026, o Programa contabilizava 324 egressos, incluindo 203 mestres, 110 doutores e 11 pesquisadores que concluíram estágio de Pós-Doutorado, além de 170 estudantes e pesquisadores em formação. Destacam-se, ainda, a ampliação das redes de cooperação, o Seminário Internacional de Pós-Graduação em Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável (SIPGDRS) e o PCI/MINTER UNIOESTE–UNIBOL. Conclui-se que o PPGDRS constitui uma experiência consolidada de pós-graduação interdisciplinar, articulando formação avançada, internacionalização, governança acadêmica e desenvolvimento territorial sustentável, com contribuições para os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável.*

Palavras-chave: *Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável; Governança Acadêmica; Pós-Graduação; Interdisciplinaridade; Internacionalização.*

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, sustainability has become a key reference for public policy formulation, scientific research, and efforts to address contemporary environmental, social, and economic challenges. In rural areas, this perspective has broadened the understanding of development beyond economic growth to encompass social justice, environmental conservation, institutional strengthening, and the integration of different fields of knowledge (Boff, 2012; Sachs, 2009).

In Brazil, the expansion of graduate programs focused on sustainable development has accompanied the strengthening of the National Graduate Education System (SNPG) and policies for science, technology, and innovation. These programs have assumed an important role in training researchers, fostering interdisciplinary knowledge production, and integrating teaching, research, and extension. Within this process, the Graduate Program in Environment and Development (PPGMADE/UFPR) stands out as a pioneer in institutionalizing interdisciplinary research on sustainability and as a reference for the establishment of other programs, including the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) at UNIOESTE (Zonin et al., 2023).

Established in 2012 with a master's program and expanded in 2017 with the implementation of a Doctoral program, the PPGDRS has developed an interdisciplinary trajectory focused on human resource development, scientific research, and territorial engagement. Its activities encompass topics such as family farming, agroecology, public policies, territorial governance, food security, bioeconomy, and climate change, integrating research, extension, and national and international scientific cooperation.

Despite the growing importance of graduate education assessment, studies that longitudinally examine how interdisciplinary programs achieve institutional consolidation through the integration of academic governance, self-assessment, strategic planning, and academic and social outcomes remain limited. Analyses often prioritize performance indicators, such as scientific production, graduate training, and internationalization, without examining in an integrated manner the institutional processes that guide their development. This gap is particularly relevant to interdisciplinary programs, whose consolidation depends on the interaction among different fields of knowledge, institutional actors, cooperation networks, and territorial demands.

In light of this gap, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How have academic governance, self-assessment, and strategic planning mechanisms contributed to the institutional consolidation of the PPGDRS/UNIOESTE throughout its fourteen-year trajectory?

The aim of this article is to analyze the institutional consolidation process of the PPGDRS, considering the integration of academic governance, self-assessment, strategic planning, human resource development, internationalization, scientific production, and territorial engagement. Specifically, the study seeks to: (i) characterize its institutional trajectory; (ii) analyze its self-assessment and strategic planning mechanisms; (iii) examine indicators related to education and training, scientific production, internationalization, and regional engagement; and (iv) discuss, based on

the experience of the PPGDRS, elements that may contribute to understanding the consolidation processes of interdisciplinary graduate programs.

TERRITORIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONSOLIDATION OF THE PPGDRS

The consolidation of graduate programs focused on sustainable development involves more than the growth of academic indicators; it requires the integration of interdisciplinarity, territorial engagement, governance, and the capacity to respond to societal demands. From this perspective, sustainable rural development constitutes a territorial process shaped by the relationships among actors, institutions, and public policies (Schneider, 2010; Sachs, 2009). To address this complexity, interdisciplinary approaches are essential, as they enable the integration of different fields of knowledge and help overcome fragmented analyses of socio-environmental problems (Raynaut, 2011; Morin, 2003).

Within the PPGDRS, this perspective has been reflected in the diverse academic backgrounds of faculty members and students and in the integration of Agricultural Sciences, Humanities, Applied Social Sciences, and Environmental Sciences. This configuration supports research on family farming, agroecology, food security, climate change, territorial governance, bioeconomy, cooperativism, and public policies. This approach is consistent with the environmental rationality discussed by Leff (2006), insofar as it integrates scientific knowledge, territorial knowledge, and participatory processes in understanding sustainability-related issues.

Territorial engagement represents another structural dimension of this trajectory. Research and extension projects developed in partnership with cooperatives, associations, social movements, public institutions, and civil society organizations have brought scientific production closer to territorial demands. As demonstrated by Zonin et al. (2026), extension experiences associated with the Program foster processes of learning, innovation, and shared knowledge construction, strengthening the integration of teaching, research, and extension.

This territorial engagement has also fostered the development of international networks, particularly due to UNIOESTE's strategic location in Western Paraná and its presence in Foz do Iguaçu, in the Triple Border region shared by Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. This geographical position facilitates closer ties between the PPGDRS and Latin American institutions and the establishment of cross-border scientific cooperation networks. Agreements, academic mobility, and the International Seminar on Graduate Studies in Sustainable Rural Development (SIPGDRS) have expanded scientific cooperation with foreign institutions. More recently, the Interinstitutional Cooperation Project (PCI/MINTER) between UNIOESTE and the Universidad Indígena Boliviana Comunitaria Intercultural Productiva Guaraní y Pueblos de Tierras Bajas "Apiaguaiki Tüpa" (UNIBOL Guaraní) has further strengthened this dimension by promoting academic training, scientific exchange, and the shared production of knowledge related to sustainable rural development and Indigenous knowledge (Zonin; Weirich, 2026).

Despite the relevance of these dimensions, the ways in which interdisciplinarity,

territorial engagement, and internationalization are connected to internal governance mechanisms to produce lasting processes of institutional consolidation in graduate education remain underexplored. This gap is particularly relevant to interdisciplinary programs, in which academic outcomes depend not only on scientific production or human resource development, but also on the institutional capacity to identify weaknesses, establish priorities, and transform assessment processes into improvement actions.

Within the PPGDRS, this integration occurs through permanent self-assessment and strategic planning mechanisms. In accordance with CAPES guidelines, self-assessment supports decisions related to education and training, scientific production, internationalization, and social engagement (CAPES, 2019). Among the instruments employed, the SWOT Matrix enables the identification of internal and external factors and their connection to institutional strategies, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 – Summary of the PPGDRS Strategic Self-Assessment

Dimension	Evidence identified	Strategies implemented
Interdisciplinarity	Faculty and student diversity	Integrated courses and interdisciplinary research
Internationalization	Location in the Triple Border region	SIPGDRS, international agreements, and academic mobility
Regional engagement	Extension projects	Strengthening of territorial networks
Scientific production	Qualitative growth	Incentives for publication and scientific cooperation
Student education and training	High demand for the Program	Curriculum improvement and academic support

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

Table 1 highlights the relationship between institutional diagnosis and the strategies adopted by the Program. Faculty and student diversity supports interdisciplinary initiatives; the border location favors internationalization strategies; extension activities expand territorial engagement; and outcomes related to scientific production and student education and training guide academic development initiatives. Thus, self-assessment is not limited to measuring performance but supports decision-making and transforms institutional evidence into development strategies.

This perspective is consistent with the formative conception of assessment advocated by Dias Sobrinho (2005; 2010) and with CAPES guidelines (2019), according to which self-assessment should contribute to identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses and guide improvement processes. It also aligns with Ahlert (2002), who understands assessment as part of processes of reflection and collective construction. In the case analyzed, the integration of diagnosis, planning, and monitoring allows institutional consolidation to be understood as a continuous process of learning and adaptation.

Thus, the experience of the PPGDRS suggests that the consolidation of interdisciplinary programs results from the interaction among academic identity, territorial engagement, internationalization, and institutional governance, rather than merely from growth in isolated indicators. This integration constitutes the analytical framework through which the following sections examine the Program's trajectory, outcomes, and institutional development mechanisms.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE PPGDRS

The Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS), affiliated with the Center for Agricultural Sciences at the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), began its activities in 2012 with the establishment of the Academic Master's program and expanded its educational structure in 2017 with the introduction of the Doctoral program. As part of CAPES's Interdisciplinary Area, its creation resulted from the maturation of the University's previous experiences in rural extension, environmental management, family farming, and interinstitutional cooperation, which contributed to the development of a graduate program focused on sustainable rural development (Zonin et al., 2023).

The institutionalization of the Program occurred progressively, combining the expansion of stricto sensu graduate education, academic organization, and the consolidation of an interdisciplinary identity. According to Zonin et al. (2017), its academic framework was designed to integrate different fields of knowledge in addressing issues related to rural development and socioecological systems. This conception is supported by Raynaut (2011), for whom interdisciplinarity entails the construction of shared objects of inquiry capable of mobilizing different scientific fields to address complex problems. This perspective also converges with Leff (2006), who emphasizes the need for knowledge-production processes capable of integrating science, territory, and diverse forms of knowledge.

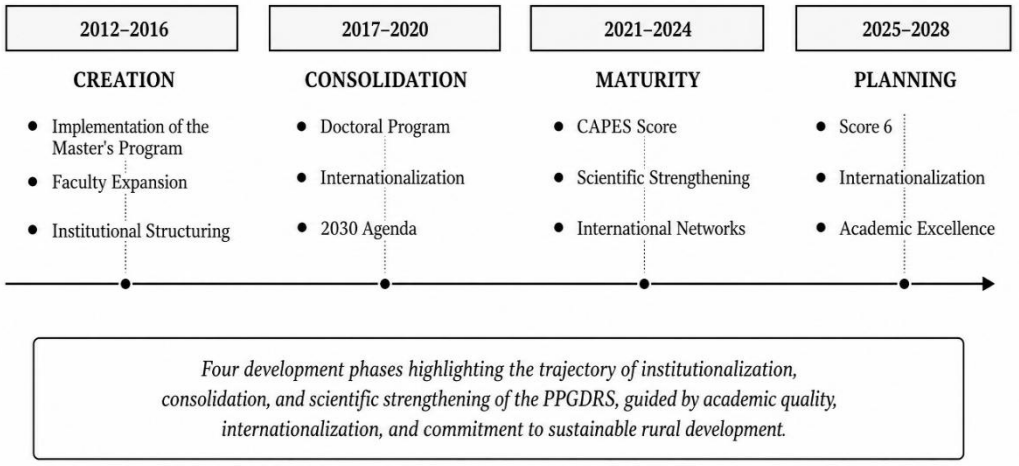
The academic organization of the PPGDRS is structured around two complementary research lines. The first, Territorial Development, Environment, and Rural Sustainability, encompasses studies on territorial transformations, environmental management, public policies, and the sustainability of agricultural, livestock, and agro-industrial systems. The second, Sociotechnological Innovations and Extension Action, focuses on innovation processes related to family farming, agroindustry, university and rural extension, social technologies, renewable energy, and cooperation networks. This structure reflects the integration of territorial development, innovation, extension, and sustainability that characterizes the Program's scientific framework.

The development of this identity was also influenced by the experience of its faculty members in initiatives such as *Universidade sem Fronteiras, Cultivando Água Boa*, and PROEXT, which preceded or accompanied the Program's establishment and strengthened the relationship between the university and the territory. These experiences contributed to incorporating into graduate education a perspective of scientific production connected to the demands of rural development, particularly in areas related to family farming, agroecology, food security, cooperativism, public policies, and sustainability (Zonin et al., 2023).

Figure 1 summarizes four stages in the institutional trajectory of the PPGDRS. The first, from 2012 to 2016, corresponds to the establishment of the master's program and the Program's academic and administrative structuring. The second, from 2017 to 2020, was marked by the introduction of the Doctoral program and the expansion of internationalization initiatives. Between 2021 and 2024, the Program entered a stage of greater institutional maturity, characterized by the strengthening of scientific production, cooperation networks, and human resource development, with the

achievement of a CAPES rating of 5 as a key milestone. The 2025–2028 cycle, in turn, corresponds to the planning of new strategies for academic advancement, with an emphasis on internationalization, scientific and social impact, and the pursuit of higher evaluation levels.

Figure 1 – Institutional Development of the PPGDRS (2012–2028)



Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

The institutional consolidation of the PPGDRS occurred progressively, alongside the expansion of its academic structure, the strengthening of research, and the growth of its cooperation networks. The institutionalization of this framework was also grounded in the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension, a principle that guides academic education and the Program's relationship with the territories. Beyond expanding its educational structure, the PPGDRS consolidated a conception of graduate education that integrates scientific production and social commitment, aligning with the principles of critical education and ethical formation discussed by Freire (2003) and Ahlert (2003).

These milestones demonstrate that the institutionalization of the PPGDRS occurred through a cumulative process of expanding and strengthening its academic and organizational capacities. The transition from offering only a master's program to an integrated Master's and Doctoral structure, the strengthening of cooperation networks, progress in CAPES evaluation, and the incorporation of strategic planning represent stages in a process of institutional maturation that, over fourteen years, has expanded the Program's capacity to train highly qualified human resources and produce interdisciplinary knowledge focused on sustainable rural development.

THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON GRADUATE STUDIES IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY

Internationalization constitutes one of the main quality indicators of contemporary graduate education, particularly in interdisciplinary programs focused on producing knowledge committed to addressing global sustainability challenges. In

this context, the PPGDRS has consolidated the International Seminar on Graduate Studies in Sustainable Rural Development (SIPGDRS) as one of its main instruments for scientific cooperation, internationalization, and knowledge dissemination. Since its first edition, the event has brought together researchers, faculty members, students, public officials, and representatives of national and international organizations, promoting the exchange of experiences and the strengthening of academic networks focused on sustainable rural development (UNIOESTE, 2016; Zonin et al., 2023).

Throughout its four editions, the SIPGDRS has progressively expanded its international reach, consolidating the Triple Border region as a strategic setting for Latin American scientific dialogue. Lectures, thematic panels, working groups, and cooperation activities have fostered integration among universities, research centers, public institutions, and civil society organizations, strengthening interdisciplinary scientific production on topics such as family farming, agroecology, food security, territorial governance, bioeconomy, climate change, and public policies. This dynamic highlights the role of the event as a permanent forum for the collective construction of knowledge and the integration of science, territory, and sustainable development.

The fourth edition of the Seminar, held in 2025 in conjunction with the 6th Workshop of the International Research Network on Climate Resilience (RIPERC), represents the most advanced stage of this internationalization process. The event brought together 348 scientific papers from 12 countries and 124 institutions, confirming the expansion of the academic cooperation networks established by the Program. In addition to the broad participation of Brazilian researchers, institutions from Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia were particularly prominent, strengthening the PPGDRS's engagement with the Latin American research agenda on sustainable rural development, climate change, and socio-environmental resilience.

Figure 2 – Strategic Word Cloud of the 4th SIPGDRS

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

The word cloud presented in Figure 2 summarizes the main thematic areas of the research presented at the 4th SIPGDRS. The predominance of terms such as development, sustainability, rural, agriculture, public policies, education, agroecology, food security, territories, bioeconomy, and climate change highlights the Program's scientific identity and strong interdisciplinary orientation. These results demonstrate the alignment of research developed within the PPGDRS with international discussions on sustainability, family farming, socioecological transitions, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reinforcing the institutional commitment to producing knowledge applied to the needs of rural territories.

Family farming occupies a strategic position in the research developed by the PPGDRS and in the discussions promoted throughout the different editions of the International Seminar, as it constitutes one of the main pillars of sustainable rural development. From this perspective, Plein and Schneider (2000) demonstrate that the social reproduction of rural families depends on a combination of economic, productive, and social strategies developed in interaction with territorial characteristics and available public policies. This understanding broadens the analysis of rural development beyond agricultural production by incorporating the diversification of activities, family organization, cooperation, and the capacity to adapt to economic, environmental, and institutional transformations. By incorporating these issues into the debates and scientific papers presented at the SIPGDRS, the Seminar expands the circulation of knowledge on family farming and fosters interdisciplinary dialogue among researchers and institutions from different territorial contexts.

Public policies aimed at family farming and territorial development are also part of the scientific agenda discussed at the SIPGDRS, bringing together research findings, territorial experiences, and different institutional perspectives. Among the studies related to this agenda, Constanty and Zonin (2016), based on the Brazilian National School Feeding Program (PNAE), demonstrate that purchasing food from family farmers can strengthen local markets, promote food security, and encourage sustainable production practices. Complementarily, Peixoto and Ferreira (2023) highlight the role of public policies targeting family farming in integrating productive inclusion, environmental conservation, and the strengthening of local economies. The presence of these topics at the Seminar highlights its role as a forum for disseminating and discussing scientific research related to public policies, family farming, and the SDGs, bringing academic knowledge closer to the concrete challenges faced by rural territories.

In this sense, rather than merely serving as a scientific event, the SIPGDRS has become a forum for coordinating the Program's scientific agenda, advancing internationalization, and strengthening cooperation networks. By bringing together research on family farming, public policies, agroecology, food security, climate change, and other dimensions of sustainable rural development, the Seminar promotes knowledge exchange and dialogue among researchers, students, and institutions from different countries. It therefore contributes simultaneously to the internationalization of the PPGDRS, the integration of teaching, research, and extension, and the expansion of the scientific and territorial reach of the research developed and discussed within the Program.

THE PPGDRS AND THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA

The consolidation of the global sustainability agenda has redefined the role of universities and graduate programs in producing knowledge aimed at understanding and addressing contemporary socio-environmental challenges. From the Stockholm Conference (1972), through Rio-92, and culminating in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, sustainable development has come to be understood as a paradigm that integrates environmental, social, economic, cultural, and institutional dimensions (Sachs, 2009; Leff, 2006). As highlighted by Zonin et al. (2023), these milestones have also influenced the evolution of Brazilian graduate education, particularly interdisciplinary programs focused on environment and development.

Within this context, the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) incorporated this agenda into its institutional identity by directing its teaching, research, and extension activities toward topics such as family farming, agroecology, food security, climate change, bioeconomy, territorial governance, public policies, education for sustainable development, and sociotechnological innovation. This trajectory aligns with Raynaut's (2011) perspective that interdisciplinary programs should organize their research around complex societal problems, integrating different fields of knowledge in the development of territorially contextualized solutions.

Similarly, Leff (2006) emphasizes that environmental rationality requires the integration of science, diverse forms of knowledge, and the sustainable management of territories. This perspective is also reflected in the scientific production of the PPGDRS, which addresses these topics through an integrated and interdisciplinary approach. As Schneider (2010) and Wanderley (2000) argue, sustainable rural development requires understanding territories as spaces in which economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions interact, a perspective that guides the Program's research lines and projects.

The Program's international engagement further reinforces this alignment. Participation in scientific cooperation networks, the organization of the International Seminar on Graduate Studies in Sustainable Rural Development (SIPGDRS), involvement in the International Research Network on Climate Resilience (RIPERC), and initiatives such as the Interinstitutional Cooperation Program (PCI/MINTER) with the Universidad Indígena Boliviana Comunitaria Intercultural Productiva (UNIBOL) demonstrate the PPGDRS's commitment to developing shared solutions to common challenges in Latin America, particularly those related to food security, agroecology, climate change, and territorial development.

The interdisciplinary nature of the PPGDRS enables its teaching, research, and extension activities to engage transversally with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. Although its studies are more strongly concentrated on sustainable agriculture, food security, education, climate action, environmental conservation, innovation, reducing inequalities, and institutional strengthening, the diversity of the research conducted establishes connections with different goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. This cross-cutting approach stems from the integration of different fields of knowledge, engagement with public policies, and participation in national and international research networks, highlighting the interdependencies

among the social, economic, environmental, and institutional dimensions of sustainable rural development.

Among the fields that exemplify this cross-cutting approach, agroecology stands out for integrating food production, environmental conservation, social inclusion, local knowledge, and the strengthening of rural territories. According to Brandenburg (2002), the agroecological movement extends beyond the strictly productive dimension by incorporating social, environmental, and cultural aspects and valuing alternative forms of agricultural organization. This perspective converges with research conducted within the PPGDRS, in which agroecology is linked to family farming, food security, public policies, sociotechnological innovation, and territorial development. Thus, agroecology represents an example of the interdisciplinary approach adopted by the Program and of its capacity to connect territorial issues with the different dimensions of sustainability established in the 2030 Agenda.

In summary, the Program's trajectory demonstrates that its institutional consolidation has occurred in close connection with transformations in the international sustainability agenda. Rather than merely following this movement, the PPGDRS contributes to its territorial implementation through human resource development, interdisciplinary scientific production, international cooperation, and the integration of teaching, research, and extension, consolidating itself as a space for knowledge production committed to sustainable rural development and contemporary sustainability challenges.

SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PPGDRS TO THE 2030 AGENDA

The relationship between sustainable development and education constitutes one of the pillars of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, particularly through Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which establishes the commitment to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. From this perspective, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), established under Target 4.7, broadens the understanding of education by incorporating knowledge, competencies, values, and attitudes related to sustainability, global citizenship, socio-environmental justice, and democratic participation. Education thus assumes a strategic role in social transformation and in building more sustainable development models (United Nations, 2015; Weirich et al., 2026).

UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that ESD should promote interdisciplinary approaches, problem-based learning, systems thinking, and integration among different spaces of knowledge production, enabling students to address challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, social inequalities, and environmental degradation. This perspective converges with Sachs (2009), for whom sustainable development requires the integration of social, economic, environmental, territorial, cultural, and political dimensions, demanding educational processes capable of preparing individuals committed to transforming reality.

In the context of rural development, education plays a strategic role in strengthening local capacities, promoting innovation, fostering social participation, and improving public policies. According to Freire (1996; 2003), educational processes grounded in dialogue and the collective construction of knowledge foster individual and collective autonomy and contribute to the transformation of territories. Complementarily, Capra (2002) demonstrates that sustainability challenges require a systemic understanding of the relationships between society, the economy, and nature, reinforcing the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in academic education.

This perspective is reflected in the trajectory of the PPGDRS, whose academic framework integrates teaching, research, and extension in the education of researchers capable of understanding the complexity of socioecological systems and developing solutions related to the needs of rural territories. Interdisciplinarity, scientific cooperation, internationalization, and territorial engagement align its educational framework with the principles of ESD, connecting academic education, scientific production, and a commitment to sustainability.

This contribution can be identified in concrete initiatives developed within the Program. Research and activities related to family farming, agroecology, and food security are particularly connected to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), while studies on environmental education, climate change, and territorial resilience are closely related to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). In the field of scientific cooperation, the International Seminar on Graduate Studies in Sustainable Rural Development (SIPGDRS), participation in the International Research Network on Climate Resilience (RIPERC), and interinstitutional cooperation initiatives strengthen SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). These examples demonstrate how the principles of the 2030 Agenda are incorporated into the PPGDRS's education, research, extension, and scientific cooperation activities.

Among these contributions, research related to the Brazilian National School Feeding Program (PNAE) exemplifies the integration of education, family farming, food security, and territorial development. Constanty and Zonin (2016) demonstrate that purchasing food from family farmers strengthens local markets, improves food security, and fosters sustainable production practices. This agenda is particularly connected to SDGs 2, 4, 8, and 12 by linking adequate food, education, income generation, and sustainable production and consumption systems. Studies of this nature demonstrate the contribution of research to the analysis and improvement of public policies and to strengthening the relationship among universities, public authorities, and society.

The climate dimension constitutes another area of convergence between ESD and sustainable rural development. Carniatto, Pereira, and Gonzalez (2025) argue that climate change education should be developed through collaborative networks that bring together universities, governments, social organizations, and communities in building responses to the socio-environmental challenges faced by Latin America and the Caribbean. Within the PPGDRS, this perspective is reflected in research on climate change and resilience and in participation in scientific cooperation networks such as RIPERC, establishing connections among SDGs 4, 13, and 17. In this sense, interdisciplinary education and interinstitutional cooperation enhance the capacity to produce and share knowledge related to climate change mitigation, adaptation, and

territorial resilience.

The integration of education and sustainability is also supported by the guidelines of the National Education Plan (PNE 2026–2036), which connects educational quality, equity, governance, cooperation, and socio-environmental sustainability. From this perspective, the PPGDRS contributes to these objectives by promoting interdisciplinary education, applied knowledge production, innovation, and engagement with public policies and territories, preparing researchers to participate in governance processes, territorial development, and the development of solutions to challenges affecting rural areas (Weirich; Boufleuher; Zonin, 2026).

Thus, the contribution of the PPGDRS to Education for Sustainable Development can be identified both in its educational framework and in initiatives related to family farming, food security, agroecology, environmental and climate education, scientific cooperation, and territorial resilience. The integration of these agendas with SDGs 2, 4, 8, 12, 13, and 17 provides concrete examples of how teaching, research, extension, and cooperation can connect the principles of the 2030 Agenda with territorial realities, strengthening the role of graduate education in developing highly qualified human resources and producing knowledge oriented toward sustainable rural development.

METHODOLOGY

This study is characterized as qualitative, documentary, and descriptive, based on an analysis of the trajectory of the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) at the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE). The study covers the period from 2012 to 2026, encompassing the Program's establishment through its current stage of institutional consolidation.

The documentary corpus consisted of institutional and normative sources related to the trajectory of the PPGDRS, including: (i) the Program's Pedagogical Project, regulations, and institutional documents; (ii) Self-Assessment Reports and Strategic Planning documents; (iii) annual reports and academic records concerning faculty members, students, graduates, scientific production, and internationalization; (iv) CAPES and UNIOESTE documents related to the establishment, recognition, and evaluation of the Program; (v) proceedings, calls for submissions, reports, and materials from the editions of the International Seminar on Graduate Studies in Sustainable Rural Development (SIPGDRS); and (vi) documents related to internationalization and interinstitutional cooperation initiatives, including the Institutional Program for International Cooperation (PCI/MINTER UNIOESTE–UNIBOL).

The following inclusion criteria were adopted for source selection: documents produced or in effect between 2012 and 2026; direct connection with the PPGDRS or with its evaluation and institutionalization processes; availability of information relevant to the research objectives; and relevance to the analysis of the Program's academic and institutional trajectory. Duplicate documents, materials without a direct relationship to the object of investigation, and records that did not provide sufficient information for the analytical categories were excluded. These criteria made it possible to delimit a documentary corpus directly related to the research problem and objectives.

In addition, scientific literature was used to provide the theoretical foundation and support the interpretation of the results, comprising articles and other academic publications on sustainable rural development, interdisciplinarity, sustainability, education, public policies, academic governance, and graduate program evaluation. Publications from journals such as Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente, International Journal of Environmental Resilience Research and Science (IJERRS), Redes, Open Minds, and Revista Tópicos, among others, were considered. The selection of this literature was based on its theoretical or empirical relevance to interpreting the trajectory of the PPGDRS and the topics investigated, including sustainable rural development, the 2030 Agenda, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

The data were examined using content analysis, following Bardin (2016), encompassing the stages of pre-analysis, material exploration, and the treatment and interpretation of results. Based on the research objectives and a preliminary reading of the documents, six analytical categories were established: (i) institutionalization and academic governance; (ii) human resource development; (iii) scientific production and interdisciplinarity; (iv) territorial engagement and university extension; (v) internationalization and scientific cooperation; and (vi) sustainable rural development, the 2030 Agenda, and Education for Sustainable Development. The documents were examined according to these categories to identify evidence, changes, institutional strategies, and outcomes observed throughout the period analyzed.

Finally, source triangulation was adopted by comparing institutional and normative documents, academic indicators, and scientific literature. This procedure enabled the results to be analyzed using different types of evidence and allowed the consolidation of the PPGDRS to be understood beyond quantitative indicators, jointly considering its institutional trajectory, human resource development, territorial engagement, scientific production, internationalization, and contribution to sustainable rural development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: 14 YEARS OF THE PPGDRS

Over its fourteen-year trajectory, the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) has consolidated itself as a reference in interdisciplinary graduate education in sustainable rural development in Brazil. This consolidation process reflects the Program's capacity to integrate teaching, research, and extension around complex issues related to family farming, agroecology, food security, climate change, territorial governance, bioeconomy, and sociotechnological innovation. Beyond expanding academic indicators, the PPGDRS has developed a scientific identity committed to the production of socially relevant knowledge and to the education of researchers capable of working in different institutional and territorial contexts.

The results achieved throughout this period indicate that the Program's consolidation stems from the combination of interdisciplinarity, territorial engagement, scientific cooperation, and internationalization. The diversity of its faculty and student body fosters research that integrates different fields of knowledge, enabling rural development challenges to be understood from complementary perspectives and strengthening the connections among science, public policies, and social demands.

The professional integration of graduates constitutes one of the main indicators of the Program's academic and social impact. Master's and doctoral graduates from the PPGDRS work in universities, Federal Institutes, government agencies, cooperatives, civil society organizations, and research institutions, contributing to the formulation and implementation of public policies, the strengthening of university extension, and the dissemination of innovative practices aimed at sustainable territorial development. These results demonstrate that the education provided by the Program extends beyond academic qualification, as reflected in the capacity of its graduates to promote innovation, public management, and social transformation.

The quality of the scientific production developed within the PPGDRS is also reflected in the recognition it has received at the national level. In 2025, the dissertation entitled "Nou aléz nan mizé: desenvolver o conceito 'Fome Cultural' para compreender a fome na perspectiva haitiana", authored by graduate Ethol Exime (Exime, 2024) under the supervision of Professor Evandro Alves Barbosa Filho, received an Honorable Mention in the CAPES Thesis Award. The distinction recognizes the study's theoretical originality, social relevance, and scientific contribution to interdisciplinary research on food security, inequalities, and development, demonstrating the Program's capacity to produce innovative knowledge with national impact.

Another significant outcome concerns the PPGDRS's capacity to foster technological innovation oriented towards societal needs. In 2026, graduate Ana Maria da Silva won first place in the 9th National Innovation Award, promoted by Sebrae and the National Confederation of Industry, in the Small Businesses & Renewable Resources category, for the development of an ice cream enriched with hydrolyzed chicken protein intended for cancer patients and individuals with dietary restrictions. This innovation demonstrates how research developed in graduate education can be transformed into technologies with significant social impact, bringing the university, the productive sector, and societal needs closer together.

These achievements demonstrate that the academic excellence of the PPGDRS extends beyond the traditional indicators used to evaluate graduate programs. Its capacity to develop highly qualified human resources, produce scientifically relevant research, generate technological innovation, and contribute to solutions addressing the challenges of sustainable rural development reflects the institutional maturity achieved by the Program. In this sense, its results reinforce the strategic role of interdisciplinary graduate education in implementing the 2030 Agenda, producing knowledge committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, and strengthening interaction among the university, society, and territories.

As of August 2026, the PPGDRS had awarded degrees to 313 graduates from its Master's and Doctoral programs, including 203 Master's graduates and 110 doctoral graduates, in addition to 11 postdoctoral fellows who had completed their research, demonstrating its contribution to the education and advanced training of highly qualified human resources. Although the higher number of master's graduates reflects the fact that the master's program began its activities in 2012, while the Doctoral program was established in 2017, the significant number of doctoral graduates in less than a decade demonstrates the rapid consolidation of this level of training, driven by the expansion of research activities, internationalization, and the strengthening of

scientific cooperation networks. The completion of postdoctoral research by 11 fellows further reinforces the academic and scientific maturity achieved by the Program and its capacity to provide advanced training for researchers at later stages of their academic careers. These results demonstrate the PPGDRS's capacity to qualify researchers and professionals for careers in higher education, research, public administration, and the formulation of policies aimed at sustainable territorial development.

The internationalization of the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) was significantly expanded through the implementation of the Institutional Program for International Cooperation (PCI/MINTER), developed in partnership between the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE) and the Universidad Indígena Boliviana Comunitaria Intercultural Productiva Guaraní y Pueblos de Tierras Bajas "Apiaguaiki Tüpa" (UNIBOL Guaraní), in Bolivia. Currently, the PPGDRS has 20 students regularly enrolled through this initiative, consolidating it as an important strategy for academic cooperation and the internationalization of Brazilian graduate education.

The PCI/MINTER UNIOESTE–UNIBOL initiative strengthens scientific exchange between Brazil and Bolivia, promotes human resource development in an intercultural context, encourages joint research, and expands cooperation networks in areas such as family farming, agroecology, Indigenous peoples, food security, territorial governance, and climate change. Grounded in South–South cooperation, dialogue among different forms of knowledge, appreciation of cultural diversity, and the shared construction of knowledge, the PCI/MINTER reaffirms the PPGDRS's commitment to educating researchers capable of working in multicultural contexts and contributing to sustainable rural development in accordance with the SDGs (Zonin; Weirich, 2026).

Table 2 – Distribution of Students Enrolled in the PPGDRS (August 2026)

Level	Regular Students	Special Students	Total
Master's	60 (40 + 20 PCI/MINTER)	39	99
Doctoral	51	14	65
Postdoctoral	6	-	6
Total	**117**	**53**	**170**

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

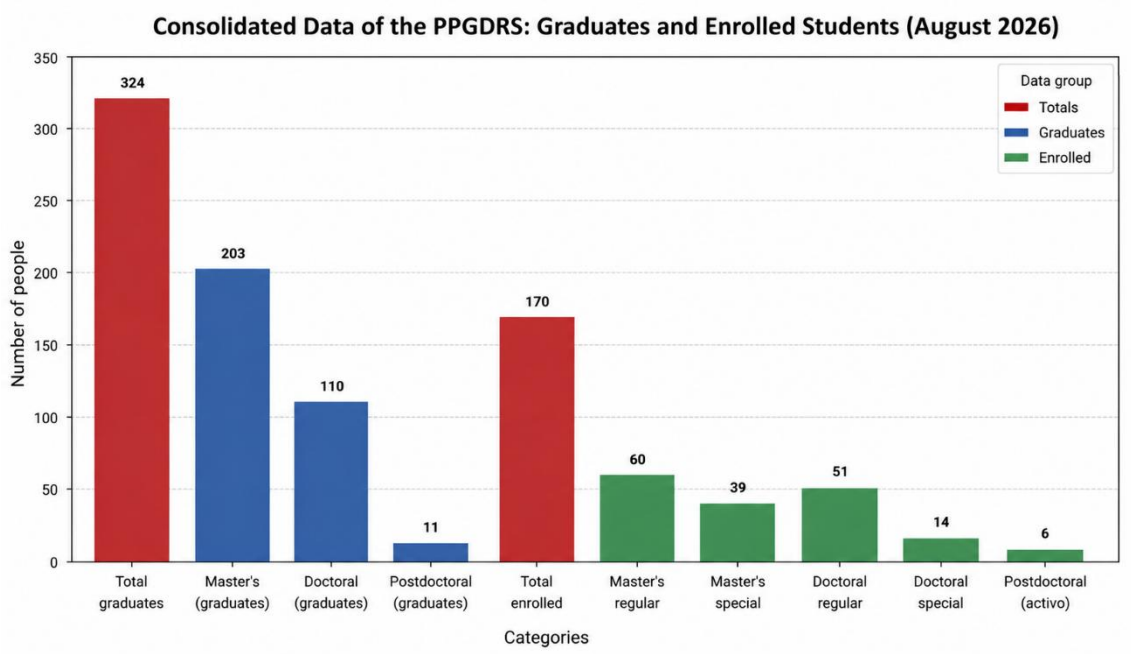
The data presented demonstrates the consolidation of the PPGDRS as a leading program in stricto sensu education in Sustainable Rural Development and in advanced scientific training at the postdoctoral level. As of August 2026, the Program comprised 170 students and researchers in training, including 99 master's students (58.2%), among them students from the PCI/MINTER UNIOESTE–UNIBOL, 65 doctoral students (38.2%), and 6 postdoctoral researchers (3.5%). This overview demonstrates the breadth of the academic training provided by the PPGDRS, encompassing different stages of scientific careers, while also highlighting the strengthening of internationalization and advanced researcher training.

Considering Master's and Doctoral students, regular students predominate, accounting for 111 of the 164 enrolled students (67.7%), while the 53 special students represent 32.3%. The significant proportion of regular students demonstrates the stability and attractiveness of the PPGDRS, whereas the presence of special students broadens access for professionals and researchers to graduate-level activities and facilitates their engagement with the Program's research lines. In addition, the 6 active

postdoctoral researchers contribute to expanding scientific production, the exchange of experiences, and opportunities for academic and interdisciplinary cooperation.

A summary of these indicators is presented in Figure 3, which provides an overview of the PPGDRS as of August 2026, highlighting the scale the Program has achieved in terms of student training, alumni, and institutional consolidation over its fourteen-year history.

Figure 3 – Overview of the PPGDRS – August 2026



Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

Institutional indicators further demonstrate that the consolidation of the PPGDRS extends beyond the quantitative expansion of its academic community. As of August 2026, the Program had awarded degrees to 313 Master's and Doctoral graduates, including 203 Master's graduates and 110 doctoral graduates, in addition to 11 researchers who had completed postdoctoral training, totaling 324 graduates across different levels of academic and scientific training and professional development. These results demonstrate the PPGDRS's capacity to build a critical mass of researchers dedicated to interdisciplinary knowledge production and to addressing the challenges of sustainable rural development.

The incorporation of postdoctoral training into the Program's trajectory reinforces its academic and scientific maturity and expands its role in advanced research training, knowledge exchange, and the strengthening of research and cooperation networks. More than quantitative indicators of academic performance, these results reflect the PPGDRS's contribution to the qualification of professionals and researchers working in universities, research institutes, government agencies, cooperatives, civil society organizations, and institutions engaged in public policy and territorial development.

This trajectory is consistent with Raynaut's (2004) perspective that the consolidation of interdisciplinary programs depends on the development of new fields

of knowledge capable of overcoming disciplinary fragmentation and addressing the complexity of socio-environmental issues. From this perspective, sustainable rural development constitutes a hybrid scientific object whose understanding requires the integration of environmental, economic, social, cultural, and institutional dimensions, thereby supporting the interdisciplinary organization of the PPGDRS.

From a similar perspective, Raynaut, Lana, and Zanoni (2000) argue that programs focused on development and the environment require differentiated approaches to education, research, and evaluation that are compatible with the complexity of contemporary problems. Thus, the evolution of the PPGDRS demonstrates that its consolidation results not only from the growth in the number of students and graduates, but also from the institutionalization of an academic environment guided by interdisciplinarity, the integration of teaching, research, and extension, and the production of socially relevant knowledge.

The diversity of students' academic and professional backgrounds also constitutes one of the Program's main distinguishing features. By bringing together professionals from Agricultural, Environmental, Social, Economic, and Human Sciences, the PPGDRS fosters the development of integrated approaches to the challenges of rural development. This characteristic is consistent with Leff's (2007) argument that the environmental crisis requires new forms of rationality and dialogue among different forms of knowledge, overcoming reductionist models of knowledge production. Interdisciplinarity therefore goes beyond being merely a methodological strategy and becomes an epistemological foundation for academic education oriented toward sustainability.

The consolidation of the Program can also be interpreted in light of recent transformations in Brazilian rural development. Schneider (2003) demonstrates that family farming has assumed a central position in academic agendas and public policies, expanding the field of research on ruralities, pluriactivity, sustainability, and innovation. In this context, the expansion of the PPGDRS accompanies the strengthening of this new scientific paradigm by educating researchers capable of understanding the diversity of rural territories and developing responses to complex issues related to family farming, public policies, and sustainability.

This contribution becomes even more evident when considering the professional integration of graduates. As Schneider (2016) emphasizes, family farming occupies a strategic position in Latin American rural development and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, requiring qualified professionals to work in research, public policy formulation, and territorial governance. Thus, the education of master's and doctoral graduates by the PPGDRS represents not only an academic outcome but also an institutional investment in building scientific capacities for sustainable development across different territorial scales.

Furthermore, the substantial number of regularly enrolled students demonstrates that the Program has achieved a high degree of academic legitimacy. The continued demand for admission, combined with the growing number of special students, demonstrates the PPGDRS's capacity to attract researchers from different fields of knowledge, strengthen scientific cooperation networks, and expand knowledge exchange. These results support the understanding that consolidated interdisciplinary

programs constitute strategic spaces for producing knowledge oriented toward concrete societal problems, thereby promoting innovation, territorial development, and social impact.

From this perspective, the PPGDRS has consolidated itself as an academic environment that fosters dialogue among different forms of knowledge, integrating scientific knowledge, territorial experiences, and knowledge produced by farmers, traditional peoples, social organizations, and public institutions. This orientation aligns with the perspective of Santos and Meneses (2009) by recognizing epistemological plurality as a condition for understanding the complexity of sustainable rural development and expanding the production of socially relevant knowledge. The results of this process are reflected in the work of its graduates in universities, research institutes, public agencies, cooperatives, and civil society organizations, where they contribute to public policy formulation, the strengthening of territorial innovation, and the development of strategies for sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the fourteen-year trajectory of the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) at the State University of Western Paraná, highlighting its process of institutional, academic, and scientific consolidation. The results demonstrate that the strengthening of the Program is associated with the integration of interdisciplinarity, teaching, research, extension, internationalization, and academic governance, supported by ongoing processes of self-assessment and strategic planning.

The indicators analyzed demonstrate the PPGDRS's capacity to develop highly qualified human resources, expand its scientific production, strengthen national and international cooperation networks, and contribute to the development of solutions for sustainable rural development. In addition, the Program's territorial engagement, combined with its activities in areas such as farming family, agroecology, climate change, food security, innovation, and public policies, reinforces its alignment with the 2030 Agenda and Education for Sustainable Development.

As its main contribution, this study demonstrates that the consolidation of interdisciplinary graduate programs results from the integration of institutional identity, governance, strategic planning, and social engagement, extending beyond quantitative performance indicators. The experience of the PPGDRS provides a framework for understanding the institutionalization processes of interdisciplinary graduate education and may support comparative studies on the evaluation, internationalization, and management of stricto sensu graduate programs focused on sustainable development.

This study is limited to the documentary analysis of a single graduate program within a specific time frame, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other institutional contexts. Future research could conduct comparative analyses with other interdisciplinary programs, further investigate the career trajectories and professional integration of graduates, and examine the impacts of internationalization, self-

assessment, and territorial engagement strategies on the quality and social impact of graduate education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE) and the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPGDRS) for their institutional support in the development of this research. The authors also thank the faculty members, students, administrative staff, graduates, and partner institutions that contribute to strengthening the Program, as well as the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), the Secretariat of Science, Technology and Higher Education of Paraná (SETI-PR), and the Araucária Foundation for their support of graduate education, research, innovation, and internationalization.

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Submission: 06/06/2026
Acceptance: 10/08/2026
Publication: 11/08/2026