

The traditional economy

The production of pepper, jute and malva was an activity of only a small part of the agricultural labour force. In the 1960s, the emphasis was on traditional rural livelihoods. Simple arable farming, extensive livestock farming and the collection of forest products employed 57% of the labour force.

Arable farming consisted largely of shifting cultivation, was practised on small areas by *caboclos* (*mestizos*) and Indigenous people and was primarily aimed in many cases at self-sufficiency. Corn, manioc, beans and rice were the main crops. The *roças* (cultivations) in most areas formed only small enclaves in the vast jungle. Typically they were used only for two to three years, after which a new piece of land was cleared. The practitioners of shifting cultivation lacked capital and knowledge for more intensive agriculture and did not always feel the need to do so, because large areas of forest were still available for clearing. To the extent that arable farming took place on the *várzeas*, there was often a more permanent use, at least during the period of the year when the water level allowed it. The *várzea* farmers were also generally not very prosperous.

Cattle farming was limited. In the 1960s, no more than 2% of Brazil's livestock was located in the North. Livestock farming took place largely on the savannas, which were found mainly in the higher parts of the Amazon basin (especially near the border with Venezuela and Guyana). The *campos de várzea* near the rivers were also used for livestock farming, but here the livestock had to be moved to pastures on the *terra firme* during the wet season or to be stabled on large platforms. The island of Marajó has long been an important cattle ranching area. The low parts were flooded during the wet season, so that evacuation was necessary here too. In the 1960s it had already become quite common to use the *várzeas* more for the raising of water buffalos. Livestock farming was generally at a low level. The *fazendeiros* were fairly prosperous; the people tending the livestock, on the other hand, were poor.

The collection of forest products, such as fruits, aromatic plants, rubber, oilseeds and precious hides, was widely practised. The buyers and their trading posts were to be found at the confluence of rivers, at points where they became navigable, and in the towns. Many merchants had acquired a monopoly position and also supplied all kinds of goods. An important part of the collecting and distributing trade was in the hands of Brazilians of Syrian and Lebanese origin. The collectors were poor, simple peasants who depended on the merchants to whom they were often in debt. Collecting was for some the main activity, for others a secondary activity next to arable farming.

Timber exploitation was traditionally also a collecting activity. Tree cutters went in search of suitable trees; planting did not take place. The wood was processed mainly by small companies. This started to change only in the 1950s and 1960s.

Expansion of mining

After the Second World War, not only commercial arable farming expanded, but also mining. Rich deposits of manganese ore had been discovered in the Serra do Navio in Amapá, and their exploitation began in the 1950s. A railway line was built between the inland mines and the Port of Macapá, port facilities were upgraded and energy supplies increased. In 1957 the first shipload of manganese ore left the port of Macapá