



**CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY IN THE
RURAL AREA OF GOIÁS: THEFTS AND
ROBBERIES IN RURAL PROPERTIES
RECORDED BETWEEN 2017 AND 2021**

**CRIMES CONTRA O PATRIMÔNIO NA ZONA
RURAL GOIANA: ROUBOS E FURTOS EM
PROPRIEDADES RURAIS REGISTRADOS ENTRE
2017 E 2021**

**DELITOS CONTRA LA PROPIEDAD EN LA ZONA
RURAL DE GOIÁS: ROBOS Y HURTOS EN
PROPIEDADES RURALES REGISTRADOS ENTRE
2017 Y 2021**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze agrarian crimes and their repercussions on the Brazilian and Goiás contexts of violence and criminality in rural areas, by identifying the structure of repression of rural crimes in Brazil and Goiás. The main objective is to discuss the difficulties in combating crime in the rural environment, considering crimes against property in rural areas. The research discusses the development of public security policies to combat property crimes in rural areas. Additionally, it evaluates data related to theft and robbery crimes recorded at the Rural Crimes Police Station of Goiás between 2017 and 2021. Through documentary research using a qualitative methodology, the study observes positive results obtained by the public policy of integration between the public security agencies of the State of Goiás and other bodies involved with agribusiness, as well as the participation of the private sector and the population.

Keywords: Public security. Collective rights. Socio-legal diversity.

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RESUMO

A pesquisa visa analisar os crimes agrários, suas repercussões no cenário brasileiro e goiano de violência e criminalidade no campo a partir da identificação da estrutura de repressão a crimes rurais no Brasil e em Goiás. O objetivo geral consiste em discutir as dificuldades de se combater a criminalidade no ambiente rural considerando os crimes contra o patrimônio na zona rural. A pesquisa debate o desenvolvimento de políticas de segurança pública no combate a crimes contra o patrimônio no meio rural. Além disso, avalia dados relacionados aos crimes de furto e roubo registrados na Delegacia de crimes rurais de Goiás entre 2017 e 2021. Por meio de pesquisa documental utilizando a metodologia qualitativa, observa resultados positivos obtidos pela política pública de integração entre os órgãos de segurança pública do Estado de Goiás e os demais órgãos envolvidos com o agronegócio, bem como com a participação da iniciativa privada e da população.

Palavras-chave: Segurança pública. Direitos coletivos. Sociojusdiversidade.

RESUMEN

La investigación tiene como objetivo analizar los delitos agrarios y sus repercusiones en el contexto brasileño y de Goiás en relación con la violencia y la criminalidad en el campo, a partir de la identificación de la estructura de represión de los delitos rurales en Brasil y Goiás. El objetivo principal es discutir las dificultades para combatir la criminalidad en el entorno rural, considerando los delitos contra la propiedad en la zona rural. La investigación debate el desarrollo de políticas de seguridad pública en la lucha contra los delitos contra la propiedad en el medio rural. Además, evalúa datos relacionados con los delitos de hurto y robo registrados en la Delegación de Delitos Rurales de Goiás entre 2017 y 2021. A través de una investigación documental utilizando la metodología cualitativa, se observan resultados positivos obtenidos por la política pública de integración entre los organismos de seguridad pública del Estado de Goiás y los demás organismos involucrados con el agronegocio, así como con la participación del sector privado y la población.

Palabras clave: Seguridad pública. Derechos colectivos. Socio-jusdiversidad.

INTRODUCTION

The State's difficulty in ensuring basic constitutional principles, such as the right to public security, is one of the factors contributing to the occurrence of violence in rural areas. In this context, it is necessary to analyze the responsibility of the federative entities and their actions, both in providing support to farmers and in implementing public policies to curb the rise in criminality and the marginalization of rural workers. Evaluating the policies for prevention and repression of property crimes in rural areas, as well as the role played by the Civil and Military Police forces of different Brazilian states, and identifying measures to be adopted by the State to ensure that those engaged in agriculture and agribusiness can carry out their activities safely, is therefore essential for fostering reflection on rural development and socio-environmental justice in Brazil.

The national policy of traditional policing adopted by most of Brazil's federative entities is carried out by public security agencies with limited interaction with other agencies and institutions. At times, even among the Civil and Military Police forces within the same state, strategies of cooperation and coordination are lacking. This model has proven ineffective, as evidenced by the positive results achieved by the current public security policy of the State of Goiás.

In Goiás, through the integration of public security agencies with other public bodies, and even with the private sector and actors involved in monitoring and advancing rural development, the integrated policing model resulted in a 30% reduction in thefts and a 56% reduction in robberies in rural properties between 2017 and 2020, according to data from the Public Security Secretariat of Goiás (QlikSense, 2021).

The general objective of this research is to understand the structure for combating crime in Brazil's rural areas, by evaluating the results of the public policy of integration between public security agencies and other entities responsible for agricultural oversight and development in Goiás, with the aim of tackling property crimes in rural areas.

Accordingly, the research seeks to understand the issue of rural violence, particularly concerning property crimes and their impact on society as a whole, taking into account not only the profile of the criminal offenders, but also identifying common socioeconomic aspects among the victims of theft and robbery recorded in Goiás between 2017 and 2021. The discussion draws from the critical theory of collective rights, the Federal Constitution, and core concepts of Agrarian Law to describe the profile of rural residents who have been victims of the increase in theft and robbery in rural properties (Feliciano, 2015, p. 83).

Furthermore, the research identifies the structure of public security agencies and the challenges they face in carrying out their duties in rural environments, aiming to ensure the safety of small, medium, and large farmers. The reflection on more effective procedures and mechanisms for combating crime in rural areas also involves the analysis of the State's responsibility in implementing security measures, exploring potential programs to combat rural crime, as well as preventive and repressive actions against offenders (Trindade, 2004).

To achieve these objectives, documentary research was carried out, following a qualitative approach through case studies. Police incident reports from 2017 to 2021 concerning thefts and robberies in rural properties in the State of Goiás were analyzed. These records served as instruments for delimiting the study of rural criminality during the analyzed period (Marconi; Lakatos, 2007; 2011).

The data obtained from the Public Security Secretariat of Goiás (SSP-GO) was analyzed using the QlikSense system, which hosts a database of police incident reports fed by various state agencies, such as the Military Police, Civil Police, Forensic Police, Penal Police, among other entities linked to SSP-GO³. The results were interpreted in light of Feliciano's work (2016), which discusses the landscape of rural violence from historical, economic, and political perspectives, offering insights into various types of rural crimes between 2001 and 2016.

Official data from public databases of the Federal Government were also used, such as the Public Security Observatory Management Office (GEOSP, 2019) and the Crime Observatory of the National Confederation of Agriculture (CNA, 2017, 2021, 2022). In addition to Feliciano (2016), works by Vieira and Doula (2019) and other authors dedicated to the study of rural criminality in Brazil were consulted.

The case study is considered an appropriate research design for investigating contemporary events, considering the context in which they occur (Gil, 2010). The research's qualitative approach aims to understand the proposed topic and problems, not limited to numerical representation, but exploring a universe of meanings, motivations, beliefs, values, aspirations, and attitudes. This allows for a deeper understanding of relationships, processes, and phenomena that cannot be reduced to the operationalization of variables (Minayo; Deslandes; Gomes, 2001). The method employed is deductive, beginning with an understanding of the rural world's socio-historical construction, constitutional foundations, and current analyses to reach conclusions about the State's role in addressing rural criminality. Therefore, it begins with a broad perspective and advances toward a specific conclusion (Marconi; Lakatos, 2007; 2011).

The article is divided into three sections. The first defines the national and Goiás-specific context, presenting data on rural violence and its repercussions on society. The second addresses the policy of repression of rural crimes and presents the national and state-level structures for combating crimes committed in rural areas, particularly those involving property. Finally, the third section presents the pilot integration project implemented in the State of Goiás to combat crimes against rural property and identifies the social group most affected by such violence.

It is important to emphasize that this work does not intend to exhaust the subject or offer a definitive answer, but rather to encourage further research on the topic. Considering public security as a third-generation collective right and its role in planning rural development policies directly

³ Access to the system was granted, as per SEI Proceeding No. 202100007086703, and allowed access to both quantitative and qualitative data on crime in the rural areas of the State of Goiás.

affects the outcomes of investments in rural areas, the permanence of rural workers, and the production of food for all.

To speak of the countryside is to discuss one of Brazil's largest international markets, addressing an issue that involves various movements for land, life, and the right to a dignified existence. After all, rural activities are fundamental to the national economy, providing food and raw materials for various sectors of society.

1 VIOLENCE AND CRIMINALITY IN RURAL AREAS: BRIEF OUTLINES OF THE BRAZILIAN AND GOIÁS SCENARIOS

Crimes against property have impacted the lives of rural inhabitants, especially those dedicated to agriculture. This is reflected in the growing difficulty they face, not only due to the financial losses resulting from the increase in thefts on their rural properties, but also in the impossibility of continuing their agricultural activities and ensuring their families' livelihood when inputs or equipment are taken from their land. In addition to theft, farmers have also been affected by the increase in robberies on rural properties, facing the brutality of this type of crime. This is due to the territorial vastness and the reduced police presence to prevent and assist victims in the countryside, who, left unprotected, become easy targets for criminal organizations specialized in this type of crime (Oliveira, 2020).

We start from the definition of the subjects, as proposed by Trindade (2004), when he asks, "Who cares about the victim?" Expanding this question and considering personal and social relationships, it is therefore relevant to ask who are the victims, the perpetrators, the co-authors, and the participants in the crimes that take place in the countryside.

Understanding the profile of the people who live in rural areas is essential for effective intervention, which justifies the need to impose limitations regarding the date, location, and types of crimes to be researched, since the absence of institutional support results in State inaction, which lacks training and information to act. Mechanization and the implementation of technological advances and new inputs have reduced the demand for labor in the countryside, leading to the impoverishment of inhabitants of small towns or the outskirts of large cities, forming an underprivileged class deprived even of the fragile support once provided by life on farms.

Thus, we observe an increase in violence and criminality in rural areas, frequently reported in the crime sections of the press, covering not only crimes against property, but also various other offenses in the countryside, such as conflicts over land ownership or the cultivation of psychotropic plants. Rural areas have been marked by various types of crimes over time, leaving traces on the

national reality and contributing to the maintenance of inequality (Pessoa, 2013, p. 09). With the modernization of rural activities and the increase in the number and value of agricultural equipment, robbery and theft have become more common on both large and small properties with extensive crops. These criminal actions often involve armed groups that frequently operate in regions near state borders, using paved roads as escape routes. The machines are usually loaded onto trucks directly from the property (QlikSense, 2021).

Rural crime in Brazil encompasses a considerable variety of occurrences, ranging from environmental offenses to violations against property and life itself. A portion of the homicides committed in rural areas results from complex processes related to agrarian conflicts and contract killings, known as “pistolagem”. These acts, usually carried out in a silent and intimidating manner, rarely lead to the punishment of either the perpetrators or those who hired them. According to Feliciano (2016), approximately 166,377 Brazilian families were threatened by hired killers between the years 2003 and 2014 across the country.

Property-related violence has become increasingly present in the daily lives of many rural families, who often do not receive adequate protection from the public security authorities. Measuring crimes against property is challenging, both due to the lack of detailed statistics from security agencies and the absence of reports filed by victims. This situation stems not only from the State’s negligence in distinguishing urban and rural areas, but also from the failure of those affected by criminal acts to report incidents to public security authorities (GEOSP, 2019).

Most property crimes can now be reported online through Virtual Police Stations, which has facilitated crime reporting by victims. However, this possibility is a recent development, largely brought about by the coronavirus pandemic that affected Brazil in 2020. In the 20th century and during the first decade of the 21st century, however, the majority of criminal occurrences in rural areas were not reported—either because victims faced logistical challenges in reaching the nearest police station in a city, or because they saw no possibility of recovering the stolen goods. Furthermore, rural properties lacked identifiable addresses, a situation that changed with the implementation of the Rural Patrol Units of the Military Police, which were responsible for identifying both residents and rural properties, even performing their georeferencing (Vieira; Doula, 2019).

Rural properties, equipped with modern technologies, electrification systems, and high-value agricultural machinery, have become targets of criminal organizations specialized in this type of offense. In some cases, criminals go so far as to commit homicide to carry out the crime or to avoid being identified and arrested, since a large number of rural thefts and robberies are carried out by current or former farm employees (Freitas; Oliveira, 2017).

Theft and armed robbery on rural properties in the State of Goiás increased at the beginning of the 21st century, reaching a total of 535 registered robberies in 2017. Nevertheless, this data is difficult to quantify due to the lack of precise statistical information provided by public security authorities. Many rural crime cases are not recorded with this specific categorization and are included in the statistics of thefts and robberies committed in urban areas. For this reason, it has been necessary to seek information in scholarly articles authored by researchers who have studied the rise in rural criminality (Oliveira, 2020).

The National Confederation of Agriculture (Confederação Nacional de Agricultura – CNA), a trade union entity that represents the interests of Brazil’s commercial rural producers, operates at the federal level—in the National Congress, within the Federal Executive Branch, and before the higher courts. In 2018, through its Rural Crime Observatory, it made available a form for the specific reporting of crimes occurring in rural areas and contacted the Brazilian states to gather information on rural criminality between 2015 and 2017 (CNA, 2017, 2021, 2022).

Among the proposals presented by the CNA, one of the most significant is the incorporation, within the national policy framework, of specific programs and projects aimed at preventing and controlling crime in rural areas, along with the creation of national and regional statistical databases containing detailed information on the most common criminal occurrences in these regions (CNA, 2017, 2021, 2022). The objective is to standardize and make these data publicly accessible. However, the lack of accurate national statistics still hinders both the fight against rural crime and the implementation of preventive actions (GEOSP, 2019). The official numbers on thefts and robberies committed on rural properties in the country are imprecise, as in most Brazilian states, such crimes are not identified as having occurred in rural areas at the time of reporting and are instead included in the statistics for crimes committed in urban zones. The public authorities’ neglect toward rural criminality does not align with the sector’s significance to both Brazilian and global society, given that agribusiness is fundamental to Brazil’s economy (Cristina, 2021). Nevertheless, within the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP), initiatives to separate rural crime statistics already exist, though coordination with state governments remains necessary (GEOSP, 2019).

Specialized crime has increasingly shifted toward rural areas due to the trend of criminals targeting regions with greater financial potential. Considering that agribusiness accounts for 26% of Brazil’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), rural properties have become a prime target for criminal operations (Vieira; Doula, 2019).

The most frequent crimes involve theft and robbery of livestock, representing 54% of reported incidents, followed by the theft of agricultural equipment, accounting for 28%. Large-scale

equipment—such as tractors, harvesters, and planters—comprised 2.46% of police reports related to crimes committed on rural properties nationwide (GEOSP, 2019).

According to the CNA (2017; 2021; 2022), most crimes were reported on farms where livestock was the main activity (54% of cases), located less than 50 kilometers from municipal centers (65% of cases), and covering no more than 100 hectares (51% of reports)⁴.

The lack of police reports filed by some rural producers hampers an accurate assessment of crimes occurring on these properties, a fact made evident in the analysis of police records from 2017 to 2021 in the State of Goiás (QlikSense, 2021). The CNA (2017; 2021; 2022) highlights that the absence of standardized data and the scarcity of information are among the main challenges faced by public security authorities in addressing rural criminality.

A survey carried out through the analysis of Police Investigations initiated by the Rural Crimes Division between 2017 and 2021 shows that those responsible for the theft and robbery of agricultural machinery in the State of Goiás are divided into the following groups: “a.” those who subdue victims using firearms; “b.” those who start the engine, maneuver, and load the machines; and “c.” those who escort the truck transporting the equipment along the escape route until reaching the first location where the stolen machinery will be hidden.

Public security agencies face difficulties in monitoring agricultural machinery due to the absence of registration with the Department of Transit (DETRAN) or the National Motor Vehicle Registry (RENAVAM), as well as the lack of identification plates (Oliveira, 2020). In response to this issue, the Federal Government, in partnership with the CNA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply (MAPA), launched ID Agro, a Digital Platform for the Registration and Management of Tractors and Agricultural Equipment. This platform was created in January 2016 and was re-regulated in November 2021 through Ordinance No. 49/2021-MAPA. This regulation allows for the official registration of tractors and agricultural equipment at no cost to rural producers (BRASIL, 2021; MAPA, [2023]).

This procedure complies with Law No. 13.154/2015, which amended the Brazilian Traffic Code (CTB) and exempted agricultural tractors from the license plate and registration requirements applicable to conventional motor vehicles at DETRAN, making their registration in a specific database of the Ministry of Agriculture mandatory. With the registration, agricultural machinery

⁴ The CNA document (2021) does not specify the period during which the data were collected. However, it praises the information provided by the Public Security Secretariat of Goiás (SSP-GO), which made available a specific report allowing for the identification of various relevant data, such as the number of monthly occurrences, incidents during weekends, by time range, among other information.

owners can verify whether a tractor is linked to criminal activity. As of 2023, it is already possible to register both new and used machines (BRASIL, [2023]).

The criminal appropriation of these assets is often facilitated by access to privileged information, since protecting them requires special attention from the producer due to their high value (Feliciano, 2016). Typically, access gates to storage sheds for agricultural inputs are broken into. Criminal groups targeting these inputs often use small trucks or cars that allow quick movement during the escape. Before acting, the criminals gather detailed information about the movement of people on the rural property and map the access roads. It is also common for them to use handheld radios, gloves, and closed clothing. Frequently, these groups operate across multiple regions, including other states in the federation (QlikSense, 2021, [n.p.]).

In relation to the lower population density in rural areas compared to urban⁵, areas, provided by the Public Security Secretariat of the State of Goiás reveal that crime has been migrating to the countryside, affecting not only residents and small farmers but also large-scale rural producers in the agribusiness sector. According to statistics from the Public Security Observatory Management Office (GEOSP, 2019), rural properties in Goiás have been a constant target of criminals committing property crimes. In just the years 2017 and 2018, 8,968 thefts and 892 robberies were recorded, totaling 9,860 incidents.

The assessment of police reports and the Statements of the Reporting Officer, which served as the basis for this research, covered incidents registered with the SSP-GO from 2017 to 2021. This evaluation shows that the number of thefts across the state of Goiás dropped from 5,017 cases in 2017 to 3,521 in 2020. The number of robberies decreased from 535 in 2017 to 232 in 2020 (QlikSense, 2021).

This analysis connects with the second phase of the investigation, which more superficially addresses the years 2001 to 2016, allowing dialogue with the studies of Feliciano (2016), who examined rural violence in general, emphasizing a historical approach with economic and political aspects. Following a rise in rural crime at the beginning of the 21st century, the policy of integrating public security agencies with other entities responsible for the development and oversight of agribusiness in Goiás has yielded positive results in combating rural violence (Feliciano, 2016).

Due to the lack of accurate statistics up to 2016, the Public Security Secretariat of the State of Goiás was unable to detail crimes occurring in rural areas before the implementation of the Integrated Service Registration (RAI). This made it impossible to compare the period prior to the

⁵ The state of Goiás has 7,056,495 inhabitants and is the 8th most urbanized state in the country (IBGE, 2023).

integration of public security in combating crime in rural areas with the years from 2017 to 2021 based on available data. However, research in the Civil Police database indicates a significant increase in the number of police procedures resulting in the arrest of individuals involved in criminal organizations specialized in property crimes against rural properties over the past five years (QlikSense, 2021, [n.p.]).

The analysis of police reports of theft and robbery on rural properties in the State of Goiás between 2017 and 2021 indicated a gradual increase in property crimes in rural areas during the first decade of the 21st century. However, following the implementation of the Rural Patrol of the Military Police and the creation of the State Division for Rural Crimes (DERCR), along with an integrated network of public agencies to combat rural crime, there has been an increase in arrests for criminal association involving individuals linked to organizations specialized in rural crimes, in addition to a reduction in reports of property offenses in the rural areas of Goiás (Oliveira, 2020).

In Brazil, there are still few public policies specifically aimed at combating crime in rural areas, particularly property crimes on rural properties. The lack of standardization and the absence of accurate information regarding the exact number of crimes in rural zones are among the main challenges faced by public security administrators in addressing rural criminality. Even within the Federal Constitution of 1988—especially in Article 3, item III, which addresses the fundamental objective of the State to eradicate poverty and marginalization and to reduce social and regional inequalities—one notes the relevance of public security policies directed toward the rural environment and its socio-legal ramifications today. Likewise, Article 144 defines the structure and functions of public security agencies (Brazil, 1988).

The National Secretariat of Public Security (SENASP) created, in 2018, the Unified Public Security System (SUSP), a program for combating rural violence coordinated by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP), in cooperation with the Public Security Secretariats of the states and the Federal District. This system aims to reduce all types of conflicts and crimes in rural zones. However, achieving such results requires not only financial investment but also a more dynamic and integrated effort between the Federal Government and the states, as well as the effective participation of the agencies responsible for promotion and oversight in rural areas, with the shared goal of developing public policies that are both preventive and repressive in the face of rural violence (Brazil, 2018).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Federal Government created the National Public Security Fund, allocating, in installments from 2000 to 2004, R\$ 1,600,000.00 (one billion and six hundred thousand reais) for investments in public security by state-level public security agencies.

However, nearly all of this funding was used for police infrastructure reforms and the implementation of public policies aimed at large urban centers. Furthermore, the Federal Government did not effectively participate in the management of these funds in partnership with the states' Public Security Secretariats, failing to follow the basic guidelines of the Integrated System of Financial Administration (SIAFI). In this context, even the priority public policies for urban centers—which could have impacted the fight against rural violence, such as the centralization of data and crime-related information—proved to be unsatisfactory. Brazil still faces challenges in operationalizing police work in rural areas, both due to the lack of qualified personnel and the lack of appropriate equipment, such as police vehicles adapted to dirt roads and satellite communication phones. Most arrests result from being caught in the act (*flagrante delicto*), and there is still a pressing need for more technical investigations based on forensic evidence and operational procedures, in conjunction with the usual search for witnesses and the gathering of statements (Costa; Oliveira Junior, 2016).

With rare initiatives for cooperation between public or private entities related to agribusiness and the state-level public security agencies—such as Agreement No. 168/2021-PMGO, entered into by the Public Security Secretariat of the State of Goiás, the State Secretariat of Economy (SEFAZ), and the Goian Agency for Agricultural Defense (AGRODEFESA), along with private sector entities that have been assisting public security agencies in overcoming the challenges of combating property crimes in rural settings—the national public security policy for combating property crimes on rural properties remains poorly integrated with other agencies and even among the police forces themselves (PMGO, 2021, p. 02).

2 THE FIGHT AGAINST RURAL CRIME IN BRAZIL AND IN GOIÁS

As a rule, the policing model in Brazil until the beginning of the 21st century was focused on urban areas. However, the increasing number of crimes committed on rural properties made it necessary to create specialized and properly equipped police teams to operate in rural environments. In the training courses for state military police officers, no criteria were adopted to differentiate the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) according to the specificities of the area where policing activities would be carried out. The recognition of the many challenges inherent to rural environments led public security authorities to create a policing model specialized in rural crime (Leal, 2009).

Rural policing is preventive, ostensive, and repressive in nature, aimed at rural areas of municipalities, with the goal of preventing crimes on rural properties and surrounding areas. This policing is conducted by patrol vehicles with two or more military police officers (Leal, 2009).

The rural policing model, designed for the prevention of crimes on rural properties, was developed starting in the 1990s and implemented by the military police through the Rural Patrol. This form of ostensive policing was adopted by various military police forces in states such as Goiás, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo. According to Caixeta (2009) and Gonçalves (2008), rural patrolling likely began in the state of Minas Gerais in the mid-2000s and later spread to other states. Due to positive results, neighboring states like Goiás and São Paulo implemented rural patrols shortly thereafter.

The Rural Patrol of the State of São Paulo (PMESP) was established in 2004, through regulation PM3-08/02/04, dated June 29, 2004, which created a new structure by developing a specific approach to policing. The directive addressed the migration of criminal acts to rural areas, particularly rural properties used for production, tourism, and leisure, in addition to crimes typical of rural settings, such as cattle theft and theft/robbery of rural properties, equipment, and agricultural supplies (São Paulo, 2004).

The Rural Patrol of the State of Paraná was created in January 1996, but it was only in 2000 that it began implementing community rural policing, aimed at preventing and combating the trafficking of wild animals, drugs, and firearms, cattle slaughter within rural properties, and the theft of livestock and agricultural machinery. Officers also conducted community visits to understand the local routine and provide guidance for preventing theft and robbery (Azevedo, 2022; PMPR, 2022).

Combating rural crime requires an analysis of the problems created by the current crime-fighting model, which range from environmental crimes to crimes against property and life, as well as the unique challenges of the rural environment. In Goiás, the Rural Patrol began experimentally in 1993 in the municipalities of Piracanjuba, Quirinópolis, and Indiará, but it was not systematized within the police force due to the absence of a regulation formally establishing rural patrolling. It was only in 2003, through Ordinance No. 678/2003-PMGO, that a process of systematization and standardization of rural patrolling techniques began, through the adoption of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), given that, in practice, there were already several officers working in rural companies or battalions (Goiás, 2003; PMGO, 2008).

Since 2017, the state of Goiás has been collecting crime statistics for rural areas. The Rural Patrol of the Military Police of the State of Goiás created a registration and georeferencing program that allows state military police officers to visit and register rural properties, rural producers, and their employees. Additionally, they can georeference the location of the property with the goal of reducing response time in the event of a crime. The registration also includes a list and photographs of farm

machinery, which are used for dissemination and identification in cases of theft or robbery. Producers receive a monitoring sign containing the registration number of their property (Oliveira, 2020).

After the implementation of this system and through joint efforts with the State Police Department for the Repression of Rural Crimes, the main members of criminal organizations operating in rural properties in the state of Goiás were arrested, and there was a decrease in the number of reports of theft and robbery in rural properties between 2017 and 2021. Data provided by the Public Security Secretariat of the State of Goiás show that the number of thefts in rural properties dropped from 5,018 in 2017 to 3,521 in 2020, a 30% decrease. In the first half of 2021, there were only 1,529 reports of theft (Qlinksense, 2021).

The number of reported robberies in rural properties decreased from 535 in 2017 to 232 in 2020, a reduction of 56%. In the first half of 2021, there were only 83 reports of robbery (Qlinksense, 2021).

The creation of the Rural Patrol Battalion in Goiás (BPMRural), however, was only formalized in 2019, through State Law No. 20.488/2019, which assigns to BPMRural the responsibility for protection and ensuring peace in rural communities, as well as acting against criminal activity and preserving social peace in the countryside.

Due to the need to strengthen the fight against rural crimes throughout the state, the Rural Crime Combat Network — as a pilot project in Brazil — established the State Police Department for the Repression of Rural Crimes (DERCR) through Ordinance No. 465/2021-DGPCGO (Ordinance 465/2021-DGPCGO, 2021).

DERCR is responsible for investigating high-profile crimes, monitoring criminal associations specialized in rural crimes, and processing data from reports of such crimes, in addition to other activities outlined in State Law No. 19.907/2017 (Goiás, 2017).

The centralization and dissemination of data and reports on crimes committed in rural properties, along with the strengthening of ties and integration with other police forces from the State of Goiás and neighboring states, allow for information sharing to achieve the common goal of repressing rural crime. Strengthening relationships with producers, rural workers, companies, and cooperatives related to agribusiness follows the same purpose (Goiás, 2017).

The legislation also addressed the issue of vehicles suitable for rural environments, specifying the use of unmarked vehicles capable of traveling on unpaved and hard-to-access roads. This is a highly relevant matter, since in certain cases, vehicles commonly used by police in urban areas would not even be able to reach rural properties (Goiás, 2017).

The State Police Department for the Repression of Rural Crimes (DERCR) is directly subordinate to the Superintendency of Judicial Police, but also reports to the Public Security Secretariat of the State of Goiás. The law also provided for the creation of an integrated network between the police forces and other state agencies related to agribusiness (Goiás, 2017).

This Rural Crime Combat Network aims to integrate police forces and other public and private entities through proper data compilation and information production, as well as integrated and collaborative action in investigations and police operations to repress rural crimes. To this end, the network operates under the coordination of units of the Civil Police of the State of Goiás and in partnership with public and private organizations and institutions linked to rural activity, aiming at the consolidation of information and the development of strategies and actions to fight rural crime.

The Public Security Secretariat of the State of Goiás (SSPGO) is responsible for controlling the other state public security agencies and for integrating other state bodies, especially the Secretariat of Economy (SEFAZ GO) and the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (SEAPA), as well as at the federal level, particularly with the Federal Police (PF) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA), and at the municipal level, especially with Municipal Secretariats of Development and Agriculture, and also in the private sector, among other institutions, such as the Agriculture and Livestock Federation of Goiás (FAEG), the Federation of Agricultural Workers of the State of Goiás (FETAEG), the National Rural Learning Service of Goiás (SENAR Goiás), the Soy and Corn Producers Association of Goiás (APROSOJA Goiás), the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA), as well as private companies (FAEG, 2007).

Created by the Public Security Secretariat and distributed by the Civil and Military Police — especially by the Rural Battalion of the Military Police — a guidebook instructs rural residents on how to adopt preventive measures against crime in the countryside.

Once the property is registered with the Rural Battalion, owners and workers gain direct access to the police officers assigned to that region in case they need assistance. The Civil Police can then more easily locate the farm, gather timely information, and increase the chances of quickly arresting criminals. Furthermore, the chances of recovering stolen items also improve.

Created by the Public Security Secretariat and distributed by the Civil and Military Police — especially by the Rural Battalion of the Military Police — a guidebook instructs rural residents on how to adopt preventive measures against crime in the countryside⁶.

⁶Among the preventive measures described in the Guidebook are the following guidelines: Always mark the herd to facilitate identification; Keep someone on the property whenever possible; Regularly count the herd; Always record the personal information of employees; Never share relevant information about the property and the herd with strangers;

With the property registered by the Rural Battalion, landowners and workers gain direct access to the police officers assigned to that region in order to request assistance. The Civil Police can more easily locate the farm and gather information in a timely manner, which increases the chances of arresting criminals more quickly. In addition, the chances of recovering stolen property from the victims are also increased.

3 RURAL CRIMES IN GOIÁS BETWEEN 2017 AND 2021

Crimes against property were those that increased the most in the early 21st century in the state of Goiás. Among the most stolen items were electronic devices, such as televisions and cell phones; work tools, such as drills, chainsaws, brush cutters, and submersible pumps; as well as firearms (Feliciano, 2016).

Despite a decrease in the number of reported cases of theft and robbery between 2017 and 2021 (QlikSense, 2021), the theft and robbery of livestock continued to rise. This offense has received a specific legal classification under Article 155, § 6, of the Brazilian Penal Code (introduced by Law No. 13.330 of 2016), which establishes a prison sentence of two to five years if the stolen item is a domesticated livestock animal for production, even if it is slaughtered or dismembered at the site of the theft.

Given the connection between the crimes of theft and receiving stolen goods, the latter also received its own legal classification in the case of livestock, applying to anyone who "acquires, receives, transports, drives, hides, stores, or sells, for the purpose of production or commercial sale, a domesticated livestock animal for production, even if slaughtered or dismembered, knowing it to be the product of a crime" (introduced by Law No. 13.330 of 2016) (Article 180-A of the Penal Code).

Although livestock robbery shows a smaller number of reported cases compared to livestock theft, it has increased in absolute terms when observing the numbers from the beginning of the 21st century. Criminal organizations that previously focused on bank robbery, drug trafficking, and other types of crimes began to recognize the weaknesses in rural policing and the lucrative potential of livestock robbery. In some instances, the profits from a single robbery can exceed those from a bank heist (Vieira; Doula, 2019).

Establish a network of contacts with neighbors and the police; Invest in security equipment such as cameras and alarms; Use dogs to reinforce surveillance; Avoid exposing any firearms stored on the property; Never sell cattle with payment by check; Do not keep cash on the property and avoid paying workers in cash; and Regularly check the property's state registration and monitor cattle movements.

In addition to material losses, this type of crime has disrupted the peace of rural communities, as it is generally carried out by specialized criminal groups that already have a pre-established division of tasks among their members (Goiás, 2018).

An analysis of police reports regarding theft and robbery in rural properties between 2017 and 2021 in the state of Goiás revealed that criminal groups typically use firearms to overpower workers and landowners, holding them captive inside the residence, usually tied up. The group's division of labor follows this pattern: one part of the group gathers the cattle and loads them into livestock trucks, while the other part subdues the residents and secures the property. These criminals often remain on-site for a few hours after the truck has departed with the animals to ensure the transportation reaches its initial destination, thereby preventing the victims from quickly contacting law enforcement (QlikSense, 2021).

The increase in property crimes in the early 21st century (Oliveira, 2020), coupled with the growing sophistication of these crimes, underscores the need to rethink the model for addressing such criminal activities. In this context, the creation of specialized police forces focused on rural environments emerged as a key strategy to counter the level of organization and complexity of the criminal groups operating in Goiás. Some of these individuals were already part of other criminal organizations specializing in drug trafficking and bank robberies.

The results achieved through the establishment of DERCR (Delegacia Estadual de Repressão a Crimes Rurais) and its integration with other police forces and agencies connected to the productive sector led to a 30% reduction in theft and a 56% reduction in robbery between 2017 and 2021. The resulting sense of security among the rural population serves as a deterrent to the commission of further crimes in these areas (QlikSense, 2021).

There is a recognizable correlation between certain social groups and specific types of crimes, yet there are few studies that re-identify some contributing factors—especially the relationship between geographic space and human predictive capacity. In the 1990s, studies on violence, criminality, and public security focused primarily on violent crime and the social representations of violence (Lima; Misse; Miranda, 2000).

Following the analysis of police reports on theft and robbery in rural properties in Goiás between 2017 and 2021, as well as the study by Feliciano (2016), which analyzed property crimes in rural areas in early 21st-century Goiás, it became evident that victims commonly shared the habit of keeping valuable items—such as agricultural inputs, electronic devices, firearms, and cash—on their properties, and often lacked security equipment such as surveillance cameras. Moreover, police reports showed that in most cases, the perpetrators were local residents or neighbors who were

familiar with the victim's routine or, at the very least, the characteristics of the targeted property (QlikSense, 2021).

There are several factors that contribute to criminality, its forms, and the places where it occurs, as well as the causal relationships associated with crime. After conducting a hierarchical clustering analysis and applying some econometric measures regarding the relationship between space and time, it was found that various types of crimes related to drugs and alcohol play a decisive role in distinguishing and gradually varying the criminal characteristics of different groups of individuals, in addition to correlating with other indicators that identify the relationship between certain social groups and specific types of crime (Henriques, 2014).

Factors such as population density or the number of police officers per capita have been evaluated for the development of public policies to combat violence in rural areas. These aspects influence the rise in property crimes in rural zones. Due to the relationship between the location where the crime is committed and the small number of officers available for a vast area, it is important for public security agencies to engage with and understand the characteristics of both the rural residents and the rural environment itself in order to carry out policing activities more effectively (Schlemper; Shikida; Carvalho, 2020).

The influence of inequality on crime rates has long been the subject of study, and the results are controversial. Some scholars claim that inequality is positively associated with crime rates, but negatively when considered over time. Other researchers argue that additional factors influence the relationship with crime, such as environmental conditions, the relationship between criminal profiles and exposure to certain environments—such as global warming—or to certain materials, such as lead (Trindade, 2004).

The development of rural public security policies must go beyond merely analyzing criminal⁷ behavior. Before that, it is essential to understand the specific data of the rural context.

A practical evaluation of police reports of theft and robbery in the State of Goiás between 2017 and 2021 also indicated that several crimes committed on rural properties were not included in rural crime statistics because they were registered as having occurred in urban areas (QlikSense, 2021). In light of this, it is necessary to create a uniform and reliable criminal statistics system for the country, especially with regard to rural violence.

⁷Becker (1968) defines the economic criminal as a type of entrepreneur, classifying crime into two categories: one of an economic nature, in which crimes ultimately aim at profit—such as usurpation, fraud, receiving stolen goods, theft, robbery, and extortion—and another of a non-economic nature, whose objective is not profit-driven, such as rape, homicide, abuse of power, and torture. Although pursuing profit like an entrepreneur, the economic criminal is harmful both to the social group and to society as a whole, as crime is an indicator of social collapse (Henriques, 2014).

Beyond the lives and financial assets lost due to theft and robbery in rural properties, it is difficult to measure the full extent of the damage caused to society. According to the Atlas of Violence (2019), the losses resulting from violence in Brazil amount to approximately 373 billion reais, equivalent to 5.9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016. This data not only reveals the magnitude of Brazil's problem (IDB, 2017), but also the urgent need to (re)think outdated strategies for combating criminality.

4 CONCLUSION

Violence in rural areas has hindered the development of agricultural and livestock activities, with effects that also extend to urban environments. Although rural inhabitants represent a small portion of the Brazilian population, they perform essential activities that ensure food security in both rural and urban settings.

The research indicates a rise in criminal activity in the Brazilian countryside, particularly crimes against property, despite the lack of official and consolidated statistical data from public security agencies. In light of the absence of official figures, a successful initiative in combating rural crime was identified through the efforts of the Public Security Department of the State of Goiás, with the creation of the State Police Division for the Repression of Rural Crimes. Through the integration of police forces, the community, and the private sector, a reduction in property crimes committed in rural areas of Goiás was observed between 2017 and 2021.

The responsibility for ensuring public safety for rural residents, especially those engaged in agricultural or livestock production, lies with the States. Since 2017, Goiás has shifted its public security policies toward programs focused on the prevention and repression of property crimes committed in rural areas. Therefore, this research evaluated existing strategies for combating rural violence, as well as potential measures that institutions involved in the productive sector may adopt to prevent such crimes in both Brazil and Goiás.

For public security forces, the countryside represents a vast and often inhospitable environment that demands integrated action from the state government, law enforcement agencies, and all actors involved in agricultural activities. Such coordination is essential for ensuring the constitutional right to human dignity for farmers, allowing them to live without the constant fear of physical or property-related violence. In fact, the prevailing climate of violence may prevent rural residents from bearing the financial burdens of their agricultural or livestock operations due to the economic losses caused by theft and robbery on their properties.

Criminal organizations that previously operated in major urban centers are now migrating to rural areas and specializing in crimes committed in the countryside, where they take advantage of communication difficulties between neighbors, the challenging access to farms, and knowledge of the specific assets present on each property. In response to the increasing sophistication of these criminal groups, the State of Goiás is rethinking its rural policing strategy by promoting integration among stakeholders, analyzing public security data, and encouraging community participation.

Despite the absence of precise official data regarding the number of property crimes in rural areas and the profiles of the victims, this study presented information obtained from public security agencies and through bibliographic research.

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize the need to develop improved mechanisms to differentiate crimes committed in urban areas from those occurring in rural properties. Such differentiation is crucial for the accurate identification and classification of rural crimes by law enforcement authorities. Many of these institutions still struggle to clearly define what constitutes a crime on rural property. Thus, acquiring more accurate data on the number of criminal incidents occurring in rural areas is essential for formulating effective public security strategies.

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