

MONITOR

JANUARY 2021



REPÓRTER
BRASIL

“SLAVE LABOR IN BRAZIL’S MEAT INDUSTRY”

The eighth issue of Monitor – a newsletter that publishes Repórter Brasil’s studies on supply chains – presents an investigation on the incidence of modern slavery in the meat industry

*Precarious accommodation at
a livestock farm*



MONITOR #8

STAFF

EDITOR

Marcel Gomes

"Slave labor in Brazil's meat industry"

RESEARCH AND TEXT

André Campos (Coordination)

Piero Locatelli

PHOTOS

Subsecretaria de Inspeção do Trabalho/ Ministério da Economia
e Avenir Prado (capa)

Subsecretaria de Inspeção do Trabalho/ Ministério da Economia (p.03, p.12, p.14, p.18 e p.20)

Axel Mellin por Pixabay (p.04)

Michael Gaida por Pixabay (p.06 e p.11)

Ascom MPT Bahia (p.07)

Álvoro Rezende (p.10)

Ahmed DRIDI por Pixabay (p.19)

João Laet (p.22)

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Elaine Almeida

REPÓRTER BRASIL

ORGANIZATION OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL PROJECTS

GENERAL COORDINATOR

Leonardo Sakamoto

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Marcel Gomes

FINANCIAL COORDINATOR

Marta Santana

ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

Marília Ramos

ADDRESS

Rua Bruxelas, 169.

São Paulo - SP - Brasil

CEP 01259-020



**REPÓRTER
BRASIL**

CONTACTS



biobr@reporterbrasil.org.br



ONGReporterBrasil



@reporterb

(55 11) 2506-6570

(55 11) 2506-6562

(55 11) 2506-6576

(55 11) 2506-6574

INTRODUCTION

This report addresses the relationship between Brazilian livestock production and modern slave labor – a crime provided for in the country’s Penal Code and in international agreements to which the country is a signatory.

Official policies to combat modern slavery in Brazil turned 25 years old in 2020. It was only in 1995 that the Federal Government officially recognized the existence of contemporary forms of slavery in the country.

Since then, a series of government and civil society actions have been carried out to address the problem. The results show that bovine cattle farming plays a prominent role in the overall scenario of slave labor, accounting for a significant portion of the cases found in the country.

The first part of this report provides a history of the connections between livestock and modern slavery in Brazil. It also describes the laws and regulations governing the fight against that crime in the country, as well as the corporate policies developed by major meat companies in order to curb worker exploitation in their supply chains.

Then some case studies are presented that provide recent examples of how, after more than 10 years of corporate policies being announced to address the problem, several links still connect large companies to ranchers who employ slave labor.

Room where the workers slept and their belongings were stored at the Umuarama farm, in Tocantins

METHODOLOGY

The case studies start from modern slavery situations found by the Brazilian government in recent years or included in the “dirty list” of slave labor during the past five years. The cases begin with operations carried out by the Subsecretariat of Labor Inspection – an agency that used to be part of the Ministry of Labor until January 2, 2019 but now reports to the Ministry of Economy.

Based on this initial scope, investigations and information crossing were carried out to map out the supply chains involving the properties. The cases presented here are the result of that work.

This does not mean that there are no other cases and connections. Information sources on supply chains accessed by Repórter Brasil have several limitations – regarding timeframe, the precise geographical movements of the products, and the identities of all suppliers and customers. For this very reason, the situations presented here should be seen only as examples of a network of commercial relations that is certainly wider.

SLAVE LABOR IN BRAZIL

In 1995, Brazil's Federal Government publicly admitted the existence of contemporary slave labour to the country itself and the International Labour Organization (ILO), becoming one of the first nations in the world to officially recognize the presence of the problem in its territory. From 1995 to date, more than 55,000 workers have been freed from situations analogous to slavery by operations headed mainly by Ministry of Labour inspectors.





Despite the relatively high number of workers rescued, it would be a mistake to assume that they represent anything close to the total cases occurring in the country. Many situations of contemporary slavery are never repor-

ted, and many complaints made to the authorities are never inspected.

The problem is spread all over Brazil's territory. Traditionally, workers subjected to contemporary slavery are employed in economic activities developed in rural areas, such as cattle farming, coal production, and agricultural crops. However, while most cases still happen in rural areas, the problem has been found more often in urban centres in recent years, especially in the textile and construction industries.

Rural workers freed during inspections are mostly migrants who had left their hometowns towards agricultural regions, after being lured by recruiters' false promises or being forced to migrate to escape economic vulnerability.

Slave labour cannot be seen merely as a violation of labour laws. It is defined as a crime against human dignity under Article 149 of the Brazilian Penal Code (Código Penal Brasileiro, CPB). According to that article – which provides for a sentence of two to eight years in prison in addition to a fine for perpetrators – any of the following four elements is enough to characterize exploitation of labour “in conditions analogous to slavery”:

	Forced labour: people forced to work under threats of physical or psychological violence or geographical isolation;
	Exhaustive working hours: workdays that go well beyond overtime and endanger workers' physical wellness;
	Degrading conditions: unhealthy accommodation, no access to PPE, decent food and drinking water at work places;
	Debt bondage: workers tied to their jobs because of illegal debts related to transportation, food, accommodation and other expenses.

Therefore, according to Brazilian law, that condition is not defined only by restriction of victims' freedom. Slave labour is also practiced by those who subject workers to situations that harm their basic dignity, to the point of placing their lives at risk due to degrading conditions of work, accommodation or food.

When the inspectors from the Ministry of Labour go to the field and find workers in conditions analogous to slavery, usually after a complaint, the so-called "rescue" is carried out. During the inspection, which in some situations may be escorted by Federal

Police, employers have to settle everything they owe to workers under Brazilian labour laws.

The reports of inspection operations that find workers in conditions of slavery are also sent to the Labour Prosecution Service (Ministério Público do Trabalho, MPT), which can resort to Labour Courts to demand compensation for individual and collective damages. In the criminal sphere, the Federal Prosecution Service (Ministério Público Federal, MPF) is competent to prosecute employers for the crime of using slave labour according to Article 149 of the Penal Code. In case of conviction, the

sentence is defined by Federal Justice – rather than Labour Justice.

Impunity, however, is still one of the main bottlenecks in the fight against slave labour in Brazil. While civil sanctions have been enforced, criminal sentences are still rare. Jurisdictional conflicts – about the competence of state or federal courts to prosecute the crime – and delays in the judicial system often cause the statute of limitations to expire.

THE “DIRTY LIST” OF SLAVE LABOR

In 2003, the federal government created the “dirty list” of slave labour, which became one of the main tools to combat that crime in supply chains in the following years. The list is a register updated by the Ministry of Labour, which discloses data on employers charged by inspectors with subjecting their employees to situations of slavery.

It is important to keep in mind that the “dirty list” is an administrative tool of the Federal Executive whose constitutionality was confirmed by the Federal

Supreme Court in September 2020. It is not based on any law, but rather on an Executive administrative ordinance that aims to provide transparency to inspection operations.

This means that employers do not have to be convicted by the crime provided for in Article 149 of the Penal Code to have their names included in the register. But no one is included until an administrative procedure is conducted under the Ministry of Economy and they present their defense.

This procedure may take months or even several years, and follows the various administrative steps provided for in Interministerial Ordinance 4 of May 11, 2016. Once a name is included in the register, it will remain there for at least two years. If all labor and social security issues are settled and there is no recurrence during that period, the information can be removed.



LIVESTOCK AND SLAVE LABOR

Historically, most cases of slave labor occur in rural areas, and livestock is the sector where the problem is concentrated. According to data provided by the Federal Government and sys-

tematized by the Land Pastoral Commission, more than half of the cases of slave labor found in Brazil between 1995 and 2020 took place in the livestock sector – 1,950 cases or 51% of the

total. Livestock is also the sector from which most workers have been rescued – 31% or 17,253 people.



Number of cases and workers rescued per year

YEAR	WORKERS FREED	CASES	YEAR	WORKERS FREED	CASES
1995	51	12	2009	604	120
1996	264	9	2010	792	106
1997	4	12	2011	530	96
1998	159	15	2012	532	70
1999	582	18	2013	284	71
2000	280	27	2014	319	49
2001	980	49	2015	181	36
2002	1274	158	2016	214	36
2003	3148	189	2017	145	31
2004	1325	154	2018	118	28
2005	1406	176	2019	140	27
2006	1393	157	*2020	18	8
2007	1465	162	TOTAL	17253	1950
2008	1045	134			

Source: Federal government data systematized by the Land Pastoral Commission

* Data available until October 2020

These figures do not account for the total problem, only for the cases with workers rescued by federal inspectors. In addition, there is a significant drop in the number of cases and workers rescued during the last decade as a result of a decrease in inspections carried out by the federal

government, caused by both budget and ideology issues. Therefore, the fewer workers rescued cannot be seen as the result of a drastic drop in slave labor cases.

At the same time, the precarious situations experienced in pastures coexist with a domestic meat industry

increasingly integrated into international markets, which has grown over the past decades and became a global leader. Brazil is currently the world's largest beef exporter. It sells its products to all continents and has over 200 million head of cattle.

FROM FARMS TO MEATPACKERS

LIVESTOCK FARMING STAGES

Farming livestock for slaughter involves the stages of breeding, rearing and fattening, which cover different times in the development of animals.

BREEDING

In bovine farming, breeding comprises the calf's birth and its growth until weaning, which usually occurs between six and eight months of age.

REARING

Breeding goes from weaning until the beginning of reproduction for females or fattening for males. The animals stay in this stage for the longest time. For those slaughtered at the age of four, it can last for about 30 months.

FATTENING

This last stage is intended to prepare the animals for slaughter. That is when their weight gain is stimulated to increase production volume. Some ranchers work with all stages, but many will focus on one or two of the steps described above. Several factors are decisive for that, such as:

1) The farmer's capacity to invest in infrastructure and feed;

2) The geographical location of the property and its proximity to slaughter plants;

3) The quality of pastures in different areas.

This results in intense pre-slaughter trade of animals. Farms dedicated only to fattening buy cattle for slaughter from other areas and producers. Likewise, farmers dedicated to raising and rearing have other rural producers as their main customers. Therefore, a large portion of cattle ranchers operating in Brazil do not trade their animals directly with meatpacking plants and slaughterhouses. Rather, they are indirect suppliers of the meat processing industry. That impacts the sales of employers who use slave labor, as will be shown in the case studies.

THE NATIONAL PACT FOR THE ERADICATION OF SLAVE LABOR

Two years after the creation of the "dirty list" in 2005, the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor was launched in Brazil. It is a multi-sector agreement that brings together Brazilian and multinational companies formally committed to eliminating the use of slave labor from their Brazilian supply chains. The pact has more than 400 signatories, including many of the largest companies operating in the country. Its signatories have committed to ten lines of action that companies must adopt to tackle slave labor. One is to use the "dirty list" to monitor their business. By signing the Pact – supported by the International Labor Organization (ILO) – companies commit to restricting business relations with employers included in the federal government's register. Current signatories include major companies in the beef sector, including the three largest Brazilian meatpackers – JBS, Marfrig and Minerva. All of them claim to have monitoring mechanisms inspected by independent auditors in order to block suppliers included in the "dirty list".

INDIRECT SUPPLIERS

However, the lack of mechanisms to track “suppliers’ suppliers” significantly reduces the effectiveness of control measures. A considerable part of the cases of slavery in livestock does not occur on farms that supply animals directly for slaughter, but rather on those doing breeding and rearing, which transfer cattle to be fattened at other properties. When this occurs, meatpackers do not have the tools to detect it and therefore remain susceptible to purchasing cattle from suppliers using modern slavery.

That gap is linked to sanctions received under the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor. In 2012, JBS was suspended from the Pact for failing to comply with duties related to monitoring its supply chain. In January 2014, however, it was reincluded among signatories.

At the time, the Pact’s Coordination and Monitoring Committee released a statement saying that “since JBS presented proposals and methodologies to control the company’s purchasing system but does not directly address the core problem of Brazilian livestock – cattle triangulation – the company will lead and support the creation of a spe-

cific Working Group for the livestock industry, to map sector-specific problems and propose solutions.”

Even so, after seven years, the sector has not produced an effective response for mapping its indirect suppliers. In addition to making such companies vulnerable to slave labor, this situation risks contaminating their supply chains with legal deforestation.

In 2020, the country’s largest meatpacking companies renewed their promises to solve the traceability problem. Marfrig stated that it will be able to identify 100% of its supply chain by 2030. JBS, in turn, announced that it will have an indirect monitoring system in place by 2025. It is not clear, however, how these goals will be actually achieved.

PREVENTION AND REMEDIATION

In any case, indirect supplier traceability should not be seen as a definitive or fully satisfactory solution to eliminate slave labor from supplier networks. As already pointed out, Brazil is currently experiencing a dramatic reduction in the number of labor inspections in rural areas. Therefore, the small contingent of ranchers included in the “dirty list” is becoming less representative of the total number of slavery cases found in cattle farms.

In this context, there is a lack of corporate policies that go beyond the use of the “dirty list” to monitor suppliers. The industry still treats the prevention of that crime at supplier farms or even remediation of damages caused to workers as absolutely secondary.

As shown by some examples in the case studies listed below, slave labor is sometimes found a few weeks before or after animals are supplied to meatpackers, which underscores the risk of contaminating supplier networks with cattle handled by workers subjected to modern slavery.



CASE STUDIES

The cases below describe supply chain tracking focused on farms and employers that have been sanctioned for the crime of “Employing Labor Analogous to Slavery.” They are linked to meatpackers’ supply chains in different Brazilian regions and biomes, according to the methodology described above.

TAQUES THOMAZELLI

SUPPLY CHAIN

In October 2019, the JBS meatpacking plant in Campo Grande (state of Mato Grosso do Sul/MS) slaughtered cattle from the Copacabana farm, located in Aquidauana (MS). Another JBS unit in Anastácio (MS) received cattle from the same farm in December 2019 and January 2020.

Sales were made directly from the property where slave labor was found. The Copacabana farm is also known as Piúva Rosa.

EMPLOYER

The Copacabana farm is controlled by Fernanda Taques Thomazelli, who lives in Campo Grande (MS). She is the daughter of José Thomazelli – who manages the property according to labor inspectors.

The property is now leased and is part of the estate of Orestes Rodrigues dos Reis, who used to be a town councilor in Aquidauana.

SLAVE LABOR

The case was found by the federal government in an inspection operation that began on August 29, 2019 and ended on September 10, 2019 – that is, a few weeks before one of the slaughters reported above. The farm and the employer in charge were included in the “dirty list” in 2020.

CASE DESCRIPTION

The rescue involved nine workers from the Taunay/Ipegue Indigenous Land, an area inhabited by members of the Terena Indigenous People. They worked on pasture cleaning “from Monday through Saturday, from 5:30 am to 5:15 pm, with a lunch break between 11 am and 1:15 pm.” Their work was initially controlled by José Thomazelli, who hired them through a middleman known as “Mr. Jair.” The latter received 8,500 reais for the entire contract and would pay 40 reais per day to each worker.

The problems found by the labor inspectors included:

The employees did not have formal contracts, did not take any pre-employment medical examination, and never received any type of protective equipment such as boots, leggings, gloves and hats or caps with nape protection.

The employer did not provide workers with accommodation, and they lived in the indigenous village more than two hours away on a dirt road. Therefore, they improvised a house at the farm. According to one testimony, “the accommodation was a shack made of tree branches covered with straw and tarpaulin, no walls and unpaved floor (dirt floor), and the beds were made of tree limbs, while the mattresses and bedding were brought by the workers themselves.”

According to the inspectors, the place offered to workers “did not meet the legal requirements for a living area; no comfort, they were exposed to several risks such as accidents with venomous and wild animals, bad weather (rain, wind, dust and cold) and, therefore, to several work-related health problems.”

The workers did not have any type of restroom facility, and “had to relieve themselves in the midst of local vegetation and use mugs and plastic water containers to bathe, without any privacy or security.”

There was no place for meals, which were prepared by the workers themselves in tarpaulin tents, without any proper structure.

The workers did not have access to clean water for drinking or bathing, and all water came from a poorly kept tank. According to one worker’s testimony, they used to drink “from the tank, and the water came with a lot of dirt and had a cloudy and sometimes green color, with brackish taste.”

Place where workers slept at the Copacabana farm, in Mato Grosso do Sul

AMARILDO MARTINI

SUPPLY CHAIN

The Rodoserv IV farm, where the slave labor case was found, supplied cattle directly to the JBS meatpacking plant in Naviraí (MS) in January and October 2019. It also sent animals to the same unit in February and April 2020. In addition, it sold cattle to another JBS plant, located in Ponta Porã (MS), in September, November and December 2019.

There is also a potential indirect relationship between the farm and the meatpacker. In April 2019, Rodoserv IV

sold cattle to the Triângulo farm, which, in turn, supplied animals to JBS's plant in Naviraí in May of the same year.

EMPLOYER

A resident of Botucatu (São Paulo/SP), Martini is a partner in the Rodoserv group, a large chain of gas stations and road food services.

SLAVE LABOR

O caso de trabalho escravo foi flagraThe slave labor case was found by an inspection operation started in October 2019. The administrative procedure related to the violations has not

been concluded yet. Therefore, the employer has not been definitely included in the "dirty list."

CASE DESCRIPTION

The operation rescued six workers, four of whom were Paraguayan migrants. They all worked in building and restoring fences.

Four workers had been on the same farm for over ten years, where they were subjected to degrading conditions. They said they worked "from 4:30 am to 11:00 am and from 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm, Monday through Saturday and sometimes on Sundays as well."

The problems found by labor inspectors included:

The water provided was not clean and was taken from a stream close to the work fronts, which was also used by cattle. The water was warm and cloudy, did not undergo any purification or filtration treatment, and was kept in plastic bottles.

In one of the accommodations, "workers had to use pesticide containers and mugs for bathing on a stream about 150 meters away from the accommodation, outdoors, without any thermal comfort, privacy or safety."

A Paraguayan worker claims that they "built a camp with tree branches covered with plastic tarpaulin opened on the sides" and that "there was no toilet, bathroom or kitchen structure on the premises, and the workers used the bush to relieve themselves."

Employees were not registered by the employer, did not undergo any pre-employment medical examination, and received no personal protective equipment.



Precarious beds on gallons of lubricants at the Rodoserv IV farm



Meat available for consumption by workers at the Rodoserv IV farm

RAFAEL PEDRON VICENTE

SUPPLY CHAIN

The Morro Esperança farm, in Co-rumbá (MS), sold cattle to the JBS unit in the municipality of Anastácio (MS) in May and August 2017. It is also known as the Santo Antônio farm.

EMPLOYER

The property belongs to Rafael Pedron Vicente, who lives in Campo Grande (MS).

SLAVE LABOR

The rancher was charged with using slave labor in an inspection operation initiated in April 2017 and completed in the following month – just when the property supplied cattle to JBS. The case was included in the dirty list in March 2019.

CASE DESCRIPTION

The five workers rescued were responsible for building and maintaining fences in the property. According to the inspection, they were subjected to degrading work conditions. Two of them were Paraguayans and did not even have documents. All were hired by a cousin of Rafael Pedron Vicente's. According to the inspection, he was the farm's manager.

The problems found included:

The workers lived in an "improvised shack with a dirt floor," which was also used to store salt for livestock and riding equipment. They had no beds and used to sleep on wooden boards and bricks, with improvised "bedsteads." No bedding was provided by the employer.

There was no proper bathroom or toilet facility. According to the inspection, "these employees had to relieve themselves in the midst of the vegetation and bathe outdoors, using a hose hanging in an improvised way in a place without any visual barrier." There were bathrooms in a building a hundred meters from the place where the workers staid, but they were not allowed to use them.

There was no proper space to prepare and store food. The workers cooked their meals on a "makeshift stove made up of rusty iron plates over bricks and located outside the shack, on dirt floor." Food was kept inside the shack, in the same environment where the workers slept.

The people rescued had never received any type of personal protective equipment and had to wear their own clothes and shoes to work.

JOAQUIM BAHIA EVANGELISTA

SUPPLY CHAIN

In December 2018, two months after being included on the “dirty list,” the 4 de Outubro farm supplied cattle to be fattened on another property in northern Tocantins – the Pateiro farm, located in Araguaã.

The Pateiro farm, in turn, sells animals to Minerva’s meatpacking plant in Araguaína (TO). It sent cattle to be slaughtered at the unit several times between 2019 and 2020.

EMPLOYER

The 4 de Outubro farm belongs to Joaquim Bahia Evangelista, who lives and has an office in Anicuns (state of Goiás/GO).

SLAVE LABOR

The case was found during an inspection carried out in March 2017 and was included in the “dirty list” in October 2018.

CASE DESCRIPTION

The worker rescued was an elderly man over 65 years old who was in charge of fence construction and maintenance. He started working on the farm about a year and a half before the rescue operation and had been recruited by the owner of the property himself.

He reported that he was initially paid BRL 40.00 a day, and his wages were increased to BRL 50.00 after he “insisted a lot.” Payments were made regularly until September 2016 and then became less regular. The employee used to write down the payments himself and, according to his calculations,

his boss owed him 186 days at the time of inspection.

The worker also reported that he provided other services to the farmer for seven months, such as taking care of pigs and chickens on the property, but he had never been paid for these activities.

While working on the farm, he suffered a work accident “when particles of red-hot metal hit his eye while he was cutting threaded iron bars.” His boss was at the farm at the time of the accident, but only after three days he told the tractor driver to take the employee to see a doctor in town. At the time, the worker spent about BRL 300.00, but was not reimbursed by the employer.

The inspectors found a series of irregularities that qualify as degrading work conditions – which, according to Brazilian law, constitute a situation of labor analogous to slavery. They include:

The dreadful conditions of the accommodation. According to the description provided by the inspectors, “the worker would enter through the corral area, full of mud and feces from the cattle that circulated there daily. The indoors area was completely dirty, damp and full of bat feces.” The roof let rainwater in. In one of the four rooms, the worker had improvised a kitchen where he cooked his meals. There was no suitable place to store personal objects and food, so that “everything was scattered and disorganized in the damp and dirty environment.” With no mattresses or bedding, the worker slept in a makeshift hammock.

The bathroom was “extremely dirty,” with no conditions to function. Dogs, birds and pigs used to enter the place where the worker lived and “defecated everywhere.”

There was no drinking water, which had to be brought in cans from another property by the tractor driver. The water used for other purposes came from a nearby dam through a narrow canal that had been built by the worker himself.

The employer never provided any safety equipment to the worker, who did not wear proper shoes or gloves to work. In addition, there was no drinking water on the work front, places for him to relieve himself or eat, which had to be improvised by the worker himself. Nor were there any first aid materials.

ERONICE DE SOUZA BORGES

SUPPLY CHAIN

In April 2020, the Pai e Filho farm in Cariri do Tocantins (State of Tocantins/TO) purchased cattle for fattening from the Umuarama farm, located in Aliança do Tocantins (TO). At the time, the supplier property was on the “dirty list” of slave labor.

Six months later, in October 2020, the Pai e Filho farm sent cattle to be slaughtered by Cooperfrigu Foods – a meat exporting industry located in southern Tocantins.

The Umuarama farm is also among the recent direct suppliers of the Boi Brasil meatpacking company, as already revealed in a report published by Repórter Brasil.¹ A month after being

included in the “dirty list”, the farm sent cattle to the slaughterhouse of Boi Brasil in Alvorada (TO).

In addition to the slave labor case, the same farm was also fined in 2018 by the Tocantins State Environmental Department for illegal deforestation of 60 hectares at the site.

EMPLOYER

Eronice de Souza Borges, owner of the Umuarama farm, lives in Gurupi (TO) and owns other farms in the area.

SLAVERY

The case of slave labor was found in an inspection carried out in February 2016 and included in the “dirty list” more than two years later, in October 2018.

CASE DESCRIPTION

The case was investigated after a complaint stating that the farm’s owner used to threaten his employees “saying that he would shoot in the face any worker who left the farm.” During the operation, the inspectors did not confirm the death threats, but found slave-like work. Only one worker was rescued – a machine operator who provided deforestation services for pasture formation.

According to inspectors, he worked under degrading conditions, since “he was treated as a thing or rather as a mere working tool.” The problems found included:

Lack of formal contract or any work documents, no weekly rest or vacation, “13th salary” or protective equipment.

The place where the worker was “did not have minimum hygiene and healthiness conditions since, despite its masonry construction, it lacked all items needed for human life. Thus, it served as a mere shelter from rain and sun, since it had no bed, cupboards, kitchen, table, bathroom, shower.” No bed or hammock was provided for the worker to sleep on, nor was there a place for him to keep his belongings.

The electrical wiring was apparent and unsafe for the worker; it did not comply with the rules for that type of installation.

The bathroom was out of service, with no functioning toilet or shower. The lavatory had no water supply.

Water for cooking and drinking was taken from an open cistern that allowed dirt and insects to enter it.

*Kitchen where workers prepared food at
the Umuarama farm*



HÉLIO CAVALCANTI GARCIA

SUPPLY CHAIN

Rancher Hélio Cavalcanti Garcia supplied cattle directly to Frigoestrela on several occasions in 2018 and 2019, while his name appeared on the “dirty list” of slave labor the previous year.

Sales were made from the Barreirinho farm in Poxoréu (MT). Slave labor was found on another of his properties in the same municipality.

EMPLOYER

Garcia was the mayor of Rondonópolis in the 1960s and, in addition to being a rancher, he is also a notary public.

SLAVE LABOR

The employer was caught using slave labor in June 2016 and was included in the “dirty list” the following year. The inspectors found five workers in a slave-like situation at his Rio Dourado farm. The case was originally exposed in 2019, in a report published by Repórter Brasil.²



JOSÉ CARLOS NOBRE MONTEIRO / JOSÉ RODRIGUES DOS SANTOS

SUPPLY CHAIN

Both ranchers supplied cattle to Frigotil, a meatpacking company located in Timon (state of Maranhão/MA), while they were on the “dirty list.” This is another case described in a previous Repórter Brasil report.

In the case of José Carlos Nobre Monteiro, sales were made between May and September 2018 from the Vitória farm in Bacabal (MA). José Rodrigues dos Santos supplied the company with animals from several farms in Maranhão between 2018 and 2019.

EMPLOYERS

José Carlos Nobre Monteiro, a.k.a. Carlinhos Florêncio, is a state deputy in Maranhão (PCdoB), currently in his third term. José Rodrigues dos Santos is a rancher who owns several rural properties in the state, with a history of recurrence in the use of slave labor.

SLAVE LABOR

Carlinhos Florêncio was fined for employing nine workers under slave-like conditions at the Tremendal farm in Parnarama (MA). They were rescued in April 2016. The rancher was included in the “dirty list” two years later.

José Rodrigues dos Santos had his name included in the “dirty list” in October 2017, after 22 employees were rescued at the Lago Azul farm in Brejo de Areia (MA).

But this was not the first case of slave labor involving Santos. In 2007, he was charged with exploiting 48 workers at the Ilha/Veneza farm in Capinzal do Norte (MA). Two years later, a new inspection on the same property led to a new rescue, this time of 29 workers. At the time, the inspectors found that Santos had leased the land to his brother.



Place used for food preparation at a livestock farm

STATEMENTS PROVIDED BY MEATPACKING COMPANIES AND CATTLE RANCHERS

Ranchers and companies directly involved in the cases mentioned in this report were contacted through e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers that were publicly available on their own channels.

See the full answers at:

<https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2020/12/integra-das-respostas-sobre-relatorio-de-trabalho-escravo-e-pecuaria/>

MINERVA

In a note sent to Repórter Brasil, the company stated: “We have never done business with the 4 de Outubro farm, located in Ancius (GO). The Pateiro farm (Araguanã/TO), in turn, is qualified to supply Minerva Foods, and the data legally available to the Company do not show any irregularities in the process of supplying livestock to our Araguaína/TO unit. We will investigate the facts and, if any irregularity is found in this process of trading cattle with our plant located in that municipality in Tocantins, appropriate measures will be taken.”

FRIGOTIL

The meatpacker stated that it was not aware of cases of modern slavery at the time of the purchases mentioned in this report. “In addition to hiring a consultancy firm, Frigotil consults the list of employers who have submitted workers to modern slavery.”

JBS

In a note sent to Repórter Brasil, the company stated that “all the commitments assumed by JBS for the purchase of cattle from its direct suppliers are based on permanently checking the Dirty List of Slave Labor, which is the government’s official base for identifying these cases. Producers are blocked as soon as their CPFs [taxpayers’ numbers] appear on the list, and that was done in the cases mentioned.”

RAFAEL PEDRON VICENTE

The rancher disputes the violation notifications issued by labor inspectors. In his defense presented to the Ministry of Economy, he says that the statements supporting the sanctions are false and he was the victim of simulation. “Knowing the content of the violation notifications, we are sure that we have been victims of a fraud in which the perpetrator has even managed to deceive the authorities, using them as instruments of pressure to achieve it.”

Vicente said he “does not remember” whether sales to the meatpacker took place before or after the inspection. “After this episode, I literally paid all the contractor’s employees and the I stopped the activity entirely, I mean, I continued operating only to remove the cattle and sell it. I ended my activities in Brazil without leaving any debts or pending issues.”

FRIGOESTRELA

In an email to Repórter Brasil in September 2019, Frigoestrela stated that “it repudiates any practices of modern slavery or child labor, having a taintless history of more than 40 years of experience in the domestic and international markets. So much so that it maintains the common practice in which all its departments responsible for purchasing cattle accompany the suppliers’ official records, paying periodic visits to the properties, and cancel purchases immediately if any restrictions are found.” At the time, they stated that they no longer had “any relationship with the aforementioned rancher or any of his properties.”

AMARILDO MARTINI

Rodoserv group’s manager Valdir Teixeira da Silva Júnior denied that workers on the farm had been subjected to conditions similar to slavery in a statement published at the time of the inspection on the blog of journalist and Repórter Brasil’s director Leonardo Sakamoto.³ The manager stated that the operation only found unregistered workers. “The operation focused only on unregistered workers. The company is signing an agreement to settle whatever liability it may have according to the law. Now, what they allege isn’t not real,” he said in interview to the blog. Repórter Brasil sought contact with the group again but received no response.

HÉLIO CAVALCANTI GARCIA

In a report published on the G1 website at the time of the inspection, he declared that he was the victim of an employee who owed him BRL 17,000. He also said that the workers were not his employees – one of them was a contractor and the other four were subcontractors.⁴ Garcia did not respond to Repórter Brasil's attempts to contact him.

JOSÉ CARLOS NOBRE MONTEIRO

In an interview with UOL in 2018,⁵ state deputy Carlinhos Florêncio's lawyer claimed that his client's inclusion in the "dirty list" was unfair because, even though he owned the farm, his brothers were in charge of management. Repórter Brasil wrote to the deputy's office but received no answers.

OUTROS

Ranchers Joaquim Bahia Evangelista, José Carlos Nobre Monteiro and José Rodrigues dos Santos, and meatpacking companies Cooperfrigu and Boi Brasil did not respond to Repórter Brasil's attempts to contact.



NOTES

- 1 <https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2019/09/pao-de-acucar-suspende-compra-de-carne-de-fornecedores-autuados-por-trabalho-escravo/>
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 <https://blogdosakamoto.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2019/10/15/paraguaios-sao-resgatados-da-escravidao-apos-dez-anos-em-fazenda-no-ms/>
- 4 <https://g1.globo.com/mato-grosso/noticia/servidor-da-sema-e-mais-3-sao-autuados-por-trabalho-analogo-a-escravidao-em-mt.ghtml>
- 5 <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticias/2018/08/29/fazendeiro-e-socio-de-empresa-na-lista-do-trabalho-escravo-disputam-eleicao.htm>