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CHAPTER SIX

MODERNISING AMBITIONS: AGRONOMISTS IN ACTION BETWEEN DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY (PORTUGAL, 1957-1986)

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The Centro de Estudos de Economia Agrária (CEEAA) was created in 1957. This scientific research unit, sponsored by the Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian (FCG)¹, was active for almost 30 years. It operated during the decades in which major changes occurred in agriculture and rural society in Western Europe and, especially, in Portugal. Since the Centre was active until 1986, its researchers accompanied the major changes of the transition from dictatorship to democracy (after the 1974 Revolution) and the preparation of the Portuguese adhesion to the European Economic Community (1986). During these decades, different factors contributed to maintain agriculture on the core of national and international debates. In this context, this chapter analyses the origins and the main objectives of the CEEAA, evaluating its role in the discussions associated with agricultural modernisation.²

¹In this article, the names of the institutions are in Portuguese, Centro de Estudos de Economia Agraria (Centre for the Study of Agricultural Economics) and the Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation).

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In this analysis, two main questions are assessed. One is related to the conditions of development of scientific research and its application to Portuguese agriculture during the decades that followed the end of World War II. This issue has not yet been fully elucidated by Portuguese historiography. Although it is recognised that during the 1950s there was investment in agronomic research, particularly during the execution of the Marshall Plan (Rollo, 2007), there is little evidence of the impact of innovation in agriculture in this decade and the next (Freire, 2007). This is an essential topic to understand the historical circumstances of the diffusion of the *green revolution* model in Portugal. Despite the criticism that the *green revolution* has been subjected to in recent decades (Griffin, 1979; Glaeser, 1987; Lanero and Freire, 2011), it remains relevant to explain how the model has spread throughout the world, including the outlying regions of the Iberian Peninsula (Lanero and Freire, 2011b). Knowledge on the activities performed by the CEEA is a contribution to shed light on the Portuguese case.

Another goal of this analysis is to evaluate how political regimes conditioned the actions of civil society. This is a big issue in the international debate, which obviously cannot be fully treated in this chapter. However, to understand the origin and development of the CEEA it is necessary to take into account the complex relationship established between the State and technical elites. In the second half of the twentieth century, the insertion of Portuguese agronomists in epistemic communities was facilitated by the admission of the country in major international organisations.³ Nevertheless, the dictatorship continued to limit the internal action of these elites and conditioned the creation of professional associations (Delicado *et al.*, 2012). The CEEA was an exception. Much as has happened with other organisations, the CEEA was ambiguous, showing similarities both with the think tanks and with the academic centres for applied research arising in Europe during these decades (Stone and Denham, 2004). Therefore, the actions promoted by the CEEA need to be placed in the broader context of political and social changes that were taking place in Portugal and in the world during its 30 years of existence.

The chapter is divided into two parts. First it describes the origin and the consolidation process of the CEEA, which requires connecting the Centre to the complex networks which link the authoritarian state, civil

³ Although it continues to be ruled by a dictatorship, Portugal was admitted to the major international organisations related to economic and social development created from the 40s, namely the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1946 and the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (first OEEC and later OECD) in 1948.

society and agronomic research. Second, it identifies the objectives that guided the activities of the CEEA, examining how these were articulated with the political and social changes that occurred in Portugal between 1957 and 1986.

Origins of the Centro de Estudos de Economia Agraria

The Centro de Estudos de Economia Agrária had, from the beginning, a unique status in the national scenario of research and debate on agriculture and rural issues. First, because it was part of the Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian. The foundation, based in Lisbon, was created in 1956 to fulfill the testamentary dispositions of the millionaire Calouste Gulbenkian. The institutionalisation of this foundation was long and complex, in part due to the negotiations with the Estado Novo.⁴ The dictatorial regime of fascist inspiration, which ruled Portugal between 1933 and 1974, closed numerous associations and repressed civil society action. The Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian was one of the few non-governmental organisations created during the dictatorship, and became one of the main sponsors of artistic, educational and scientific programmes in Portugal.

During the first decades of its activity, the Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian established several scientific research units in areas that were not under state control. The CEEA was the first of these research units. The initiative to set up the Centre came from a group of agronomists who, on September 1957, sent the proposal to the Foundation. In the document, the relevance of the Centre is justified by the urgent need to develop agriculture and increase the incomes of Portuguese farmers. In this sense, the document states that the Centre should be devoted to the study of the following problems: "living conditions of rural populations; profitability analysis of various forms of land use; defining the characteristics of the farming methods most appropriate to the demands of contemporary life; scientific analysis of the social-agricultural income distribution; study of the forms of rural property exploration" (FCG Historical Archive, Pt:93, 22/5).

In September 1957, the foundation President, the lawyer Jose de Azeredo Perdigao, received nearly twenty proposals with several projects and requests. These requests were for grants and other type of support (to establish research units, to purchase equipment, to support fieldwork, etc.),

⁴ Several books gave more information about Calouste Gulbenkian and the foundation (Barreto, 2007; Hewins, 2009; FCG, 2010, for example).

which reflects the multiple expectations placed by the Portuguese elites on this foundation. The decisions of the President were not always favourable, but he had no doubts in accepting the proposal to create the CEEA. He considered that the project "has all the conditions to be accepted and carried out by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation" (FCG Historical Archive, Pt:93, 22/5). In the report he sent to the Foundation Board of Directors, he stated that the Centre could contribute decisively "to value our greatest asset — the land" (*ibidem*), so it should be issued "a favourable decision which would allow the proposal to be considered and financed" (*ibidem*). These recommendations appear to have been decisive for the creation of the CEEA for two main reasons. First, Azeredo Perdigao had a strong influence over all the foundation bodies. Second, because both the programme activities planned to be held by the Centre and the agronomist who presented the proposal did not fostered easy consensus among the members of the Board of Directors.

Jose de Azeredo Perdigao felt himself the need to provide additional information to clarify his position, as far as the goals of the Centre were concerned. Strengthening his opinion became necessary also because, in the early years of the twentieth century, he had published a small essay in which he underrated agriculture and argued that Portugal should focus on industrialisation. However, in 1957, despite the progress of the country's industrialisation after the World War II, agriculture still had a strong economic and social role. Actually, until the early 1960s, the primary sector was the main contributor to the Gross Domestic Product and employed a large part of the workforce (Lains, 2009). Recognizing this Portuguese specificity in the Western Europe scenario, Jose de Azeredo Perdigao understood that it was necessary to promote the modernisation of the primary sector, allowing it to contribute to the overall development of the country.

The President of the Fundaçd'o Calouste Gulbenkian argued that "our agriculture is, even today, guided by the same principles that prevailed centuries ago without taking advantage of the numerous advantages modern science makes available to the farmer, in order to reduce the risks of land exploration and to increase its productivity" (FCG Historical Archive, Pt:93, 22/5). In fact, this opinion provides a sample of the concepts that at the time were common among technical elites in Portugal, and which were used to explain the problems identified in agriculture: outdated practices, low productivity, widespread ignorance among farmers. Although historiography has been demonstrating that these opinions reflected neither the economic behaviour of farmers, nor the technological transformations which were occurring in Portuguese

agriculture in the first half of the twentieth century (Brito, Baptista and Pereira, 1996; Freire, 2007), these were the concepts which framed the creation of the CEEA. The Centre took on the mission of studying the best strategies to disseminate new agricultural practices, based on scientific knowledge and modern technology in order to contribute decisively to modernise Portuguese agriculture.

The proposal that led to the CEEA institutionalisation was signed by Mario de Azevedo Gomes and Henrique de Barros, two agronomists recognised by their professional skills and by the political positions they defended, often against the dictatorship. Both had been persecuted due to their active involvement in opposition movements against the Estado Novo and the political police had their criminal records. Among other activities, Mario de Azevedo Gomes had been president of the Movimento de Unidade Democrática, created after World War II to promote the democratisation of the country, but made illegal in 1946. Henrique de Barros was part of several movements that acted on the edge of legality, which did not benefited his academic career in public universities. Several factors contributed for selection of these two names as the official proponents of the document submitted to the Fundac' do Calouste Gulbenkian. Especially, Mario de Azevedo Gomes had a close personal and ideological relationship with Jose de Azeredo Perdigao. Both were Republicans and had affinities since the beginning of the *Seara Nova* movement, in the 1920s, before the establishment of the dictatorship. However, the role of Mario de Azevedo Gomes also had a symbolic meaning. On the one hand, he had advocated for long the establishment of a technical assistance service to farmers. On the other, the Estado Novo had extinguished the public research centre Estacao Agraria Central, in 1936, when he was its director.

Although these were the protagonists, the information gathered indicates that it was Manuel Bobone who had the idea of establishing a research centre devoted to agriculture. As a public servant in the Direccao Geral de Agricultura (Ministerio da Economia/Economy Ministry), this agronomist had visited the USA in the early 1950s. He thus knew the programmes of agricultural research and extension that existed in that country. This initial group was also composed by Quartim Graca and Eugenio de Castro Caldas. The first was a civil servant who had already been the Under Secretary of State for Agriculture in 1947, and again in 1958. The second one, besides being a professor at the Institute Superior de Agronomia (at the time the sole Portuguese agronomic university), had several political appointment positions (including being a member of several advisory and technical state committees). Even agronomists who

were civil servants acknowledged that the dictatorship imposed institutional _ and political constraints that did not allow the development of technical assistance programmes within the State, either in universities or in other public services. Therefore, some agronomists tried to find other ways to study problems and to promote agricultural innovation. The CEEA was an opportunity to accomplish this purpose. The project gathered agronomic engineers from different generations and ideological positions (who did and did not support the Estado Novo). However, all were renowned and experienced, which gave the project a national goal and withdrew from its immediate political connotations.

The CEEA began operating in January 1958. It followed one of the general requirements of the Fundacdo Calouste Gulbenkian, which was not to compete with the state, but to act only in areas outside the state's intervention. The CEEA proponents considered that the foundation contributed to overcome an institutional gap, which existed since the 1930s, when the Estacdo Agronemica Nacional (1936), another kind of state research centre, replaced the Estacao Agraria Central. More than a simple name change, this replacement revealed a clear preference of the dictatorship for the agronomy branch related to genetic and fitopathologic research. Thus, it disappeared from the organisational structure of the state one service devoted to the agronomy branch, which studied the economic and social factors associated with the modernisation of agriculture. After World War II, the rapid spread of the *green revolution* gave further relevance to these issues, and in several European countries, they became areas of study in rural sociology. Nevertheless, according to Henrique de Barros, in the 1950s Portugal, this study domain was being "almost marginalised by the people involved in agricultural policy, from farmers to the final decision-makers, including the technicians and the researchers" (Barros *et al.*, 1983). The CEEA proposal was aimed at solving these shortcomings, by actively contributing to study the implementation of *green revolution* solutions in Portuguese agriculture, since these solutions were increasing the productivity of land and labour in other countries.

However, the nature and goals of the CEEA raised prolonged objections, both within the foundation, and in political circles. In an attempt to clear all doubts, Jose de Azeredo PerdigAo provided further clarifications in the first major event of public projection of the CEEA, held in 1959.⁵ He reaffirmed that the Centre was not intended to compete

⁵ It was the first *Curso de gest& da empresa agricola*, held on the premises of the Associacffo Central de Agricultura Portuguesa, in April, 1959. Public and corporatist services officers were present at the inaugural session (FCG/CEEA, 1960:7).

with the state, but rather to work together with all the existing corporate and public entities. Especially because "knowing what to produce, where to produce and how to produce is presently a common concern of governments and farmers" (Barros *et al.*, 1960: 22). For these reasons, across the world, state entities and private initiatives had arisen, joining farmers and technicians and promoting the necessary studies to support the best decisions of the state and agricultural entrepreneurs. Offering to cooperate with the state, the CEEA positioned itself in this lineage of these entities⁶ and gave the dictatorship the political decision to accept or not this collaboration to improve public policy.

In fact, during the first decade of the CEEA activities, which coincided with the last years of Oliveira Salazar's government (1932-1968), the criticism of the agronomists regarding the indifference of the State increased. Although the dictator allowed the establishment of the Centre, he was not receptive to the adoption of the modernising solutions advocated by its researchers. The situation changed a little during the Marcelo Caetano period (1968-1974). There was a greater receptivity towards the initiatives and proposals of agronomists, which, however, was not reflected on political measures for agriculture modernisation. Following the principles of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, during the dictatorship, the CEEA activities were based on a plurality of opinions and ideological positions, which guaranteed its independence. However, these principles do not seem to have favoured the Centre's intervention in public policies and it seems to have had only a modest capacity to influence the course of agriculture modernisation (Freire, 2002).

In the years that followed the Revolution of April 1974, the CEEA members had more opportunities to influence public policies. Some of them abandoned temporary the CEEA to assume executive government positions' or to work in other public and private organisations (cooperatives, associations, etc.). In this way, they participated actively in the processes devoted to producing fast changes in rural areas or to increase food production.

⁶ The CEEA members knew some of them, in Europe, the first entities of official nature arose in Germany (1892) and Switzerland (1901). The development of research in the areas of agricultural economy led to the emergence of more public and private centres both in Europe (Netherlands, 1930, France, 1937), and in North America (Caldas and Pereira 1959: 63 - 67).

⁷ Among the members and employees of the CEEA who assumed positions of minister and secretaries of state related to agriculture, we may mention Agostinho de Carvalho, Antonio Lopes Cardoso, Fernando Oliveira Baptista, Joaquim Lourenco e Joao Mendes Espada.

The political and institutional changes introduced by the Portuguese democratic governments and the intensification of international critics to the *green revolution* may have contributed to diminish the relevance of the CEEA project. At the same time, following a strategy to reduce the direct responsibilities in scientific research, the Fundacalo Calouste Gulbenkian closed several centres formed in previous decades. The CEEA was formally extinct in 1986. However, many of its former members continued to develop professional activities (teaching, research, public employees) related to agriculture and rural issues. After all, these agronomists were part of the technical elite that took on broad responsibilities in national and international institutions.

Activities of the CEEA: to research, to disseminate and to influence

Both the justifications provided by agronomists in the proposal submitted to the Fundacdo Calouste Gulbenkian and the opinions of Jose Azeredo Perdigao made clear that, despite the industrialisation processes that were occurring in the country during the 1950s and 1960s, agriculture continued to have an important role in the economy and society. Giving meaning to these perspectives, the new centre would have as a primary goal the development of the agricultural sector, which was seen as immersed in a kind of historical backwardness. It should also contribute to the introduction and diffusion of scientific knowledge and technology that were prosperous in other countries. As it is referred by Eugenio de Castro Caldas and Mario Pereira, in the foreword of the first book published in the CEEA collection, the foreign bibliography that reached Portugal showed that even the Old European Mediterranean countries had decided to adopt the economic research techniques applied to agriculture in the USA (Caldas and Pereira, 1959: 13-14). The CEEA members accepted this mission and presented themselves as active agents in the diffusion of the American agriculture and food paradigm (based on fossil energy, chemicals and genetic manipulation), which became hegemonic in the West after World War II.

Taking into account the social and agro-ecological specificities of the country, the CEEA researchers devised a model aimed at making Portuguese agriculture more efficient. This was, after all, an ancient ambition, probably dating back to the eighteenth century, and lengthily discussed. However, as Azeredo Perdigap carefully points out, in 1960, the purpose was not to reedit physiocrat proposals or anachronistic modernisation programmes (Barros *et al.*, 1960: 17-22). On the contrary, it

was to follow the latest international trends. This was the era in that the miracles of improved seeds and chemicals were believable (Griffin, 1978). Agronomists "came out of the schools with a mission to suit the agricultural and farming world to the needs of good techniques, which, by definition, were the most modern ones" (Baptista, 2001: 174). This ambition implied the recognition of the backwardness signs in Portuguese agriculture and their elimination, by following a previously outlined model.

Portuguese agronomists understood that after the State promotion of extensive exploration natural resources, which led to the extinction of uncultivated lands,⁸ the place of agriculture in economic development would be achieved through agricultural intensification. These agronomists considered that the general development of the country demanded that agriculture maintained its historical economic and social functions. They considered that, at least in a transitory phase, measures which would require a sudden rural population exodus would have negative effects on society and the economy. Therefore, modern agricultural practices should be adopted, if they could assure the maximisation of natural resources exploration, but also if they ensured the dynamism and well-being of rural society. These perspectives contradicted the economists' position, which advocated a drastic and sudden reduction of the agrarian active population (to a value closer to the 5% of Northern Europe countries). Nevertheless, these agronomists ensured that it was possible to increase the efficiency of farms while maintaining relatively high levels of rural employment.

Members of the CEEA focused on production conditions of goods to satisfy the immediate needs of the growing urban population, which was increasing demand for livestock, fruits and vegetable products. This focus was a high priority because the Portuguese population continued to show calorie and protein consumption levels that were lower than the levels recommended by international organisations (Freire, 2011).

Similar to the large modernisation projects that were being implemented by Franco in Spain (Freire and Lanero, 2013) and by the governments of other countries (Scott, 1998), the plans designed by the Portuguese technicians gave the State a primary role. The modernisation proposals were based on extending irrigation systems, associating them to the multiplication of medium-sized farms focused on market production. Both the expansion of irrigated farmlands and the changes in the agrarian

⁸Two policies promoted by the Estado Novo contributed strongly to reach the limit of extensive land exploration. One was the Campanha do Trigo (Wheat Campaign) in the 1930s (Freire, 2008), the other was the forestation of wastelands in the 1950s (Freire, 2004).

structure required solid financing and public policies. Although the irrigated farmlands could be an incentive for property division, without state intervention this process would be too slow and disorganised. Therefore, in a country with a historical imbalance of land ownership, between the North (small size properties) and the South (large estates), agronomists advocated that public investment in irrigation infrastructures should be linked to a process of property redistribution, that would allow the formation of farms with technically efficient dimensions. In fact, these were old issues, dating back to the nineteenth century, but the national polemics were being updated by international experiences and debates. In short, we can say that the modernisation model proposed by CEEA agronomists was based on intensive and specialised agriculture, developed within technically efficient family farms, thus maximising national production in order to satisfy the demands of internal urban markets.

Although, at the time, the profound complexity of agricultural innovations could not be fully recognised by technicians, it was understood that meeting the demands of an industrialised and urbanised society posed new problems to the farmers. These problems could be divided into two categories. Some problems had exogenous origins, but affected the farmers work and incomes. Amongst these were: the impacts of economic policies; changes in consumer demands; market fluctuations for agricultural inputs and outputs; action of powerful monopolist commercial or industrial organisations. Other problems were indigenous to the farms and were related to their organisation and performance. Among these can be mentioned: extent and purposes of the agrarian exploration; farming systems; productivity of production factors; priority of financial investments; combination of production factors; analysis of farm incomes; production costs.

The CEEA was built to actively participate in solving the endogenous problems and also some of the other problems, through scientific research and dissemination of technical innovations. From the beginning, the mission of the Centre developed on two main fronts. As Castro Caldas and Mario Pereira stress it, in 1959, on the one hand, it was necessary to provide working conditions for Portuguese researchers. The world scientific research system was changing and those who "were aware of the progress of agriculture economics research noticed with anxiety, grief and dismay that everything newly presented was no longer the product of isolated researchers work [...], but the result of systematic research conducted in good economics and rural sociology laboratories, properly organised and with access to means of investigation that did not yet exist in Portugal" (Caldas and Pereira, 1959:14). The Fundacao Calouste

Gulbenkian provided the Centre with logistical and financial conditions, which allowed the recruitment of several researchers, technicians, interns and other workers.⁹ Following the settings of international academic laboratories, the researchers organised themselves into groups in order to develop research projects, which would require fieldwork and travelling abroad. At the same time, they participated in international conferences, organised several scientific meetings and published research results. They also promoted exchanges with national partners (central and regional public services, universities, corporatist organisations, associations) and international partners (FAO, OECE/OCDE, EFTA universities and public services related to development).

On the other hand, the Centre researchers had to find ways of transferring new knowledge to those who worked the land: "in countries where the economic and social research in agriculture progressed, the farmers professional organisations showed greater vitality and established with the scientific institutions the necessary alliances to achieve common goals" (Caldas and Pereira, 1959:14). These goals will remain throughout the period of the Centre's existence, despite the adaptations made to the various political and social dynamics that occurred during the decades of its activities.

Initially, the strategies adopted to disseminate new knowledge and practices were aimed directly at both technicians and farmers. In this sense, one of the first initiatives of the CEEA was the organisation (in 1959) of a training course that brought together one hundred technicians. In addition to other courses, they also promoted conferences, meetings, and the publication of three simultaneous collections (books, articles and working papers).¹⁰ These publications aimed at disseminating the work of the CEEA members and at the translation into Portuguese of papers or articles written by renowned foreign researchers. With these collections, which were active for more than 25 years, the Centre gathered extensive knowledge on agriculture and rural society, influencing the training of several generations of Portuguese technicians and agronomists.

The direct action aimed at farmers did not have this kind of continuity. It began by giving priority to issues related to agricultural management. It

⁹ Many of them that could benefit from the scholarship and internship programmes of the CEEA, were recruited among senior students of the agronomic engineering of the Instituto Superior de Agronomia.

¹⁰The CEEA library was closed and dispersed after 1986, but most of the books that were published in the collections of the centre are available in the current library of the Fundaco Calouste Gulbenkian (www.biblarte.gulbenkian.pt) and also in other libraries in the country and in the world.

was precisely to observe the activities of these farmers advising organisations that the CEEA researchers made their first visits to France. The synthesis of what they had learned constituted the first book published in the CEEA collections (Caldas and Pereira, 1959). Until 1958, the agricultural enterprise management "was an unknown theme" (Galva^o, 1978: 14) among Portuguese farmers. To make this practice effective, they thought that was essential to create *management advice for the farmers*. The CEEA sponsored four initiatives in different regions of the country (Baixo Alentejo, Beira Litoral, Minho and Douro Litoral), expecting the multiplication of these farmers-entrepreneurs associations. In 1958, the beginning was auspicious, but the expectations were not fulfilled. However, these centres did operate for a few years and promoted technical training for farmers, especially in the north and centre of the country.

The activities that may be considered of rural extension were more visible during the first two decades of the CEEA functioning. Covering roughly the 1960 and 1970 decades, they corresponded to the period of the Centre's greatest activity and coincided with the peak of the *green revolution* global diffusion. Although the Estado Novo was promoting some changes in agriculture and rural areas (for example, the allocation of subsidies for some farm infrastructure, since 1946; the release of the irrigation plan for the Alentejo region, in 1957), the technicians considered that these measures were not enough. Mainly because, among other problems, the dictatorial governments hindered land restructuring and did not promote rural extension.

The fall of the regime in 1974 opened new possibilities to make more effective the modernisation model defended by the Centre, especially as the land reform was a part of the political programme of the various governments. Expectations that it would be possible to apply the agricultural modernisation model defended by the CEEA agronomists remained until the late 1970s, when changes in the agrarian reform and the agreements with the European Economic Community gave a different direction to the agricultural and rural policies. At the same time, both the services created directly by the state (for example, the rural extension service and the Instituto Nacional de Investigaçao Agraria), and the restructuring of the higher education system (new courses, new departments, new universities) took on the functions which competed with the activities performed by the CEEA. In the 1980s, the CEEA sought various ways to reposition itself in the new political and institutional framework, highlighting the high qualifications, experience and international recognition of its members. Some of these ways were the consolidation of advanced technical training (conferring PhD degrees, for

example), the expansion of the think tank functions, by bringing together experts with the ability to promote research, consulting and conducting useful discussions to inform public policies.

At the end of the 1970s, the publication of several studies allowed a global view of the primary sector path and dissipated any optimism about agriculture performance (Caldas, 1978; Gido, 1980). The Agricultural Gross Product had stagnated and agriculture had not contributed to meet the growing food needs of the Portuguese inhabitants, requiring an increase in the import of basic products.

Concluding remarks

For nearly 30 years, the Centro de Estudos de Economia Agraria sponsored scientific research about Portuguese agriculture and rural society and raised relevant discussions about the development of the country. These activities did not have a direct impact in farm modernisation, but were instrumental in forming specialised elites and contributed to the expansion of rural studies.

During the dictatorship, the political meaning of the creation of the CEEA and the various interpretations afforded by the actions and speeches of those who were connected to the Centre, were not ignored in the arena of debate. On the one hand, the interventions of the various personalities linked to the Centre show that its existence was a constant factor of tension with members of the governing bodies. Researchers of CEEA had to find ways to avoid relationship conflicts with official bodies related to agriculture and even with members of the elite who occupied the most important positions in the organisations of the Nation. On the other hand, some of the proposals that emerged from the scientific research carried out at the Centre were used in the arguments produced by the opposition movements that fought against the Estado Novo regime. In some cases, personalities from the CEEA also developed civic actions in informal organisations that worked between legality and opposition to the regime.

The drivers of the Centre could be convinced, as was common at the time, that *good technique and progress* do not have necessarily a *political colour*. But in fact, the fulfillment of the purposes for which the Centre was created would lead to structural changes in the primary sector. And advocating measures that would lead to the implementation of this kind of changes had, even if implicitly, political purposes.

Following the dominant doctrines in Western Europe, the sponsors of the CEEA understood that the State should have an active role in driving the economy. And, as the entity that watched over the *common good*,

would promote the most appropriate political decisions for each sector. The CEEA was endowed with logistical, human and financial conditions to produce scientific information that would allow the state to make the best decisions. In this sense, the Centre approached the think tank organisations that have emerged in other countries. Although developing other activities, the ambition to participate in the definition of public policies seems to have been the most constant objective of the CEEA.

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