

Work in progress paper

Building Networks in the Global Beef Market

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Abstract

Several authors studied networks (Hertz & Mattsson, 2001; Gemunden et al 1997, among others). The beef business is composed of several networks, called here the agri-food networks. Any network is defined as a group of suppliers and distributors of an analyzed firm (in an individual case), or of the alliance being analyzed (in case of firms that manage a common brand). These firms perform the products, services, communication, and information, orders and payments flows needed to link from farms' input suppliers until the final consumers.

According to recent movements in the global beef market and external variables, mainly natural conditions, Brazil emerges as a candidate to assume the place of major global beef supplier in the world. This is empowered by the entrance of global players in the Brazilian beef market and crisis in some of the main competitors. Considering this current situation, what could be the future of this international business?

The first objective of this paper is to make a brief review of recent data on Brazilian and global beef markets (Umberger, 1999; Latvala & Kola, 2000; Brester 2000; Verbeke & Viaene, 2000, among others) and discuss potentialities and problems of the Brazilian beef production. The second objective is to show how the global beef networks could be operating in 2010 considering consumer and organizational developments. The methodology used in this article was diverse: bibliographic research, qualitative in-depth interviews were made with 30 specialists to get insights from the beef market and data were gathered and generated by the authors. Four expected networks for 2010 are described based on in depth-interviews with specialists.
