

# BURITI (MAURITIA FLEXUOSA L): ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE AND THE IMPACTS OF HUMAN ACTION ON THE POPULATION OF BURITI POPULATIONS IN CITIES IN THE EASTERN REGION OF MARANHÃO.

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FALCÃO; Milton de Sousa<sup>1</sup>, OLIVEIRA; Francisca das Chagas<sup>2</sup>, ALVARENGA; Glaziane Soares<sup>3</sup>, CARMO; Claudio Wesley Diniz do<sup>4</sup>

## RESUMO

Scientific name *Mauritia flexuosa* L., the buritizeiro, also known as miritizeiro, palm-do brejo, buriti-do-brejo or moriti, is a large palm of the Arecaceae family found in sappy and wet regions of the Center, North and Northeast of Brazil and other countries of Central and South America. In the east of Maranhão it is found bordering perennial streams and lakes throughout the stretch that comprises a basin of the Parnaíba River; its enormous ecological importance is due to the fact that it contributes to maintaining soil moisture and reducing evaporation in water courses, thus maintaining the region's microclimate. Its fruits and remains of roots represent a source of food for birds, mammals and fish important for the aquatic and terrestrial food chain, in addition to composing the culinary of the region's inhabitants with the preparation of sweets from the pulp and in the extraction of oil from the seeds, rich in precursory of vitamin A. The Pinto stream, with a length of 72 km and springs in the rural area of the city of Timon-MA between the Carnaubinha, Bandeira and Boqueirão, has been suffering constant loss of vegetation coverage due to the deforestation and changes of the watercourse with direct consequences on the reduction of the buritizal area. Such actions impact the entire local ecosystem, reaching species that see their ecological niche in the buritizal and in the extractive activity practiced by the population. A study and mapping of human actions in the region was carried out in order to help understand the main elements of environmental aggression, the consequences of these activities and forms of secondary intervention and the negative impacts on the environment. From the typification of human activities adopted in the region, it can be seen as the main forms of environmental degradation. Five rural properties were found commercialized through land subdivisions for the construction of properties with great appeal for the use of the banks of the stream as a sales strategy that end up promoting deforestation; 12 balneary and several private properties that explore the stream bed for bathing and modify the stream course with the construction of desviation, dams or fish farming tanks that take the water flow in stretches ahead, taking some points to loss of perennality and impacting various plant species accustomed to the humid environment and preventing new owners from sprouting and developing. Some few cases of crossing the banks of the stream for agriculture or livestock have also been observed. The results show that about 50% of the buritizal area is modified and that predatory actions are grouped by not observing the environmental legislation related to the conservation of riverside areas and that an urgent intervention is necessary in order to reverse how changes promoted so far and prevent new predatory activities from occurring either in the Pinto stream, or in a series of other water courses with similar characteristics in the cities of Maranhão in Timon, Parnarama, Matões, Caxias and Coelho Neto.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** buriti, deforestation, ecological importance, Pinto stream, water barriers

<sup>1</sup> Professor de Química pelo IFMA, sf.milton@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Pós-graduanda pelo IFPI, francisca.mat@hotmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Pós-graduanda pela UFMA, glaziane37@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup> Graduando em Química pelo IFMA, claudiowesleyreal@gmail.com