

Human Right to Food and Food Systems in Brazil

RENATO S. MALUF
LUCIENE BURLANDY



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SCN Quadra 1 Bloco C salas 1102-1104

Ed. Brasília Trade Center Brasília - DF

+55 61 9 9964-3731

contato@apd-brasil.de

www.de.apdbrasil.de

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ABOUT THIS STUDY

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AUTHORS

Renato S. Maluf is retired full professor at the Postgraduate Program in Social Sciences in Development, Agriculture and Society (CPDA), Rio de Janeiro Federal Rural University (UFRRJ), where he coordinates the Reference Center in Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty (CERESAN/UFRRJ).

Luciene Burlandy is associate Professor at the Postgraduate Program in Nutrition Science and the Postgraduate Studies Program in Social Politics at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF), where she coordinates the Reference Center in Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty (CERESAN/UFF). It is worth noting the popular 'Citizenship Action against Hunger and for Life', led by Herbert de Souza (widely known as Betinho).



Table of contents

List of acronyms	5
Introduction	8
1. Food Security and the Right to Food in Brazil: Recent Trajectory	12
2. Sustainable, Healthy and Equitable Food Systems	16
3. Public Policies, Institutionalities and Potentialities to Transform Food Systems	20
4. Lessons Learned and Challenges in the Brazilian Experience	33
References	36
Annexes	43

List of acronyms

ADPF	Arguição de Descumprimento de Preceito Fundamental (Claim of Non-Compliance with a Fundamental Precept)
BPC	Benefício de Prestação Continuada (Continuous Payment Benefit)
CAISAN	Câmara Interministerial de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Interministerial Chamber for Food and Nutrition Security)
CERESAN	Centro de Referência em Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Reference Center in Food and Nutrition Security)
CONSEA	Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (National Council on Food and Nutrition Security)
COPs	Conference of the Parties
EBIA	Escala Brasileira de Insegurança Alimentar (Brazilian Household Food Insecurity Scale)
EIPCO	Estratégia Intersetorial de Prevenção e Controle da Obesidade (Inter-sectoral Strategy to Prevent and Control Obesity)
EMBRAPA	Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agrícola (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation)
EPSANs	Equipamentos Públicos e Sociais de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Public and Social Food and Nutrition Security Equipment)
FI	Food Insecurity
FNS	Food and Nutrition Security
FNSS	Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty
FS	Food Sovereignty
GAPB	Guia Alimentar para a População Brasileira (Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population)
HRtF	Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition

LOSAN	Lei Orgânica de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security)
MAPA	Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento (Ministry of Agriculture and Supply)
MDA	Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário (Ministry of the Agrarian Development)
MDS	Ministério de Desenvolvimento Social; Ministério de Desenvolvimento e Assistência Social, Família e Combate à Fome (Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Social Development and Social Service, Family and Fight against Hunger)
NCD	Chronic Noncommunicable Disease
PAA	Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos (Food Acquisition Program)
PBF	Programa Bolsa Família (Family Grant Program)
PENSSAN	Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Brazilian Network of Research on Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty)
PLANSAN	Plano Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (National Plan for Food and Nutrition Security)
PLANAPO	Política Nacional de Agroecologia e Produção Orgânica (National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production)
PLOA	Projeto de Lei Orçamentária Anual (Annual Budget Bill)
PNAE	Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (National Program on School Meals)
PNAN	Política Nacional de Alimentação e Nutrição (National Food and Nutrition Policy)
PNMC	Política Nacional sobre Mudança do Clima (National Policy of Climate Change)
PNSAN	Política Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (National Food and Nutrition Security Policy)

PPAs	Planos Plurianuais de Investimento (Pluriannual Investment Plans)
RBBA	Rede Brasileira de Bancos de Alimentos (Brazilian Network of Food Banks)
SESAN	Secretaria Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (National Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security)
SISAN	Sistema de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Food and Nutrition Security System)
SUS	Sistema Único de Saúde (Unified Health System)
SUAS	Sistema Único de Assistência Social (Unified Social Service System)

Introduction

Brazil has been acknowledged worldwide for the process of socially building a unique concept of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) that incorporated the principles of Human Right to Adequate and Healthy Food (HRtF) and Food Sovereignty (FS). That construction occurred during the country's re-democratization period, after the civil-military dictatorship ended, in 1985, unfolding the pioneer approach of Josué de Castro in his work entitled *Geografia da Fome* (Castro, 1992 [1946]), which unveiled the taboo of hunger, providing a seminal contribution to politicize hunger by stating it is a product of human action, more specifically a product of development models. At that time, strong social mobilization started to request ethical-based politics, evidencing hunger as a denial of citizenship, and demanding urgent actions that could combine public policies and citizen participation¹. That was when the 'political field of FNSS/HRtF' started to emerge, mobilizing a broad and diverse set of social actors, and modifying the terms of public debates in Brazil, with repercussions abroad. From 2003 on, it would significantly influence the construction of public policies (Maluf, 2021)².

In the framework of the growing social participation, we can list the first Brazilian Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), which did not last long (1993-1994), the first National Conference on FNS (1994), the elaboration with social participation of the Brazilian document for the World Food Summit (1996), the creation of the Brazilian Food and Nutrition Security Forum (1998), and the creation of State-level Conseas. It was a long and fundamental period to lay the foundation and plan for the FNSS/HRtF that would flourish in the first Lula Administration, in 2003, as a basis of the institutional framework and the set of public policies that broadened the understanding of what hunger means and the strategies to address its multiple determinants. Those initiatives comprise the strengthening of food systems formed by family-based diversified farming, preferably agroecological production, a segment that in several countries is socially vulnerable and subject to situations of food insecurity (FI) and hunger. Significant actions led by civil society organizations that advocated for goals that would be used as a reference for FNS and SISA National Policies, in construction highlighted by social participation,

¹ It is worth noting the popular 'Citizenship Action against Hunger and for Life', led by Herbert de Souza (widely known as Betinho).

² As conceptualized by Bourdieu (2005), the political field corresponds to a field of symbolic struggles that presupposes the mobilization of symbolic capital, gives rise to properly political manifestations and, therefore, presupposes antagonisms.

reflected on the importance assigned, among others, to (i) the democratization of access to land, water and adequate and healthy food, (ii) strengthening of agroecological practices to produce food and fair, sustainable and healthy systems, and (iii) gender and ethnic/racial equity (Burlandy, 2023).

However, in the Brazilian trajectory, there is a permanent tension between the perspectives and propositions derived from FNSS/HRtF concepts, which emerged from the social construction process as mentioned above, and the agroindustrial food system configurations based on large-scale monocultures, extensive grazing system, intense use of pesticides, and supply of ultra-processed products, led by the agribusiness sector, food industry and large agrifood corporations. The private goals and interests of those players are, to a large extent, opposed to SISA goals and permeate their politics, with products and practices pointed out by academic studies as drivers of environmental, health and social problems (IPES-Food, 2017; Burlandy, 2023). This contraposition involves an important competition of narratives around the idea of food security and the eradication of hunger. The historical development of agricultural exports occurs using practices that, in certain territories and farming segments, cause deforestation, wildfires, social inequalities, violence, hunger, and poverty. It is a sector that captures significant revenue in a concentrated way, creates wealth that is not equitable and, also, contributes to sustainability and public health issues (Maluf *et al.* 2022a; Maluf *et al.* 2022b; Burlandy, 2023).

The perspective of productivism with an essentially commercial rationale is based on the fact that Brazil is a great producer and exporter of agrifood products as commodities, and the consequent economic and political influence of agents and representative entities in the so-called agribusiness. This is evidenced in the dimension of policies conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Provisioning (MAPA)³, and in the research agenda at the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company (EMBRAPA), among others. Despite that, it is worth noting a significant shift in CONAB operation, from 2003 on, towards diverse and agroecological farming, as well as MAPA engagement in a joint construction with the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) in Brazil's National Plan on Agroecology and Organic Production (PLANAPO). EMBRAPA, in its turn, as an institution with significant heterogeneity in the agendas of research and extension

³ It is noteworthy that, since the end of the 1990s, Brazil has different programs for corporate farming (agribusiness) managed by MAPA, and for family farming, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA). The idea of sorting farming activities according to social criteria and the respective differentiation of structures and programs was a Brazilian innovation, with broad acknowledgment.

of its many units, strengthened the operations of the units focused on family farming, agroecology, indigenous peoples, and traditional peoples and communities.

The economic and political influence, as mentioned above, strengthens the claims of the agribusiness sector - but equally involves food corporations - to be the enabler of food security in the country and worldwide, recurrently claiming global food security in not a less controversial way. However, more recently, there have been social domestic and international demands associated with the environment, human health, and climate. Here, too, the argument of feeding Brazil and the world is highlighted in the narratives of the sector, in face of measures aimed at enhancing social and environmental laws, the regulation of commercial determinants of health with the publication of the Dietary Guidelines by the Ministry of Health (Pompéia and Schneider, 2021), and the pressure to reduce deforestation and to decarbonize to fight climate change (Maluf et al, 2022a). It is no surprise that the agribusiness sector has no narrative to refer to the focus on HRtF, let alone FS.

The aforementioned contraposition of concepts and models and the corresponding conflicts are a central component of food politics in Brazil whose trajectory associated with FNSS/HRtF also reflects the country's more general political context. The parliamentary coup that toppled the President, in 2016, increased the adoption of fiscal austerity measures⁴ and initiated a progressive emptying of instances and programs that were promoting FNSS/HRtAFN until they were almost completely halted in the 2019-2022 period, aggravated by attacks on various social rights. Current President Lula administration (2023-2026) resumed the main references that were effective until 2016 and added a few others, reestablished political priorities to tackle hunger and other food insecurity conditions, and reincorporated the environment, sustainability and climate change into the public agenda. Additionally, his administration played a leading role at the international level by launching the proposition for a Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty under the G20 Brazilian presidency, as well as a Taskforce for Global Mobilization against Climate Change, a protagonism that reinforces domestic commitment.

Bringing hunger and FNS back as government priorities reflects on a broad set of policies, programs and actions, involving a significant amount of ministries that face the challenge of elaborating and implementing programs in an integrated, coherent, inter-sectoral and participatory way. There are plenty of materials available on the

⁴ Resource reduction in many social programs as a result of austerity policies had been occurring since 2014 (Souza et al., 2019).

performance of each program, their corresponding interruption, and route changes. To offer some additional contribution, we chose to focus on lessons learned from the social construction of FNSS/HRtF in Brazil and the institutional framework and public policies whose implementation relied on significant social participation, at the same time pointing at possible paths that may develop from that trajectory towards integrating FNSS/HRtF with the construction of sustainable and healthy food systems that are responsive to climate change.

For that purpose, the text is divided into four sections. The first section presents an update of the Brazilian population in terms of FNSS/HRtF. The second section introduces food systems' approaches, formats, and transition matters. The third section presents a broad overview of the most relevant policies, programs and actions when it comes to their contributions and potentialities to achieve the objectives pointed out in the two first sections in a combined way. The final section summarizes the lessons learned from the Brazilian experience and signals some challenges for the country to advance in the promotion of FNSS/HRtF and in the transition towards sustainable and healthy food systems that are responsive to climate change.

1. Food Security and the Right to Food in Brazil: Recent Trajectory

The way Brazil has been tackling hunger over time reveals both the possibilities of public actions and policies with proper design and political prioritization to promote FNSS/HRtF, and the obstacles derived from the social and economic structure of a highly unequal country with a very asymmetrical political system. The inequalities and asymmetries work as obstacles for the actions and programs to advance, and make it harder to continue them given the alternance of governments, in other words, they hinder the adoption of FNSS/., HRtF as permanent goals of the State, rather than the goals of one or another administration. And what is worse, setbacks in the political regime can trigger significant setbacks.

Data produced in the Brazilian Household Food Insecurity Scale (EBIA), conducted by IBGE (IBGE, 2024) and twice by Rede PENSSAN (PENSSAN, 2023) show a more virtuous trajectory between 2004 and 2014 (Figure 1, Annex). The success obtained in hunger reduction and improvement of food and nutrition conditions in Brazilian families in that period was the result of a set of broad and diverse measures aimed at the labor market (job creation, recovery of the minimum-wage purchasing power, strengthening of social security), extreme poor population (revenue transfer), family farming (food procurement, agroecology), schools (meals offered at schools, and food and nutrition education), nutrition and health (adequate and healthy food), environment (biodiversity, pesticides and transgenic food), meals (restaurants, kitchens, food banks), diffuse access to water (rural artesian wells), and electric power in rural areas.

After the aforementioned virtuous trajectory until 2014, there was an inflection point in 2017/18 that made FI drop back to the 2004 levels. The regression kept getting deeper until 2022, when only 41.3% of the households could be considered food secure, with an increase in all forms of food insecurity, the most severe form (hunger) accounting for 15.2% of all households, or 33 million people⁵. A new inflection was observed with a significant reduction, in a short period, in all forms of FI in Brazil and, particularly,

⁵ EBIA scale measures the following levels of food insecurity: mild when the regular food intake is compromised by food quality; moderate when the amount of food is lower than usual; severe when at least one family member is hungry because they had nothing to eat at all, or had to skip a meal.

the most severe form of FI (hunger) between 2021/22 and 2023, with about 21 million people being food insecure, out of which 8.7 million still experienced hunger. Although it was a significant and quick reduction, shortly after a year the country was ranking at the same levels measured in 2017/18; therefore, hunger was placed at a level that, at the time, signaled a setback in the reduction trend observed between 2004/2013 (Figure 1, Annex).

Data collected from the 2017/18 period and, especially, from 2020 and 2021/22 reflect the period of deterioration of the country's social, economic and political condition from 2016 on. Adding up to the economic recession and growing unemployment rates, the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated this scenario even further, affecting the lives of families, particularly the most vulnerable ones, with the extended impact caused by the way the pandemic was addressed by Bolsonaro's Government, producing damage far beyond what would be inevitable. In 2022, the pandemic came to an end, and the economic situation of the families gradually improved; there was a temporary rise in the value of cash transfer program (Brazil Aid) soon before the elections, and people and families resumed their work-related activities after they had been heavily affected, most of them getting back to the so-called informal labor market (precarious, uncertain and with low wages).

From 2023 on, the reconstruction of the state apparatus to a large extent dismantled by the previous administration was followed by a strong increase in formal employment and consequent reduction in unemployment rates, in addition to a sustained increase in the purchasing power of the minimum wage. It is also worth noting the Family Grant program was resumed, with re-qualification of the Unified Record and an increase in cash transfer amounts, with sustained expansion reaching over 21 million families. There was a significant increase in the amount of resources for basic protection provided by SUAS (Unified Social Service System), the meals served at schools were reinforced, with an adjustment in per capita value and more resources, and credit lines to support family farming were resumed with the Harvest Plan 2022/2023, and PAA (Food Acquisition Program) resumed purchases.

Those trends and their main drivers show that the institutional framework and public policies contributed to the periods when there has been positive evolution of reducing hunger and other FI manifestations. However, many factors explain the significant shifts in public policy orientation, their emptying and even dismantling which, to a large

extent, explain the periods of setbacks and comings and goings of hunger. Unfortunately, hunger and poverty have been a constant scenario in the history of the country; however, those recent ‘comings and goings’ of hunger and FI reflect a fragile internalization of HRtF in a society that not only coexists with hunger, but allows it to come back with the intensity observed more recently.

In the previous section, we briefly introduced the institutional framework and the policies and programs that laid out the Brazilian experience during the successful period of the Zero Hunger Strategy in 2003/2014. In the post-2023 context, when public policies and actions aimed at FNSS/HRtF are being resumed, now under the Brazil Without Hunger plan, it is timely to get back to the HRtF assumptions, with important implications in the design and implementation of those policies and actions. It is in fact a challenging goal for a society that lacks a solid culture of rights, where rights are not acknowledged, let alone demanded. It is clear from what was stated previously that the right to food is not the right to any food, but rather adequate and healthy food, or “real food in the countryside and in the city” according to the motto approved in the V National Conference on FNS (2015). Having become a constitutional right in 2010, although with fragile enforcement as argued in the text, the need to review programs and actions in order to prepare instruments for the promotion, protection and compliance (enforceability) of the DHA remains.

Some processes have been conducted in this direction, despite several obstacles when it comes to legal framework, posture revision and a shift in old clientelistic practices still very common in the three spheres of public administration. Starting with cash transfer, it consists of an instrument to promote the right to food and other essential needs for more vulnerable people. The fact that the cash transfer is done using a bank card whose holders are women represents important protection against those interested in politically leveraging the situation. Nevertheless, continuous efforts to communicate with the program beneficiaries are core to raising their awareness that they are entitled to that right and to support their use of the resources to access adequate and healthy food.

Tackling access restrictions to adequate and healthy food imposed by corporations, food industry, retail chains and the media is also, and above all, a human right issue, namely the right to receive accurate information, protect children who are the target of advertising, and have options available to access adequate and healthy food. When the idea of ‘real food’ was launched, it ignited important conflicting narratives with extensive use of the media. Access is affected by that type of private sector action, but also by

social and spatial inequalities in urban areas, like populations living in the outskirts of the city who are affected by income limitations (economic access) and lack of equipment to supply that type of food (physical access).

Organizations and social movements in Brazil are still crawling in their mobilization in the Judiciary Branch to advocate for the human right to food. For a long time, there have been lawsuits in the country in defense of consumer rights, which are definitely important, but they are more limited than the lens in FNSS/HRtF. It is also worth noting the recent appeal to the instrument of Claim of Non-compliance with Fundamental Precept (ADPF), a lawsuit driven by acts of the Public Authorities that are not compliant with the fundamental precepts found in the Federal Constitution. In 2021, a group of civil society organizations filed a lawsuit claiming the Federal Government failed to take action to tackle the exponential rise in hunger in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court failed to rule it.

The perspective of using HRtF with FNSS to analyze food systems in their different scales is promising and has been increasingly adopted. The research conducted by CERESAN under the *JustFood* project (Maluf et al, 2022a; 2022b; 2024) is a good example of questioning the formats of dominant food systems in Brazil and at the international level⁶. The questioning establishes a direct relationship between inequalities, inequities, injustices and rights, as we will clarify in the following section.

⁶ There has been an increasing number of research groups that address food systems to gather their analysis on inequalities, injustice and rights.

2. Sustainable, Healthy and Equitable Food Systems

There have been intense international discussions about the demand for just transitions towards sustainable and healthy food systems, with changes in diets, in the context of climate change. This perspective can be found in academic texts, documents related to the Sustainable Development Goals, and international events, such as the UN Food Systems Summit (2021) and the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) on Biodiversity and Climate Change. However, the positioning of civil society, private business private, governments, private foundations and international organizations makes up a scenario full of controversies associated with the role played by food systems to combat inequalities and promote social equity, the relationships between food production and consumption and human health, and also the transition paths with transformation aiming at sustainability and climate change (Maluf et al, 2022b).

Food systems here are addressed as complex sets whose evolution involves complementarity, conflicts and contradictions in their components, operate in a non-harmonic manner, and require coordination mechanisms among economic agents, social actors in general and State action. A multiscale and multidimensional approach to food systems sheds light on the different scales and dimensions they encompass (Maluf, 2021; Maluf; Burlandy, 2023). Thus, many factors or dynamics enable us to identify a domestic food system, whereas others extrapolate national borders and correspond to an international food system, and both systems are highly influenced by corporations and supported by national States or blocks of countries. Circuits or flows with lower spatial amplitude and scale of operation (local, territorial or regional) coexist with the aforementioned dynamics, resulting in interconnections of food systems with specific social, economic, political, cultural and ecologic characteristics of the social and spatial context. The connection of spheres enables us to unveil the links of what is produced and eaten with the corresponding culture and environment, as pointed out by Josué de Castro in his ecologic essay entitled *Geografia da fome* (Castro, 1992 [1946]). This perspective guides the proposition of decentralized food systems as a development of the multiscale approach to capture the interactions in territories and localities among systems with different scopes (Maluf, 2021).

In Brazil, there have been intense discussions and propositions related to connections between food systems, food provisioning and health and nutrition issues in situations of FI and hunger, obesity, environmental degradation and erosion of cultural practices, Chronic Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and diseases related to nutrient deficiency, which affect in a very uneven manner different population segments, regions of the country, and urban and rural areas. Under the perspective of sustainability, social equity and FNSS/HRtF, these connections are supported by vast academic literature on the repercussions of predominant modes to structure food systems (HLPE, 2017; IPES-FOOD, 2017; Swinburn et al., 2019). Additionally, there are social demands for the incorporation of social justice criteria and rights into the current food system transformation with references to food justice (Gottlieb & Josh, 2010), environmental justice (Acselrad, Herculano & Pádua, 2004), and the understanding of food as a common good (Vivero-Pol, 2018).

Systemic determinants for inequalities resulting from notably unjust food systems, combined with more general factors inherent to the formation of the Brazilian society, are expressed in the high concentration of production and trade practices (highlighted by the historical land concentration), as well as in the representation of interests and the governmental decision-making processes. Among the consequences, we can list (i) use of pesticides closely related to health problems, (ii) large-scale monocultures and agroindustrial value chains resulting in production specialization and compromise of the food and nutrition diversity, rather than using agroecological modes, (iii) marginalization of different farmer segments, particularly family and peasant farming, contributing to food insecurity and health insecurity in those segments, and (iv) invisibility of the economic, social and health problems experienced by certain population segments. Food systems reflect and at the same time are determinants of the high inequality levels that characterize the Brazilian society.

Because it is so relevant, it is worth including here a brief introduction to the food provisioning focus to be resumed in the next section under the scope of public policies in Brazil. Food provisioning encompasses a diverse and complex set of activities, agents and players mediating production and consumption, equally multiscale in their own matters in various scopes. Food provisioning actions and policies, when guided by FNSS/HRtF assumptions, aim at extending access to adequate and healthy food sourced from forms of production and distribution that are socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and value diversity in its multiple expressions, particularly family-based, diverse and preferably agroecological farming.

Food provisioning gained new nuances and higher complexity with integration at the international level, where large corporations stand out, increasingly bigger and more challenging urban areas, a change in the relationship between urban and rural areas in the territories, and an evolution in consumption behaviors and eating habits. Dominant food production, circulation and consumption standards compete with a broad spectrum of the so-called alternative initiatives for social control over food provisioning, with repercussions in food politics (Goodman et al, 2012).

Transformation in food systems that address the problems highlighted previously is capable of considering the development issue and its relationship with food politics, as noted by Leach et al. (2020), to whom food became the lens through which it is possible to address in an integrated manner an array of contemporary global challenges towards sustainable and equitable development, based on plural approaches and pointing to the diversity of paths for change. The different roles played by food and eating habits to tackle poverty and the various manifestations of inequalities and, of course, FI, require food system transformation processes that can address inequalities and injustice, and foster equity. From the very beginning, they should support and qualify economic activities of small and middle scale in food production, processing, trade and consumption, because that is where a significant part of the population is engaged in informal labor, in such a way that promotion of food justice and food equity have a broader meaning of promoting social justice and equity through food and eating (Maluf, 2024).

The transformation of food systems in Brazil faces one of the key links between the global and the domestic spheres due to the interconnection of soybean and livestock global value chains, one of the pillars of the world food system, since the country stands out as one of the largest world producers and exporters of soybean and meat. Those chains have been heavily questioned for contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and consequences of consumption habits associated with them on human health. They show clear manifestations of injustice in the three dimensions classified by Fraser and Honneth (2003), namely, distributive (economic concentration and other inequalities), procedural (power asymmetries and unequal incidence on public policies), and cognitive or recognition (related to family and peasant farming, indigenous peoples and traditional peoples and communities). Similarly, there are manifestations of inequalities and injustice in all ‘transformation domains’ proposed by Anderson et al. (2019), a focus that strengthens the agroecological transition advocated by the authors.

A great deal of the issues covered can be found in the research with the approach of just transition of food systems in Brazil, carried out by CERESAN (Maluf et al, 2022a; 2022b; 2024). A multiscale approach was developed on the interactions of global value chains of the soybean-meat complex with food systems at the national and local-territorial levels, in a context of high inequalities and injustice, revealing significant repercussions on social, environmental, human health and climate aspects of the production and consumption models at the global level and their repercussions on the ways to grow, process and trade food systems at the national and subnational levels. The limited reach of agribusiness and food corporate reactions to social demands, as well as the false solutions in terms of just transitions like moratoria and certifications, were clear in the conflicting narratives related to the meaning of sustainability and the contraposition of isolated and partial measures and those that assume great transformation in the food system. The research conducted locally in the Amazon context - Metropolitan Region of Santarém (PA) - captured the confluence of international, national and local-territorial dynamics with a fair amount of tension and conflict, and significant social mobilization. Historical social, economic and political dynamics were reinforced in that region, with territorial conflicts, impoverishment, production of inequities and power appropriation, followed by a compromise in access to adequate and healthy food, with changes in the menu of many social groups.

3. Public Policies, Institutional and Potentialities to Transform Food Systems

This section provides a broad overview of the public policies and the institutional framework developed in Brazil to tackle hunger and foster FNSS/HRtF, with the perspective of exploring its potentialities to promote sustainable, equitable and healthy food systems, taking into account climate change. The political decision made by the Presidency of the Republic, back in 2003, to prioritize the eradication of hunger by adopting the ‘Zero Hunger’ motto⁷, and the existence of a civil society organized around this goal since the end of the 1980s, were an integral part of the construction of an institutional framework and public policies and programs with inter-sectoral and participatory approach mentioned in extensive literature [Aranha (organizer), 2010; Silva et al (organizers), 2010; Leão; Maluf, 2012). We can highlight the reinstallation of the Brazilian Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) as a body to provide consultancy to the Presidency of the Republic, the National Secretariat for FNS (Food and Nutrition Security, SESAN), and the FNS Interministerial Chamber (CAISAN). The initial legal framework was the FNS Organic Law (LOSAN, 2006), a perfect example of joint work between the government and the civil society that created the FNS National System (SISAN) to promote HRtF through a FNS national policy (PNSAN).

According to Losan:

Art. 2 Adequate food is a fundamental human right, inherent to the dignity of people and indispensable to the realization of the rights entitled in the Federal Constitution, so the public authorities shall adopt the necessary policies and actions to promote and ensure food and nutrition security to the population.

Art. 3 Food and nutrition security consists of making sure everyone has regular and permanent access to quality food, in sufficient quantities, without compromising access to other essential needs, based on dietary habits that promote health, respect cultural diversity and are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

⁷ During Mrs. Dilma Rousseff’s administration, the ‘Zero Hunger’ motto was replaced, in 2012, with ‘Brazil without Extreme Poverty’, to extend the objectives and the scope of the actions, leveraging the social energy that had been gathered.

CONSEA and CAISAN are the two key SISAN organizing hubs, a structure that is reproduced at the state and municipal levels (Graph 1, Annex). Losan incorporated into the Brazilian legal framework the concept of the human right to food and FNS, observing the principle of people's sovereignty⁸. The legal framework was completed when Constitutional Amendment 64/2010 was signed, including access to food among the social rights entitled by Article #6 of the Federal Constitution, after intense social mobilization led by CONSEA. Although access to food has become a constitutional right, its enforceability is still rather fragile in Brazil. Additionally, states and municipalities may or may not voluntarily adhere to SISAN. In addition to the routine operation of CONSEA and its state and municipal counterparts, there are two occasions when public policies go under social control, the quadrennial FNS National Conferences and, an important innovation, the National Conference + 2 years, when the implemented actions are compared against the propositions made during the Conferences.

Two other monitoring instruments are innovative initiatives led by CONSEA. The first one consists of gathering all the organizations that are official information producers to elaborate an inter-sectoral matrix with indicators of HRtF achievement (CAISAN, w/d). The second was the formulation of an 'FNS Budget', resulting from a careful study of countless components of the Federal Budget to get to a set of core programs to foster FNSS/HRtF that can be monitored. Although they were not part of the official budget, they were an important input to elaborate FNS National Plans I and II. They were also used as a reference to assess the budget propositions elaborated annually by the government and submitted to the National Congress (PLOAS), the Pluriannual Investment Plans (PPAS) and the budget execution. The use of both instruments in a CONSEA publication assessing HRtF became a reference for population studies and analyses of public policies (CONSEA, 2010).

After a halt between 2016 and 2022, when the actions were no longer guided by the priorities and guidelines that had been effective from 2003 on, having been reduced and even discontinued, the administration that took over in 2023 started, under the Brazil Without Hunger plan, the reconstruction of an institutional framework and a set of policies that had been effective previously, to which new initiatives have been added. After CONSEA and CAISAN resumed their operation again, and SISAN construction was

⁸ It is worth noting there was parliamentary resistance to the use of the expression 'food sovereignty', which is not showing in Losan, Art. 6, which reads: 'Exercise of the human right to adequate food and to food and nutrition security requires respect for sovereignty, which gives the countries primacy to make their decisions on food production and consumption.'

resumed, the VI National Conference on FNS was held (2023) and the III FNS National Plan started being elaborated, both of them discontinued in 2019.

The guidelines in both FNS national plans (CAISAN 2011; 2018) associated with the promotion of universal access to adequate and healthy food set food-insecure families and people as a priority, and it should be kept as a priority also in the elaboration of the third plan. Income and poverty are known to be general determinants of hunger and FI, so it is important in the recent trajectory of the county to generate formal employment and value the minimum wage purchasing power policies, which heavily affect other forms of monetary income, including retirement funds and social security. Following the same rationale, there are governmental cash transfer programs linked to FNS policies, such as the Family Grant program (PBF), and others related to social security, such as the Continuous Payment Benefit (BPC). All of these programs are strategic to FNS/HRtF for vulnerable people and families, especially if they are connected in a way integrated to the set of programs that foster adequate and healthy food, access to food, sustainable food systems, urban farming and access to water that are part of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PNSAN). Therefore, employment, salaries and cash transfers are combined as an integral part of FNSS/HRtF systemic and inter-sectoral policies.

As mentioned in the introduction, the following presentation will not cover the significant consequences of inflections that occurred in the 2016-2022 administration period on the main FNSS/HRtF programs and actions or the reconstruction currently in progress. The goals here are to highlight the lessons learned from the Brazilian experience analyzing the policies, programs and actions with a large scope and that can best express the inter-sectoral and participatory approach to promoting Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty and the Human Right to Food (FNSS/HRtF), and point to effective or potential contributions of the programs and actions to foster healthy, sustainable and equitable food systems.

a. Systemic, Inter-sectoral and Participative Approach in Planning Public Policies

Mitigating environmental, health and social problems boosted by agroindustrial food systems and promoting sustainable, healthy and equitable food systems require political decision-making capable of gathering key stakeholders and reducing power asymmetries in the decision-making process. In this sense, the FNS National System and Policies

implemented in Brazil have provided important learning about the development of programs and actions based on the principles of inter-sectorial, social engagement and equity. As examples of this process, we can list the constitution of integrated inter-sectoral planning spaces, such as CAISAN, and the formation of political arenas for discussions and agreements made with the organized civil society and different government sectors, such as CONSEA.

The construction of this institutionality has been boosting public policies that address problems in an integrated manner, like different manifestations of FI, hunger, overweight, and obesity, among others, by challenging food system formats, environmental issues, and social inequalities. Thus, they tend to encourage a broader perspective of food and nutrition issues, beyond the consumption dimension (interconnecting with production, trade and provisioning practices). In this sense, Brazil is one of the only countries in the world to formulate an *Inter-sectoral Strategy to Prevent and Control Obesity (EIPCO)*, elaborated on inter-sectoral discussions conducted in CAISAN based on exchanges with CONSEA (CAISAN, 2014). It lists actions to be implemented by the group of sectors that are part of SISAN and proposes new ways to produce, trade and consume food to change eating habits and consequently affect obesity and NCD rates (Burlandy et al., 2020). This systemic perspective derives, to a great extent, from the institutional characteristics of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PNSAN) and the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN), constructed at spaces of social participation and promotion of inter-sectoriality at CONSEA and CAISAN.

Another example of an inter-sectoral strategy with a systemic perspective is the one that, under the Brazil Without Hunger program, reinforces the link between the promotion of FNS through SISAN with actions implemented in the Unified Social Service System (SUAS) and the Unified Health System (SUS). In 2023, the federal administration established guidelines to prioritize and organize service to food insecure individuals and families at these three policy national systems, identifying food-insecure individuals in the units of the three systems that serve the population, and integrating the corresponding information systems so they could have priority at SISAN, at Food and Nutrition Security Public and Social Equipment (EPSANs), such as community kitchens, community restaurants and food banks, as well as in programs such as the Programs to Acquire Food, Urban and Peri-urban Farming, Rural Development, Social Technologies to Access Water.

b. Public procurement of food as a strategy to promote access, family production and equitable development

FNS National Policies and System have been deploying strategies to promote equity through governmental support to social and economically vulnerable segments, such as family farmers, population in situations of FI and hunger, traditional peoples and communities. In this sense, public procurement has been consolidated as an instrument to reduce inequalities of access to public resources and foster the trade of food produced by those segments (Burlandy et al, 2023). To illustrate that potential, we can list mainly the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) based on the CONSEA proposition back in 2003, and the National Program on School Meals (PNAE), which was reconfigured based on the propositions of the Council in 2009. Inter-sectoriality in both cases occurs when public procurement is boosted to promote, simultaneously, access to adequate and healthy food for vulnerable populations, and strengthen family-based agri-food production by purchasing their products.

The goal of PAA is to foster institutional markets through governmental purchases of food to distribute to social programs and state-owned institutions, such as schools, community restaurants, community kitchens, food banks, nurseries, nursing homes, and shelters, most of them managed at the local level. Additionally, it aims at offering greater and more frequent access to quality food for food and nutrition-insecure individuals, strengthening local and regional networks that trade food, promoting and valuing biodiversity with organic and agroecological food production, encouraging healthy eating habits at the local and regional levels, encouraging the development of farmer cooperatives and associations, storing strategic stocks with family farming products.

PNAE, on its turn, was majorly reformulated in 2009 by a piece of legislation that determined students have the right to access adequate and healthy food, and makes it mandatory that at least 30% of the program resources come from the federal government and be used to purchase local or regional family farming products. The operational design of those programs has been gaining international momentum as examples of integrating policies to promote access to adequate and healthy food sourced from diverse family-based agri-food production forms, boosting food system inter-sectorial, equity and sustainability. They consist of powerful strategies to promote connections among food production, distribution and consumption modes that simultaneously prioritize socially vulnerable segments, contribute to assure HRtF and FNS, and encourage local economies (Burlandy; Rocha and Dias, 2023).

Both programs, combined with others that are part of SISAN, reduce inequities in the access to food, goods and public policies, and have a meaningful impact on FI and hunger situations and eating habits, not only on users of public equipment, but also on socially vulnerable farmers. That equipment favors access to adequate and healthy food because it is guided by FNSS/HRtF principles and the Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population (GAPB).

c. Food provisioning as a strategy to articulate adequate and healthy food production, distribution, and access

The National Food Provisioning Policy, whose implementation plan was recently launched, is critical and has huge growth potential around the food systems it can promote, considering the systemic concept of supply, thus mediating and connecting access to production, as explained in the previous section. The Decree that established its creation was announced during the VI National Conference on FNS, in December 2023, with the following guidelines: (i) promote an integrated system of food provisioning encompassing production, processing, storage, transportation, distribution, trade, and consumption, to foster Food Sovereignty (FS) and Food and Nutrition Security (FNS); (ii) assure the Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition (HRtF), with regular and permanent access of the Brazilian population to adequate and healthy food at sufficient quantities; (iii) encourage food practices that promote health, agroecology, and socio-biodiversity.

The plan for the 2025-2028 period will be implemented according to six strategic pillars: (i) Distribution and commercialization of healthy food; (ii) Promotion of fair and affordable food prices; (iii) Production of healthy food in sustainable systems; (iv) Food environments and access to healthy food; (v) Information, strategic intelligence and communication about food provisioning; (vi) Access to land, territory and water. The plan consists of 28 initiatives that unfold into 92 strategic actions under the responsibility of 15 government organizations. These are some of the plan ambition highlights: respect for cultural diversity, gender equity, socio-environmental justice and human rights; fight against structural racism; appreciation of local eating habits and the Brazilian cuisine; prioritization to serve food insecure and socially vulnerable individuals; climate action mitigation; participation and social control; inter-sectoral management and collaboration among states.

d. The Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population and the NOVA food classification system as transformative instruments

The Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population (GAPB) offers a systemic approach to eating habits, associated with the promotion of environmentally and socially sustainable food systems. Additionally, it privileges the production means focused on family farming, with agroecological bases, in harmony with biodiversity and produced using fair labor (Burlandy *et al.*, 2021). The systemic inter-sectoral perspective of the Guidelines is present, for instance, when they recommend reducing the consumption of animal-based products, whereas increasing the intake of plant-based unprocessed and minimally processed food, since modern livestock significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, one of the key aggravating factors of global warming and climate change.

GAPB is based on the NOVA food classification system internationally acknowledged as an inflection point in a healthy diet approach articulated with healthy and sustainable food systems. Based on the NOVA system, nutritional characteristics and other food characteristics are assessed according to the extension and purpose of their processing, and GAPB guidelines recommend avoiding the consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPF). The reasons are related to health damages (including NCDs and obesity), risks to traditional food cultures, and contributions to unsustainable food systems from the social, economic and environmental perspectives (BRAZIL; Ministry of Health, 2014; Burlandy *et al.*, 2021).

NOVA classification system and the concept of adequate and healthy food based on FNS/HRtF guide the Brazilian public policies and represent a critical reference to assess different strategies that have been suggested to promote a 'healthy diet' or a more environmentally sustainable diet. This is the case of technological solutions such as plant-based products made of cereals (soybeans) or industrial alternatives to meat consumption, since they are UPF with high content of sodium and saturated fat (Penna Franca *et al.*, 2022). As we've seen, the soybean-meat complex is one of the greatest emitters of greenhouse gases and is associated with injustice and equity issues (Kaljonen *et al.*, 2021; Tribaldos and Kortetmäki, 2022). The relationships between UPFs and the food system (un)sustainability have been established by academic studies that indicate how those products are associated with intensive agriculture and grazing and threaten all dimensions of sustainability (social, economic and environmental) (Fardet and Rock, 2020).

The NOVA classification system has been guiding the new composition of the National Basic Food Basket, and has been taken into account in discussions about tax reform, to reduce or zero the taxes levied on unprocessed and minimally processed foods, culinary ingredients and some processed foods, as established by Decree #11,936/2024 and Ordinance MDS 966/2024.

e. Potentials of the adequate and healthy food concept, and the ‘real food’ motto

The concept of adequate and healthy food stands out in the unique Brazilian experience of socially constructing concepts about food and nutrition, evidencing determinant factors of social, environmental and health problems associated with food systems. In Brazil, the Food and Nutrition Policies (particularly in the 2011 version), FNS National Policies and public actions instruments that guided all national policies, such as GAPB (2006 and 2014), and the Reference Framework of Food and Nutrition Education in Public Policies (2012), were formulated in the context of consolidating the FNSS/HRtF political arena and building SISAN. Adequate and healthy food is *‘a basic human right that requires a guarantee of permanent, regular and socially fair access to adequate food according to the biological and social characteristics of individuals, and shall be compatible with special dietary needs. It shall take into account the corresponding dietary culture, as well as gender, race and ethnic dimensions; it shall be affordable and low cost; consistent in quantity and quality, following the principles of variety, balance, moderation and pleasure, and based on adequate and sustainable farming practices.* (BRAZIL, Ministry of Health, 2014: p. 8).

The integrated approach of food systems centered on the concept of adequate and healthy food consolidates the convergence between the terms ‘adequate’ and ‘healthy’, having the adequacy and sustainability of farming practices as a constitutive element. Similarly, recommendations about food consider the impact of food production and distribution processes on social justice and environmental integrity (CONSEA, 2007; BRAZIL, 2010; BRAZIL, Ministry of Health, 2011; BRAZIL, 2012; BRAZIL, Ministry of Health, 2014).

The motto ‘real food in the countryside and in the city: for rights and sovereignty’, adopted at the V National Conference on Food and Nutrition Security, held in November 2015 in Brasília, the capital of Brazil, is pretty similar to the idea of adequate and healthy food, broadly spread worldwide. Gathering a broad and heterogeneous range of social players and segments, it breaks up with dominant concepts of eating habits and contributes to

the discussions about sustainable and healthy food systems, clearly denouncing ‘junk food’ in its many manifestations, such as UPF. Considered the safeguard of life and the planet, real food intends to highlight FNS/HTtAFN social and cultural dimensions to: (a) align food production and consumption; (b) build bridges between urban and rural areas; (c) appreciate agro-biodiversity, fresh and regional food; (d) respect black and indigenous ancestry, African roots, and traditions from all peoples and communities; (e) recover the Brazilian population food identities, memories and cultures.

f. The strategy to foster family farming, agro-ecological food systems and organic production

FNS National Policies and the I and II FNS National Plans, formulated by CAISAN in partnership with CONSEA (Brazil, 2010; CAISAN 2011 and 2018), establish inter-sectoral actions in which the promotion of organic and family farming, as well as agro-ecology represent paths to transform food systems towards assuring adequate and healthy food and HRtF. Additionally, the National Organic Production and Agroecology Policies and Plan (PLANAPO) were institutionalized to foster food production processes guided by sustainable and healthy development principles. As mentioned, public procurement is aligned with the systemic perspective that integrates food production, trade and consumption actions, reinforcing the support offered to agroecological and family farmers (Burlandy; Rocha and Dias, 2023).

The recent resumption of the National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production enabled the elaboration of a plan (PLANAPO, 2024-2027) aimed at implementing actions, programs and projects that act as drivers in the transition to agroecology, sociobiodiversity and organic and agroecological-based production. Its purpose is to contribute to FNS and FS, through the supply and consumption of healthy food, water security and sustainable use of natural resources. That policy potential to promote inter-sectoriality and systemic transformation is clear in its goals related to organic and agro-ecological production, sociobiodiversity, management and decision-making social projects, knowledge production, insertion in public procurement and private markets, promotion of ethnodevelopment, knowledge and practices of care and surveillance in health, and adoption of agroecology as a strategy to foster health and healthy and sustainable territories.

The support offered to family farming, agrarian reform and agroecological transition, prioritizing food-insecure individuals and families, are considered a way to promote

equity and make the food system more sustainable (from the environmental, social and economic perspectives) and fair for both producers and consumers. They are strategies aimed at reverting the concentrated large-scale sales of natural resources, inputs (pesticides), technological equipment and UPF, articulated with the promotion of access to adequate and healthy food (FAO & WHO, 2014; CAISAN, 2011; BRAZIL, 2010; BRAZIL, Ministry of Health, 2014; CAISAN, 2018). Nonetheless, there have been questions regarding the limited amount of resources allocated to this policy, as well as the adequacy of some of its instruments.

The connections between PNAE and family farming, including public procurement targeted at that segment, have been acknowledged as a way to reduce the consumption of ultra-processed food for school meals (Teo, 2018) and promote equity in food systems by leveraging access to adequate and healthy food, both for farmers and students (Burlandy; Rocha and Dias, 2023).

g. Adequate and healthy food in the cities with transformation of the food systems

Cities, mostly urban centers, have become an inevitable reference in the formulation and deployment of strategies targeted at promoting FNS/HRtF, with special repercussions in current discussions on food system transformation. Increasingly, at the global level, the focus is on specificities of eating habits in urban areas, as evidenced in initiatives such as the New Urban Agenda launched by the United Nations (UN, 2017), FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda (FAO, 2020), Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (FAO, n.d.), 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and reports produced by experts about urban and peri-urban food systems (HLPE, 2024), and food territorial markets (IPED FOOD, 2024). Similarly, in Brazil, this theme has long been discussed in national meetings held by CONSEA and in National Conferences.

Encouragement from international forums and the background of the country are at the core of the construction process of the National Strategy on Food and Nutrition Security in Cities, the so-called ‘Alimenta Cidades’ (Feed the Cities), launched in 2023, led by MDS and CAISAN with an inter-sectoral and participative design. Elaboration of ‘Alimenta Cidades’, with broad participation, has the key goal of extending production, access, availability and consumption of adequate and healthy food, prioritizing urban peripheral territories and highly vulnerable and at social risk populations. The Strategy is structured on eight complementary and articulated pillars: (i) supply and availability of healthy food in public and social food and nutrition security equipment; (ii) supply

and availability of healthy food in public and private supply equipment; (iii) promotion of urban food environments that favor adequate and healthy food; (iv) production of healthy and sustainable food in cities and their outskirts; (v) reduction in food loss and waste; (vi) food and nutrition education, communication and information on adequate and healthy food; (vii) inter-sectoral articulation among areas of social service, food and nutrition security, and health, among others, to provide actions and services to food and nutrition insecure families and individuals at the local level; (viii) support provided to the Urban Network of Healthy Food to be implemented as a mechanism of mobilization, inter-sectoral and inter-governmental governance, and cooperation among the states participating in the Strategy (MDS, 2024).

Among the components of ‘Alimenta Cidades’ that are noteworthy, we can refer to the priority given to the so-called urban peripheral territories and populations in situations of vulnerability and social risk, and the proposition to conform healthy, inclusive and resilient food systems through a holistic and extended approach in which the elements of the Strategy form an integrated and inter-sectoral system. It is worth pointing out the focus on circular food systems interconnecting the environment, people, input, processes, infrastructure, institutions and activities related to production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, in articulation with territorial markets that convey identity to a specific space. Similarly, the proposition of a Healthy Food Urban Network has the potential to contribute to the articulation of access to adequate and healthy food with transformation in the food systems, among other things, qualifying and integrating urban and peri-urban farming appreciation and qualification actions, as well as FNS public equipment (restaurants, food banks, and solidarity and community kitchens).

The National Program on Urban and Peri-Urban Farming, launched in 2018 and updated in 2023, includes farming activities and small-scale livestock raising in urban and peri-urban areas. It encompasses every step in production, processing, distribution and sale of food, medicinal, aromatic and ornamental plants, phytotherapeutical plants and inputs, for personal use and for sale, as well as organic waste management processes. Urban farming can have different formats and objectives; however, beyond the production itself, the program interacts locally with SISAN and plays the role of promoting, developing, and raising awareness about the impacts of urban and peri-urban farming on cities, from sustainable agriculture to the fight against food insecurity.

Community or solidarity kitchens are a social technology to tackle hunger, initially implemented by a civil society initiative, voluntarily working with funds raised from partners and individual donations. One more case of a civil society initiative that developed into a public program, the recent launch of the Solidarity Kitchen Program, in 2024, has the goal to provide free and quality food, preferably to people in vulnerable situations and at social risk, including homeless people and those in severe food and nutrition insecurity. Kitchens spread all over the country started receiving funds from the program, with complementary support to develop production activities and offer meals. This new context is expected to favor the expansion of the objectives of the kitchens beyond fighting hunger, and integrate with SISAN at the local level.

There are two other older resources related to access to food: food banks and popular restaurants. Food banks started operating in Brazil in the beginning of the 2000s, in different formats, and they became part of a program launched in 2004, with significant evolution since then. In 2020, the Brazilian Network of Food Banks (RBBA) was created, gathering public and private food banks, to strengthen a joint operation of those resources, reduce food loss and waste, and promote HRtF. A number of assessments of the operation models in food banks and their corresponding programs pointed paths to enhance their operation and systemic integration. Popular restaurants, also implemented with public support since the early 2000s, have played a critical role in increasing the offer of a balanced diet, affordable to low-income, socially vulnerable and food-insecure populations. Their goal is to promote access to adequate and healthy food, valuing regional eating habits, and resorting to educational actions for users.

It is important to highlight the connection between urban food and climate issues, both to shed light on the disproportionate impact of extreme climate effects on groups that are at risk and in social vulnerability, and to reinforce it is critical to transition to healthy, sustainable and circular food systems. One of those links is established between the aforementioned FNS National Strategy in the Cities and the sectoral plan entitled ‘Food and Climate’, as follows.

h. Food and Climate under the FNSS/HRtF Perspective

The National Policy of Climate Change (PNMC) was established in 2009, and sectorial plans of adaptation to climate change are being currently elaborated, scheduled to be integrated into the 2024-2035 Climate Plan. Among the guidelines for those plans present in Law # 14,904 (June 27th, 2024) related to the aforementioned goals are

incentives to the agricultural sector to consolidate a low-carbon agriculture (ABC Plan), as well as the adoption of the so-called nature-based solutions as part of the adaptation strategies. In a previous section on food systems, we explored some caveats regarding this type of guidance and advocated for other strategies that are more consistent with the focus adopted here.

In the sectors that are more closely associated with FNSS/HRtF, led by CAISAN and by the FNS National Secretariat (SESAN/MDS), there is a Sectoral Plan on Food and Nutrition Security (Food and Climate) being elaborated to be incorporated into the Climate Plan, involving frequent consultation with managers, technicians and social stakeholders. Documents produced previously point to six climate risks that affect those objectives, namely: (i) reducing food availability; (ii) elevating social and economic vulnerability; (iii) increasing food prices; (iv) increasing the number of food-insecure people; (v) compromising access to healthy food; (vi) diminishing water availability for consumption and food production. There are also suggestions made by civil society presented on the Participatory Climate Plan Platform, to be considered in the Climate Plan General Strategy, with CONSEA participation in those more closely related to FNSS/HRtF.

Long before climate change gained momentum in the public agenda, initiatives to access water in the Semiarid region resulted in the Rural Cisterns Program, created in 2003, a key success story of a civil society initiative that was later adopted as a public program. The goal was to promote diffuse access to water for human consumption and food production in the Semiarid region of Brazil by implementing simple and low-cost social technologies (cisterns and small dams built with the participation of the families served). It is aimed at low-income rural households (per capita revenue up to half minimum wage) and at rural public equipment affected by the drought or lack of water, prioritizing traditional peoples and communities. In 20 years of operation, the Program has delivered over 1.2 million social technologies to access water, having a positive impact on health, food security and revenue indicators for millions of people, especially in the Semiarid region. The records show over 100,000 cisterns were implemented in 2023 and 2024, the partnership with civil society was resumed, and there was an expansion to the Amazon region. The shift from the traditional focus on the fight against drought to the perspective of co-existing with the Semiarid region embracing agroecology has clear repercussion on the transformation of food systems in the region, with repercussions beyond that.

4. Lessons Learned and Challenges in the Brazilian Experience

To wrap up, we will summarize the key contributions and lessons learned from the Brazilian experience while building SISAN to point out, in connection with them, the challenges faced to promote access to adequate and healthy food, along with the transformation towards sustainable and healthy food systems, taking into account climate change. It is worth noting that the key contribution of the Brazilian experience has been the development of a systemic, inter-sectoral and participative approach to plan public policies for multidimensional issues with diverse manifestations. They are issues that definitely require State action, but also effective social engagement, as in the case of fighting hunger promoting FNSS/HRtF supported by a national system of public policies like SISAN.

Considering there is progressive development in conceptual terms and in the engagement of government sectors and social actors in general, many lessons have been learned, as pointed out in the various assessments available on the challenge of inter-sectorial, federative integration and social participation in public actions at various levels. This last aspect sheds light on the importance of the Brazilian experience to form social participation councils in public policies like CONSEA and its state and municipal counterparts, as well as holding regular National Conferences, like other policy areas do. Among the challenges related to the construction of SISAN, we can point out more adequate instruments to establish federative relationships and reciprocal commitments, and to have effective engagement from local administrations, notably with the relevance cities have as a reference to design food policies, as we will see below. They are spaces with an important role when it comes to the mobilization of social actors, conflicting narratives, and conflicts of interest. As a substrate of the institutional and legal construction, the challenge lies in making HRtF effective, especially when it comes to its enforceability.

A second lesson learned is the potential for the concepts of adequate and healthy food, a result of a joint construction between the government and the civil society, to drive a shift in habits and transformation in food systems. It has proved to be a truly innovative concept, given its interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach. Along with the important conflicting narratives it has experienced, the present text listed some of its developments

that confirmed the potential aforementioned. Among them, it is worth highlighting the adoption of this concept as a guiding principle for many initiatives (guidelines for school meals, public procurement of food, strategies for the cities), the Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population, and the NOVA food classification system as transformative instruments. The ‘real food’ motto is more ambitious in the breadth of references it carries, equally subject to intense conflicting narratives, whose adoption is to be more broadly communicated.

The third lesson learned, which is a challenge, refers to addressing the contemporary trends of eating habits promoted by food systems under strong criticism, making it inevitable to associate that fight with the necessary transitions in food systems at different scales. Public procurement of food as a strategy to promote access, family production, and equitable development stands out as an instrument seeking to combine both perspectives. Equally relevant with a larger breadth in the structuring of food systems is the strategy to foster family farming, agroecological food systems, and organic farming, although the execution of the programs included in that list has some caveats.

Considering what has just been said, it is still early to draw effective lessons from two recently formulated initiatives. However, they are mentioned here because they are strategic and core to the combination of objectives to simultaneously promote adequate and healthy food with transformation of the food systems. One of these initiatives is the National Policy of Food Provisioning, which, in case it succeeds in its conception and the goals established, will have significant repercussion in terms of institutional articulation. The second initiative refers to the decision to have cities or urban centers as references in the construction of strategies that combine adequate and healthy food in cities with the transformation of food systems. Both are linked to the construction of the ‘Food and Climate’ sectoral plan under FNS/HTtAFN.

Finally, it is necessary to take into account the inevitable obstacles derived from the challenging scenario the country is experiencing, in which regular difficulties inherent to social transformation intents in unequal and inequitable countries like Brazil are further aggravated by a hard and unusual transition of administrations that has not been fully completed yet, given some embarrassment from the previous administration still remains. This context heavily affects the execution of public policy strategies and options from the FNSS/HRtF perspective aiming at transforming the Brazilian society. As explained in previous work (Maluf, 2024), efforts should be made to mobilize conceptual references and identify strategies and designs of public policies that incorporate goals associated

with FNSS/HRtF at the same level as the strategic pillars currently dominated by the perspectives of ecological transition, industrialization, promotion of bioeconomics, and digitalization. Notwithstanding how relevant those perspectives are, the intertwining of food, environmental and climate issues (or crises) in a society that is as unequal as the Brazilian, requires social and structural transformation, and proper instruments so that the fight against hunger and the promotion of FNSS/HRtF do not miss their core role or are not limited to the condition of complementary actions to the economic center of the so-called ‘country reconstruction’, which is a perspective far below the one desired to transform the Brazilian society.

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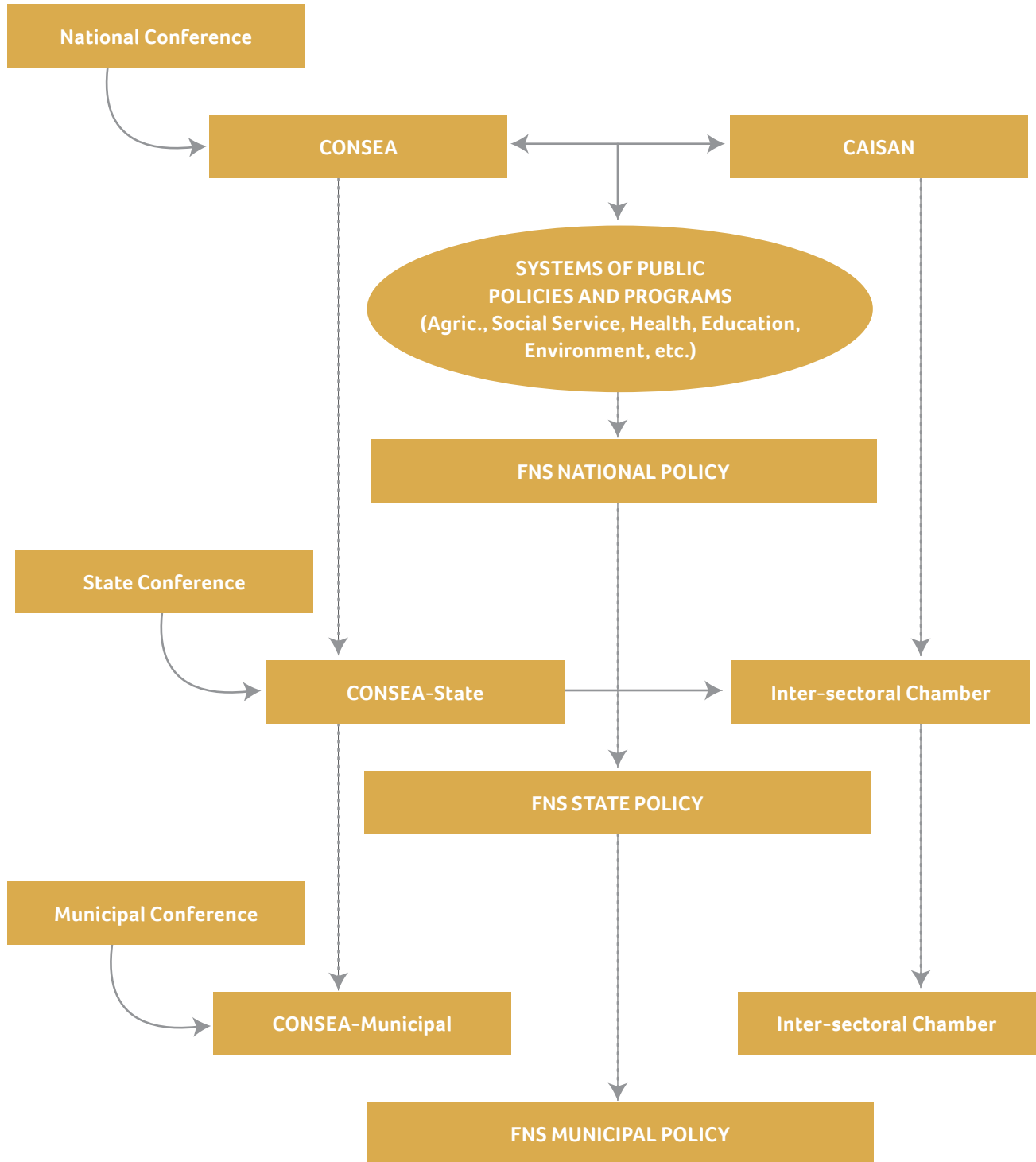
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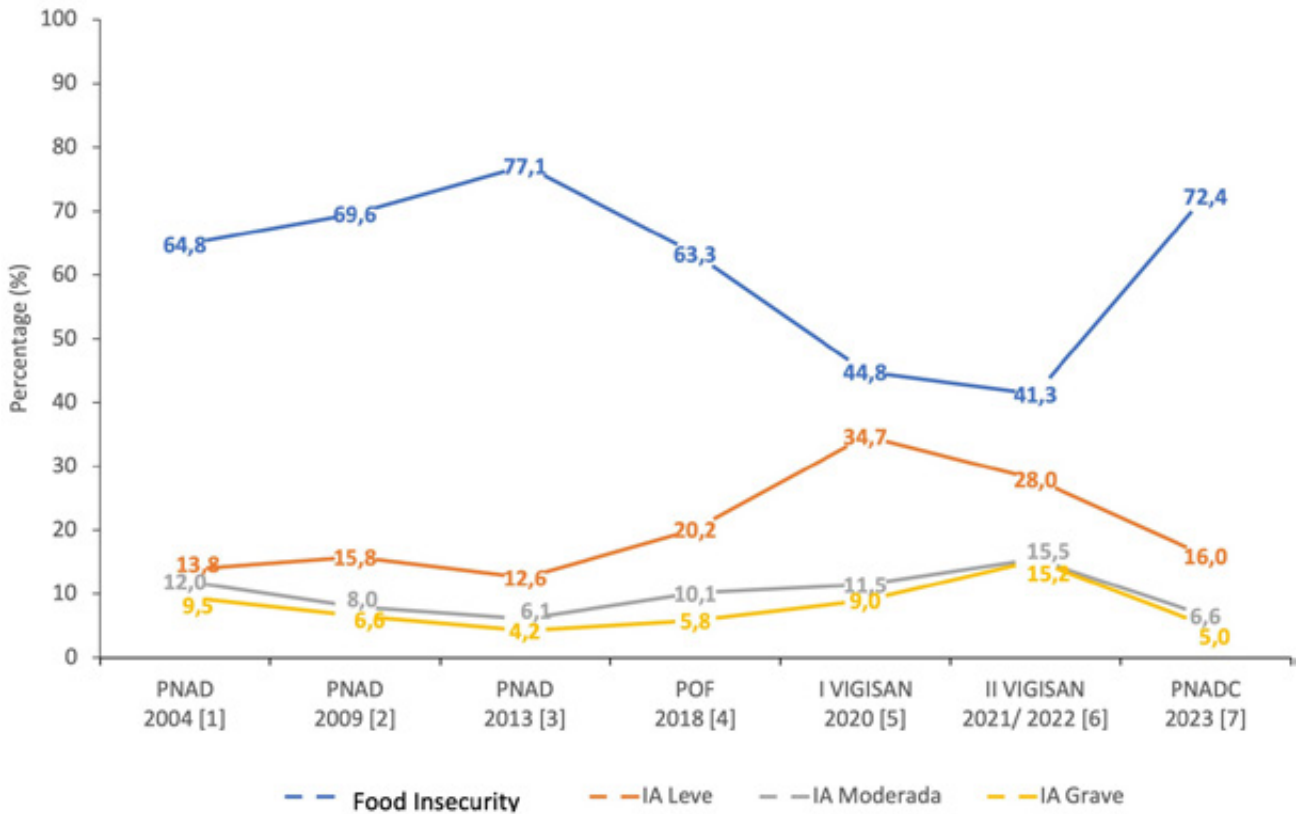
Annexes

Graph 1. SISAN structure



Source: Maluf (2010)

Figure 1 – Trends of Food Security and Levels of Food Insecurity (FI) in Brazil, 2004 - 2023.



Source: Data gathered for the Brazilian Food Insecurity Scale, consisting of 8 items, based on the following surveys: [1] National Household Sample Survey 2003-2004 (IBGE); [2] National Household Sample Survey 2008-2009; [3] National Household Sample Survey 2013-2014; [4] Household Budget Survey 2017-2018; [5] National Inquiry on Food Insecurity in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic 2020 (Rede PENSSAN); [6] National Inquiry on Food Insecurity in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic 2021-2022; [7] Continuous National Household Sample Survey 2023.

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Editorial Board & Staff

Authors

Renato S. Maluf,
Luciene Burlandy

Graphic design

Contexto Gráfico

Front cover and text formattings

Kenia de Aguiar Ribeiro,
Scriptorium Design Editorial

Translation

Renata Hetmanek

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Editorial Coordination

Gleice Mere, Carlos Alberto dos
Santos, Alexander Borges Rose
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