

Practical Guide:

How to use international instruments related to the right to food at the national and subnational levels - the case of Brazil

THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD AND AGROECOLOGY: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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PRACTICAL GUIDE: HOW TO USE INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO THE RIGHT
TO FOOD AT THE NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL LEVELS - THE CASE OF BRAZIL

The Human Right to Adequate Food and Agroecology: Food Sovereignty, Sustainability and Socio-Environmental Justice



JUNE 2026

Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação (CIP)

P895 Practical Guide: how to use international instruments related to the right to food at the national and subnational levels - the case of Brazil/ Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. -- Brasília : Presidência da República, 2026.

v.

v. 1. The human right to adequate food and food markets - v. 2. The human right to adequate food and agroecology: food sovereignty, sustainability and socio-environmental justice - v. 3. The human right to adequate food and consumer protection policies - v. 4. The human right to adequate food and social participation in political decision-making - v. 5. The human right to adequate food and social protection - v. 6. The human right to adequate food and the rights of indigenous peoples - v. 7. The human right to food and policies for small-scale food producers - v. 8. The human right to adequate food and water, fishers and oceans - v. 9. The human right to adequate food and the solidarity economy - v. 10. The human right to adequate food and gender equality - v. 11. The human right to adequate food and the right to land - v. 12. The human right to adequate food and school meals.

ISBN 978-65-86360-28-8

1. Direitos humanos. 2. Segurança alimentar. 3. Alimentação. 4. Participação social. I. Brasil. Presidência da República. Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional

CDU 342.7:612.39(81)

With support from



Federal Ministry
of Agriculture, Food
and Regional Identity



SECRETARY-GENERAL



by decision of the
German Bundestag

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This publication was supported by the Agricultural Policy Dialogue Brazil–Germany (German acronym: APD) a cooperation instrument aimed at the exchange of knowledge on agricultural and environmental policies, based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Regional Identity (BMLEH), the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (Portuguese acronym: MAPA) and the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Agriculture (Portuguese acronym: MDA).

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AGRICULTURAL POLICY DIALOGUE
APD | BRAZIL-GERMANY

Implemented by:



PUBLICATION DIVIDED INTO 12 VOLUMES OF THE SERIES:

**PRACTICAL GUIDE: HOW TO USE INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO THE
RIGHT TO FOOD AT THE NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL LEVELS - THE CASE OF BRAZIL**

Institutional Support

The Agricultural Policy Dialogue Brazil-Germany (APD, by its German acronym) provided support for the Spanish translation and the layout of the collection.

The German Institute for Human Rights provided support for the translation into English.

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INTRODUCTION

BRAZIL AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD

At the heart of today's debates on equity, justice, sovereignty and democracy lies the human right to adequate food (right to food). It is not only about ensuring access to food and meals; it also means recognising that land and territory, water, health, food culture and food supply are inseparable parts of a fundamental right – one that underpins citizenship and must be guaranteed through public policies.

Brazil enshrined the right to food in the Constitution in 2010 and has since developed pioneering public policies for food and nutrition security. This is a collective achievement, resulting from decades of social mobilisation, academic work, institution-building and international commitments undertaken by the Brazilian State. This accumulated experience is expressed in a set of legal instruments, treaties, resolutions and pacts that have recognised the right to food as a legal, political and ethical guideline.

Today, this framework is not only a reference for Brazil: it has become a concrete example, able to inspire governments, institutions and civil society. In a global context of geopolitical instability, environmental crises and deep inequalities, the realisation of the right to food cannot be treated as a mere administrative choice. It is a constitutional duty and a moral imperative. Hunger, deforestation, water insecurity and an exclusionary, health-damaging agri-food model are all symptoms of the same system, which continues to violate rights and destroy lives.

Brazil has a responsibility to maintain and deepen its normative frameworks. This means advancing public policies, strengthening participatory democracy, protecting traditional peoples and communities, ensuring agroecology as a viable horizon, and confronting interests that seek to reduce food to a commodity and to superficial solutions.

The existing set of international normative instruments related to the right to food has been fundamental in guiding Brazilian public policies on how to use human rights-based approaches at national and subnational levels. This guide provides an overview of how public policies of major relevance to the realisation of the right to food in Brazil connect with international instruments adopted by the United Nations and by regional bodies as part of an advanced normative framework on the right to food; how these instruments can be used for effective policies to combat hunger and malnutrition, to guarantee healthy food; and how they relate to key areas such as social participation, accountability, corporate power and finance.

Bringing together the core instruments that underpin the right to food internationally and nationally, linking them to public policies in practice, and identifying challenges is not a bureaucratic exercise. It is a political act. It is a way of insisting that rights cannot be suppressed, diluted or negotiated away. It affirms our place in a history that moves forward when the State plays its role and when civil society participates, holds authorities to account, proposes solutions and drives change.

The human right to adequate food is more than a constitutional provision: it expresses a social pact. A pact that allows no setbacks, and that demands vigilance, commitment and courage to meet the present while keeping our eyes on the future.

CONSEA Brazil

THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD AND AGROECOLOGY: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Ten Elements of Agroecology (2018)¹ – FAO identifies ten interrelated elements that underpin sustainable and socially just agricultural systems: 1. **Diversity**: Strengthening biological diversity in crops, species and practices to enhance the resilience, productivity and ecological functions of agroecosystems; 2. **Synergies**: Fostering positive interactions among the different components of agricultural systems to improve the use of natural resources and ecosystem services; 3. **Efficiency**: Enhancing the efficient use of local resources, reducing dependence on external inputs and minimising waste, thereby contributing to environmental and economic sustainability; 4. **Resilience**: Building the capacity of agricultural systems to absorb and recover from shocks and stresses, including climate change, pests and economic instability; 5. **Recycling**: Reinforcing

1 FAO Ten Elements of Agroecology, 2018. See: <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/overview10elements/en/>

closed nutrient and energy flows by recovering and reintegrating by-products and residues within the production system; 6. **Co-creation and sharing of knowledge**: Bringing together traditional, local and scientific knowledge to improve farming systems and strengthen collective capacities; 7. **Culture and rights**: Valuing local cultures and farmers' rights, respecting traditional knowledge and food sovereignty; 8. **Social responsibility**: Promoting social justice by ensuring equitable access to resources, markets and decent conditions for rural workers; 9. **Local governance**: Strengthening the autonomy and control of local communities over their natural resources and over decisions related to agricultural production; 10. **Circularity**: Adopting circular-economy principles so that agricultural production is aligned with the natural and social cycles of the environment.

UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Agroecological and other innovative approaches (2019)² – This report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) argues that agroecology and other innovative approaches are essential to transforming food systems in the face of hunger, inequality and the environmental crisis. It presents agroecology as a strategy capable of strengthening biodiversity, reducing dependence on external inputs, increasing climate resilience and promoting social justice.

It introduces the concepts of transition and transformation: transition refers to changes within a system over time in a specific context, while multiple transitions are required to achieve a broader transformation of food systems, involving profound changes in what is produced and in how food is produced, processed, transported and consumed. The report identifies three interlinked operational principles for sustainable agricultural development that can guide transition pathways towards sustainable food systems for food and nutrition security: improving resource efficiency, strengthening resilience and ensuring equity/social responsibility. It also presents 13 principles that guide sustainable practices, value traditional knowledge, strengthen short supply chains and underline the importance of public policies that ensure social participation, access to land, gender equality and the inclusion of youth. While other approaches such as conservation agriculture or digital technologies may contribute, the HLPE stresses that sustainable transition must be coherent with human rights, environmental sustainability and the strengthening of family farming. It further recommends that individual and collective actions to progressively realise the human right

2 Agroecological and other innovative approaches, 2019. See: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ff385e60-0693-40fe-9a6b-79bbef05202c/content>

to adequate food should be guided by seven principles (PANTHER): participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and the rule of law.

CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches

(2021)³ – This document presents policy recommendations and proposes pathways for transforming food systems towards sustainability, equity and resilience. It guides countries to strengthen public policies, reform incentives and promote sustainable consumption; to improve monitoring and evaluation using social, environmental and economic indicators; to support transitions towards diversified, resilient and biodiversity-based production systems; to invest in research, innovation and co-learning between scientific and traditional knowledge systems; and to guarantee participation, rights and inclusion of family farmers, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Taken together, the recommendations aim to ensure food and nutrition security, healthy diets and respect for the human right to adequate food, adapted to the realities of each country.

Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (2012; 1st revision 2022)

(2012; 1st revision 2022)⁴ – These CFS Guidelines establish international parameters to guide States in the fair and transparent management of natural resources. They provide guidance on agrarian reform, territorial protection, sustainable resource use and the strengthening of agroecology, with a focus on reducing inequalities and ensuring access to land, water and forests for family farmers, Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities.

Officially endorsed by the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on 11 May 2012, they do not require individual country signatures, as they are a voluntary instrument rather than an international treaty. Nevertheless, Brazil consolidated its political commitment to the Guidelines by formalising a letter of intent with FAO in 2017, through the National Institute for Colonization (Rural Settlement) and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), to support their implementation in the country. Since their adoption, the Guidelines have been reiterated and encouraged in spaces such as the G20, Rio+20 and the UN General Assembly, reinforcing their legitimacy and relevance for land, environmental and human rights policies.

3 CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches, 2021. See: https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2021/Documents/Policy_Recommendations_Agroecology_other_Innovations/2021_Agroecological_and_other_innovations_EN.pdf

4 Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, 2012. See: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/609a716c-464c-4454-9222-78f5e7cd23f7>

FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Agro-environmental Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean (2017)⁵ – These Guidelines constitute a regional framework to guide governments in formulating and implementing policies that integrate environmental sustainability, agricultural production and social participation. The document consolidates agroecological principles and instruments aimed at strengthening resilient production systems, promoting the sustainable management of natural resources and enhancing the role of family farmers, Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities in decision-making processes.

They are the result of an extensive regional dialogue carried out between 2012 and 2015 under the project Strengthening Agro-environmental Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean. The process involved consultations, workshops and exchanges of experiences among Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Nicaragua in the first phase, and later Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama and Paraguay. This participatory character lends legitimacy to the Guidelines and reinforces their central purpose: to support countries in building an agro-environmental governance system capable of articulating sectoral policies, fostering agroecology and ensuring that territorial management is shared, transparent and socially inclusive.

Model Law on the Promotion of Agroecology – Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino) (2024)⁶ – This Model Law constitutes a normative reference instrument to guide countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in formulating policies for agroecological transition. Its content highlights the centrality of intersectoral integration among agriculture, environment, health, education, science, technology and social protection, recognising agroecology as an approach capable of promoting socio-environmental sustainability, food sovereignty, food and nutrition security, and the strengthening of family farming.

The Model Law emphasises the value of traditional knowledge, the recognition of ancestral agricultural systems and the strategic role of Indigenous Peoples, traditional communities, rural women and youth in building resilient production systems. It also proposes guidelines for expanding technical, scientific and financial support for agroecological practices,

5 Voluntary Guidelines for Agro-environmental Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2017. See: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/c305fd78-de4a-4246-8d16-3425c394ef3b>

6 Model Law on the Promotion of Agroecology – Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino), 2024. See: <https://parlatino.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ley-modelo-promocion-agroecologia.pdf>

including economic incentives, the formation of territorial networks, participatory research and governance mechanisms that ensure effective social participation.

Approved with FAO's technical support during the XXXVIII Ordinary Assembly of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament, held in Panama on 5 and 6 December 2024, the Model Law reinforces the region's commitment to promoting food systems that are just, inclusive and environmentally responsible, serving as a foundation for countries to adapt and strengthen their own legislative frameworks and public policies.

UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (1992)⁷ – Adopted during the 1992 Earth Summit (ECO-92) in Rio de Janeiro, the Convention is one of the main international legal frameworks dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources. These objectives align directly with the foundations of agroecology, particularly regarding the sustainable management of agricultural ecosystems, the protection of natural resources and the valuing of biological diversity as the basis for resilient production systems.

Brazil adhered early to the treaty, approving its text through Legislative Decree No. 2 of 1994 and ratifying it by Decree No. 2.519 of 16 March 1998. Since then, the CBD has guided national policies and influenced the development of legal frameworks on environmental conservation, access to genetic heritage and the protection of associated traditional knowledge. As of May 2023, the Convention had 168 signatory and ratifying countries, consolidating its role as a key instrument in global environmental governance.

The CBD functions as a normative framework for various specific agreements and protocols, including the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Bonn Guidelines, the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity related to preventing invasive species and promoting sustainable tourism. It also stimulated the development of an International Regime on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS), strengthening recognition of the strategic value of biodiversity for food security, scientific research and sustainable development.

7 Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992. See: <https://www.cbd.int/>

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)

(2004)⁸– The Treaty aims to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources essential for food and agriculture, as well as to promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use. It operates in a complementary manner to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), strengthening the protection of agrobiodiversity and contributing to sustainable agriculture and global food and nutrition security. Brazil adopted the Treaty through Legislative Decree No. 70/2006, which entered into force that same year, and incorporated it into domestic law through Decree No. 6.476/2008.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) (2018)⁹

– This Declaration recognises and protects fundamental rights related to access to land, water, seeds, natural resources and agroecological practices. It affirms the right to conserve, use, exchange and develop farmers' seeds, contributes to the preservation of agricultural biodiversity and reinforces productive autonomy in the face of dependence on genetically modified organisms, technological packages and agrochemicals. It also strengthens the legitimacy of resistance to predatory practices associated with production models that violate human rights or degrade the environment.

UNDROP was first presented to the Human Rights Council on 28 September 2018 and was subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly on 17 December 2018 as an annex to Resolution 73/165. In the final vote, Brazil abstained, joining neither the group of States voting in favour nor the bloc of countries voting against.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007)¹⁰

– This Declaration ensures fundamental rights to land, territories and natural resources, to culture, traditional knowledge, customary production systems and to self-determination. It recognises the right of Indigenous Peoples to maintain and strengthen their traditional agricultural systems, their seeds, their biodiversity management practices and their food systems,

8 International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), 2004. See: <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/en/>

9 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, 2018. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1650694?v=pdf>

10 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007. See: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

reinforcing sustainable practices, food sovereignty and socio-environmental justice – pillars that are directly related to agroecology.

The Declaration was presented to the Human Rights Council on 29 June 2006 and adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007 as an annex to Resolution 61/178, with Brazil voting in favour. Domestically, Brazil had already recognised these rights in the 1988 Federal Constitution. Article 231 affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples to the lands they traditionally occupy. The Statute of Indigenous Peoples (Law No. 6.001/1973), still in force, sets out norms for the protection of Indigenous Peoples, although it is outdated with respect to the constitutional framework and to the international standards represented by UNDRIP.

International Labour Organization Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO Convention No. 169) (1989)¹¹ – This international human rights treaty provides specific protection for Indigenous Peoples and for traditional peoples and communities. It establishes the obligation of States to ensure these peoples' rights to self-determination, to the recognition and protection of their social, cultural, political and economic institutions, and to the possession, use and control of the lands and natural resources they have traditionally occupied or used. It also mandates free, prior and informed consultation on all legislative or administrative measures that may directly affect them, in accordance with the principle of effective participation.

In Brazil, ILO Convention No. 169 is fully in force, incorporated into domestic law by Decree No. 10.088 of 5 November 2019, which systematised the instruments related to ILO conventions ratified by the country and expressly reaffirmed the validity of Convention No. 169. By virtue of its content and purpose, the instrument forms part of the broader bloc of constitutionality and guides the interpretation of public policies related to territorial protection, the guarantee of collective rights and the promotion of sustainable practices adopted by Indigenous Peoples and by traditional peoples and communities.

11 ILO Convention No. 169, 1989. See: <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/indigenous-and-tribal-peoples>

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966)¹² – This international human rights treaty establishes State obligations regarding the progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. Article 11 recognises the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, as well as the continuous improvement of living conditions. This provision underpins the duty of States to ensure public policies that give effect to the human right to adequate food. In this context, agroecology constitutes a central approach for realising that right, as it promotes sustainable, diversified, culturally appropriate and socially just food systems.

Adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 1966, the Covenant entered into force internationally in 1976. In Brazil, it has domestic legal force through Decree No. 591 of 6 July 1992, which promulgated the text and ensured its full applicability within the national legal system.

2030 Agenda – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹³ – The SDGs serve as global guidelines to guide public policies that promote development models that are socially just, environmentally sustainable and economically inclusive. Agroecology is strategically integrated into this agenda, as it advances sustainable food systems based on biodiversity conservation, the ecological management of natural resources, the valuing of traditional knowledge and the promotion of food sovereignty and food and nutrition security.

The SDGs with a direct and structural relationship to agroecology are:

- SDG 2 Zero Hunger: Agroecology provides scientific and practical foundations for diversified, resilient and low-impact agricultural systems, which are essential for eradicating hunger and ensuring adequate and sustainable food.
- SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production: Agroecology contributes to sustainable consumption and production patterns through short supply chains, waste reduction, the valuing of local markets and low-impact production practices.

12 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966. See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

13 2030 Agenda – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). See: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

- SDG 13 Climate Action: Agroecological practices enhance climate resilience, strengthen the adaptive capacity of farmers and ecosystems, and reduce emissions through the sustainable management of soil, water and vegetation.
- SDG 15 Life on Land: Agroecology plays a central role in restoring soil fertility, protecting biodiversity, preventing environmental degradation and promoting the sustainable use of agricultural and forest ecosystems.

EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION IN BRAZIL

Federal Constitution of Brazil (1988) – Articles 6, 23, 24 and 225 of the Federal Constitution form a normative bloc that underpins ecological social rights in Brazil. Article 6 recognises the right to food as a social right of immediate applicability, linking it to the need for sustainable production systems. Article 23 establishes shared competences that require all levels of government to act cooperatively in food supply and poverty reduction. Article 24 defines concurrent competences for legislating on production, consumption, the environment and the protection of cultural heritage, allowing States and the Federal District to complement federal general norms. Article 225 enshrines the right to an ecologically balanced environment and requires the public authorities to control techniques and substances that pose risks to health and to the environment. Taken together, these provisions structure an integrated socio-environmental legal regime, articulating food and nutrition security, sustainability and cooperative federalism.

National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production (PNAPO) and its National Plan on Agroecology and Organic Production (Planapo) – These two instruments together constitute the federal policy framework that guides actions to promote agroecology, organic production and the supply of healthy food, integrating environmental sustainability, social inclusion and food and nutrition security. PNAPO establishes the overarching policy directives, while Planapo translates these directives into concrete programmes, targets and actions. Their central objectives are to integrate public policies; strengthen family farmers and traditional communities; expand sustainable production; stimulate agroecological research and rural extension services; promote differentiated markets; and ensure social participation.

Planapo is the plan that operationalises PNAPPO, organised in multi-year cycles with targets and actions. It is structured around four main axes: 1. Production, with support for agroecological transition; 2. Use and conservation of natural resources through sustainable management; 3. Knowledge, through research, training and the valuing of traditional knowledge; 4. Marketing and consumption, through institutional markets, short supply chains, certification and food education; and as a cross-cutting axis, social participation and inter-ministerial coordination through the National Commission on Agroecology and Organic Production (CNAPO).

Regulation, Certification and Inspection of Organic Production – Law No. 10.831/2003

establishes the principles of organic agriculture in Brazil, while **Decree No. 6.323/2007** regulates its implementation by creating the Brazilian System for the Assessment of Organic Conformity (SisOrg) and the use of the “Organic Brazil” seal. Certification may occur through official audit, participatory guarantee systems or social control for direct sales, ensuring that products comply with legal standards on production, management and inputs. Inspection, carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA) and accredited bodies, guarantees traceability, compliance with the rules and the correct use of the seal. The system aims to ensure the authenticity of organic products, protect consumers, promote sustainable agricultural practices, strengthen family farming and agroecology, and reinforce the organisation and credibility of the organic market.

Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) – Established by Law No. 14.628/2023, the PAA regulates the direct purchase of food from family farming, including agroecological production, to supply social programmes and strengthen public procurement of food from family farmers. It is implemented by the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) in partnership with State, Federal District and Municipal Governments, with the National Supply Company (Conab) and the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA).

National Programme for Strengthening Family Farming (Pronaf) – Established by Law No. 11.947/2009, Pronaf offers several lines of credit aimed at strengthening family farming in Brazil. Among them is a specific line for Agroecology, designed to provide investment and operating credit for agroecological or organic production systems. Other credit lines target specific groups, such as Pronaf Women and Pronaf Youth, as well as thematic lines such as Pronaf Forests, which align with the Agroecology line. Pronaf is implemented by

public and private banks, as well as rural credit cooperatives, which offer financing conditions with differentiated interest rates and terms to increase accessibility for the beneficiary public. Despite the potential of Pronaf Agroecology, access still faces significant challenges, with low uptake partly attributed to the way financial agencies operate, which hinders the effective use of credit by family farmers.

National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (Plansan) – Plansan is the main instrument for planning, managing and implementing the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PNSAN). Among its guidelines is the “promotion of supply systems and of sustainable, decentralised and agroecology-based systems for the production, extraction, processing and distribution of food.” The third edition of Plansan, launched in 2025, is organised into 18 intersectoral strategies and 219 initiatives, establishing itself as a central instrument for coordinating the various public policies related to food and nutrition security in the country.

National Food Supply Plan (Planab) – Established by Ministry of Agrarian Development Ordinance No. 49/2014, Planab aims to structure an efficient and sustainable food supply system, with priority attention to the most vulnerable populations, the strengthening of family farming and the production of healthy foods. Centred on food sovereignty, food and nutrition security and agroecological transition, Planab integrates several strategic sectors, promoting the strengthening of territorial supply networks, the preservation of ecosystems and the valuing of traditional knowledge. Its scope covers policies on production, marketing, access to information and territorial rights. It is implemented by the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming (MDA) as an intersectoral coordination instrument for the promotion of sustainable and inclusive food systems.

Biodiversity Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) Framework – Established by Law No. 13.123/2015, this framework sets out the national policy for the research, production and protection of seeds and seedlings of agricultural and forest species, with the aim of promoting innovation, ensuring the quality of planting material, preserving genetic diversity and fostering economic development in the sector. Its main guidelines include the registration and protection of new plant varieties, the sustainable use of genetic resources, support for research and partnerships between public and private institutions, the certification and marketing of high-quality seeds and seedlings, and social participation and transparency in policy implementation.

Agroecology Research and Education Network (CAPES and CNPq Calls) – These networks are supported through public calls for proposals aimed at promoting teaching, research and extension activities in agroecology within higher education and research institutions. Through this network, the aim is to strengthen academic training, foster the production of scientific knowledge and encourage technology extension and social technology practices that contribute to more sustainable and socially inclusive agri-food systems.

Agroecology Fairs and Networks – These are territorial initiatives that strengthen short supply chains by directly connecting farmers, consumers and organisations in regions such as the South, Northeast and Amazon. Such initiatives promote the valuing of local production, access to healthy food and the strengthening of family farming.

Creole Seeds Network – This national community initiative preserves and multiplies traditional seed varieties, strengthening agricultural biodiversity and agroecology. Its sustainability is expressed in environmental terms, by preserving adapted varieties; in economic terms, by supporting family farming and local markets; and in social terms, by promoting autonomy and food sovereignty. It operates through cooperation among farmers, seed exchanges, technical training and collaboration with universities and public agencies, ensuring genetic and cultural preservation and the sustainable development of communities.

State and municipal policies – Implemented in states such as Rio Grande do Sul, Maranhão and Pernambuco, these policies seek to integrate technical assistance, incentives for sustainable production and the strengthening of short supply chains, promoting agroecological transition in an organised and territorially adapted manner.

At the municipal level, cities such as Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Recife and Fortaleza have developed specific legislation and programmes to encourage organic production, linking farmers' markets, community gardens, farmer training and the inclusion of agroecological products in school and public food programmes. These initiatives reflect a broader trend towards strengthening family farming and consolidating local markets, while supporting environmentally responsible agricultural practices.

Agroecological Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER) – Regulated by Law No. 12.188/2010 through the National Policy on Technical Assistance and Rural Extension for Family Farming and Agrarian Reform (PNATER) and the National ATER Programme

(PRONATER), this approach promotes support for agroecological transition. It integrates technical knowledge and traditional knowledge, sharing the principles of agroecology, and strengthens the autonomy and sustainability of family farming production systems.

MAIN CHALLENGES

Engagement with rural social movements – The expansion of agroecological production in Brazil faces multiple interconnected challenges. At the level of institutional support and public policies, there is a lack of integrated and consistent policies across regions. Credit lines and technical-assistance programmes specifically geared towards agroecology remain insufficient, and integration with food-supply and marketing policies is still limited. Capacity-building and technical knowledge also pose obstacles, due to the need for adequate training for family farmers, the scarcity of professionals specialised in agroecological Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER), and limited access to information on good practices and sustainable innovations.

Infrastructure and logistical challenges further aggravate the situation, including weak transport, storage and marketing systems—particularly for short supply chains—as well as territorial and economic barriers that limit the participation of small farmers in fairs and local markets. In addition, there is a need to raise awareness among consumers and markets about sustainability and food sovereignty. Climate change also requires agroecological systems to adapt to extreme events and shifting environmental conditions, demanding greater investment in teaching, research and extension in agroecology.

The strong political and economic influence of agribusiness constrains the expansion of agroecological models within a context dominated by conventional agro-industrial paradigms. There is limited recognition of the added value of agroecological foods, including in relation to subsidies. Conventional food systems conflict with agroecological principles, as they rely on monocultures, focus on export markets, and make intensive use of chemical inputs and genetically modified organisms. They also tend to push for the deregulation of standards, including tax exemptions, the approval of pesticides, flexibilised environmental licensing and the reduction of protected areas, all of which directly undermine agroecological practice and its expansion.

Compounding this is land concentration, which restricts access to land and water. Dominant markets, including large supermarket chains and conventional supply chains, do not prioritise the marketing of agroecological products.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Councils and Commissions

The core purpose of the councils is to formulate, monitor and evaluate public policies, ensuring coordinated action between government and civil society.

National Commission on Agroecology (CNAPO) – Linked to the Office of the President's Secretariat-General, CNAPO is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and guiding public policies on agroecology and organic production. It has a plural and parity-based composition, bringing together representatives of government, rural social movements, the scientific sector and civil society, ensuring integration between public policies and the demands of family farmers and traditional peoples.

National Council for Sustainable Rural Development (Condraf) – Condraf proposes guidelines for public policies aimed at sustainable rural development, agrarian reform, family farming, food supply and food sovereignty, among other affirmative actions for peoples of the land, waters and forests.

National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) – CONSEA monitors the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PNSAN) and its main instrument, the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (Plansan), and issues recommendations. CONSEA has issued a range of related recommendations and statements, such as calling for the full veto of Bill No. 1.459/2022 in favour of pesticides, requesting the reinstatement of the National Programme for the Reduction of Pesticide Use, and opposing tax mechanisms that benefit pesticide use. It has also advocated integrated public actions to combat and eradicate hunger and racism in Brazilian food systems, recommended that the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty be guided by the human right to adequate food, and monitored the public budget for food and nutrition security with social participation, applying gender-, race/colour/ethnicity- and socioculturally sensitive budgeting to ensure adequate funding, minimum execution parameters and a dedicated management marker.

Networks and Movements

Rural social movements have been essential in consolidating agroecology as a strategy for social and economic development. Organisations such as the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), the Small Farmers' Movement (MPA), the National Agroecology Alliance (ANA) and the Brazilian Agroecology Association (ABA), among other agroecological movements, work to mobilise, train and organise family farmers. These initiatives strengthen sustainable practices, the production of healthy foods and the autonomy of rural communities, demonstrating the importance of social participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies for family farming, agroecological transition and food sovereignty.

In terms of participation and social representation, access to formal decision-making spaces remains limited, with larger and more bureaucratised actors predominating, while public consultations often have a symbolic character and offer little concrete influence.

National Agroecology Alliance (ANA) –

ANA is a space for coordination and convergence among Brazilian social movements, networks and civil society organisations engaged in concrete experiences that promote agroecology, strengthen family-based production and build sustainable rural development alternatives.

Brazilian Agroecology Association (ABA)

– ABA encourages the development of technical-scientific knowledge integrated with popular knowledge in the field of agroecology, and contributes to the drafting and implementation of public policies aimed at improving quality of life and fostering social inclusion.

Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST)

– MST organises rural workers in the struggle for agrarian reform and access to land.

Small Farmers' Movement (MPA) –

MPA organises small farmers to defend their identity and agricultural model, seeking alternatives such as agroecology, food sovereignty and the valuing of their shared needs.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENFORCEABILITY

Responsibility for advancing agroecology is shared, but organised in a common yet differentiated manner, recognising the central role of the State and the co-responsibility of society and the productive sector. Although there is no single, specific channel for justiciability, it is exercised both through judicial action and through the mobilisation of democratic instruments of participation and social oversight, which strengthen transparency, policy effectiveness and the protection of the human right to adequate and environmentally sustainable food.

The State holds the primary and structuring responsibility for formulating, implementing and monitoring the National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production (PNAPO) and the National Plan on Agroecology and Organic Production (Planapo), as well as for ensuring credit, agroecological Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER), public research, institutional procurement and mechanisms for protecting sociobiodiversity and the territories of traditional peoples and

communities. It is also the State's duty to ensure oversight, clear regulations and spaces for participation and social control—such as CNAPO, councils and committees—that allow society to demand compliance with policies and to report omissions or setbacks.

Civil society, in turn, exercises a participatory and co-responsible role, contributing to the conservation of creole seeds, to sustainable production practices, to shared policy management and to territorial monitoring of outcomes. Social movements, family farmers, community organisations and consumers play an active role in building and defending agroecology as both a right and a development model.

The productive sector and companies also have specific obligations related to compliance with socio-environmental standards, the prevention of harm, the restoration of degraded areas and the adoption of responsible practices throughout production chains.

CORPORATE POWER

Agroecological transition and production in Brazil remain constrained by a coordinated bloc of corporate powers that sustain the dominant agro-export model. The economic power of agribusiness exerts strong control over production chains, rural credit, logistics and markets, directing investments toward monoculture commodity systems and limiting alternatives based on productive diversity.

Added to this is the sector's highly organised political power, which influences law-making, shapes the public budget and interferes in regulation, ensuring the continued use of chemical inputs and the expansion of agricultural frontiers from north to south.

Another central component is the corporate power of the pesticide, fertilizer and seed industries, which are committed to preserving models dependent on external technological packages—the very models that agroecology seeks to overcome. Together with media and cultural power, these corporations reinforce the narrative that agribusiness is synonymous with pro-

ductivity, modernity and wealth, obscuring agroecological experiences and discrediting evidence of their socio-environmental effectiveness.

Finally, institutional power continues to reproduce the logic of the Green Revolution: technical structures, research systems, financing mechanisms and regulatory frameworks remain anchored in productivist paradigms, hindering the development of policies, incentives and approaches aligned with agroecological transition.

When combined, these forms of power create political, economic and symbolic barriers that limit the consolidation of robust public policies, strategic investments and narratives capable of advancing agroecology as a project of sustainable rural development, food sovereignty and socio-environmental justice in the country.

FINANCING

Agroecology in Brazil is financed by a diverse array of actors, but without an integrated and stable support system. The main funder is the State, particularly the Federal Government, which allocates resources through Pronaf Agroecology, agroecological ATER, research calls and public food procurement. International cooperation also plays a decisive role by financing projects, training and territorial networks.

Civil society organisations and social movements mobilise and apply resources to training activities, farmers' markets, creole seeds and technical assistance, often sustaining initiatives in areas where the State does not reach. Universities contribute through investments in research and extension. Finally, consumers and solidarity-based markets directly support farmers through purchases at fairs, Community-Supported Agriculture schemes and short supply chains.

Thus, the financing of agroecology results from the combination of State action, international cooperation, civil society, research and responsible consumption—still marked, however, by insufficiency and fragmentation.

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