

Food and Nutrition Security Policy in Brazil: Empowering Quality Management in Family Farming Cooperatives

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Abstract

Brazil currently offers an important conceptual framework and public policy for food and nutrition security (FNS) and hunger combat, guided by the Human Right to Adequate Food (HRAF). More than a decade of the political commitment to the multisectoral and participative, with great public investments, resulted in significant reductions on poverty and hunger in the country.

Since the early 2000s, the FNS theme became prominent in the government agenda. However, this new phase of policies aimed to combat hunger derives not only the political will of governments, although this is a key variable in the agenda-setting model. The recent decisions are derived from an accumulated process of learning by trial and error over almost a century of social mobilization and public administration, promoting a favorable environment to effectively implement and generate continuous and expressive results.

Nowadays, the Brazilian system absorb the international standards and adapt to its reality, linking the concepts of food security and food nutrition, and having its legal framework based on seven dimensions: food production, food availability, income, food accessibility, health and health services accessibility, education, and programs and actions related to FNS.

Two major categories constitutes the food production in Brazil: the agribusiness and the family farming. The agribusiness category is a largely monoculture export-led sector. It accounts for 62% of the country's gross agricultural production value and is largely responsible for Brazil's main products in the international market. Characterized by relatively large proprieties, it accounts 15% of the 5.2 million rural establishments and more than three-quarters of the rural land area. On the other hand, the family farmers forms the bulk of the rural population: nearly 4.4 million families on 85% of the country's rural establishments, making the sector represents three-quarters of the rural labor force (IBGE, 2009).

In this complex evolving framework, the society has been empowered as an important actor, participating, promoting, monitoring and being part of the public policy. The Brazilian government provided a positive mechanism for these voluntary actions, encouraging people to adopt positive FNS norms and standards. While the policies were evolving, the family farming sector, mainly through the cooperativism, became a viable production source in terms of food quality and quantity, according to the FNS principles.

IBGE. (2009). Censo Agropecuário 2006. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE.