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T20 POLICY BRIEF

Task Force 01

FIGHTING INEQUALITIES, POVERTY, AND HUNGER

Brazil's Recipe for Sustainability: Public Food Procurement Policies for Food System Transformation

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Abstract

Food and nutrition insecurity has advanced around the world, and rural areas are particularly sensitive. Public purchases of food from family farms have already proven to be an effective way of tackling urban and rural hunger. Also, these purchases are increasingly associated with diversification of production through short production chains, incentives for sustainable agricultural practices, income generation, and stimulation of local economies. All this occurs while promoting food and nutrition security for the beneficiaries of the programmes and the farmers who supply the food, by strengthening self-consumption. In Brazil, these policies have been consolidated over the last two decades, starting with the Food Purchase Programme (PAA), launched in 2003, and the commitment to allocate part of the funds of the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) to purchase from family farms, established in 2009. The policy configuration has evolved to incorporate an environmental and civic ethic through a legal framework that prioritises socio-economically vulnerable social groups, sustainable production, and products from regional socio-biodiversity. This leaves room for building a more sustainable, healthy, and respectful society for the planet's natural resources and current and future generations. However, policies have not yet reached their potential to effectively promote a sustainable food system. To advance in the food system transformation, some actions are needed, including the continuous improvement of the legal framework, dissemination of information on sustainability, infrastructure, and financial and technical resources compatible with the dominant production system for investment in sustainable agricultural production. These are key efforts towards scaling up the sustainability potential of policies through the availability of financial and human resources, and they are relevant for the G20.

Keywords: Sustainable Food Systems; Public Procurement; Family Farming; Food Acquisition Program; School Feeding; G20.

Diagnosis of the issue

Brazil's innovative approach to integrating family farming into public procurement policies to build sustainable food systems offers a central arena for addressing the multiple global challenges that are high on the G20 agenda. This policy brief provides a thematic examination of Brazil's public procurement policies, in particular the Brazilian School Feeding Programme (PNAE) and the Food Purchasing Programme (PAA), and highlights their relevance to the G20's deliberations on sustainable development, climate resilience, and food security.

The significance of this topic for the G20 agenda lies in its alignment with key global priorities such as sustainable agriculture, climate action, and nutritional health. These areas are crucial for fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as these public purchases from family farming are recognized for their capacity to significantly support the achievement of several SDGs: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reducing inequality), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), and SDG 13 (climate action). The selection of this theme is driven by the urgent necessity to tackle the immediate challenges posed by climate change, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity, which are intensified by traditional agricultural methods (Willett, W. et al., 2019). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic downturn have exposed the vulnerabilities of global food systems, especially with the increase in food insecurity (FAO; IFAD; UNICEF; WFP; WHO, 2023), emphasising the imperative for resilient and sustainable approaches to food production and distribution.

This policy brief explains the evolution, achievements and challenges of Brazil's public procurement policies from its inception to its current state. It highlights the critical

role of family farming in conserving biodiversity, improving food security and contributing to a healthier planet. It also highlights the systemic barriers to realising the full potential of these policies, such as logistical challenges, the need for enhanced technical assistance, and for more inclusive and flexible procurement mechanisms.

In light of unprecedented challenges, Brazil's public procurement policies, through the PNAE and the PAA, serve as a paradigmatic example of how government initiatives can promote sustainable food systems at local, national, regional, and community levels. The policies prioritise local food from family farms, socio-economically vulnerable farmers, including women, blacks, indigenous peoples, quilombolas and settlers, as well as organic, agroecological and sociobiodiverse non-industrialised food. These policies not only support local economies and smallholder farmers but also promote biodiversity, nutritional health, and environmental sustainability. This innovative approach has catalysed a transformative shift towards more sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems in Brazil and offers valuable lessons and scalable models for G20 countries.

Recommendations

1. Exporting the Brazilian Model to Other Nations

Recommendation: The G20 countries ought to adopt and promote the institutionalisation of public procurement policies that prioritise the purchase of products from sustainable family farming. These purchases should focus on sustainable, organic, and agroecological practices, as well as sociobiodiverse foods from traditional and vulnerable communities. The government's food procurement budget should primarily be allocated towards these goals.

Implementation: National laws, regulations, and guidelines should be established to integrate sustainable food procurement with sustainable family farming purchasing in all public institutions, including schools, hospitals, and government agencies. To achieve this, it is essential to (i) establish the beneficiaries and sustainability criteria, i.e., regulations defining the characteristics of a sustainable small family farmer and sustainable products; (ii) create a certification and monitoring system to ensure adherence to sustainability criteria.

Practical cases: Brazil's PNAE and PAA programmes demonstrate how public procurement can serve as a strategic tool for promoting sustainable agriculture, enhancing food security, and supporting rural economies. Allocating food procurement to family farming can have a positive impact on local economies, reduce carbon footprints, and improve nutritional outcomes.

2. Advancing Local and Regional Food Systems

Recommendation: Develop policies that promote the sourcing of food from short-supply chains, with a focus on local and regional producers. This encourages food

production and processing by sustainable small-family farmers and communities, contributing to local supply and prioritising socio-biodiversity foods. Additionally, it helps reduce the environmental impacts associated with production, processing, and logistics.

Implementation: From a regulatory perspective, it is crucial to adjust laws and regulations to meet the requirements of sustainable family farmers and local communities, and to monitor their implementation. Operationally, it is necessary to establish local food hubs that connect smallholder farmers with public institutions, optimise food supply and reduce logistics costs. These hubs provide logistical and financial support to facilitate their participation in public procurement processes.

Practical cases: Local food purchasing policies, such as Farm-to-School-US (McKinzie et al., 2023), have notable positive effects on local economies. However, it is important to note that these effects are currently limited to local examples. More investment in financial and technical resources is required to scale up.

3. Promote Agroecological Transition and Biodiversity Conservation

Recommendation: The transition of conventional farms to agroecological and organic farming should be encouraged and supported by public procurement policies.

Implementation: Prioritise and value sustainable production. In addition, mechanisms should be implemented to aid small-family farmers in transitioning to sustainable production. This can be achieved by providing technical and financial support for participatory certification in organic and agroecological production.

Practical cases: Brazil has local examples of agroecological transition of farmers due to the support provided by public procurement, with the assistance of local governments. These local examples have the potential to spread nationally and globally with the largest

allocation of resources and with the support of complementary public policies, particularly technical assistance and rural extension and credit aimed at sustainable production.

4. Improve food security and nutrition in both rural and urban areas through public procurement.

Recommendation: Public procurement can be used as a tool to improve food security and nutrition for both food suppliers and programme beneficiaries.

Implementation: Set nutritional standards for public food procurement that prioritise the promotion of healthier and sustainable diets for all, including non-industrialised and nutrient-dense foods aligned with food based dietary guidelines. Engage nutritionists in the planning process and work with producers to promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Practical cases: The building of sustainable food systems based on family production is recognized as coinciding with the strengthening of healthy eating (Bocchi et al., 2019; FAO/WHO, 2019). In Brazil, the push to buy locally and fresh items from family farming has resulted in the PNAE offering more healthy and sustainable food (Soares et al., 2018). Brazilian legislation promotes the procurement of food from family farming, as well as foods that are both healthy and sustainable, including agroecological food products aligned with the dietary guidelines of the Brazilian population. This regulation can inspire governments to provide healthier diets to schools, hospitals, prisons, welfare organisations, public bodies, and others. The government can provide a useful reference for the general population and promote a transition to healthier diets.

5. Sustainable and Healthy Public Procurement Guide

Recommendation: Establish a robust guide to track the impact of public procurement policies on sustainability, economic development, food security, and nutrition outcomes.

Implementation: Develop indicators and benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of public procurement policies. Utilise existing government data through digital tools and technologies for real-time monitoring and feedback. Continuously work on monitoring and improvements based on additional data collection, analysis, and qualitative information. Measurable elements include the amount of food purchased by family farmers, the amount of food purchased by programmes that comes from socio-biodiversity, and the amount offered by farmers in socio-economic vulnerability, among others.

Practical cases: The Brazilian government monitors certain information, such as the percentage of purchases from family farming by the PNAE. However, the latest data available at this level of detail is from 2019 (CONAB, 2021). The PAA has recently published studies, but the quantitative data available in a report was last published in 2020 by Conab (FNDE, 2024). The periodicity and detail of the information are not easily accessible to the public, including beneficiaries.

Scenario of outcomes

In considering the future of Brazil's federal public purchasing policies for family farming products and their role in constructing sustainable food systems, it is essential to objectively evaluate the multifaceted outcomes of adopting these recommendations.

1. Enhanced Sustainability and Resilience in Food Systems

Adopting the recommendations could strengthen the sustainability framework within the agricultural sector. Emphasising organic and agroecological farming practices has the potential to reduce environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, contributing to a more resilient ecosystem. This scenario describes a transition towards a more circular economy, where waste is minimised, and resources are efficiently utilised. This will enhance the resilience of food systems against climate change and other global challenges.

Contradictions and Trade-offs: However, this scenario presents economic and infrastructural challenges. The initial costs and investments required for transitioning to sustainable practices may be prohibitive for small-scale farmers without adequate and longstanding financial support. Even in Brazil, where the policy is present throughout the entire territory and is considered comprehensive, the total amount available for public purchases is insufficient to promote sustainable transitions for all family farmers. In 2019, PNAE and PAA spent approximately R\$1.5 billion or US\$300 million purchasing from family farmers. However, Brazil has 3.9 million family farming establishments, of which 68% can be considered vulnerable, with a gross family income of up to R\$23,000 or around US\$4.6 thousand (IBGE, 2019). Furthermore, transitioning towards a sustainable model requires significant changes in infrastructure and market dynamics, which may

cause disruptions in food supply and accessibility. Participants in the current conventional value chain may need to relocate within the new configuration of the food system or migrate to other sectors of the economy.

2. Economic Empowerment of Family Farmers

The policies could potentially empower family farmers by providing them with stable markets and fair prices, which could improve their livelihoods and reduce rural poverty. By fostering closer connections between consumers and local producers, these policies may stimulate local economies and create jobs, thereby addressing issues of economic inequality.

Contradictions and Trade-offs: However, family farmers may face barriers to expanding production due to competition in other markets and consumer preferences, which can hinder their economic empowerment. Small-scale farmers may face challenges when competing with larger industrial producers in terms of cost and efficiency, which could lead to market consolidation if not managed carefully. Competitors operate within consolidated markets and offer their products through large chains that are not easily accessible. This makes it difficult for small producers to compete on price and remain viable. Aligning consumer preferences with the outputs of family farming requires significant cultural and educational efforts to shift consumption patterns towards more sustainable choices.

3. Food Security and Nutrition Outcomes

Prioritising the purchase of diverse, nutritious, and locally produced foods could lead to improved nutritional outcomes and enhanced food security among the population. This

approach aligns with global efforts to combat malnutrition and promote healthy diets, contributing to the well-being of all citizens.

Contradictions and Trade-offs: The optimistic scenario is tempered by the logistical and operational complexities of implementing large-scale changes in public procurement practices. The focus on local procurement might limit the availability of certain foods. It could prove challenging to ensure a careful balance between local sourcing and the need for dietary diversity and safety standards across a diverse network of small producers, requiring robust regulatory frameworks and monitoring systems.

4. Strengthened Social and Cultural Capital

Adopting these recommendations could enhance the social and cultural fabric of communities by valuing traditional knowledge and practices related to agriculture and food. This approach acknowledges the significance of conserving cultural heritage and promoting a sense of community around local food systems.

Contradictions and Trade-offs: The implementation of federal public procurement policies for family farming products in Brazil presents a complex set of scenarios, each with its own contradictions and trade-offs. While the potential benefits are significant, including environmental sustainability, economic empowerment, improved nutrition, and cultural preservation, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that come with them. To navigate these complexities, a holistic approach is required. This involves stakeholder engagement, adaptive management, and continuous evaluation to reconcile diverse outcomes and optimise benefits for all members of society.

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