

## Links between family farming and the National School Feeding Program in Brazil: comments on the article by Schwartzman et al.

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Conexiones entre agricultura familiar y el Programa Nacional de Alimentación Escolar en Brasil: reflexiones sobre el artículo de Schwartzman et al.

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doi: 10.1590/0102-311X00084817

The article by Schwartzman et al. analyzes the process of drafting and implementing *Law 11,947/2009* and the components of the Brazilian National School Feeding Program (PNAE) in its “link” to family farming. The article cites the study by Hawkes et al. <sup>1</sup> that analyzed the same process, but with a different approach, since the latter study was based on models from political theory, while Schwartzman et al. did not specifically state their frame of reference and included the analysis of components according to the logical model. Hawkes et al. identified elements in the political process that allowed approval of the Law (alliances and opposition strategies, like those in the Senate) that were only addressed in passing by Schwartzman et al.

Analyzing the historical context, the article highlights the importance of the Zero Hunger Program and the National Council for Food and Nutritional Security (CONSEA). However, it is important to emphasize the political dynamic established by the CONSEA, which empowered and coordinated demands by different sectors, facilitated alliances and negotiated policy action beyond the Executive Branch, like the Congressional Front for Food and Nutritional Security created in 2007, which helped confront the political opposition in the Senate.

The process also allowed reshaping ideas, arguments, and interests and facilitated the shared development of definitions on issues that were essential to the terms of the Law: food and nutritional security and adequate and healthy eating, the PNAE and rights, family farming and the justifications for supporting it, public purchases to induce new practices and values, and development with equity, social inclusion, and social, economic, and cultural sustainability.

Brazil's *Federal Constitution* (1988), Article 208, already acknowledged school feeding as a duty of the state, but it was only included in the list of social rights in 2010, with *Constitutional Amendment 64*<sup>2</sup>. However, the links to the human right to adequate food only gained “material substance” in the CONSEA, which made specific recommendations to the PNAE from this perspective <sup>3</sup>.

The links to family farming were initially established through recognition of agriculture's calling and incentives for local production and purchases. *Law 8,913* of 1994 <sup>4</sup> already recommended that produce should be purchased preferentially at the regional level, but the justification of reduced costs took on new meaning in the context of food and nutritional security.

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Local circuits of food production and consumption have been promoted in various countries, but the Brazilian context differs because of the specific incentive for family farming (and not only for local agriculture). The article acknowledges that the institutional link between school feeding and local agriculture through *Law 11,947* is a milestone in food and nutritional security policies. However, it is important to note that this is the first legislation for the PNAE that mentions not only the incentive for local purchases, but preferentially for purchases from family farming and indigenous and *quilombola* (slave-descendant) communities. The justifications for purchases from family farming can differ from those for local purchases.

As the article emphasizes, the demands to link family farming to government purchases had been voiced since the 1980s, but ran into difficulties when attempting to sell to the institutional market. Such demands also took on new meanings.

The 1st National Conference on Food and Nutritional Security in 1994 emphasized “non-formulated” regional foods as the priority, together with subsidies and technical assistance for “small farmers” through incentives for the production of staple foods. The following year, the National Program to Strengthen Family Farming (PRONAF) was created to provide special credit conditions for family farming. As an important milestone from the legacy of policies to encourage family farming, the program is mentioned by Schwartzman et al., but only as a reference for defining the “target public” benefited by the linkage between the PNAE and family farming. However, PRONAF reshaped government action in agriculture, since the Brazilian state now formally recognized a specific category of farmers. For the first time, PRONAF set the criteria for defining “family farmers”, with specific eligibility status for government programs and policies, as distinguished from “small” or “local” farmers. The definition was later adopted formally in *Law 11,326* of July 24, 2006<sup>5</sup>.

In the context of the Zero Hunger Program and CONSEA, the support for family farming was seen as a structural policy to promote economic activities on an equitable basis and expand the supply of foods that express dietary cultural diversity and induce competition in markets controlled by large food industries.

Two innovative initiatives were established for this purpose, drafted by a working group of CONSEA and an inter-ministerial technical group: (1) the Harvest Plan for Family Farming (2003-2004), aimed at integrating the agricultural policy instruments for the annual harvest with guidelines for agrarian development and food and nutritional security, purchasing foods from family farming to serve as initiatives to subsidize consumption and implemented by Zero Hunger; (2) the Food Procurement Program, whose objectives point to new meanings in the incentives for family farming, especially related to equitable food supply and access, such as: contributing to farmers’ food and nutritional security; generating income with the sale of surplus produce to the Federal government; incentivizing local marketing of produce, expanding food stocks for distribution to feeding programs; guaranteeing access to foods with the necessary amounts, quality, and regularity for populations in situations of food and nutritional insecurity; and promoting social inclusion in the countryside.

Reclaiming the social importance of family farming was essential to development of the focus on food and nutritional security in Brazil, highlighting its productive capacity, since family farming supplies the largest share of the domestic consumer market, despite limited access to land, farm credit, and technical support; preservation of traditional knowledge, local culture, and the potential for sustainable and equitable development. The promotion of agroecological farming techniques (not always used by family farming) was prioritized, but from the perspective of a progressive transition that did not override the support for family farming. Such elements conditioned the underlying arguments in the Law’s defense.

Although the initiative to link family farming to government programs through public purchases preceded the CONSEA, and the focus on food and nutritional security reinforces this link in other ways and lends new meanings to it by encouraging awareness of the origin of the foods and the way they are produced, and evidencing how farming practices condition eating practices and affect inequalities.

Thus, the debate on public food purchases was expanded beyond forming regulatory food reserves, including the criteria for choosing suppliers. Since government is a strategic buyer, it can induce new practices and values in the market as well.

From the perspective of food and nutritional security, it matters who one purchases food from, how the food is produced, and to ask: What are the social, economic, political, environmental, cultural, and health repercussion of these different agricultural practices? Which human and citizens' rights do the public policies address? What kind of development (sustainable, inclusive, equitable, or exclusionary) do they promote? Which segments of suppliers and consequently what type of development and practices, including eating practices, do the institutional rules and public procurement process favor? Such questions allowed the concept of adequate and healthy eating to be redefined by CONSEA, associated with all the above-mentioned aspects, and that justified the link between family farming and the National School Feeding Program as provided in the Law.

### Contributors

L. Burlandy e C. S. Carvalhosa contributed in the design, study and analysis of the article

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Submitted on 16/May/2017

Approved on 17/Jul/2017