

A Reference for *Designing*  
**Food** and **Nutrition** Security Policies:



The Brazilian **Fome Zero** Strategy

## A Reference for Designing Food and Nutrition Security Policies: The Brazilian *Fome Zero* Strategy

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A REFERENCE FOR DESIGNING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY POLICIES:  
THE BRAZILIAN *FOME ZERO* STRATEGY

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Hunger continues to be one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. In Latin America and the Caribbean it is a challenge that is directly linked to the unequal distribution of income in the region. In most of its countries, there is not a problem of production but of access, that has been compounded by the combined effects of high food prices and the economic crisis. The problem lies in that a significant portion of the population does not have the money to buy food.

Between 2000-2002 and 2004-2006, Brazil was able to reduce its undernourished population from 17 million to 11.9 million thanks to an integrated effort whose centrepiece is the Fome Zero (*Zero Hunger*) Strategy, launched in January 2003 by the then recently inaugurated Lula Administration. In the midst of the current economic crisis, sustained internal consumption, in part because of cash transfer programmes and government support to family farm and other actions that are part of the *Zero Hunger* strategy, has also contributed to make Brazil one of the countries least affected and first to surface from the international turmoil.

In a nutshell, *Zero Hunger's* strategy combines short-term responses to emergency situations with medium- and long-term responses that help create the necessary conditions for families to guaranteeing their own food security. Additionally, it recognizes that the needs of people living in rural and urban areas differ and offers a specific set of interventions for each case. This is in line with the "twin-track approach" recommended by FAO in the 1996 World Food Summit and endorsed by the Comprehensive Framework of Action of the UN's Secretary General High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

Also crucial to understanding *Zero Hunger* is the need for a new model of economic development that is more inclusive and gives opportunities to all citizens. If structural changes are not made to reduce social exclusion and concentration (income, land, etc.) and break from the vicious circle linking social exclusion to poverty and hunger, no food security policy can be successful.

The multifaceted nature of food security and the need to confront the issue with a multi-sector perspective were considered in the design of the *Zero Hunger*. Over 10 ministries are involved in the strategy that has 30 programs and initiatives falling into four main areas of intervention: access to food, strengthening of family farming, income generation, and social empowerment, mobilization and oversight.

The participation of state and municipal governments, as well as of the civil society and private sector, was also a central point for a quick scaling up and to bring about a rapid and significant decrease in the levels of poverty and hunger. This combined effort also facilitated the *Zero Hunger* Programme taking root as a permanent priority of the country, and a transformation beyond being a feature of the Lula Administration. This approach also allowed the focus on hunger to reshape the role of the state and society in tackling the country's longstanding social and economic challenges.

Its multi-sector approach is one of its strong points: by coordinating previously independent efforts it is possible to reach better results. At the same time, the coordination effort is also one of its implementation challenges.

In Brazil, the Lula administration made it clear from the very start that fighting hunger was a top priority. In his inaugural speech on January 1, 2003, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva stated that he would consider his life's mission fulfilled if every Brazilian were able to have three meals a day by the end of his administration. "This is a cause that could and should belong to everyone, without distinctions of class, party or ideology", the new President went on to say, calling upon all elements of Brazilian society to embrace this goal.

This is the first lesson learned from the *Zero Hunger* strategy: the eradication of hunger and malnutrition needs to be placed in the top of the political agenda, be a shared commitment of all, and be backed by concrete action.

Brazil's recent track record in reducing hunger and poverty is the best advocate of *Zero Hunger's* success. The purpose of this paper is to share the Brazilian experience and let it be a point of reference for other countries in the Region, and in the world, that are designing food and nutrition security policies and are committed to eradicating hunger.

Hopefully, in looking back at how *Zero Hunger* was designed and implemented, other countries will find a valuable source to draw from to adapt or take into consideration when tackling these same challenges.

# 1. POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

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## 1.1 The overview

The number of people who suffer from hunger worldwide is projected to reach 1.02 billion by the end of 2009, and many more suffer from micronutrient deficiency. This is a result of incapacity of most governments to address the problems of hunger and malnutrition seriously, caused by a wide range of reasons, including lack of political will and institutional and legal framework to promote food security, insufficient resources to invest in food security and agriculture, social and political instability, and climatic events made more frequent and violent because of climate change.

This scenario has been compounded recently by a dangerous combination of high food prices and economic slow-down in many countries. Though the worst seems to have past, prices still remain higher than in 2005 in many developing countries and employment and wages still remain below their pre-crisis levels. In the current situation, the poor are hit doubly hard since they must pay more for food while their purchasing power dwindles due to the economic crisis.

Worldwide, although most countries made significant progress towards reducing chronic hunger in the eighties and the first half of the nineties, the number of undernourished people increased relentlessly during the past decade. Between 1995-97 and 2004-06 the total number of undernourished people increased throughout every Region of the world (in total, from 825 million to 873 million), except in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## 1.2 Latin America and the Caribbean lose ground because of the crisis

Despite the gains between 1995-1997 and 2004-2006 contrary to the global tendency, even in Latin America and the Caribbean the substantial progress made in reducing hunger has been lost because of the combined impacts of high cost of food and the current economic crisis. As a result, the number of undernourished is back to its 1990-1992 level of 53 million, after falling to 45 million in 2004-2006.

Economic growth helps explain its overall progress in terms of reducing extreme poverty and hunger in the Region until 2006. The new jobs created as a result of this economic growth have increased employment opportunities and more tax revenues, which spur greater social spending.

However, with the crisis came an economic downturn and the region could not sustain its gains against undernourishment because in Latin America and the Caribbean the problem is essentially one of lack of access to food rather than one of production. In the vast majority of its countries, there is no food shortage. Simply put: a significant portion of the population does not have the money it needs to buy food. The crisis magnifies the problem since it lowers income and causes a rise in unemployment.

Growth is expected to hit a downturn in the next few years as a consequence of the global financial crisis that erupted in 2008, which has had serious repercussions throughout 2009. The world recession will likely have a direct impact on the price of exports and demand in developing countries, thwarting progress towards reducing poverty. Moreover, because there is no direct link between poverty and food security, the prevalence of food insecurity could persist even if poverty is reduced.

The lack of access is a historical problem in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region displays severe inequalities in the distribution of income and this is exacerbated by a skewed distribution of assets including land. According to the World Bank, inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean between the '70s and '90s was 10 points higher than in Asia and 17.5 points higher than that in 30 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

At the same time, the Region's growing incidence of hunger is also a consequence of governments having embarked on a process of dismantling and privatizing the public sector system of support for agriculture, compounded by the fall of official development assistance to agriculture from US\$8.8 billion in 1980 to US\$3.4 billion in 2005 (in 2004 US\$). The global free market economy worked while there was cheap food – usually produced with subsidies in developed countries – in the international market, but when the need came to produce food to face the rising food prices developing countries were unable to respond.

It is noteworthy that progress in eradicating hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean has not been uniform. Ten out of 12 South American countries were well on their way to achieving –Brazil among them- or had already achieved the First Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving poverty and hunger from its 1990-1992 levels. In Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, there is not such a clear tendency: while some countries have successfully met the first MDG target, other continue to experience difficulties in reducing hunger.

One restriction faced by many countries in confronting the crisis is the still relatively modest public budget for social programmes, although it has been increasing. According to estimates made by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the average amount spent per capita in 2005 was only US\$ 440, with Brazil spending some US\$ 860, one of the highest in the Region equivalent to 15% of GDP.

## 2. FOOD SECURITY AND THE *ZERO HUNGER* STRATEGY

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### 2.1 Hunger and poverty: concepts and implications

Food security policies affect the entire population and not exclusively the poor. Conventional food security policies, such as those relating to food distribution and improved food supplies, food and nutrition education, information and product labelling, food quality and safety, among others, are good examples of policies that affect people irrespective of their income.

Nevertheless, the right to food is an inherent human right and an essential condition of life and social inclusion. Set in this context, a food and nutrition policy must guarantee regular and permanent universal access to quality food in sufficient quantities. Assuring this right for all people must not be at the expense of people's access to other basic necessities. A distinction should be made between food security policies and, more specifically, policies to fight hunger, and those aimed at fighting poverty in general. The difference centres on the fact that food security policies encompass the interrelationship between food production, distribution, and consumption, whereas cash transfer policies are confined to consumption.

Hunger and poverty are not the same but are clearly linked. Hungry people cannot learn or produce or as a healthy person can. In this sense, the perpetuation of hunger is the perpetuation of a vicious circle of exclusion. On the other hand, well-nourished people may be poor, but they can still participate in all aspects of a country's economic and social life and have a better chance to improving their life.

Reducing poverty will not, therefore, automatically, reduce hunger in the same proportion. Thus, specific public policies are needed to deal with poverty and food and nutrition issues and they are mutually complementary.

This is one of the understandings on which *Zero Hunger* is founded, as the strategy tries to transform vicious circles of exclusion in virtuous circles of inclusion through coordinated and integrated action.

### 2.2 Key points of the *Zero Hunger* Strategy

A broad and integrated strategy such as *Zero Hunger* must guarantee both access to food and its availability, and ensure a nutritionally adequate diet from a sustainable perspective. It is important to prevent undernourishment as well as other types of malnutrition that lead to overweight and obesity, increasingly frequent in the Region.

Hunger cannot be overcome solely through the distribution of free food and food security policies must be linked to economic and social development strategies helping promote growth with income distribution and more and better paid jobs. This is crucial and, put in another way,

means that the eradication of hunger – and poverty – can only be accomplished by the adoption of a new economic development model that promotes inclusion and gives opportunity to all citizens.

If the economic development model contributes to the concentration of resources (financial, natural, etc.) and does not successfully reduce unemployment and better wages, the vicious circle of exclusion, hunger and poverty perpetuates itself. In this sense, economic stability and growth is a necessary – but not sufficient – to successfully advance in the promotion of food security. This is particularly relevant for regions such as Latin America, where deficient access (insufficient income) is the main cause of hunger (FAO 2009).

At the same time, the fight against hunger cannot wait for the complete transformation of the structural policies from exclusive to inclusive. Such process can take years and, to do so, would mean condemning many of those living in food insecurity in the present. So, one challenge to be faced is how to advance, simultaneously, in promoting the structural changes leading to a more inclusive development while tackling the problem of hunger – through short and medium-long term actions.

*Zero Hunger* is an example of this new economic development model, in which its twin tracks assist the needy and promote social inclusion.

Based on the *Zero Hunger* strategy, food and nutrition security policies should govern the relationship between production, distribution, and consumption and must usually include 3 main dimensions:

- a) National-level structural policies adopted and coordinated by central or federal governments to address the primary causes of hunger and poverty. These include employment and income generation policies, the promotion of family farms, and agrarian reform, among others;
- b) Specific national-level food security policies to enable all people to access the food they need for a healthy life. These include cash transfer mechanisms, distribution of food in emergency situations for a limited period of time, and the establishment of food stocks for such distribution. Other specific policies touch on food safety and quality, mother and child nutrition, and nutrition education;
- c) Local-level policies – Decentralized local systems for food security are important because it is at this level where food security actions achieve the best results and allow for the more active social participation. Local-level policies are implemented through municipalities or civil society organizations with the objective of reducing the distance between producers and consumers. Actions that can be implemented at local level include peoples' restaurants, community kitchens, and food banks. Measures that raise local food demand need to be complemented by actions in rural areas aimed at enhancing the performance of family-run small-scale farms.

It is also important to implement actions adjusted to the specific needs at the local level, since there are significant differences between the problems faced by the poor according to whether they live in rural, urban or metropolitan areas.

The Brazilian experience also suggests that a successful Food and Nutrition Policy must encompass at least six very distinct but inter-related components, that carry the essence of the twin-track approach:

- a) A conditional cash transfer programme to immediately supplement income of poor families so they can buy the food they need. The conditional component contributes to long-term development by associating the cash transfer to factors such as health checks and school attendance.
- b) A stimulus programme to enable poor family farmers to expand their outputs in response to the growing demand for basic food products generated by the enhanced purchasing power created by the cash transfers. This is one of the most effective ways of addressing the extreme rural poverty that is so visible in Latin America.
- c) A health and nutrition programme to support specific groups that require greater care (i.e., elderly, children, nursing mothers), and to address illnesses caused by vitamin and micronutrient deficiencies. The access to clean drinking water deserves special attention, particularly in semi-arid Regions;
- d) A programme to monitor food intake and the extent to which public authorities are complying with their role as overseers.
- e) A comprehensive food and nutrition education programme to promote the principles of healthy eating habits. It is crucial that the media (particularly radio and TV) be a partner in conveying reliable information to consumers;
- f) A food supply and distribution programme specifically targeting large cities and metropolitan Regions to ensure access to good quality food by the low-income population. This can be done in partnership with the private sector and civil society.

*Zero Hunger* has had success in fighting undernourishment. According to a report published by the Brazilian Presidency in 2007, the country has met the Millennium Development Goal set by the United Nations for 2015 of reducing extreme poverty by half. Brazil has also established a new target, to reduce extreme poverty another 25 percent by 2010, leading the country on its way to completely eradicating hunger and extreme poverty.

In a similar trend, infant malnutrition in 2002, which affected 4.6 percent of children under the age of five, fell to 1.7 percent in 2006 according to surveys of the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (IBGE) and the Brazilian Analysis and Planning Centre (CEBRAP). The Unified Health System (SUS) statistics show that hospitalizations from malnutrition fell from 1.02 percent in 2002 to 0.53 percent in 2008. The reduction in the prevalence rates are linked to the expansion of the country's Family Health Strategy, and the extended coverage of cash transfer programs, one of the short term components of *Zero Hunger*.

Brazil implemented *Zero Hunger* during long growth period, obviously starting it in a crisis period had made it more complicated. It is important to note that during the 2008-2009 crisis *Zero Hunger* was an important safety net that mitigated the impact on the poorest sectors of the

population and helped to manage the effects on those who were impoverished as a strengthened local markets and maintained internal consumption which helped to compensate the external demand contraction. As a result Brazil as a whole, and particularly, the most vulnerable, suffered less and recovered has recovered faster than most of the countries.

### 2.3. The Institutional Framework for Food and Nutrition Security

The experience in Brazil indicates that the institutional framework of a food and nutrition security policy should involve at least four elements: 1) a participatory approach to policy-making and performance monitoring; 2) institutional arrangements to make the implementation of policies feasible, including executive institutions and advisory bodies such as councils at central and decentralized levels; 3) a coordinating institution answering directly to the Head of Government; and, 4) a right to food approach guaranteed by a legal framework that also ensures the sustainability of key programmes.

The institutional framework needs to be designed in such a way to allow for a multi-sector and implementation at the national, state, and municipal levels. In other words, a food security policy cannot focus solely on particular sectors (even if certain actions have greater priority) nor can it allow local actions to be taken separately from other complementary actions at the Regional and national level.

Because of the number of actors involved, food and nutrition security programs should be coordinated as close as possible to the Head of Government's Office. This is necessary to guarantee that the fight against hunger and the promotion of food security is a government priority, and not just the priority of one ministry. Furthermore, these aspects were incorporated into the national law, discussed below, which in essence elevated the objective of ensuring food and nutrition security for all Brazilians from a government priority to a permanent priority of the state.

The fight against hunger was put at the centre of the Lula Administration even before he was sworn in. In his first speech as President-elect, Lula stated:

*"My first year in office will be marked by the fight against hunger; a call for solidarity towards all Brazilians who have nothing to eat. (...) I am certain that this is the greatest demand of society as a whole, today. If, at the end of my term of office, all Brazilians can have three meals a day, I will have fulfilled my mission in life"*  
(Fragment of the first speech of the President-elect delivered on 20/10/2002).

When he took office in 2003, President Lula followed words with action and created the Special Ministry for Food Security and Fight Against Hunger (MESA), an institutional framework placed close to him, to coordinate the implementation of the *Zero Hunger* strategy.

The creation of MESA was not part of the initial proposal but was an outcome of the process of developing the new governmental structure<sup>1</sup>. It was thought that the level of interest in the issue of food security and the fight against hunger within the government might have waned had the Special Ministry not been created<sup>2</sup>.

A special advisory body within the Presidency of the Republic was also created to oversee the actions of popular movements including the coordination of private fund raising.

Also central to the new institutional framework was the reestablishment of a National Food Security Council (CONSEA), a policy advisory body constituted by representatives of the government and civil society organizations (churches, trade unions, NGOs, business organizations), which have a 2/3 majority<sup>3</sup>.

The legal framework was strengthened in 2006, with the approval of the Food and Nutritional Security Law.

## 2.4. Implementing Zero Hunger

The new Ministry's initial objective was to implement specific food and nutrition security actions and policies and, at the same time, coordinate the social programmes of other government bodies and civil society institutions.

Four lines of actions were developed within the strategy: access to food; strengthening of family farming; income generation; and social empowerment, mobilization and oversight.

The 2003 Annual Budget Law included funding for three new actions, considered priority within *Zero Hunger*:

- a) Implementation of the Cartão Alimentação (Food Card) Programme to supplement the income of poor families, with an allocated budget of US\$ 400 million.
- b) Purchasing of food produced by family farmers (PAA), with an allocated budget of US\$ 130 million. The proposal was based on the assumption that the increased consumption introduced by the first component, would create greater demand that could be covered by family farms.

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<sup>1</sup> Zero Hunger is an evolving concept (FAO 2006). In 2001, when it was originally presented by the *Instituto Cidadania* and then presidential candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, it was defined as a project. In 2003, the Lula Administration called Zero Hunger a programme to fight hunger and its structural strategies. In 2005, it was described as a strategy. This is important, as it shows Zero Hunger has been changing and growing in the past years.

<sup>2</sup> In January 2004, the MESA was dissolved and incorporated into the new Ministry of Social Development and the Fight against Hunger (MDS), which also took over the structure and policies of the Social Assistance Ministry and the Executive Secretariat for the *Bolsa Família (Family Grant)* Programme.

<sup>3</sup> Civil society participated in the design of Zero Hunger since the very beginning. The first version of Zero Hunger presented in 2001 was elaborated after a year long process in which NGOs, research institutes, unions, civil society organizations, social movements, and experts debated the issue of food security in Brazil.

- c) Improving the socio-economic conditions of families, especially minority groups and others in emergency situations, with an allocated budget of US\$ 65 million.

### 3. HUNGER ZERO: SELECTED PROGRAMMES FROM ITS FOUR AREAS OF INTERVENTION

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#### 3.1. Access to Food

##### a) *Cash transfers: from the Food Card to the Family Grant programme*

The Food Card was the first cash transfer programme of *Zero Hunger*. It was launched as a pilot in early February 2003 in two municipalities in the State of Piauí (Guaribas and Acauã) selected due to their low Human Development Index (HDI) and because they were in a drought-stricken Region. The Food Card Programme gave an additional R\$25 (US\$ 7.3) per month per capita to families with a monthly per capita income below US\$ 25 and that were not receiving any additional state benefits; and poor households with children, elderly members, pregnant and/or nursing mothers, and physically handicapped or chronically ill persons.

The primary beneficiaries were women; the food card was to be used exclusively for purchasing food and was valid for a period of six months, which could be extended if the socio-economic and nutritional conditions of the household did not improve. In a few months results could be seen (Box)

##### **Guaribas transformed**

*With the additional R\$ 25 (US\$ 7.3) per month that began to circulate in the city thanks to the Food Card programme, the local economy flourished and the lives of the inhabitants of Guaribas began to change. Mud houses were replaced with brick homes, dirt roads were paved, cisterns and two water supply systems were built, and treated water was piped in and began to run in the taps of the city's residents. A total of 116 students participated in the literacy courses, electricity was introduced in four rural villages, a post office was opened, and a public market and community radio station were installed in the city. There were also outstanding results in nutrition and health indicators: as of March 2003, no infant deaths caused by malnutrition were reported; and by December 2003 vaccine coverage grew from 9 to 96%, and prenatal care from 10 to 80%.*

*Expanded to other municipalities, Zero Hunger continued to show positive results:*

- *Survey carried out in 12 municipalities that received Zero Hunger assistance in Piauí and Rio Grande do Norte, showed that infant mortality rates dropped 83%; and in four of them no deaths of children under one year of age was reported in 2003*
- *In 10 months, 71.5% of extremely poor households in the North-eastern Region of Brazil were covered by the Food Card programme*
- *100% of children registered in school received a school meal*

Partnerships had to be established to implement the food card programme and other initiatives associated with *Zero Hunger* so Coordinating Committees and Food and Nutrition Security Councils were created in each state (subordinated to the Governor). At the municipal level, Management Committees were formed and the creation of Food and Nutrition Security Councils was encouraged.

The Management Committees reviewed, on a voluntary basis, the Cadastro Único (Unified Register) –a list of the supposedly extreme poor families in the country- and selected the families that were to receive benefits, provided support and counselling, and acted over *Zero Hunger's* implementation. As with CONSEA, civil society also had a 2/3 majority in the Management Committees, a composition that reinforced the social legitimacy of the strategy.

The Management Committees were crucial for *Zero Hunger* on its onset to guarantee transparency and ensure that those receiving the benefits were eligible to participate in the Food Card Programme. Up until December 2003, MESA capacity-building activities had been carried out in 2,451 municipalities, 2,132 of which had put in place Management Committees for the Food Card programme. In 2003, the committees identified that about 30% of the people listed in the Unified Register were not eligible for programme.

Eventually the Committees expanded to regions where the local community was already organized around the Local Integrated and Sustainable Development strategy, launched in 1999, and where CONSAD (Local Food Security and Development Consortia) were being set up. These Consortia are territorially-based arrangements formed, on average, of 20 municipalities in less developed states for the purpose of implementing structural actions to guarantee food security and to promote local development concurrent with the implementation of the food card programme.

In a way, these actions pioneered the rural territorial development approach in Brazil that later was adopted by *Territórios da Cidadania* (Territories of Citizenship), in which a group of poor rural municipalities in the same region and sharing the same needs are subject to comprehensive public policy intervention – agreed upon between the local community itself and the government - in order to promote development.

As of December 2003, the food card programme had benefited 1.9 million households in 2,369 municipalities of Brazil. Nevertheless, in October 2003 it has started to be phased out by the Government and substituted by the *Bolsa Família* (Family Grant) Programme.

## **b) Family Grant**

The Family Grant was created as a result of the amalgamation of several cash transfer programmes, including the School Grant and the Food Card Programme, which was phased out in December 2003 with the understanding that their unification would increase efficiency and impact on poor families. This coincided with the dissolving of MESA and its incorporation into the new Ministry of Social Development and the Fight against Hunger (MDS), which also took over the structure and policies of the Ministry of Social Assistance and the Executive Secretariat for the Family Grant Programme.

The School Grant is a conditional cash transfer programme that provides financial assistance to Brazil's poor and extremely poor households, provided certain education, welfare and health-related conditions are met.

The Family Grant initially assisted households living in poverty (with a monthly per capita income of between US\$ 24 and US\$ 47) and in extreme poverty (with a monthly per capita income below US\$ 24). The benefit ranged from US\$ 7 to US\$ 62, depending on the monthly household per capita income and the number of children and youths under 17.

As of September 2009, 12.4 million families received the grant. Benefits vary from US\$12 to US\$ 108 according to the number of children and youth,. In average, each family receives US\$51. Regarding funding, the Food Card/Family Grant budget increased from US\$ 1.1 billion in 2003 to US\$ 6.5 billion in 2009.

The Programme is formulated around three key dimensions of the fight against hunger and poverty:

- *The promotion of immediate relief of poverty through direct cash transfers to households, provided certain conditions are met;*
- *The strengthening of basic social rights, such as access to health and education, which will help families break the intergenerational cycle of poverty;*
- *The linkage to programmes which aim to enable families that receive the Family Grant to overcome their condition of vulnerability and poverty such as employment and income generation programmes, adult literacy programmes, as well as access to public registrars so they could receive personal identification cards*

The findings of a study by the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE) on beneficiary families of the Family Grant, show that the cash transfer together with the meals provided at schools are the main means for low-income households to access food. The study determined that most of the income of Family Grant beneficiary households is spent on food; the average amount spent per month on food is R\$ 200 (US\$ 109), which represents 56% of household income, and that the poorer the family, the greater the proportion of income spent on food.

The Family Grant now assists some 12 million families or 48 million people throughout the country. Between 2003 and 2009, the program's budget grew considerably, from R\$3.2 billion (US\$ 1 billion) to R\$ 12 billion in 2009 (US\$ 6.5 billion).

### ***c) School Meals: extending coverage and linking to small farm production***

The National School Meals Programme (PNAE) was launched over 50 years ago in Brazil. The Programme currently provides financial assistance directly to public schools or municipalities on the basis of daily student attendance, so that they may receive at least one meal per day (cities and state may complement the funding).

In 2009, changes were made to the programme in order to extend its coverage to all children attending public schools, previously only students up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade participated in the program, which increased its coverage from 37 to 47 million beneficiaries between 2003 and 2009 and saw its budget grow from R\$ 954.2 million (US\$ 310 million) to R\$ 2 billion (US\$ 1.1 billion) during that period.

Also relevant, was the decision to determine that 30% of the products be purchased locally from small farmers. In this way, the school meal programme helps to boost local productivity and creates new markets for family farms.

#### **d) Access to Water –Cisterns**

The access to water is a central element to the inhabitants of the semi-arid region of Brazil. Being able to store water for use during the dry season is guarantee potable drinking water and between 2003 and June 2009, the Government provided funding for the construction of 241,000 cisterns and training in the management of water resources, benefiting approximately one million people in the semi-arid region of Brazil, totalling an investment of US\$24 million. Access to clean drinking water helps reduce infant mortality, and water storage helps farming.

#### **e) Food, Nutrition, and Consumption Education**

The objective of the programs is to encourage people to adopt healthier eating habits, stave off illnesses associated with poor eating habits, encourage the adoption of a diet based on Regional products, promote food safety and quality, and prevent waste and hunger. These interventions include educational and communication activities, and radio and TV campaigns, as well as the production and distribution of leaflets to raise awareness on proper eating habits and food consumption.

#### **f) Local Food Security Programs: some examples**

- *People's Restaurants:* Programme fosters the creation of community run restaurants that offer balanced, good quality meals at cost price.
- *Food Banks:* Food considered unsuitable for sale but safe for consumption is donated by the food sector (supermarkets, wholesale outlets, etc.) and distributed by non-profit organizations to poor families. This intervention also helps reduce waste.
- *Community Kitchens:* publicly run operations that provide healthy meals to poor people and are run with a high level of community involvement. It is implemented primarily in densely populated neighbourhoods in the outskirts of cities and target poor families, undernourished pregnant women, nursing mothers, children, street vendors, unemployed, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations.

### **g) Feeding specific vulnerable populations**

The distribution of food to specific groups, such as communities of descendants of slaves, indigenous communities, rural workers in temporary settlements and other groups facing food and nutrition insecurity is also a priority of *Zero Hunger*.

## **3.2 Strengthening of family farming**

Family farms play an extremely important role in any food and nutrition security development strategy, because poverty and undernourishment levels are significant in rural areas and, at the same time, family farms have the potential to produce more. In other words: the public interventions should be to transform a sector that is usually considered as part of the problem and as beneficiaries of social programmes into part of the solution. To do so, programs focusing on family farmers should encompass two components: access to sufficient quality food by rural families and boosting the contribution of these families to supplying agri-food products to the general public.

### **a) Special Credit for Family Farms (PRONAF)**

The National Programme to Strengthen Family Farming (PRONAF) provides financial assistance to small-scale rural farmers and their families. The programme was launched in 1995 with a low interest line of credit to cover production costs and later added other financing mechanisms. Around 1.2 million family farmers benefit from PRONAF, programme whose budget increased from R\$ 2.1 billion (US\$ 0.7 billion) in 2002/2003 to R\$ 13 billion (US\$ 7.1 billion) in 2008/2009.

### **b) Food Acquisition Programme (PAA)**

The PAA is one of the structural actions of the *Zero Hunger* strategy aimed at linking local production directly with expanding food consumption. The objectives are to improve the nutrition of the needy population; promote the consumption of locally-produced agricultural products, foster local development; empower and support family farmers through job creation and income generation; help establish small farmer cooperatives and associations; support the development of family farms by ensuring adequate prices are paid for their products; purchase minimum stock of products for emergency food “baskets” (in the same Region that they are consumed); and distribute the food aid to those in a situation of severe food insecurity.

The PAA enables government to purchase up to US\$2,700 from individual family farms per year, without having to go through a process of tender. At least 30% of PAA purchases must be from family farms. A PAA sub-programme (PAA *Leite*) was created to boost milk consumption and support small-scale dairy farmers and provide milk to pregnant women, children, nursing mothers and the elderly (PAA *Leite*).

### 3.3. Income Generation

These include programs that promote employment and better wages, broaden microcredit availability, improve access to quality elementary, secondary and technical-level education, and better housing and sanitation. They also encompass programmes to promote local economic development based on solidarity principles, and the development of skills qualification initiatives geared to the low-income population to help them enter the job market.

- **Vocational and Professional Skills Training:** Almost 100,000 Family Grant beneficiaries are attending courses on skills training program. Approximately 25,000 have completed the programme.
- **b) Solidarity Economy and Productive Inclusion:** This program offers workers who are registered in the Public Employment System, the opportunity to obtain vocational, professional and occupational skills qualifications in conjunction with other microcredit, employment and income generation, and solidarity economy schemes.
- **Microcredit Programmes:** These are intended to increase access for the low-income population to the financial system. One of the objectives of the federal government is to improve access to credit for Family Grant beneficiaries that fit into the profile of micro-entrepreneurs.

### 3.4. Social mobilization and oversight

The Brazilian Constitution guarantees social participation and establishes the creation and institutionalization of sector or rights based policy councils within the spheres of the three powers of the State. In this sense, *Fome Zero* was ground-breaking. The organization of society and social participation were, without a doubt, two of its principal accomplishments, which has become a paradigm for what public policies can and should achieve in Brazil with participation of the civil society.

Since President Lula's announcement that the fight against poverty was to be a priority of his government, the voluntary participation of society – donating food, money and valuables – eventually turned into a full-fledged civic campaign, which went on to be called *Mutirão Contra a Fome* (Mutual Assistance Against Hunger). Between 2003 and 2009, more than R\$ 15 billion (US\$ 8 billion) were deposited by anonymous individuals and corporations in the Fund to Combat and Eradicate Poverty.

Other innovative concepts were introduced by *Zero Hunger*, such as the Food Card Program Management Committees and the high profile given to the CONSEA.

How to engage the private sector is a particularly complex issue. Several sectors of society – particularly the business sector, the trade union movement, and churches and philanthropic organizations – can usefully be called on to work towards achieving policy objectives.

Businesses called on to participate in a programme, practice what can be described as “good karma marketing”, which plays a very important role in the public’s perception of the actions undertaken by the government. The union movement can contribute greatly towards the mobilization of society in support of the programme. Finally, the churches and philanthropic organizations form an extensive network of institutions that provide the valuable social resources needed to implement the programme.

The participation of non-governmental actors is important and should be encouraged, but as a part of an effort coordinated by the government to avoid that private interests groups end up thwarting the implementation of the food security policy when it does not serve their particular interests.



## 4. OTHER PROGRAMMES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY

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Though a broad government wide strategy aimed to coordinate the eradication of hunger and promotion of food security, *Zero Hunger* also articulates itself with other programmes that fight hunger, poverty and promote rural development. Some of them are:

### 4.1. Territórios da Cidadania

The Territories of Citizenship programme uses a holistic approach that takes into consideration all problems and challenges faced by communities living in economically depressed rural areas. Its goals are to promote economic development and universalize access to basic citizenship programs through a sustainable territorial development strategy in which the participation of the civil society – that help define priorities and monitor the implementation process - and the integration of federal, state and municipal level actions are fundamental.

The program targets small cities and communities with low Human Development Index Score and a high proportion of Family Grant beneficiaries. In 2009, there were 120 Territories of Citizenship in the country, benefiting around three million people with over 200 programmes and an estimated budget of R\$ 24 billion (US\$ 13 billion).

### 4.2. Agrarian Reform

The agrarian reform process aims to ensure the social role of property and the distribution and development of income-generating sources, and promotes food production for subsistence purposes. It does so by creating rural settlements in unproductive, government-owned or illegally occupied land; and providing credit and technical assistance.

Access to land has always been a problem in Brazil. According to National Institution of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), 530,000 families were settled between 2003 and 2009 and some 40 million hectares of land have been set aside for future land reform. Data from the Ministry of Agrarian Development indicate that the amount of resources allocated to improving the quality of agrarian reform settlements, such as infrastructure, support credits and development loans, increased steadily to US\$ 900 million in 2009.

### 4.3. Programa Mais Alimentos

In July 2008 the government launched the *Programa Mais Alimentos* (More Food Programme) to address the impact of soaring food prices and boost family farm production. This

facilitated investment in family agriculture, technology and marketing, and consequently, increases the income of rural families.

Between October 2008 and July 2009, the *More Food Programme* financed the sale of 14,350 tractors for family farmers, at a low interest rate. In the first quarter of 2009 alone, the programme was responsible for 61% of all tractor sales in Brazil. The More Food programme also extended credit to coffee producers and cattle, pig, chicken, goat and sheep farmers to automate their production.

#### **4.4. National Biodiesel Programme**

Family farmers receive technical assistance, credit and training, allowing them to participate in producing raw materials for biodiesel processing plants. Over 200,000 family farmers already participate in the programme. Industries who buy from small farmers receive the “Social Fuel Seal”; they are encouraged to do so through different incentives

#### **4.5. Rural Electrification**

*Luz para Todos* (Light for All) programme provides poor households – prioritizing Family Grant beneficiaries - electricity connections free of charge. The goal is to ensure universal access to electricity by 2010. By June 2009, the program had already assisted some 10 million people.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Based on the Brazilian experience with the *Zero Hunger* Strategy, the following are a series of observations and recommendations that could prove useful in designing food security policies and programmes in Latin America and other Regions:

- a) Food insecurity, hunger and poverty are distinct concepts that call for different types of public sector action. A more explicit reference to the concept of food insecurity and the notion of the Human Right to Food allows us to better envisage the need for policies and specific frameworks and legislation. Programmes to fight hunger must be based on the concept of food security and the right to food and should be comprehensive, involving food production, access to food, and promote a healthy diet to confront undernourishment and other forms of malnutrition such evidenced by the growing rate of overweight and obesity and diabetes, and other illnesses associated with poor eating habits.
- b) The eradication of hunger should be the objective of the government as a whole, and it is the President who must give it priority. Government's budget must be subordinate to this objective, and not the other way around. At the same, the participation of civil society and private actors, as well as an adequate institutional framework are also crucial.
- c) Food security policies should have a multi-sector approach and not focus only on the agriculture sector or on assistance. They should include cash transfers and other emergency help as a means to guarantee access to food by the poorest households, as well as support programs for family farms, a system to monitor health and nutrition, and local food supply schemes.
- d) It is financially feasible to reduce hunger in the short term: the Family Grant benefits 11 million families, a quarter of Brazil's population, but entails investments of a little over 2% of the federal budget and only 0.4 of the GDP. At the same time, reducing hunger also appears to generate economic benefits to local development, especially in economically depressed rural areas.
- e) The importance food retailers have in the formulation of production and distribution plans is also acknowledged. The influx of large supermarket chains in Latin America leaves no doubt as to the role they play in distributing food for consumption by the urban poor. Their influence and power in coordinating the chains of production compels us to re-examine the relationships that exist between the many links of the production chain and the production strategies of small farmers and rural industries. The decisive role supermarkets play in the distribution of family farm products, ethnic foods and specialty food is undeniable;
- f) The implementation of food security policies geared to urban Regions is a critical component. With the crisis of the model of public sector intervention in the area of supply, new initiatives were launched and much of what has been done must be reconsidered and re-examined. It is important to establish a clear division between the

role played at a public and private sector level when addressing matters relating to the extension of urban programmes;

- g) A more active participation of Latin American countries in the global debate on food safety should place them in a position of greater equality to counter conflicts involving non-tariff barriers on exports of agricultural products;
- h) In the case of Latin America, where there is no tradition of organization and consolidated civil participation, it is vital that these policies be participatory and empowering in nature. Strengthening the links with the local community, promoting mechanisms of shared management between public authorities and civil society, are essential since hunger is not only a statistical or biological phenomenon; it is also a political one. It is the structural consequence of a perverse development model that generates privileges and privations, one that tends to accentuate inequalities. Therefore, community involvement in the formulation, monitoring and oversight of these programmes confers social inclusion, true citizenship and future empowerment;
- i) Finally, it is important to point out that, especially in the case of Latin America, food security policies must necessarily be implemented in conjunction with large-scale income distribution policies if they are to have lasting results. Structural hunger and food insecurity are rooted in the unequal structure of income and its perpetuation and exacerbation. Therefore, structural policies and the development options open to the government, notwithstanding the scarcity of resources, must be mutually reinforcing, otherwise they will not address the root causes of the problem.

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