

Authors' comments

Giselle Silva Garcia¹
Elisabetta Recine¹

¹ Departamento de Nutrição, Faculdade de Ciências da Saúde. Universidade de Brasília. Brasília, DF, Brasil.

Correspondence
Elisabetta Recine
E-mail: recine@unb.br

Ways to Strengthen Family Agriculture in the Institutional Market

The opportunity to discuss the characteristics of the hegemonic Food System and its interrelations with the Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) is precious and necessary in the face of the still numerous violations of the Human Right to Adequate Food (HRAF). Have as a reference the different expressions of violations of this right, in Brazil, currently, 67 % of adults suffer from some type of food and nutrition insecurity, considering both the cases of malnutrition (2.7 %), such as overweight (49 %) and obesity (14.8 %).¹

The Sistema Nacional de Informações Tóxico-Farmacológicas (Sinitox – National Toxic and Pharmacological Information System) of Brazilian foundation Fundação Oswaldo Cruz reveals another example of violation of the right to food (HRAF). In the 2007 report, 8.7 % of the reported notifications were related to pesticide poisoning, these associated with the development of various cancers.² The document also highlights the existence of underreporting by the difficulty of diagnosis.

We approach even more the complexity in the number of violations of the right to food if we consider other situations over which we have irregular information, such as the lack of understanding of the information provided on the packaging and labels of manufactured products, the difficulty of physical and financial access to healthy food and the challenges for production of adequate food. These violations are directly related to the characteristics of the different stages of the Food System and the quality of food offered. The same model that generates the uncontrolled use of pesticides with serious consequences to human health, both for workers and consumers, also heavily impacts the environment and the social and economic relationships involved. This same reflection was widely exposed by the discussion paper, “*Food and nutrition security, family farming and institutional purchases: challenges and opportunities*”.³

In order to transform this reality, it is necessary to ensure the transition to a healthier, more sustainable and more agroecological food system model, referenced in local food specificities and culture. These benchmarks are currently embodied in the concept of FNS, which converges with the local and family model of production.

The debate article, “*Food and nutrition security: highlighting the family farm*”⁴, shows the intersectoral coordination as an essential strategy for the production from family farming to be linked more strongly to the public agencies network and the associated to the guarantee from FNS, such as the Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos (PAA – Food Acquisition Program), the Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (PNAE – National School Food Program) and the Programa Bolsa Família (PBF – Family Allowance, a social welfare program of the Brazilian government).

These policies and programs constitute the set of government actions that make the Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Sisan – National System of Food and Nutrition Security). Sisan, for its intersectoral nature, requires the association and coordination of different institutional mechanisms and legitimate spaces of articulation and debate⁵ between the civil society and the government for its consolidation.

Let us then reflect on the proposed issues for debate: “How can family farmers take ownership of a totalizing knowledge of the food system in which they live, making them even more purposeful and assertive when facing the challenges of implementing the policies involved? What are the characteristics of the management of institutional purchases markets and the social and productive scenarios of farmers that can influence the effectiveness of the purchase and consumption of food in short circuits? What recommendations and learning experiences can be made explicit in order to strengthen these public policies of the FNS? “ In short: “How is it possible to strengthen the family agriculture to serve the institutional market?”

It seems, in fact, that the ownership of knowledge / empowerment and overcoming existing challenges are inseparable. It is noteworthy that among the principles of human rights there is the “free and informed participation of the entitled holders”, which highlights the need for people to define what is essential to their well-being, participating in an active and informed manner in the planning, design, monitoring and assessment of the government actions related to doing what is right. Furthermore, the individuals must be able to participate in discussions and reflections on macro policy issues. Full participation requires transparency, empowers individuals and is an expression of human dignity.⁶

Under this perspective, empowerment is a procedure that results in increasing the capacity of individuals to interfere in the reality in which they live, making choices and transforming those choices into results that alter the original reality. It is, somehow, a learning and action experience that increases the degree of freedom to reflect and act. It also consists in understanding that social change, by the structural transformation, occurs by means of a procedure that alters the dynamics of power and access to political spaces. Empowerment and power are enhanced by the active practice of developing new skills.⁷ These transformations are generated by the daily work of the social movements, entities and organizations.

Another aspect to be considered is shown in the *Policy Letter from the Research Seminar in FNS*, stating that FNS is “a field of knowledge that promotes the link between popular and scientific knowledge in order to generate development procedures referenced in a dialogical and systemic approach of reality, bringing together traditionally fragmented dimensions in the academic field”,⁸ which allows us to reflect on the importance of linking the popular and traditional knowledge to the academic.

Then there is the challenge of narrowing the paths of dialogue between these knowledges, so that they strengthen popular education strategies. In this context, it is crucial to enhance university extension projects and participatory research committed to the agenda of FNS, making the academic production converge with the knowledge generated in society, by social and popular movements and the traditional knowledge.

Critical methodologies of training and knowledge construction contribute to a participatory discussion with the social actors when valuing knowledge from different types.⁹ The acts of action and reflection generated by the critics is essential to achieving consistent public policies and require a spiraling route: integrating dream and reality; “providing hope”; mobilizing and articulating partners; problematizing; dialoguing in an expanded form with all subjects; agreeing on proposals and actions; and reinvention.¹⁰

To enlarge the spaces of reflection and knowledge generation, as well as those of social control and participation, it is worth mentioning the role of public policy councils, such as Conselho de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Consea – Council of Food and Nutrition Security), present in all three spheres of government and one of the essential tripods of Sisan.^{11,12} The participation of the different social groups involved with the local and family production and agroecology, among others, in these councils, contributes to a broad and complex understanding of local realities, fostering the exchange of experiences and proposing public actions that serve, in the most appropriate way, these groups, and may also qualify the programs and the provision of healthy and adequate food. Once inserted, these sectors will be able to strengthen dialogue with others, favoring the joint identification of structural nodes and strategies to overcome.

The level of incidence can be in the logistical and operational aspects, such as in the participatory planning of food production, based on the productive capacity and diversity of establishments; administration and management, such as issuing invoices and accountability; but it may also focus on the creation or revision of legal frameworks that fit the reality of commercialization of smallholder farmers. All these structural challenges were expressed by the respondents¹³ and by both articles for discussion.^{3,4}

For public management, approaching the producers facilitates the identification of the obstacles experienced in practice. It provides concrete evidence about the feasibility of access to available technical advisory services; it provides important information for monitoring and assessing the goals and targets set in the programs; and it facilitates reflection on the management and implementation procedures of the policy, such as the identification of a support beyond the financial incentive, but in the prospect of expanding the consumer market (institutional path).

Overcoming these barriers is critical for the family farming to be able to establish itself as political and fulfill its role of strengthening the local economy and the rural sector. Thus it will contribute to reduce inequalities in the field while providing to buyers healthy foods referenced in the local food culture. The impact of this production system is already noticeable on PNAE, because fresh food, free from contaminants, reaches schools.

As seen, the dialogue and coordination between these sectors of government and the civil society, their organizations and movements are essential for overcoming the current challenges. Only by means of knowledge exchange, guaranteed among all sectors, is that together they can strengthen a network of articulation, reflecting concrete strategies that encourage family farming, since the current social scenario demands a fairer, healthy and sustainable productive system.

References

1. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. Pesquisa de orçamentos familiares 2008-2009: antropometria e estado nutricional de crianças e adolescentes e adultos no Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE; 2010.
2. Brasil. Instituto Nacional de Câncer. Coordenação de Prevenção e Vigilância. Vigilância do Câncer relacionado ao trabalho e ao ambiente. 2ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: INCA, 2010. [acesso em: 8 jun. 2014]. Disponível em: http://www1.inca.gov.br/inca/Arquivos/PIV_poeira_2010.pdf.
3. Rigon AS, Bezerra I. Segurança alimentar e nutricional, agricultura familiar e compras institucionais: desafios e potencialidades. Revista DEMETRA [online] 2014; 9(2)
4. Mônico EM. Segurança alimentar e nutricional: colocando em evidência a agricultura familiar. Revista DEMETRA [online] 2014; 9(2)
5. Burlandy L. A construção da política de segurança alimentar e nutricional no Brasil: estratégias e desafios para a promoção da intersetorialidade no âmbito federal de governo. Ciênc. Saúde Coletiva 2009; 14(3):851-860.
6. Burity V, Franceschini T, Valente F, Recine E, Leão M, Carvalho MF. Direito humano à alimentação adequada no contexto da segurança alimentar e nutricional. Brasília: ABRANDH; 2010. 21p.
7. Vasconcellos M, Vasconcellos AM. Partnership, empowerment and local development. Interações (Campo Grande) 2009; 10(2):133-148.
8. Carta Política. In: Seminário de Pesquisa em Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional; 4-6 dez. 2012, Brasília.
9. Brasil. Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome. Marco de referência de educação alimentar e nutricional para as políticas públicas. Brasília: MDS; 2012.
10. Brasil. Secretaria-Geral da Presidência da República. Marco de referência da educação popular para as políticas públicas. Brasília: Secretaria Nacional de Articulação Social; Departamento de Educação Popular e Mobilização Cidadã; 2014.
11. Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada. Conselhos nacionais: perfil e atuação dos conselheiros. Base de dados. Brasília: Ipea; 2013.
12. Brasil. Lei nº 11.346, de 15 de setembro de 2006. Cria o Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (Sisan) com vistas a assegurar o direito humano à alimentação e dá outras providências. Diário Oficial da União 18 set. 2006.
13. Garcia GS, Recine E. Perspectivas do fornecimento de produtos da Agricultura Familiar para os Equipamentos Públicos de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional no Distrito Federal. Revista DEMETRA [online]. 2014; 9(2):

Received: July 08, 2014

Approved: Sept.16, 2014

