

Food and nutrition security: raising awareness of family farming

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This paper discusses the supply and promotion of a diet based on the concept of food security and nutrition (FSN), where the authors point out, as a strategy, the inclusion of food from the local food system through short production cycles, referred to as family farming.

There are two important points to be highlighted on this approach: one of them is the association of family farming with the National System of Food and Nutrition Security (SISAN), which creates a space for debate on public policies geared towards ensuring the human right to adequate food. There is also the action across sectors, which include the Food Acquisition Program (PAA); the National School Feeding Program (PNAE); the Bolsa Família Program and the Network of Public Food and Nutrition Facilities (popular restaurants, food banks and community kitchens).^{1,2}

Public facilities are encompassed in the FSN Plan¹ as an institutional coordination network strategy, whose objectives include “to foster food supply as a way to consolidate the *the organization of local and regional production, supply and consumption cycles* to guarantee regular and permanent access by the population [...]” (my translation, my emphasis).

The second highlight concerns agriculture, a sector divided into family farming and corporate farming, based on different socioeconomic, productive and technological features.³ The former is associated with producing food to be consumed by the population, even though it uses only 24.3% of the total cultivation area.⁴ Encouraging food family farming is part of food sovereignty strategy, which relies on rural development (overcoming inequities) and promotes favorable environment for the adoption of healthy eating and appropriate and more sustainable modes of consumption, based mainly on environmentally sustainable forms of cultivation and short production and consumption chains.^{5,6}

The debate proposed in this paper is precisely about the importance of including local produce from family farming into the logic of supply for public FSN facilities. It is very relevant when one considers the evidence pointed by a study that identified the Federal District as a geographical space where productive potential is underused. This identifies potential that is still untapped.⁷ Emphasis should be given to the relationship between family farming and government procurement, in the so-called “institutional markets.” And in this context, PAA and PNAE should also receive attention, because of the volume of trade, implementation time and scope. PNAE, for example, reaches all Brazilian municipalities.

As shown in this paper, there are aspects of this relationship that should be further developed. The experience of the staff of the School Feeding and Nutrition Collaborative Center, Federal University of Goiás (CECANE-UFG), in developing projects about the relationship between PNAE and family farming, has identified challenges to this process, e.g., barriers associated with production (absence of technical assistance in the field, difficulties in adjusting production of processed foods to current health standards) and trade (failure of PNAE management to map local production and cost of produce delivery).⁸ In this context, they suggest that when farmers are organized in cooperatives or associations, managers are aware of law enforcement and nutritionists are committed to complying with it, food acquisition by PNAE is more likely to be successful.

It seems appropriate, in this effort to promote a debate, to reflect upon the themes presented in the study. For *understanding FNS*, research is suggested on the absence of other dimensions of FNS and if they appear or not in the everyday lives of collective subjects to the extent of not becoming part of their speech.

As regards *food system* and *family farming*, one should identify individual, collective and institutional strategic subjects involved in including family farming products in institutional markets, by mapping processes and mediations from production to food supply. Understanding the whole and the nodes of this process may contribute to the adoption of more effective strategies when institutional procurement is performed.⁹

Challenges, in their turn, must consider the debate in an evaluative perspective that arises not only in the present study, but also by others that deal with the subject, avoiding a structural discussion. They would, thus, help account for the scenario whose background is family farming in Brazil, and the following questions should be asked:

- What are the management characteristics of institutional procurement and of farmers' social and productive scenario that can cause food acquisition to take place in short cycles?
- What can be taught and recommended more overtly in order to strengthen these public FSN policies?
- How can family farmers take ownership of a totalizing knowledge of the food system which they are a part of, thus becoming even more purposeful and assertive, facing challenges of implementing policies that affect them?

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