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Including the Culture Component of Food and Nutrition Security to the School Feeding Program in Brazil

FERNANDA DIAS BARTOLOMEU ABADIO FINCO¹, ESTEPHANY JEANNY K. SILVA², LUCIMARA
MENDES DE AGUIAR², IGOR GALVÃO SILVA²

¹*University of Hohenheim, Institute of Biological Chemistry and Nutrition, Germany*

²*Federal University of Tocantins, Food and Nutrition Security Lab., Brazil*

Abstract

The national school feeding programme in Brazil is one of relevant Food and Nutrition Security policy in the country. Its goal is to satisfy the nutritional needs of the students during the time spent in the classroom, contributing to their growth, development and learning, as well as to the acquisition of healthy eating habits. Awareness that culture is an important component to be considered in food security programs, and also that the Brazilian food culture vary widely within different regions, this research proposes that the menu of the Brazilian school feeding program should include typical foods, taking account the culture factor of food based on a sensory research. This work aimed at evaluate liking for typical meals in the North Region of Brazil (Municipality of Palmas, Tocantins State). All the children involved (n= 120), aged between 5 and 10 years old, supplied liking scores for 20 typical meals of north region of Brazil. A 7-point facial hedonic scale from super good (7) to super bad (0) was chosen to identify the preference for typical foods. Sensory data were submitted to Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ($p < .05$). Typical foods used in the sensory test were chosen by previous research. All foods were well accepted by children, but mango juice was the most preferred beverage and fish meals had the less preferred dish. The high scores observed to typical food can be explained by their insertion in the children food culture as, possibly, children are used to have these dishes at home. In conclusion, results indicated that food culture develops an important role on food choice and acceptance by children, and that food culture should be taken account by the Brazilian School Feeding Program, including the typical food in its menu.

Keywords: Nutritional security, school feeding program, sensory analysis