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**Food and Nutritional Security in Brazil: Socio-political Scenario from 2015 to Covid-19**

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Over the years, Brazil has gained worldwide recognition in the fight against hunger and food insecurity, being a reference for other parts of the world. This fact occurred after the understanding of hunger as a social, political, and economic problem, not just as a natural phenomenon. Food and nutritional security structure were built with policies aimed at reducing poverty and inequities, with a focus on human development, such as “Fome Zero” and “Brasil sem Miséria”, resulting in Brazil leaving the Hunger Map in 2014. However, despite all the achievements, recent analyses reveal the increase in poverty numbers in Brazil and great possibility of returning to the Hunger Map. According to the semi-annual report on the Latin American and Caribbean Region, developed by the World Bank in April 2020, since 2015 the reduction of poverty and inequality seems to be stagnant, and this year’s projections of the International Poverty Index increased from 4.4 in 2019 to 7.0 in 2020. Thus, this research aims to analyse the current Brazilian scenario, the measures taken and the impact already observed, through a qualitative approach, anchored in historical and dialectical methods, through bibliographic and documentary research. It was noted that in 2019, Provisional Measure 870/2019 was instituted by the current government of President Bolsonaro, which modified the structure of the federal government, reducing and bringing together ministries, and disrupted the Organic Law on Food and Nutritional Security (Losan nº 11.346 / 2006), extinguishing the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) and, consequently, damaging the food and nutrition security system (SISAN). Currently, Brazil has no new National Plan for Food and Nutritional Security, referring to the years 2020-2024, as this would be the responsibility of CONSEA. Amid this deficit and insecure scenario, due to Covid-19, social problems can be amplified, increasing the level of food insecurity. Thus, observing and analysing the actions of public authorities and organised civil society are the next tasks of this research.

**Keywords:** Corona virus, food entitlement, pandemic, public policy

**Introduction**

The most recent FAO (2020) report, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020, showed the number of the people in hunger situation since 2014 going increasing. Therefore, the

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goal that promotes Hunger Zero until 2030 will probably has not happen. Currently, 690 million of people are hungry and, even not considering the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, the expectation is that hunger will exceed the number of 840 million in 2030, equivalent to 9,8 % of the population. (WORLD BANK, 2020)

In 2014, Brazil no longer more Hunger Map due to the construction a complex structure of food and nutritional security, but that over the years have been weakened. From 2015 to 2017 Brazil had an economic and political crises resulted to increase to poverty and unemployed and in addition to budget cuts in several areas, including food and nutrition security policies.

In the middle this scenario, in 2020 Brazil was impacted with COVID-19 what promoted intensification of social problems. Thus, the goal of this research is to analyze the 2015-2020 food and nutritional security scenario considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and governmental measures to reduce them.

## **Material and Methods**

Qualitative approach based on historical and dialectical methods, through bibliographic and documentary research between 2014 and 2020, about food and nutrition security, economic, poverty, social dates in general, for understand the entire Brazilian's scenario, before and after pandemic context, thinking about the measure of the impact reduction and the future perspective.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***General Aspects***

In order to balance and mitigate the impacts of the economic crisis (2015-2017), Amendment No. 95/2016 was instituted in 2016, freezing spending for 20 years, resulting in budget cuts in basic areas such as health, education and food security. However, before Amendment 95/2016, there was already a weakening of food security policies, mainly aimed at family agriculture, and institutional dismantling. After 2016 budget decreases were only intensified.

In 2019, there is a political break with the election of then President Jair Bolsonaro, entitled neoliberal. On first day of government, the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), an advisory body to the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN), which is responsible for articulating the National Food Security Policy, is abolished. CONSEA was responsible for monitoring and following the Policy and the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan, in addition to promoting communication between civil society and the State.

### ***Analyzed data***

The Food Acquisition Program (PAA), responsible for public purchases of food from family agriculture and its distribution to individuals in a situation of economic vulnerability, in 2018 had a budget execution of approximately one fifth of what was applied in 2012 (R\$ 1,157.1 - 2012 and 232.7 million - 2018) and in 2020 the budget forecast is even lower, at R\$ 186 million, thus being insufficient to serve the beneficiaries (SAMBUICHI, *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, the public stock of food formed by the production of family agriculture, which aims to regulate minimum prices in order to increase economic access to food, as well as its strategic use for catastrophes or reserves, is currently at its lowest level. Thus, as described by Valadares *et al* (2020), budget cuts have prevented the economic survival of small producers, who without government assistance are based only on market outflows, which increases their indebtedness and undermines food supply (ALPINO *et al.*, 2020; VALADARES *et al.*, 2020).

Analyzing the latest food and nutrition security data published by IBGE this year, with data for the years 2017 and 2018, in a total of 68.9 million households in Brazil, and 10.3 million people have a high degree of food insecurity. It is important to note that this is a survey related to households, so that people on the street are not considered, which increases the number of people

in food insecurity. Only from 2017 to 2018 food security dropped to 63.3%, reaching its lowest level (IBGE, 2020).

Currently, according to data from the National Household Sample Survey - COVID (PNAD-COVID), approximately 13.3% of the Brazilian population is unemployed and of the employed 40% are informal workers, that is, without labor protections. Therefore, the pandemic affected the income of Brazilians and consequently their purchasing power, which intensifies food insecurity and increases the number of people in situations of vulnerability.

In addition to the reduction in purchasing power, there was an increase in basic food prices. Due to the high dollar, producers prioritized exports, which reduced the availability of some foods and raised prices. In this year alone, rice had an increase of 17.98%, soy oil 27.54% and meat 4.53%. With public stocks practically zeroed, it is impossible to use this tool to regulate prices (IBGE, 2020).

Regarding the quality and sustainability of food production, meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, there was a significant increase in the number of new pesticide registrations. Between 2005 and 2015, averages of 140.5 records were recorded per year, gradually increasing over the years, until 2019 jumping to 478 new records (VALADARES *et al.*, 2020).

### ***Measures to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic***

(1) Economic Impact Payment (EIP): instituted in April Law No. 13.982 / 2020 established an aid to informal workers in the amount of R\$ 600 reais (95 euros) for 3 months, which could be extended from July to October. The population already registered will receive the aid until December. According to data from June of PNAD COVID, 43% of households receive EIP, however, the assistance probably did not reach the entire population in a state of vulnerability, considering that the registration was carried out via the internet and not everyone has access and through the “Cadastro Único” database which in turn has a “waiting list” (IBGE, 2020).

(2) National School Feeding Program - PNAE: The National Congress sanctioned law 13,987 / 2020, which exceptionally authorizes the distribution of food kits purchased by PNAE to parents or guardians during the period of suspension of public schools of basic education, in emergency or public calamity. At least 30% of the PNAE's food must be purchased through family agriculture, which contributes to the maintenance of local commerce and social development. However, in some regions, non-compliance with this requirement has been reported, in addition to few food items in the kits or their non-distribution (AMORIM, 2020; FIAN, 2020).

(3) Extraordinary credit: after mobilization by civil society, Provisional Measure n° 957 was instituted, which granted an extraordinary credit of R\$500 million for the purchase of products from family agriculture by PAA (APLINO *et al.*, 2020).

(4) Donations: basic food baskets for indigenous, riverside (ribeirinhos) and quilombola communities. Currently, 414 thousand kits have been distributed to indigenous peoples. According to Alpino *et al* (2020), fruits and vegetables from family farming were not identified in these food baskets.

### **Conclusion and Outlook**

The research revealed that in mid-2014 it is already possible to see budget cuts in policies related to food security, mainly regarding family agriculture. These reductions were intensified with the economic crisis, Amendment No. 95/2016 and the rise of President Jair Bolsonaro in the government, budgetary decreases and institutional dismantling weakened the National System of Food and Nutrition Security.

Food security has been reduced over the years and with COVID-19, the health crisis and the macro and microeconomic impacts generated contributed to the elevation of existing social problems, reduced income, purchasing power, rising prices, impacts on family agriculture and consequently the increase in food insecurity and loss of nutritional quality.

The results generated by the pandemic are still immeasurable and the measures implemented by the Government only mitigate its effects, and work in specific areas such as income and immediate access to food. The discontinuity of these actions, such as Emergency Impact Payment, generates insecurity for the most vulnerable population. However, it is necessary to present medium and long-term measures aimed at the right to adequate food and to revive existing social policies related to food security. Brazil continues without a Food and Nutrition Security Plan and lack of coordination and monitoring for actions aimed at food security, with CONSEA extinct and the Interministerial Chamber of Food and Nutrition Security inoperative.

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