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The evolution of rice and bean consumption in Brazil

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Abstract

The consumption of rice and beans represents the cornerstone of food security and culinary heritage in Brazil. Despite their traditional importance, household survey data have highlighted a marked reduction in domestic acquisition, influenced by profound socioeconomic shifts. This research sought to estimate the Apparent Per Capita Consumption (APCC) of these staples between 1961 and 2025. By utilising a metric that considers total food market availability—incorporating production, stocks, seeds, and foreign trade—this study provides a more systemic view of national consumption patterns than surveys limited to household acquisition. The results reveal contrasting historical trajectories for both commodities. Rice consumption reached its zenith in the 1990s, with an annual average of 47.01 kg per inhabitant, before entering a steady decline to 33.74 kg in the 2020s. Conversely, beans have undergone a continuous structural decline across the sixty-year period, dropping from 22.69 kg in the 1960s to just 12.90 kg in the 2020s. This represents a substantial reduction of approximately 43 % over six decades. Several factors drive this nutritional transition. Rapid urbanisation and modern lifestyles have constrained the time available for traditional home cooking, particularly for beans, which require longer cooking times. The discrepancy between the APCC and household data suggests that a significant portion of rice and bean intake now occurs through processed foods or meals eaten away from home. Additionally, the study identifies a concerning trend in food sovereignty: bean exports increase while domestic consumption declines. Without intervention, this decline may deepen as these staples lose prominence in school meal programmes. The study concludes that targeted public policies are essential to maintaining healthy eating habits, preserving culinary traditions, and safeguarding the nutritional security of future generations.

Keywords: Apparent consumption, food security, food supply, supply

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