



THE STATE, PUBLIC POLICY AND EVOLUTION OF THE BRAZILIAN FOOD SUPPLY: IMPACTS OF CENTRALIZATION

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Received: 12/22/2021
Accepted: 12/14/2023

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RESUMO

This study aimed to discuss the trajectory, current context, and reflections of the centralizing food supply model in Brazil, focusing on government action as a driving force. The transformations that have been taking place in the Brazilian food supply processes over time are also discussed, be they in the production, market, or consumption aspects. The method adopted in this study was bibliographic research and secondary data research, resulting in a theoretical essay. To survey scientific production, systematic searches were carried out in different databases. A search in secondary data was carried out in the official databases of the Brazilian National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE), National Supply Company (CONAB), and the Ministry of Citizenship. It was possible to determine that the actions and public policies historically adopted by the Brazilian government were not sufficient to meet the national food supply demands. With a historical development policy focused on scale production for exporting, Brazil has faced several supply crises, causing the worsening of social problems. Nevertheless, the Brazilian government did not establish a government plan capable of correcting weaknesses and prioritizing production and the markets for supplying food to Brazilians.

Keywords: Supply Centers. Public procurement. Local disarticulation.

RESUMO

O presente estudo tem como objetivo discutir a trajetória, contexto atual e os reflexos do modelo centralizador do abastecimento alimentar no Brasil, focando na ação estatal enquanto força motriz. Discute-se ainda, as transformações que vêm ocorrendo nos processos de abastecimento alimentar brasileiros ao longo do tempo, nos aspectos produtivos, de mercado e consumo. O método adotado neste estudo foi a pesquisa bibliográfica e a pesquisa de dados secundários, resultando em um ensaio teórico. Para levantamento da produção científica, foram realizadas buscas sistemáticas em diferentes bases de dados. Também foi realizada busca em dados secundários nas bases de dados oficiais do Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento Educacional (FNDE), Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento (CONAB) e Ministério da Cidadania. Foi possível constatar que as ações e políticas públicas historicamente adotadas pelo Estado brasileiro não foram suficientes para atender as demandas de abastecimento alimentar nacional. Com uma política histórica de desenvolvimento focada na produção em escala e para a exportação, o Brasil enfrentou várias crises de abastecimento causando agravamento de problemas sociais. Ainda assim, o Estado brasileiro não estabeleceu um plano de governo que fosse capaz de corrigir debilidades e priorizar a produção e os mercados para abastecimento alimentar dos brasileiros.

Palavras-chave: Centrais de Abastecimento. Compras públicas. Desarticulação local.

INTRODUCTION

The predominating food model is based on large-scale, limited differentiation of products and services to consumers, excessive intermediation with cost aggregation, non-identification of food origins, and institutionalized quality regulation (Renting; Marsden; Banks, 2017; Sonnino; Marsden, 2017). This globalization of agricultural production systems that predominated in the past century caused consumers to lose the references or cultural ties to food (Hernández, 2005).

However, the beginning of the 21st century was marked by a series of food crises worldwide, revealing controversies and deficiencies of the modern agri-food system, characterized by food produced at scale, within large industries, by large economic conglomerates (Breitenbach *et al.*, 2018). As a consequence of this problem, the search of consumers for alternatives to the predominant food supply system through long chains with state regulation and centered around the agroindustrial alliance with large retail increased (Anjos; Caldas, 2017; Darolt *et al.*, 2013; Pearson *et al.*, 2011; Hendrickson, 2009).

This process was intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which accentuated the fragilities of the hegemonic food system model in the conservation of life and nourishment. In contrast, new forms of



supply and commercialization began to be valued (Breitenbach, 2021).

It is notorious that transformations have been taking place in the Brazilian food supply processes over time, both the production-marketing perspective and within the consumption scope. However, the action of the Brazilian government does not always meet the demands regarding the formulation of public policies appropriate to the historical period and needs of a country with continental dimensions (Silva; Lorenzo, 2017). In problematizing this issue, this study aimed to discuss the trajectory, current context, and reflections of the centralizing food supply model in Brazil, focusing on government action as a driving force.

The food supply system must occupy the government agenda, the coordinating and regulating institution. According to Maluf (2018), food supply involves the diverse and complex set of activities (and agents) that intermediates access to food, from the ways the access/consumption takes place to the production/distribution of these goods, beyond a mere availability. It is pondered that the links of the production chains must be organized so to guarantee quality nourishment to the population with accessible prices and sufficient amounts, promoting production inclusion, development, and the heating of the local economy (Zuin, 2016; Mafra; Naves, 2009).

This study, focused on the centralized model of food supply in Brazil, aligns with the theme of management and regional development given the crucial role that regional management and development play in promoting sustainable growth. The predominant globalized food system, characterized by large-scale production and distribution, has profound implications for regional dynamics. The disruptions and challenges highlighted in this research, from consumer disconnection to vulnerabilities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, underscore the need for effective regional management in the realm of food supply.

The Brazilian context, with its unique transformations and challenges in food supply processes, provides fertile ground for understanding the intersection between regional development and the agri-food system. The inconsistencies in governmental actions, explored in this study, are essential considerations for regional policymakers. By delving into the historical trajectory and current context of the food supply model in Brazil, the study provides practical insights for decision-makers and stakeholders, fostering an informed dialogue on how regional development can be positively influenced by strategic interventions in the food supply system. Through this contribution, the research serves as a catalyst for informed dialogue



and effective strategies for regional development.

This paper is structured in two main parts besides this introduction and the final considerations. The following section promotes a presentation of the methodological routes, seeking to demonstrate to the reader how the steps of this theoretical essay were constructed. The central portion of the article are the results, which, besides a theoretical review effort, also proposes to demark the historical periods and main facts related to the food supply in Brazil, as well as the impacts that occurred.

METHODOLOGY

The method adopted in this study was bibliographic research and secondary data research, resulting in a theoretical essay. This research is qualitative and exploratory, given that it aimed to understand the meanings and attributes of the research objects (Richardson *et al.*, 1999). To survey scientific production, systematic searches were carried out without time restrictions the following databases: Google Scholar, SciELO, ERIC, Periódicos CAPES, BDTD, Science.gov, and ScienceResearch.com. The following markers were used for the search: “abastecimento alimentar”; “abastecimento nacional”, “políticas públicas para alimentação”, “centrais de abastecimento”, “programas de abastecimento”. These keywords were used considering the following theoretical bases: Brandão, Balen e Dutra (2021); Grisa e Porto (2022) e Wegner e Belik (2012). Complementary to this, a search in secondary data was carried out in the official databases of the Brazilian National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE), National Supply Company (CONAB), and the Ministry of Citizenship.

Considering the bibliographic research steps defined theoretically by Salvador (1986), this study followed an ordered adjacent of procedures, namely: a) Reconnaissance reading - Rapid reading to locate and select material presenting information regarding the theme; b) Exploratory reading - Rapid reading to verify if the selected information or data are important to the study, performing a classification process of the material; c) Selective reading - Selecting the material that is actually of interest, relating it directly to the research objectives; d) Reflexive or critical reading - Critical analysis of the material, ordering and summarizing the information; e) Interpretative reading - Inventorying ideas, confronting them with the research problem, as well as interpreting the authors' ideas and correlating with the purpose of the researcher.



The data were organized, seeking to form a timeline, verifying the primary actions adopted by the different administrations of the Brazilian government that impacted food supply. Prominence was given to the public policies within the scope of the federal executive branch due to the centrality and relevance thereof. There is scientific evidence already published that there is a relationship between the way the supply is organized in the regions and the public policies that have been implemented over the years (Brandão, Balen and Dutra, 2021). In this way, the methodological procedures adopted are justified based on bibliographical and documentary research (over a long period of time) to define important historical periods for the organization of the food supply in Brazil, main facts related to the food supply in Brazil, as well as, the respective impacts occurred.

The data were organized into three subsections as follows: Retrieval covering a more extended period, demonstrating the historical trajectory (1900 to 1999) that defined the centralized form of supply; Makes evident the context of supply in Brazil fostered by the Brazilian government in the 21st century; Ponders the impacts that the centralization of government actions caused on local supply systems.

THE HISTORY OF BRAZILIAN FOOD SUPPLY (SHORTAGE)

The food supply problems are substantiated with the history of Brazil itself. Since the time of the colonization of Brazil, production for exporting has prevailed to the detriment of the food supply. In its colonial phase, the Brazilian economy was anchored on different guidelines: a) Planting of export products such as sugar and tobacco; b) Secondary activities, the purpose of which was to maintain the functioning of the export economy. At this time, the attention was turned to the exporting role of the economy, neglecting the planting for domestic supply. This practice led to some of the most severe problems the colonial population faced: food shortages in densely populated regions, food insufficiency (Prado Junior, 2011), and dependency on food from other countries.

Later, at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, with the advent of the Republic, the apogee of the Brazilian economy aimed at extensive, large-scale production for exporting occurred. The products with the most significant weight in Brazilian exports were coffee, rubber, cocoa, maté, and tobacco. At this time, Brazil was one of the largest global producers of raw materials and tropical items (Prado Júnior, 2011). With this, the insufficiency of domestic consumption



items for the needs of the country persisted, requiring the importing of most and the most basic food articles (Prado Junior, 2011). At the time, foodstuffs figured approximately 30% of the imports of the country, a paradoxical and abnormal situation for an agrarian country such as Brazil. In this period, the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo had over one million urban inhabitants and no concrete system for planning and supply (Belik, 1999).

The lack of food for domestic consumption, added to other social problems of the time, resulted in social unrest that culminated in pressures and the first direct form of government intervention in food distribution, characterized by the founding of the Public Food Commissariat in 1918 (Belik, 1999). It was committed to regulating prices and stocks of basic need items, producing biweekly tables with the prices allowed for such products.

In the 1930s, the impacts of the New York stock market crash of 1929 affected Brazil, and another food supply crisis was experienced. This resulted from the fast urban population growth and importing difficulties (Prado Júnior, 2011; Belik, 1999). In the mid-1930s, the Getúlio Vargas government recognized malnutrition as a social and public health problem. To circumvent it, it assembled an administration with a strong police power so to control and punish those responsible for the supply problems (Belik, 1999).

From 1930 to 1945, two measures were adopted to improve worker access to food: a) the officialization of the minimum wage to satisfy the basic needs of workers and their families (basic nourishment, health, housing, among others); b) the creation of the Social Security Food Service (SAPS) in 1940, which aimed to create cafeterias in the larger companies, make meals available in smaller companies, commercialize food at cost for workers with larger families, disseminate food education, and train professionals to work in the field (Silva, 1995).

With the outbreak of the Second World War, a new supply crisis surfaced. The supply priority was to the belligerent, setting up a retraction in the offer concomitant with the increase in the search for food items, generating a rise in prices and overpricing (Luz, 2015). In this period, another aggravator was the devaluation of the Brazilian currency stemming from the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944, which fixed a new parity for the cruzeiro (the currency at the time) (Barreiros, 2009). A solution was expected for the foreign accounts and, consequently, to the trade balance. However, while the



exporting of commodities was stimulated, a large portion of the importing of foods that composed the food basket of the population with lower purchasing power was inhibited, consequently increasing their prices (Belik, 1999).

Important references for the agri-food supply policies in the mid-20th century were the Minimum Price Guarantee Policy (PGPM) and the emergence of the Production Financing Commission (CFP) through Decree-Law No. 5212 of January 21, 1943 (Oliveira, 1977). The CFP sought to outline the financial plans concerning production that were of interest to the economic and military defense of the country, in addition to arranging their execution after approval by the government. Incumbent upon the CFP was the direct execution of the storing, classification, and commercialization of the products received by the government. From 1951, still within the Ministry of Treasury, the CFP began to ensure minimum prices directly to producers and their cooperatives (currently known as Federal Government Acquisition - AGF) and finance 80% of the price for commercialization (Oliveira, 1977).

At that time, the activity of the national system of minimum prices in Brazil was outlined. However, all the attention was directed at industrialization through the substitution of imports, and, for agriculture, there was a discrimination of the economic policy. The economic plan of the government devised at this time¹ found in agriculture one of the main bottlenecks of national development and proposed an agrarian reform as a solution (Oliveira, 1977).

Attempting to circumvent such problems, from 1946 to 1951, president Eurico Gaspar Dutra put into practice the SALTE Plan (health, nourishment, transport, and energy), which improved, albeit incipiently, the access of the population to foodstuffs (Vasconcelos; Batista Filho, 2011). In the Juscelino Kubitschek government (1956-1961), in the face of the instability of the macroeconomic policies, there was a generalized increase in food prices and distribution mistakes, leading the government to take measures to reorganize this system (Belik, 1999). Among such measures was the implementation of food distribution programs, with the prominence of the national school meal program, which started to be executed from the mid-1950s, the embryo of the current National School Feeding Program (PNAE) (Vasconcelos; Batista Filho, 2011).

1 “Triennial Economic and Social Development Plan, 1963-1965” (synthesis), December 1962; pages 140 to 149. Available at: <http://bibspi.planejamento.gov.br/handle/iditem/495>. Accessed on April 5, 2017.



The articulation of this program along with others at the time should be stressed, with international food support organizations and programs such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Food for Peace Program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Program (WFP) (Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2011).

After 1964, the way the government organized and regulated the economy changed, substituting normative intervention for direct intervention. Regarding rural matters, Brazil experienced a "conservative modernization" in this phase. Modern from the viewpoint of production techniques and conservative in preserving the concentrated agrarian structure without democratization of land access (Menezes *et al.*, 2015). In this context, patronal agriculture was supported, with investments prioritizing export products, neglecting small-scale agriculture responsible for domestic supply. This agriculture model repelled the demand for labor in fields and generated an exodus of rural workers to cities, which had no structure to meet the needs that the new urban people would demand (Menezes *et al.*, 2015).

The Executive Group for Supply Modernization (GEMAB) was instituted in 1968 with the purpose of creating a system of direct intervention in food trade. Among its duties was the implementation of Supply Centers (CEASA) in the state capitals and main urban centers of the country (Belik, 1999).

The 1970s in Brazil were of particular interest in this study. In 1972, the National Supply Center System (SINAC) was regulated. The SINAC should institute commercialization norms and market information and incentivize production for the horticultural segment. However, the SINAC emerged without having a defined strategic view and more related to the pace of expansion in infrastructure investments that Brazil experienced in the 1970s (Cunha, 2006).

This system integrated the CEASAs of each state of the federation and the municipal ones in a single system. The twenty-one supply centers created around the country were formed as mixed economy entities, the shareholders of which were the Union, the states, and the host municipalities of the centers (Menezes *et al.*, 2015; Belik, 1999).

The expansion of the CEASA system resulted in a double coercive stimulus that favored business people, who, on the one hand, were protected by laws that prohibited wholesale trade outside the delimited spaces of the warehouses (the "perimeter law") and, on the other hand, received incentives,



advantages, and benefits such as subsidies and advantages (Cunha, 2006, p. 3). However, at the same time that this double stimulus was useful for the CEASA system, it was also a limiter of its expansion. This was because an image of public benefits of private agents was formed, with non-functional intermediaries or with cartel forces (Cunha, 2006).

From 1974 to 1979, with the purpose of modernizing the perishable food supply system, significant efforts were devoted, such as the organization of retail from the perspective and needs of each region and the creation of “Producer Markets”, “Horticultural Markets”, “Covered Street Markets”, and Satellite Markets (Menezes *et al.*, 2015). Such a project sought to benefit producers, distributors, and consumers in the manipulation and distribution processes through the employment of technologies allied to market information and communication media. One may notice an attempt by the government to dynamize the supply, including regions and cities that were outside the large urban axes.

Two other government programs of the 1970s that merit highlighting were the Worker Nourishment Program (PAT) and the Program for Supporting the Production and Commercialization of Horticultural Products (Prohort). The former was launched in 1976 by the Ministry of Labor through joint action by the government, business people, and workers for companies to provide subsidized meals to their employees. As an obstacle, it was observed that such a program only benefited formal employees and, primarily, those working in the south and southeast regions (Menezes *et al.*, 2015; Barros; Tartaglia, 2003). The program was updated in 1991, persisting in the 21st century.

In turn, Prohort was launched in 1977 to strengthen the distribution system of small retailers and stimulate horticultural production. Moreover, the plan promoted the development and modernization of olericulture production chains, with goals of improving production, commercialization, distribution, and supply (Cunha, 2006).

In 1978, the Rede Somar Program was created, the purpose of which was to supply basic products at reduced prices to the needy population with difficulties accessing the existing supermarket chains. Hence, a physical and institutional supply structure was consolidated, with the government opting to guarantee conditions for production, distribution, and supply, excluding the idea that the primary obstacle to supply at the time was caused by inflation (Menezes *et al.*, 2015).



The 1980s marked a destructuring of the existing food distribution system. In 1986, there was the dismantlement of SINAC, with the transfer of the shareholding control of the CEASAs to the respective state and municipal governments, harming food supply throughout the country (Cunha, 2006; Menezes *et al.*, 2015). After this disintegration, several Brazilian CEASAs faced structural and conceptual deficiencies, the obsolescence of physical commercialization structures, and the precariousness of management methods (Cunha, 2006). Wegner and Belik (2012) claimed that this pulverization of the shareholding control of the CEASAs rendered the activity diffuse and with no articulation.

The last decades of the 20th century (1980 to 1999) were marked by the resumption of democracy and the hegemony of neoliberalism in the country. Subjects related to supply, hunger, misery, and malnutrition emerged in social groups that so far had remained quiet before the theme (Belik *et al.*, 2001). From 1992 to 1994, popular initiatives that resulted in the elaboration of a National Food Security Policy presented to the federal government and the mobilization of civil society around the Action of Citizenship against Hunger and Misery and for Life campaign merit prominence.

Both generated pressures that corroborated for the creation of the National Food Security Council (CONSEA) in May 1993. Despite having developed actions such as the insertion of hunger into the public agenda, the holding of the 1st National Food Security Conference (CNSA), and the influence in government programs such as the decentralization of school meals, such a council was extinct two years after its creation (Belik *et al.*, 2001).

The National Supply Company (CONAB) started its activities on January 1st, 1991, with 100% of capital from the National Treasury. This company authorized the merger of three public companies: the Production Financing Company (CFP), the Brazilian Food Company (COBAL), and the Brazilian Storage Company (CIBRAZEM). The organization is present in all Brazilian regions, with superintendencies in the twenty-six states and the Federal District, besides sixty-four Storage Units (UA) such as conventional warehouses, bulk carriers, etc., capable of storing various agricultural products and ensuring the food supply of the population. Its mission is to provide agricultural and livestock-raising intelligence and participate in formulating and executing public policies, contributing to the regularity of the supply and income generation for rural producers (CONAB, 2017). The CONAB is still relevant nowadays, offering the federal government technical information to make decisions



regarding elaborating policies aimed at agriculture. It provides detailed and updated information on the national agricultural and livestock-raising production, besides technical studies that enable the analysis of the supply and demand situation, among other data (CONAB, 2017).

As a way of summarizing the results obtained in this item, the Table 1 is presented.

Table 1 | Summary of “The history of Brazilian food supply (shortage)”

Bibliographic reference	Discussion summary
Prado Junior (2011)	Attention turned to the exporting role of the economy - this practice led to some of the most severe problems the colonial population faced: food shortages in densely populated regions, food insufficiency.
Belik (1999)	Foodstuffs figured approximately 30% of the imports of the country
Silva (1995)	creation of the Social Security Food Service (SAPS) in 1940 - to improve worker access to food.
Luz (2015)	Second World War, a new supply crisis surfaced
Barreiros (2009)	Fixed a new parity for the cruzeiro (the currency at the time).
Oliveira (1977)	Important references for the agri-food supply policies in the mid-20th century were the Minimum Price Guarantee Policy and the emergence of the Production Financing Commission.
Vasconcelos; batista filho (2011)	Food distribution programs - with the prominence of the national school meal program.
Menezes <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Patronal agriculture was supported, with investments prioritizing export products, neglecting small-scale agriculture responsible for domestic supply In 1978, the Rede Somar Program was created.
Cunha (2006)	In 1972, the National Supply Center System (SINAC) was regulated - This system integrated the CEASAs
Barros; Tartaglia (2003)	1970s that merit highlighting were the Worker Nourishment Program (PAT) and the Program for Supporting the Production and Commercialization of Horticultural Products (Prohort).
Wegner and Belik (2012)	The CEASAs pulverization of the shareholding control of the CEASAs rendered the activity diffuse and with no articulation.
Belik <i>et al.</i> (2001)	Creation of the National Food Security Council (CONSEA) in May 1993.
CONAB (2017)	National Supply Company (CONAB) started its activities on January 1st, 1991.



PUBLIC POLICIES FOR SUPPLY IN BRAZIL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

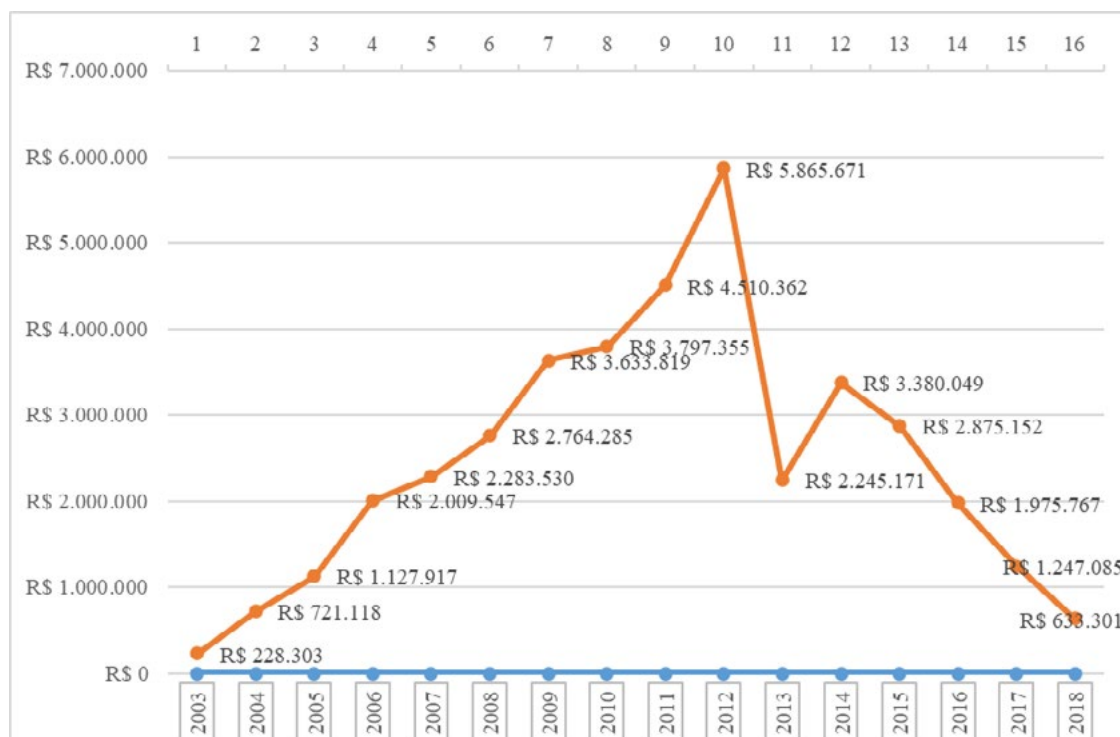
This period was marked by the abandonment of government experiences (including the CEASAs), implicating a decline in management and precariousness of the infrastructural supply conditions. This occurred together with the globalization of food markets, when food retail began coordinating various production chains, representing the main commercialization channel for horticultural items and other foods, striving for greater cost and quality control (Farina; Nunes, 2002; Wegner; Belik, 2012). With this, the distribution centers of large supermarket chains began imposing closer relationships, gaining more space on the market (Wegner; Belik, 2012; Maluf, 2018).

In the first years of the 21st century, in Brazil, the attention was given to the monetary access for acquiring food, questioning quality little (Cunha, 2015a). In government terms, the income transfer policies for more disadvantaged social groups stood out with the emergence of the Bolsa Família Program and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) in 2003, connecting food production and public consumption (Schneider *et al.*, 2010). The creation of government strategies for acquiring food directly from farmers, exempt from the rules of the bidding law, such as the PAA, enabled the opening of institutional markets to family agriculture (Breitenbach *et al.*, 2020).

The action by the CONAB in the operationalization of food purchases and donations stands out. One may observe in Figure 1 that, historically, the CONAB operates on average 70% of the total resources applied in the PAA. One may verify the withdrawal of government investments in the policy, which came to acquire around R\$ 600 million in 2012. In 2014, after the resumption of investments, the curve decreased to the point that, in 2018, less was applied than in 2004.



Figure 1 | Evolution of the investments in the PAA operationalized by the CONAB from 2003 to 2018.



Source: Devised based on CONAB (2019).

In 2005, seeking to strengthen the CEASAs, the functions of the Prohor were created and expanded through Ordinance No. 171 of March 29, 2005², and Ordinance No. 339 of April 11, 2014, of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food Supply. Through information systems, the Prohort sought to bring data on the commercialization of horticultural products of the main CEASAs of the country, providing an opportunity for a detailed analysis of the sector and bonds with areas of the Ministry of Economy, monitoring the main items of the basic basket that influence the inflation index³.

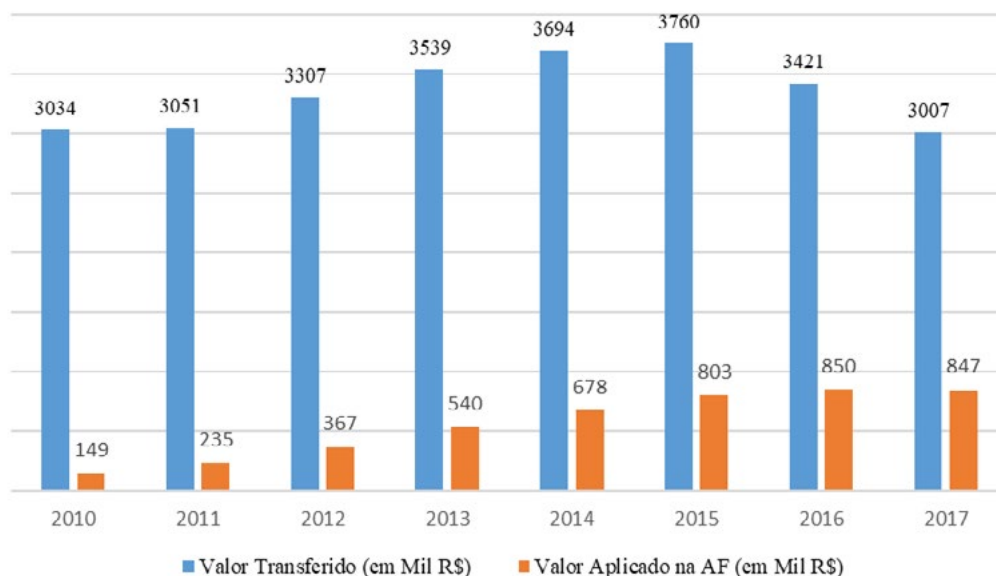
These actions seek to strengthen the policies for constructing and opening markets to farmers, reconnecting the food demand and supply with quality food in a national context. One example is the expansion of the purchasing of products from family agriculture for school meals through the PNAE, structured in 2009. The PNAE is a policy of structuring nature that contributes to fostering jobs and work in the rural environment and reducing the exodus and poverty (Triches, 2010).

2 Ordinance No. 171 of March 24, 2005. Available at <<http://extranet.agricultura.gov.br/sislegis-consulta/consultarLegislacao.do?operacao=visualizar&id=11486>> . Accessed on October 9, 2019.

3 Prohort presentation by the CONAB. Available at <<https://www.conab.gov.br/info-agro/hortigranjeiros-prohort>>. Accessed on October 9, 2019.

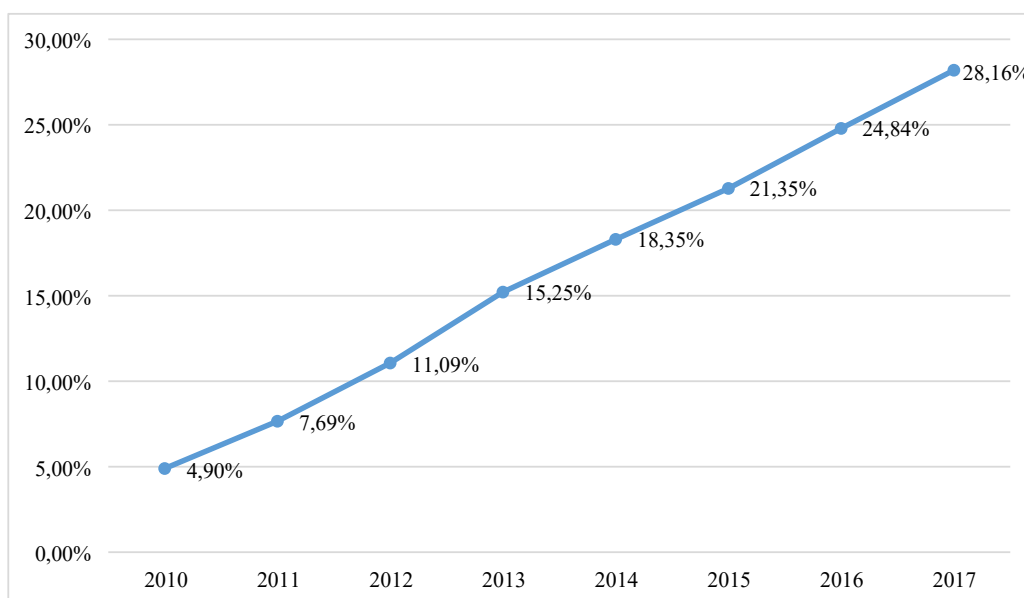
Purchasing local products was expected to incentivize sustainable consumption, fostering the expansion of the access of family agriculture to this market. Such a trend may be visualized in Figures 2 and 3, which show the annual average growth.

Figure 2 | Evolution of the volume of resources invested in acquiring food from family agriculture for the PNAE.



Source: Devised by the authors based on FNDE (2020).

Figure 3 | Percentual evolution of the resources invested in acquiring food from family agriculture for the PNAE. Source: Devised by the authors based on FNDE (2020).



Mirrored in the advances of the PAA modalities, especially in the PNAE, through Law No. 11947/2009, the federal government instituted the requirement that 30% of the financial resources intended for the acquisition of foodstuffs in all agencies of the federal public administration, direct, autarchic, and foundational, be used in purchasing products from family farming⁴. This measure expanded and created new institutional markets for these products and expanded the family agriculture income (Breitenbach *et al.*, 2020).

Data from the extinct Ministry of Planning (2015) indicated that the potential market of family agriculture in institutional food purchases was R\$ 2.8 billion⁵, considering acquisitions by the Ministry of Defense (Air Force, Army, and Navy), Ministry of Education (Federal Universities and Institutes), Ministry of Health (Federal Hospitals), and Ministry of Justice (Federal Prisons). Therefore, besides relocating the food dynamic through the consumption of local production by hospitals, schools, and prisons, the institutional markets have a more sustainable objective dimension, including the economic dimension. From them occurs the provision of more nutritious meals for the beneficiaries, reducing food transit and favoring these new trends (Breitenbach *et al.*, 2020). The limitation is that they are markets that focus on incorporating family farmers with difficulty entering the market by their own means, failing to capacitate them better to participate in private markets or even public equipment retail markets (Maluf, 2018).

As a way of summarizing the results obtained in this item, the Table 2 is presented.

Table 2 | Summary of “Public policies for supply in Brazil in the 21st century”

Bibliographic reference	Discussion summary
Farina; Nunes (2002)	This period was marked by the abandonment of government experiences (including the CEASAs).
Wegner; Belik (2012)	The distribution centers of large supermarket chains began imposing closer relationships, gaining more space on the market.
Cunha (2015 ^a)	In the first years of the 21st century, in Brazil, the attention was given to the monetary access for acquiring food, questioning quality little.
Schneider et al. (2010)	emergence of the Bolsa Família Program and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) in 2003, connecting food production and public consumption.
Breitenbach et al. (2020)	The PAA, enabled the opening of institutional markets to family agriculture.
Triches (2010)	The purchasing of products from family agriculture for school meals through the PNAE, structured in 2009.
Maluf (2018)	The limitation is that they are markets that focus on incorporating family farmers with difficulty entering the market by their own means, failing to capacitate them better to participate in private markets or even public equipment retail markets.

4 Decree No. 8473 of July 22, 2015. Available at <http://www.planalto.gov.br/CCIVIL_03/_Ato2015-2018/2015/Decreto/D8473.htm> Accessed on October 9, 2019.

5 Survey carried out by the CONAB, Ministry of Social Development, to justify Decree No. 8473 of June 22, 2015.



IMPACTS OF THE CENTRALITY ON LOCAL SUPPLY SYSTEMS

Without claiming to exhaust the theme, it was found that, over the last century, there was an evolution of public policies surrounding food supply, summarized in Figure 4. It is challenging to perform a synthesis, given that supply is a broad subject involving the various sectors of the economy (agriculture, industry, and services). It also involves public and private agents, as mentioned throughout the paper.

Figure 4 | Historical evolution of public food supply policies in Brazil.

1918	Public Food Commissariat
1940	Social Security Food Service (SAPS)
1943	Minimum Price Guarantee Policy (PGPM) and Production Financing Commission (CFP)
1946	SALTE Plan (health, nourishment, transport, and energy)
1956	National school meal program
1968	Executive Group for Supply Modernization (GEMAB)
1972	National Supply Center System (SINAC/CEASA)
1974	Producer markets, Horticultural markets, Covered street markets, and Satellite markets
1976	Worker Nourishment Program (PAT)
1977	Program for Supporting the Production and Commercialization of Horticultural Products (Prohort)
1978	Rede Somar Program
1980	Dismantlement of the SINAC / shareholding control of the CEASAs goes to the states
1991	National Supply Company (CONAB)
1993	National Food Security Council (CONSEA)
2003	Food Acquisition Program (PAA)
2005	Expansion of the Prohort
2009	National School Feeding Program (PNAE)
2015	Decree requiring 30% of purchases from family agriculture

Even with the retreat observed in the last ten years in terms of public policies (exposing fragilities of the links supported exclusively by them), the centralized form of organization boosted a rupture between retail trade and regional farmers. Retail and food industries centralized themselves, while regional food industries and merchants were marginalized (Friedmann, 2016). Even decades after the creation of the CEASAs and monitoring their constant decline (Cunha, 2016), difficulties organizing supply chains based on purchasing from local suppliers (i.e., farmers), be they long or short, are observed. The supply centers, for example, were unable to create stimulus or programs focused on differentiating family agriculture or integrating themselves to the Brazilian government programs for valorizing the local nature of the food (Belik; Cunha, 2015).

Therefore, besides being circumstantial, the government policies create vulnerabilities for the links anchored on them. Public policies may generate “side-effects” for the agents that make transactions regardless of them. The said effects are, for example: a) the gradual decrease in farmers interested in producing foods that are not agricultural commodities; b) when there is a regional production, the farmers, especially family farmers, face difficulties participating in the markets and making their products reach the final consumers. This is due to traditionally known factors such as field emptying, lack of technical assistance and rural extension, low education level of the farmers, physical isolation of the properties, etc. However, it is also due to the lack of organizational and mobilization ability of the agents around the theme of local supply.

Concomitant to this, the search by consumers for alternatives to the predominant supply system through long chains centralized by the agroindustrial alliance of large retail is noted (Anjos; Caldas, 2017; Darolt *et al.*, 2013; Pearson *et al.*, 2011; Hendrickson, 2009). They search for particular and personal forms of interaction, with less power unbalance and information and more emphasis on mutual dependency (Kjaernes *et al.*, 2007).

This reaction is based on a pattern of values that Cunha (2015a) denominated “New-Ancestral” (N-A), in detriment to the Old-Obsolete (O-O) model. Even considering the CEASAs and supermarket chains as important actors in the food supply, to Cunha (2015a), these channels are indifferent to the new trends, being organizations based on the O-O model: old values and old formats. Consumers currently search food for quality, social or local representation, and direct transactions, which characterize the new pattern (N-A) (Cunha, 2015a).



It is argued that food supply, associated with the localized production systems, may be a fundamental element for regional development. It gives opportunities for income to many actors traditionally excluded from the competitive market, improves socioeconomic indices, and empowers socially vulnerable groups (Guirado *et al.*, 2017; Zuin; Zuin, 2008). The proximity between production and consumption may provide transparency to the matters that involve nourishment and maintain a variety of foods at lower prices (Breitenbach, 2021).

It is evident that there is a movement of consumers claiming better food quality, involving aspects of nutrition, health, the environment, pleasure, and authenticity (Goodman, 2003). In other words, the multi-dimension of quality worked by Allaire (2013) gains prominence. This dimension considers the preparation, hygiene, freshness, nutritional capacity, health, and social, environmental, and ecological implications of the production, processing, and distribution of the foods. It is alerted that in the so-called “turn to quality” (Goodman, 2003), the strategies differ from the industrial form that presents prepared food products. This would take place by considering social, moral, and sacred values, with a holistic view of quality and transformation of the market governance structures (Allaire, 2013). Ramírez-García, Mancha-Cáceres, and Del-Canto-Fresno (2016) explained that these realities express the construction of a movement of returning to territorialized agriculture and the social construction of markets.

Even if initiatives based on short commercialization chains have been dynamizing the local economy and expanding the supply (Renting *et al.*, 2017; Craviotti, 2018), the central question is the following: what is the function of the government in reincorporating local production into the supply? Except for the construction of supply centers four decades ago, little was done to improve the commercialization channels on which millions of family farmers depend (Belik; Cunha, 2015).

The first matter to resume is that in which, historically, there was a centralization of the public policies around the availability of food for large urban centers and a certain inability to include family agriculture in the supply of peripheral regions. To Belik and Cunha (2015), the Brazilian model of wholesale trade did not address the notion of territory, local culture, and social and community organization well. Many places did not fail to have food availability, albeit of questionable origin. However, the fact is that, even in regions with the presence of family agriculture, a dependency on food steaming from elsewhere was promoted, with there being social harm over the forms of knowledge related to this type of production.



These farmers ended up migrating to activities that allowed their social and economic reproduction, especially in the production of agricultural commodities.

In this sense, it is important to understand the impacts of the long development model adopted in Brazil on what remained of family agriculture production forms. On the other hand, as a way to provide to farmers technological solutions and investments compatible with the diversified production of healthy foods and short-chain commercialization, the knowledge must not come distanced from agricultural credit. Family agriculture is experiencing a scenario of workforce decrease stemming from the reduction in the number of members of households, aging, and exodus of the youths. On the other hand, many of the production activities have specific assets, technological solutions, and working capital needs that result in investment amounts that exceed the ability of farmers to disburse. In this context, it is important to conceive supply strategies that take such particularities into account.

Moreover, it is necessary for production and supply initiatives not to come distanced from the participation and involvement of farmers in the markets and commercialization. Attention is drawn to the importance of expansion and mobilization spaces around such initiatives as part of considering supply outside the large distribution mechanism. For such, there is a need to provide solutions to create distinctiveness so that consumers recognize and feel stimulated to develop new consumption habits to the point of providing market gaps or shares.

In this context, there is a need to bring small retail inside such initiatives because, insofar as they provide spaces for local products, they also gain visibility for their small businesses, this instituting an instrument of engagement, mobilization, and synergy around more local forms of production and supply. Another important component in harmonizing a local-base supply is the appropriation by farmers through stronger bonds. To achieve scale capacity in supply, there is a need to expand the interactions around farmer organizations (cooperatives and associations) and alliances with other civil society actors, especially the private initiative.

To Grisa and Schneider (2015), the development of family agriculture tied to the dynamism stemming from a supply of territorial nature depends on a public policy of knowledge, mobilization, articulation, and better co-management among the government, federative units, and territories, with interactions between the distribution and consumption agents. Otherwise, the opportunities



stemming from the New-Ancestral model may become once again centralized. Furthermore, according to Maluf (2018), regarding supply being a theme of significant socioeconomic meaning and political sensitivity, an actor currently emerges with a differentiated force in this power field. When called to assume this debate on nourishment, consumers have backed more local and reflexive supply forms. Therefore, the government must use this context to take on a more active role in correcting historical debilities and promoting a more inclusive institutional change.

As a way of summarizing the results obtained in this item, the Table 3 is presented.

Table 3 | Summary of “Impacts of the centrality on local supply systems”

Bibliographic reference	Discussion summary
Friedmann (2016)	The centralized form of organization boosted a rupture between retail trade and regional farmers. Retail and food industries centralized themselves, while regional food industries and merchants were marginalized.
Cunha (2016)	Difficulties organizing supply chains based on purchasing from local suppliers (i.e., farmers), be they long or short, are observed.
Belik; Cunha (2015)	The supply centers, for example, were unable to create stimulus or programs focused on differentiating family agriculture or integrating themselves to the Brazilian government programs for valorizing the local nature of the food.
Anjos; Caldas (2017); Darolt <i>et al.</i> (2013)	The search by consumers for alternatives to the predominant supply system through long chains centralized by the agroindustrial alliance of large retail is noted.
Kjaernes <i>et al.</i> (2007)	They search for particular and personal forms of interaction, with less power unbalance and information and more emphasis on mutual dependency.
Guirado <i>et al.</i> (2017); Zuin; Zuin (2008)	It is argued that food supply, associated with the localized production systems, may be a fundamental element for regional development.
Breitenbach 2021)	The proximity between production and consumption may provide transparency to the matters that involve nourishment and maintain a variety of foods at lower prices.
Goodman (2003)	‘Turn to quality’.
Allaire (2013)	Considering social, moral, and sacred values, with a holistic view of quality and transformation of the market governance structures.
Ramírez-García, Mancha-Cáceres, Del-Canto-Fresno (2016)	Construction of a movement of returning to territorialized agriculture and the social construction of markets.
Renting <i>et al.</i> (2017); Craviotti (2018)	Initiatives based on short commercialization chains have been dynamizing the local economy and expanding the supply.
Belik and Cunha (2015)	Except for the construction of supply centers four decades ago, little was done to improve the commercialization channels on which millions of family farmers depend.
Grisa and Schneider (2015)	Development of family agriculture tied to the dynamism stemming from a supply of territorial nature depends on a public policy of knowledge, mobilization.
Maluf (2018)	Regarding supply being a theme of significant socioeconomic meaning and political sensitivity, an actor currently emerges with a differentiated force in this power field.

APPLICABILITY OF RESULTS IN THE FIELD OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The presented data and discussion shed light on the intricate dynamics of food supply systems and their impact on regional development. The historical evolution of public food supply policies in Brazil, as depicted in Figure 4, reveals a century-long journey marked by various initiatives and programs. Despite this, the recent retreat in public policies has exposed vulnerabilities in the links reliant on them, leading to a disconnection between retail trade and regional farmers. The centralized organization of the food industry has marginalized local producers, hindering the creation of supply chains anchored in local suppliers.

The analysis underscores the unintended consequences of government policies, such as the gradual decrease in farmers interested in producing non-commodity foods and the challenges faced by family farmers in participating in markets. However, the study also highlights a counter movement among consumers seeking alternatives to the dominant supply system, driven by a “New-Ancestral” value system focused on quality, social representation, and direct transactions. This consumer shift, coupled with the potential of localized production systems, presents an opportunity for regional development by providing income to traditionally excluded actors, improving socioeconomic indices, and empowering vulnerable groups.

Moreover, the research emphasizes the need for a reevaluation of the government’s role in reincorporating local production into the supply chain. The historical centralization of public policies around large urban centers has left peripheral regions underserved, necessitating a more nuanced approach that considers territory, local culture, and community organization. To address the challenges faced by family agriculture, the study advocates for technological solutions, investments compatible with diversified production, and attention to the specific needs of farmers. Additionally, the involvement of farmers in markets and commercialization, expansion of spaces for small retail, and collaboration with civil society actors are identified as crucial components for the success of localized supply initiatives. Overall, the research contributes valuable insights to the discourse on regional development, urging for a more inclusive and adaptive approach to food supply systems.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article addressed and problematized the Brazilian food supply processes over time with the aim of discussing the trajectory, current context, and perspectives of food supply in Brazil. From such discussions, it was made evident that food supply in Brazil was never a central goal of economic and production policies. Despite several supply crises that worsened social problems such as hunger and malnutrition, the Brazilian governments did not adopt a consistent plan that corrected the debilities and prioritized production for feeding Brazilians.

More recently, there have been political and social movements aiming to transform how food supply is conducted in Brazil. As actions by the government, public policies such as the PNAE and PAA, which link family agriculture production and consumption in public education networks, hospitals, the military, etc., stand out.

In turn, from the viewpoint of civil society, the movements start from food consumers. This change is not exclusive to Brazil and has intensified in other nations, especially European and North American countries. These consumers have resignified consumption and revalued local food production. Other aspects of quality to be valued in food come into evidence, especially the culture and traditions that are part of producing food. Origins and production forms, with the valorization of the colonial, local, and fresh, become central in this movement towards new forms of food consumption. Although it does not generate an enormous impact on production processes and the national economic focus, this demand from consumers may generate changes in the role of the government and its actions.

However, despite the important changes in the Brazilian food supply scenario, the action of the government and its policies prioritizing production for exporting is still evident. The incentives for food production for consumption of Brazilians themselves are still incipient.

Moving forward, it is imperative for the government to recognize and address historical inadequacies in its approach to food supply. Policies should be tailored to support diversified, local production, considering the unique challenges faced by family agriculture. Additionally, efforts should focus on creating distinctiveness in local products, involving small retail, and fostering stronger bonds between farmers and consumers. A more active role from the government, involving



knowledge-sharing, mobilization, and co-management, is crucial to navigating the complexities of food supply and promoting a sustainable, inclusive institutional change that aligns with evolving consumer preferences.

The research presented highlights opportunities for further investigation into the dynamics of food supply in Brazil. Future studies could assess the effectiveness of recent government initiatives, such as the PNAE and PAA, in linking family agriculture with public institutions and their impact on local supply chains and issues of hunger. Additionally, a comparative analysis with similar programs in other nations may offer cross-cultural insights. Another avenue for research involves exploring the persistent prioritization of food production for export over domestic consumption, examining its underlying factors, and assessing its implications for local farmers and food security. These research directions have the potential to inform evidence-based policies that align with evolving dynamics in food supply and consumption in Brazil.

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