



**BRAZIL**

---

**BRAZIL'S FOOD  
AND NUTRITIONAL  
GOVERNANCE PLAN**

---

INTERNATIONAL LEARNING SERIES / 4  
PUBLISHED JULY 2017





# TACKLING HUNGER THROUGH SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICIES – LEARNING FROM BRAZIL NOVEMBER 2016

---

**Between 1990 and 2015, Brazil more than halved the proportion of its citizens who suffer from hunger: from 14.8 per cent in 1990–1992 (22.6 million people) to less than 5 per cent in 2014–2016**

*This briefing pack provides a snapshot of Brazil's national framework for food and nutritional security policy, and showcases a number of specific programmes aimed at improving nutritional outcomes, including school meals, breastfeeding, community restaurants and nutritional surveillance systems. These documents are available online from the Food Foundation and Institute of Development Studies.*

## **Credits**

This Food Foundation-IDS Policy Briefing was written by Jennifer Constantine, Research Consultant, Institute of Development Studies, UK; and Mariana Santarelli, Researcher, Reference Centre on Food and Nutrition Sovereignty and Security (CERESAN) at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil. It was produced as part of the Brazil-UK Food Policy Learning Exchange project, funded by the New Venture Fund (NVF). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Food Foundation, IDS or the New Venture Fund. Readers are encouraged to quote and reproduce material from these Policy Briefings in their own publication. In return, the Food Foundation and IDS request due acknowledgement and quotes to be referenced as above.

# Brazil's Food and Nutritional Governance plan

## Contents

Tackling hunger through sustainable food policies – learning from Brazil	3
National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security: a political history	5
From campaign to policy	6
Financial reform and investment	6
What is food and nutritional security?	7
Placing people and rights at the heart of food policy	7
The National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security: Governance Structure	8
Multisectoral approach	8
Citizen participation	9
Nutrition transition: obesity and undernourishment	10
The 'double burden' – where malnutrition and obesity co-exist	10
SISVAN: food and nutritional surveillance	10
Developing a response to obesity	11
Initial results	11
From working group to policy	11
Conclusion: opportunities for mutual learning with the UK	14

## BRIEF 1: TACKLING HUNGER THROUGH SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICIES – LEARNING FROM BRAZIL'S FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL GOVERNANCE PLAN

*Between 1990 and 2015, Brazil more than halved the proportion of its citizens who suffer from hunger: from 14.8 per cent in 1990–1992 (22.6 million people) to less than 5 per cent in 2014–2016, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Brazil's success holds lessons for developed and developing countries alike, many of which are facing nutrition crises of their own. In the UK, for example, an estimated 8.4 million people live in households with insufficient food, as research by the Food Foundation has shown. A complementary series of one-pagers detailing some of Brazil's policies on school meals, breastfeeding, community restaurants and nutritional surveillance systems is also available online from the Institute of Development Studies and the Food Foundation.*

Over the last 20 years, Brazil has made food and nutritional security a matter of national concern, and has established policies that have tackled the structural causes of hunger and malnutrition. It did this through:

- expanding social protection programmes
- increasing access to healthcare through the national health system
- creating a National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security, to address hunger, malnutrition and obesity. The Policy emerged from a dialogue between civil society organizations, social movements, and government agencies.

This policy brief looks at how Brazil achieved this, focusing on how it built the National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security, exploring some of the associated systems for governance, coordination and implementation, and looking at its efforts to tackle the 'double burden' of malnutrition: the coexistence of obesity with undernutrition.

### National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security: a political history

The National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security (*Política Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* – PNSAN) is the result of a process that brought together civil society organisations, social movements and networks with government, politics and policy processes. The issue of hunger is associated most recently with Brazil's former president, Lula da Silva. However, calls to tackle hunger in Brazil can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. Even then, it was evident that hunger and poverty were political issues that demanded better public policies to tackle the root causes – for example, increasing agricultural productivity was not enough: better distribution mechanisms were also needed, together with pro-poor policies.

In 1993, hunger gained new visibility in what would become a turning point for food and nutritional security in Brazil. Led by sociologist Herbert de Souza, popularly known as Betinho, the Movement for Ethics in Politics launched a national campaign called Citizens' Action against Hunger, Poverty, and for Life – also known as the **Campaign Against Hunger**. This led to a mass mobilisation that transcended class, race and geography: thousands of food collection committees were formed across the country, distributing food and other forms of support. The success of the campaign gave greater visibility to the issue of hunger and showed civil society the power of direct action, publicly highlighting gaps in the State's response to poverty. Civil society organisations took a series of proposals around food and nutrition security to the government as part of a broader mobilisation for improved public policies. This included the **Hunger Map** (*Mapa da Fome*), commissioned by the government to provide the evidence base for what would eventually be a policy response led by the government. The Hunger Map identified that 31.7 million people – 21.9 per cent of the population – were living below the poverty line in 1994.<sup>1</sup>

The success of the campaign gave greater visibility to the issue of hunger and showed civil society the power of direct action, publicly highlighting gaps in the State's response to poverty

<sup>1</sup> Medeiros Peliano A. M. et al. (1993). A nova experiência brasileira no combate à fome e à miséria. *Revista Saúde em Debate*, 40: 17–25

## Brazil's Food and Nutritional Governance plan

The Hunger Map laid the foundations for the proposal of a **Plan for the Fight against Hunger and Poverty** and the creation of the National Council for Food Security (*Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar – CONSEA*), which includes both civil society and government in its governance structure. In the same year, the government also convened the first **National Conference on Food Security**, which enabled the debate on food security to be seen as part of a broader national project to challenge the factors that left over one fifth of Brazil's population suffering from hunger, poverty and inequality.<sup>2</sup> However, in 1995, CONSEA was dismantled by the new president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso. This demonstrates how precarious the process of institutionalising governance frameworks can be: CONSEA was only reformed in 2003, under President Lula da Silva, and the second National Conference took place in 2004, almost a decade after the first.

### From campaign to policy

The wide range of individuals, organisations and social movements that were part of the Campaign Against Hunger and the 1996 World Food Summit galvanised political support for what would become Brazil's national food policy system. In 1998, many of them joined the Brazilian Forum on Food and Nutrition Sovereignty and Security (*Fórum Brasileiro de Soberania e Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional – FBSSAN*), which created a new space for work on food and nutritional security.

Brazil's *sanitaristas* – members of the health-workers' movement that was mobilising for public health reform – were also important actors in this process and were part of the FBSSAN from its beginning. They supported the right to food, in view of the multiple impacts of malnutrition on broader health outcomes. FBSSAN advocated for a national food and nutrition security system, which would work in tandem with the public health system – a **Unified Health System** (*Sistema Único de Saúde – SUS*).

Food security had been a priority for the Workers' Party (*Partido Trabalhista – PT*) since the 1990s. Key figures in the PT had elaborated a proposal for a national food security policy, called **Zero Hunger**. This included contributions from FBSSAN and hundreds of experts and civil society activists, and later was implemented by President Lula's first government in 2003.<sup>3</sup> From 2003 onwards, FBSSAN collaborated closely with CONSEA, working on the National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security, and other public policies such as the National School-Feeding Programme (*Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar – PNAE*), the National Programme for Strengthening Family Agriculture (*Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar – PRONAF*), and the Food Acquisition Programme (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos – PAA*).

### Financial reform and investment

The hunger identified by the 1994 Hunger Map was the consequence of deeper socio-economic issues. The fiscal, budgetary and structural reforms introduced by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's Plano Real (named after the new currency) in 1995 were designed to get the economy working again, reducing inflation and providing macro-economic stability. An increase in social investment was underpinned by legal and policy frameworks, and by political and financial support: in 2000, health spending was set as a fixed percentage of GDP by constitutional provision,<sup>4</sup> and social assistance spending doubled as a share of GDP in the period 2000–2002 from 0.3 per cent to 0.6 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Brazil's experience shows that it is possible to implement an ambitious social policy with minimal spending, provided other elements are in place, such as legal and political frameworks. It also shows how certain policies can span political parties/coalitions and wider agendas rather than being associated only with one party.

Brazil's experience shows that it is possible to implement an ambitious social policy with minimal spending, provided other elements are in place, such as legal and political frameworks

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Social Development (MDS), Brazil <http://www.mds.gov.br/saladeimprensa/eventos/seguranca-alimentar-e-nutricional/i-conferencia-nacional-de-seguranca-alimentar-e-nutricional> (retrieved July 2011)

<sup>3</sup> Takagi, M. (2010). A Implantação do Programa Fome Zero no Governo Lula. In *Fome Zero: uma história brasileira*. Brasília: Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome; M. Leão in V. Burity, T. Franceschini, F. Valente, E. Recine, M. Leão, M. de F. Carvalho. (2010). *Direito Humano à Alimentação Adequada no Contexto da Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional*. Brasília: ABRANDH.

<sup>4</sup> Giambiagi, F. and Ronci, M. (2004). Fiscal Policy and Debt Sustainability: Cardoso's Brazil, 1995–2002. IMF Working Paper WP/04/156. Washington, D.C.: IMF <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2004/wp04156.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Hall, A. (2006). From Fome Zero to Bolsa Família: social policies and poverty alleviation under Lula. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38 (4). pp. 689–709.

A strong civil-society-led public campaign led to the inclusion of the right to food in Brazil's Constitution, along with other social rights such as education, health and labour

## What is food and nutritional security?

The collective agreement of what constituted food and nutritional security, not just as a technical but also as a *political* concept was a key step in Brazil's food policy trajectory. The definition adopted for the Organic Law on Food Security was as follows:

Food and nutritional security is the realisation of the right of all to regular and permanent access to quality food in sufficient quantity, without compromising access to other essential needs, based on nutrition practices that promote health, respect cultural diversity and are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. (*Lei Orgânica de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* – LOSAN, Article 3, 2006.)

Overcoming different and competing interpretations to build consensus on the terminology was fundamental. It provided a common language that could be understood across different government sectors. Brazil's addition of *nutrition* to what is generally referred to as *food security* was done with the aim of linking approaches to health and nutrition, and shifting away from the common assumption that tackling hunger is through increased food production. Putting together *food availability* and *food quality* was also strategic, and designed to challenge dominant narratives about food production and consumption, and the relationship with healthy food.<sup>6</sup> This was complemented by strong links to health and social protection programmes working at central, state and local level, such as breastfeeding and school meals.

## Placing people and rights at the heart of food policy

The National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security is guided by a **human rights approach**, which places the human right to food at the heart of public policy. A strong civil-society-led public campaign led to the inclusion of the right to food in Brazil's Constitution, along with other social rights such as education, health and labour. The constitutional right to food requires the State to provide policies aimed at ensuring food and nutrition security. The rights-based approach does not mean the government is responsible for providing food to all, but rather that the government is accountable for ensuring this right can be realised by all citizens.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Leão, M. and R. Maluf (2012). *Effective Public Policies and Active Citizenship: Brazil's experience of building a Food and Nutrition Security System*. Brasília: ABRANDH.

<sup>7</sup> Burity V., Franceschini T., Valente F., Recine E., Leão M., de F. Carvalho M. (2010). *Direito Humano à Alimentação Adequada no Contexto da Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional*. Brasília: ABRANDH.

### THE NATIONAL POLICY FOR FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Brazil's 2006 food security law (LOSAN) provided government with a framework for the **National Food and Nutrition Security System** (*Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* – SISAN). The SISAN framework was designed with the explicit aim of creating a governance structure to coordinate and monitor decentralised public policies to ensure the right to adequate food. The PNSAN (National Policy for Food and Nutritional Security) was formally approved by the president in 2010. It did not create new programmes, as most of the new food and nutritional security policies had already been created or expanded with the launch of the Zero Hunger programme. But it did provide a more integrated framework, with clearly defined guidelines, management procedures and mechanisms for the funding, monitoring and evaluating of State actions on food and nutrition. The Policy is delivered through the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan, which is renewed every four years. The Plan outlines all the programmes and actions to be implemented, with quantifiable targets and timelines that are linked to the public budget. SISAN is led by two institutions which coordinate and monitor the national system:

- i) **CAISAN** – the National Intersectoral Chamber on Food and Nutrition Security, an exclusively governmental body formed by ministers;
- ii) **CONSEA** – the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security, an advisory body linked directly to the President of the Republic, providing a space for the participation and social control of public policies, which includes both civil society and government in its governance structure.

Both institutions use the deliberations from the National Conferences as part of their decision-making process. The **National Conference on Food and Nutrition** takes place every four years, and is one of the most important expressions of citizen participation in Brazil's food policy, as it approves the guidelines and priorities for the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy and its Annual Plan. The National Conference brings together 2,000 people, two-thirds of whom are from civil society and the remainder from government. The event is preceded by provincial and municipal conferences that take place across all of Brazil's 27 states.



**SISAN is aligned to Brazil's Federal Constitution, which states that public policy must be managed through integrated and coordinated systems that ensure human rights and include citizens' participation in the formulation, implementation and control of all public actions**

#### Multisectoral approach

SISAN is aligned to Brazil's Federal Constitution, which states that public policy must be managed through integrated and coordinated systems that ensure human rights and include citizens' participation in the formulation, implementation and control of all public actions. One key feature of SISAN when compared with other systems is its multisectoral character. This is a challenging element, which requires significant capacity to coordinate and monitor policies that are the responsibility of a wide range of government sectors and actors. This multisectoral element is fundamental in allowing government to design linked-up programmes which address the factors affecting the food and nutritional status of diverse individuals and social groups, including children, the elderly and families.

SISAN was developed in dialogue with several public policy systems, including the health, education, social assistance, and agrarian ministries. SISAN's wide-ranging reach requires food and nutrition civil society advocates to learn how to overcome sectoral siloes and work together, and calls for a systems approach that takes into account the multiple problems faced by a diverse population and seeks to avoid the duplication or overlapping of policies and programmes, while delivering cost-effectiveness. The table (opposite page) shows how intersectoral development challenges were selected as targets for the National Plan in efforts to bring together different parts of government and civil society service providers.



## Brazil's Food and Nutritional Governance plan

Intersectoral development challenges the National Plan seeks to address (2016–2019)	Example of policies
Universal access to healthy food, especially for the most vulnerable	<i>Bolsa Família</i> (conditional cash transfer programme) National School–Feeding Programme (PNAE) Community Restaurants
Healthy food production and productive inclusion of the rural poor and specific groups such as indigenous peoples and quilombolas (Afro-Brazilian communities)	National Programme for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF) Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) National Plan for Agroecological and Organic Production (PLANAPO)
Control and prevent diseases from bad food habits	National System for Food and Nutritional Surveillance (SISVAN) National Plan for Tackling Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases National Breastfeeding Policy National Dietary Guidelines
Access to water	National Programme for the Universal Access to Water ( <i>Água – Água Para Todos</i> ) Drinking Water Cistern Programme in semiarid regions ( <i>Programa Cisternas</i> )

### Citizen participation

As with other Brazilian social policies, SISAN includes citizen participation, which in Brazil is referred to as social participation. Citizen participation in the formulation and monitoring of public policies in Brazil has grown since the 1988 Federal Constitution and works in conjunction with parliament's wider role in Brazil's representative democracy. The inclusion of civil society and the State in CONSEA creates a more participatory and consensual policymaking process, and a more transparent policy environment overall (Leão, 2012).

In the last decade, Brazil has made significant advances in integrating food and nutrition in all policies, with the Organic Law for Food and Nutritional Security (LOSAN), the National Policy and Plan for Food and Nutritional Security (*Política e Plano Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional – PNSAN*). These work in tandem with CONSEA. The combination of a legal framework with a governance structure and strong citizenship participation in social policy means that work on food and nutrition is rooted in an intersectoral, integrated systems approach, all of which is designed to guarantee the human right to adequate and healthy food. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Burity et al., 2010

## Brazil's Food and Nutritional Governance plan

Between 1974 and 2003, rice purchases fell by 23 per cent and beans by 31 per cent, but the purchase of ready meals rose by 82 per cent, and biscuits and soft drinks rose by 400 per cent

### NUTRITION TRANSITION: OBESITY AND UNDERNOURISHMENT

As with most of the world, Brazil has been undergoing a **nutritional transition** in recent decades, marked by a shift from minimally processed, traditional foods to ultra-processed foods such as crisps and sweets.<sup>9</sup> Between 1974 and 2003, rice purchases fell by 23 per cent and beans by 31 per cent, but the purchase of ready meals rose by 82 per cent, and biscuits and soft drinks rose by 400 per cent.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, beans continue to be a staple in the Brazilian diet: 66 per cent of adults eat beans on five or more days of the week.<sup>11</sup> While the proportion of fruits and vegetables in overall food purchases remained stable during this period, only one in five Brazilians now consume their five-a-day as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). The volatility of food prices also shaped changing habits: the price of vegetables increased by 91 per cent between 1990 and 2012, while the price of some processed foods dropped by up to 20 per cent;<sup>12</sup> and recent research shows that the 2008 food price crisis increased the consumption of junk foods.<sup>13</sup> Research done by the Brazilian government shows that in 2015, 16.2 per cent of the population were substituting lunch or dinner for a snack on at least seven (or more) occasions each week.<sup>14</sup>

#### The 'double burden' – where malnutrition and obesity co-exist

These trends are directly associated with the rapid increase of overweight, obesity and other non-communicable diseases related to poor nutrition, especially among people living on low incomes. More than half of all adult Brazilians are overweight and around 18 per cent of the adult population is obese. While the prevalence of malnutrition has fallen, it is still worrying in some subsets of the population. Overall, around 2.7 per cent of adults are underweight.<sup>15</sup> The **double burden of malnutrition** – the coexistence of obesity with undernutrition – is serious, and has led Brazil to invest in monitoring people's health and nutritional status and dietary practices through the National System for Food and Nutritional Surveillance (*Sistema Nacional de Vigilância Alimentar e Nutricional* – **SISVAN**).

#### SISVAN: food and nutritional surveillance

Systematic monitoring of people's food and nutritional status is crucial to understanding changes in the population's epidemiologic and nutritional status. SISVAN gathers data from municipal administrations, which are linked to the **Unified Health System (SUS)**. Initially, the system was geared to monitoring children and pregnant women, but currently it is used for the wider population: in 2009, SISVAN monitored around 7 per cent of Brazil's population. *Bolsa Família* – Brazil's income transfer programme – provides family health data to SISVAN, which is especially important since *Bolsa Família* recipients tend to be the most affected by the double burden of malnutrition. SISVAN collects data such as weight, height, body mass index (BMI) and skin fold thickness. More recently, it has also collected data on food consumption. It monitors the nutritional status of certain segments of the population – generally those on lower incomes who use the public health system – and produces information that informs the design and delivery of local and national health and social policies and programmes. National surveys such as the Family Budgets Survey (*Pesquisa de Orçamentos Familiares 2008/2009*) and the annual Chronic Diseases Surveillance Survey (*Pesquisa de Vigilância de Fatores de Risco e Proteção para Doenças Crônicas*) are also important inputs to the national obesity prevention strategy.

<sup>9</sup> Monteiro C. A., D'A Benicio M. H., Conde W. L., Popkin B. M. (2000). Shifting Obesity Trends in Brazil. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 54(4): 342-6; and Monteiro C. A., Bertazzi Levy R., Moreira Claro R., Rugani Ribeiro de Castro I., Cannon G. (2010). A new classification of foods based on the extent and purpose of their processing. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, Rio de Janeiro, 26 (11): 2039–2049.

<sup>10</sup> CONSEA (2010). *A Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional e o Direito Humano à Alimentação Adequada no Brasil*. Brasília: CONSEA.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Health, Brazil, 2015. <http://portalsaude.saude.gov.br/index.php/cidadao/principal/agencia-saude/17445-obesidade-estabiliza-no-brasil-mas-excesso-de-peso-aumenta>

<sup>12</sup> Sharada Keats and Steve Wiggins (2014). *Future diets Implications for agriculture and food prices*. London: ODI

<sup>13</sup> Scott-Villiers P., Chisholm N., Wanjiku Kelbert A., Hossain N. (2016). *Precarious Lives: Food, Work and Care After the Global Food Crisis*. Oxfam and IDS.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Health, Brazil, 2015. <http://portalsaude.saude.gov.br/index.php/cidadao/principal/agencia-saude/17445-obesidade-estabiliza-no-brasil-mas-excesso-de-peso-aumenta>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Ministry of Health, Brazil, 2015.

## Developing a response to obesity

In 2011, Brazil's Ministry of Health launched the National Plan for Tackling Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (*Plano de Ações Estratégicas para o Enfrentamento das Doenças Crônicas Não Transmissíveis*), the precursor to the obesity strategy launched in 2014. It identified the need for a policy framework that would promote healthy foods and provide the infrastructure to deliver healthy food in places such as schools.<sup>16</sup> It also included integrating nutrition actions in the national healthcare system and sought to integrate nutrition with food issues. Other measures included promoting sport, food regulation, and citizen participation in policy development and implementation. The design of the obesity strategy and related food and nutrition policies and programmes is intersectoral, and the implementation of integrated delivery across all sectors remains a real challenge.<sup>17</sup>

## Initial results

The 2011–2015 Plan included research, and monitoring of national objectives for the reduction of mortality and risk factors, as well as actions aimed at prevention and risk reduction. These included encouraging physical exercise, healthy eating and health promotion through the Healthy Gym Programme (*Programa Academia Saúde*), new legislation on tobacco-free environments, free distribution of medication for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as high-blood pressure, diabetes and asthma. Most of these initiatives are delivered through the public health sector. It also required better organisation of the healthcare network in order to improve response times for urgent cardiovascular disease, and increased access to cancer diagnostics and treatment. Recent evaluations show that there have been improvements in terms of surveillance, health promotion and integrated care.<sup>18</sup> However, obesity rates continue to rise.

## From working group to policy

In 2011, CAISAN set up an intersectoral committee to work on a new obesity policy. This followed the country's well-established model of bringing together a range of different sectors, institutions and actors in view of the need for integrated, intersectoral action to tackle the multiple contributing factors to obesity.

The committee's work eventually led to the development of an Intersectoral Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Obesity (*Estratégia Intersectorial de Prevenção e Controle da Obesidade*), launched in 2014. The Plan shows that the State recognises obesity as a serious issue. The Plan aims to strengthen activities such as widening the availability of access to adequate and healthy foods through school meals, popular restaurants and other public instruments; education, communication and information on the National Healthy Eating Guidelines; promotion of healthy living in public spaces such as school canteens; strengthening Health and Nutritional Surveillance; and monitoring the levels of salt, sugar and fat in foods. Various states and municipalities also created legislation to regulate foods sold in private school canteens. There are laws at the federal level that ban the sale of beverages with low nutritional content, and foods rich in sugar, salt and/or saturated/trans-fats in schools. However, the monitoring of these laws is still fragile, and whilst there is monitoring of the food environment overall, there are no prescribed nutritional targets *per se*.

**The Plan identified the need for a policy framework that would promote healthy foods and provide the infrastructure to deliver healthy food in places such as schools**

<sup>16</sup> Jaime P. C., da Silva A. C., Gentil P. C., Claro R. M., Monteiro C. A. (2013). Brazilian obesity prevention and control initiatives. *Obes. Rev.* 2013 Nov; 14 Suppl 2:88-95.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Carvalho Malta D., Porto Oliveira T., Siqueira Santos M., Caribé de Araújo Andrade S., Alves da Silva M. (2015). Progress with the Strategic Action Plan for Tackling Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases in Brazil, 2011–2015. *Grupo Técnico de Monitoramento do Plano de DCNT. Epidemiol. Serv. Saúde, Brasília, 25(2) :373–390, abr-jun 2016.*

## Brazil's Food and Nutritional Governance plan

As CONSEA's president, Maria Emília Lisboa Pacheco, pointed out, obesity cannot be seen as the result of individual choices: it is a complex issue that can only be tackled through the involvement of a wide range of specialists and government sectors, working in tandem with popular mobilisation and bolstered by political will. She points to the relationship between food supply and health, underlining that food choice is not individual, given that eating is a social practice. As such, one element of obesity prevention is a focus on better state regulation of food supply policy, given that in certain places food choices are limited by price and availability.<sup>19</sup>

Given the tendency of some policies to change with governments, CONSEA works to ensure regulation of food and nutritional security is underpinned by legal frameworks. For example, LOSAN (legislative) demands that the federal government should develop a national food and nutritional security plan every four years. In turn, the plan functions as a planning instrument that is approved by CAISAN's ministerial plenary, but it is not legislatively prescriptive. However, its budgetary targets correspond to those in the Pluriannual Plan, which is Brazil's main instrument for budgetary planning, approved by congress every four years. This is a clear example of why political leadership is key to policy success – particularly endorsement by the President, as is the case with CONSEA.

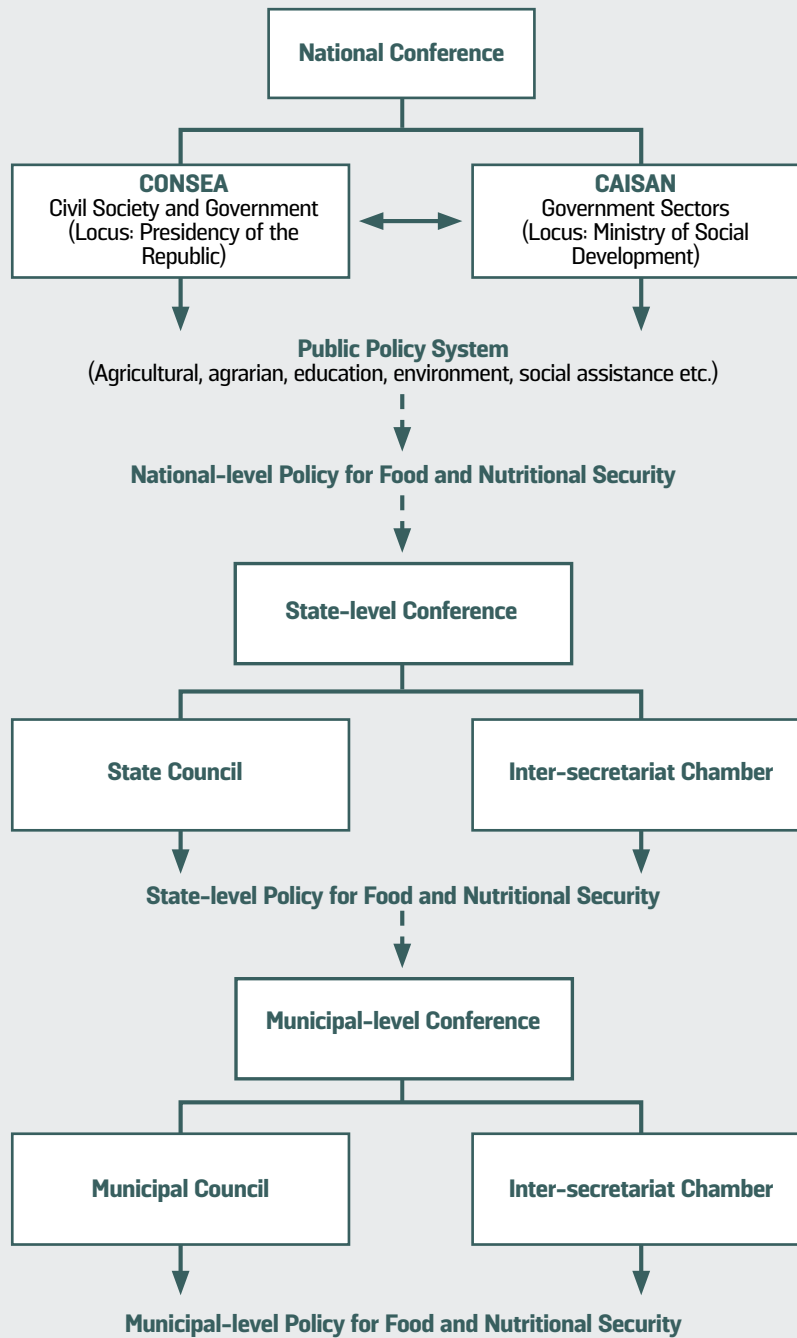
---

**One element of obesity prevention is a focus on better state regulation of food supply policy, given that in certain places food choices are limited by price and availability**

---

<sup>19</sup> CONSEA website, 2015. <http://www4.planalto.gov.br/consea/comunicacao/audio/2015/prevencao-e-controle-da-obesidade-por-uma-visao-intersectorial>

**Figure 1: Brazil's food and nutritional security policy framework**



Source: Authors' translation, adapted from Marília Leão and Renato Maluf (2012). A construção social de um sistema público de segurança alimentar e nutricional. ABRANDH/Oxfam.

### CONCLUSION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUTUAL LEARNING WITH THE UK

Civil society actors and policymakers working on food and nutrition security in Brazil are the first to point out that there is still much to be achieved, particularly in terms of ensuring the right to food for poor and vulnerable people, including traditionally under-served populations such as Afro-Brazilians and indigenous communities; and tackling the growing challenge of obesity and related non-communicable diseases. However, there have also been significant public policy successes, which translate to very real gains for Brazilian citizens. While identifying and disseminating lessons learnt can be challenging given the specificity of Brazil's culture, history and politics, there are some very practical cross-context lessons from Brazil's experience which will be of interest to policy actors grappling with similar issues elsewhere.

A common feature of Brazil's social policy frameworks is the manner in which they are constructed. Political support and the successful championing of certain issues translates into legal instruments, policies and programmes which are all i) rights-based, ii) intersectoral and iii) involve participatory citizen engagement.

Key features of Brazil's model, which are also relevant to the UK, are as follows:

- **Strong political leadership, supported by a broad range of stakeholders** including civil society, social movements, elected politicians, and citizens.
- **Integrating food and nutrition in all policies and related governance structures.** Embedding an intersectoral, integrated systems approach supported by legal and institutional frameworks.
- **Recognising the role of civil society organizations in promoting the public good.** Unlike some of the lobbying seen by private sector actors, CSOs have much to contribute to both the formulation and the delivery of public policies, working in conjunction with the State.
- **Working together across social movements and sectoral fault-lines.** The coalescing of civil society can build strong and successful social movements with political clout that can then influence and contribute to food, nutrition and health laws, policies and programmes.
- **Transparency and social accountability through participation.** Participatory governance structures and monitoring mechanisms can improve the quality and delivery of public policies.
- **Ensuring continuity in public policy provision.** Embedding policy in law is important, but does not always protect it from changes in government, politics and/or funding. Linking policy to fundamental rights and gaining support from a variety of stakeholders – including citizens – is key in protecting the delivery of economic, social and cultural rights – for example, Brazil's new government has shown its political commitment to *Bolsa Família* by increasing its funding, but other programmes have had their funding cut. The rapidly changing political and economic context in Brazil highlights the need for awareness of the effects of policy change.

Last, but by no means least, none of these advances would have been possible without political commitment from Brazil's Federal Government to make food and nutrition security a matter of national priority, backed up by legal frameworks, political and financial support.

## FURTHER READING

CONSEA (2009). Building up the National Policy and System for Food and Nutrition Security: The Brazilian experience. Brasília: CONSEA.

Leão, M. and R. Maluf (2012). Effective Public Policies and Active Citizenship: Brazil's experience of building a Food and Nutrition Security System. Brasília: ABRANDH.

Menezes, F. (2010). Mobilização e Participação da Sociedade Civil. In Fome Zero: uma história brasileira. Brasília: Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome.

Santarelli, M. (2012). Política nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional: desafios intersetoriais e participativos. In Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional: tecendo a rede de saberes. Rio de Janeiro: FAPERJ.

Taylor, A. and R. Loopstra (2016). Too Poor to Eat: Food insecurity in the UK. London: Food Foundation.



## CONTACT

---

Office@foodfoundation.org.uk  
www.foodfoundation.org.uk  
020 3086 9953