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## BRAZIL: BETWEEN THE PUBLIC POLICIES AND THE HUNGER

BRASIL: ENTRE AS POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS E A FOME

BRASIL: ENTRE LAS POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS Y EL HAMBRE

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### ABSTRACT

The article studies food security in Brazil (2004-2022) and how the inefficiency in implementing public policies contributes to the advance of hunger, making a comparison between the number of people who live with hunger and the activities aimed at extinguishing this phenomenon. It is established as a hypothesis that the evolution of public policies is simultaneous to the growth of food insecurity in the Brazilian population. To prove this study, we use the methodology of analyzing the genesis of the policy, how it is proposed to be implemented, the intended results, and the social impact. As results, it is shown that the levels of food security have remained in decline (2004-2013) and the quantity of the food insecure population has increased between 2013 and 2017-2018, in addition to the increase in food insecurity between 2017-2018 and 2022.

### KEYWORDS

Fome Zero. Food Security. Public Policies

## RESUMO

O artigo estuda a segurança alimentar no Brasil (2004-2022) e como a ineficiência na implementação de políticas públicas contribui para o avanço da fome, fazendo uma comparação entre o número de pessoas que vivem com fome e as atividades destinadas a extinguir este fenômeno. Estabelece-se como hipótese que a evolução das políticas públicas é simultânea ao crescimento da insegurança alimentar na população brasileira. Para provar este estudo, utilizamos a metodologia de análise da gênese da política, como é proposta a sua implementação, os resultados pretendidos, e o impacto social. Como resultados, mostra-se que os níveis de segurança alimentar permaneceram em declínio (2004-2013) e a quantidade da população em insegurança alimentar aumentou entre 2013 e 2017-2018, para além do aumento da insegurança alimentar entre 2017-2018 e 2022.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Fome Zero; Segurança Alimentar; Políticas Públicas.

## RESUMEN

El presente artículo estudia la seguridad alimentaria en Brasil (2004-2022) y de qué forma la ineficiencia en la implementación de políticas públicas contribuye al avance del hambre, se compara el número de personas que viven con hambre y las actividades destinadas a minimizarla. Se establece como hipótesis de trabajo: la evolución de las políticas públicas es simultánea al crecimiento de la inseguridad alimentaria en la población brasileña. Metodológicamente, se realiza el análisis de la génesis de la política pública, se estudia la forma que su implementación, los resultados pretendidos y el impacto social. Como resultados, se muestra que los niveles de seguridad alimentaria se han mantenido en declive (2004-2013) y la cantidad de población con inseguridad alimentaria ha aumentado entre 2013 y 2017-2018, además del aumento de la inseguridad alimentaria entre 2017-2018 y 2022.

## PALABRAS-CLAVE

Hambre cero; Seguridad alimentaria; Políticas Públicas

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Despite various collective efforts at the national and international levels to combat hunger, with the United Nations itself has set as a goal to be achieved by 2030, ending hunger by ensuring constant, quality food, food insecurity is a factor that, since the end of the first decade of the 21st century, has been increasing throughout Brazil.

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) analyzes food security in Brazil through the National Household Sample Survey - PNAD (IBGE, 2010, 2014, 2020). However, the current situation of hunger in the Brazilian federative units is uncertain, given the lack of direct and recent calculation at the municipal level.

This study is justified by the precariousness of IBGE data on the level of food security in Brazil, with no recent data collected by this public institute to determine the severity of hunger at the local level. Besides, it is convenient to analyze the fulfillment of public policies' objectives to guarantee the right to food.

In January 2023, teams from the Ministry of Health found many members of the Yanomami territory in a serious state of health due to severe malnutrition, as well as many cases of malaria, acute respiratory infection, and other diseases (BRASIL, 2023).

In a preliminary report released by the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, 22 cases were pointed out in which the government of former president Jair Bolsonaro omitted violence or ignored recommendations made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (BRASIL, 2023). It should be noted that the report is still contemporary to the verification of the situation of vulnerability of the Yanomami people<sup>1</sup>, meaning that the situation evidenced in the document could be even more problematic.

It is established as a research hypothesis: The historical evolution of public policies to fight hunger is simultaneous to the increase in food insecurity among the Brazilian population.

Seeking to prove the hypothesis, the research establishes as its general objective to carry out a comparative study between the evolution of the quantity of the population that coexists with hunger and the performance of policies destined to extinguish this phenomenon.

The study has as specific objectives, aimed at building the theoretical foundation necessary to prove the hypothesis: 1) To determine the evolution of food security in Brazil from the years 2004 to 2022; 2) To verify the public policies derived from the Fome Zero program developed by the Brazilian Federal Government.

In the first chapter, the object of study is the historical evolution of the Brazilian population living in food insecurity. Through data made available by IBGE (2010, 2014, 2020) it is possible to determine the degree of food (in) security at the local level and, nationally, through surveys conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022). In this sense, the data will be collected from IBGE for the years 2004, 2009, 2013, 2017-2018, from FAO for 2019-2021, and the Brazilian Research Network on Food and Nutritional Sovereignty and Security for the year 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> This article does not focus on the Yanomami people, however, the recent news involving the theme of food insecurity linked to indigenous peoples underscores the relevance of the central focus of this research.

Next, the public policies to combat hunger are analyzed, describing the intended objectives and their form of implementation. In this way, it seeks to determine, through a historical analysis, the evolution of policies developed by the Federal Government since the Fome Zero Program.

Finally, a comparison is established between the objectives achieved by public policies to fight hunger in Brazil and the evolution of the percentage of the population living in a situation of food insecurity. In this way, it is determined if there is a correlation between the evolution of national policies on the subject and the increase/decrease in the amount of the population living with hunger.

To analyze the data on the food insecure population, the research uses an evolutionary analysis, taking as a parameter the period between the years 2004 and 2022, considering the first collection of data from the IBGE and understanding the year following the beginning of the application of the Fome Zero program.

To evaluate the performance of public policies developed by the Executive at a national level, the research delimits as methodological factors of this analysis: 1) the genesis of the policy; 2) the way it is proposed to be implemented; 3) the intended results; 4) the social impact achieved (DAGNINO et al., 2002).

It is intended to approach a study on the results of public policies in the social environment, analyzing the execution of services (DAGNINO et al., 2002), verifying, from this, if the applicability of the policy of promoting food security is constant. The due evaluation of current federal public policies will be subsequently carried out, thus seeking to “identify the impact that policies have on the socio-economic context, the political environment, the population” (DAGNINO et al., 2002, p. 105).

Finally, the research makes a historical comparison between the development of public policies and the number of people who live with hunger at different levels. The use of this methodology presupposes the search for a correlation between the actions of the executive branch, whether through government programs or isolated public policies and the maintenance of hunger in a national context.

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## 2 EVOLUTION OF HUNGER IN BRAZIL

This chapter discusses an analysis of the evolution of hunger levels in Brazil. Considering that the intended is to conduct this inspection based mainly on data made available by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in addition to those from parallel national and international surveys, the period between 2004 and 2022 is established as the time frame.

Beginning the verification with data from the year 2004, it is verified that, at that time, 60.1% of the residents in Brazilian homes were in a situation of food security, while 20.3% lived with mild insecurity, 11.3% with moderate insecurity, and 8.2% in a severe stage. Therefore, in that same year, approximately 72,334,000 (39.8%) people reported living with some stage of hunger insecurity, with a higher incidence in the Northeast region, where 1,754,000 households were in a severe state of hunger (IBGE, 2010).

In 2009, data from the IBGE (2010) shows that 65.8% of the inhabitants of Brazil have food insecure, while 20.9% are slightly insecure, 7.4% are in a moderate stage, and 5.8% claim to live with severe

hunger. In this respect, there is a reduction in the total number of inhabitants with food insecurity, being now 65,556,000 (34.2%). There is a significant reduction in this social problem in all regions of the country, however, the reduction, in absolute numbers, is greater in Northeastern of Brazil, with 321,000 fewer households in a severe state of hunger, when comparing the 2009 data to the 2004 data.

The analysis of the data for the year 2013, when compared to the previous ones, shows an increase in the population in a food security situation, now corresponding to 74.2% of the inhabitants. Among the 52,014,000 (25.8%) inhabitants in food insecurity, 17.1% are in a mild state, 5.1% in a moderate level, and 3.6% with severe hunger (IBGE, 2014).

Observing it from a regional perspective, taking the Northeast region as an analysis parameter, because it is the region that historically presents the largest number of households living with food insecurity, the reduction of hunger can be seen practically constantly, since in 2004, 13.2% of households were in a severe state of food insecurity, in 2009 it is found that this percentage is 9.3%, and in 2013, it reduces to 5.6% of households. Therefore, based on 2013 data, although the Northeast continues to be the region with the highest absolute quantity of severe food insecurity, it is surpassed by the North region in relation to the percentage of households with severe hunger, affecting 6.7% (IBGE, 2014).

The data for the years 2004, 2009, and 2013 are determined by the national survey by household samples – PNAD (IBGE, 2010, 2014), different from the data collection regarding the years 2017-2018, which are carried out through the household budget survey – POF. However, even though they are different surveys from the same institute, the methodology used is identical (IBGE, 2020), and can therefore serve as a comparative parameter.

In 2017-2018, the percentage of the population living with food insecurity increased, reaching 41% of the population, of which 27% are mild, 9% moderate, and 5% severe. The North region continues to have the lowest rate of food insecure households in the country, at 43%, followed by the Northeast with 49.7%, which means that more than half of the households in the North and Northeast lived with hunger or poor quality food (IBGE, 2020).

It can be seen that, unlike the pattern previously established, there is an increase in the number of food-insecure populations, reaching a higher percentage than that observed in the 2004 data. The data for POF 2017-2018 represent the last IBGE research on the subject, however, through other sources, it is possible to determine the state of hunger in Brazil after this period.

According to the survey conducted by the United Nations, the prevalence of moderate food insecurity, about the total number of inhabitants in Brazil, between 2019 and 2021 is 28.9%, while severe corresponds to 7.3% (FAO; et al, 2022). In this sense, national research comprising the biennium 2021-2022 shows that, while 58.7% of the population is food insecure, 28% are in a mild state, 15.2% are in a moderate level and 15.5% are in a severe situation (REDE PENSSAN, 2022). Therefore, we see the greatest prevalence of hunger to date, not only about absolute numbers but also due to the fact that, comparing the data listed, for the first time the percentage of the population in severe food insecurity exceeds the percentage of those in a moderate state.

The evolution of hunger culminates in the exponential growth of the number inhabitants with food insecure in the years 2021-2022, with more than 15% of the population characterized in a severe sta-

ge of food insecurity, either due to a total lack of food for an entire day or a reduction in the amount of food for adults and minors in Brazilian households. In this scope, while the first decade (2004-2013) of the period related to this analysis presents a constant decrease in hunger levels, the second decade (2013-2022) is represented by the deterioration of the progress achieved and the growth of hunger in the country to levels not previously observed.

### 3 ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC POLICIES

Initially, this chapter classifies public policies to fight hunger and lists how they are developed by the Federal Government in the periods corresponding to the hunger data from IBGE (2004-2022). In Brazil, these policies adopt a fluid character, being determined according to the form and ideology of the State and its ruler, varying from their planning to how they are carried out (VASCONCELOS, 2005).

The public policies of the national executive branch aimed at reducing food insecurity indices are linked to poverty reduction policies, and are thus characterized as unstable or volatile. This is because the way the actions are applied changes depending on the ideological component present in each executive power management (ALSTON; et al, 2011). Thus, based on the fact that the objectives and performances are, theoretically, altered with each governance, either by the type of State or by the ideological factor, an individual analysis of the different public policies in the period corresponding to the study is necessary.

In 2003, the government in question instituted the program entitled Fome Zero, consisting of a set of policies aimed at strengthening the population's access to food through a cash transfer project for vulnerable families, conditioned to the enrollment and permanence of minor children in educational institutions (ANJOS; CALDAS, 2018).

Moreover, as structural policies, defined as general parameters for the pursuit of the universalization of social rights, the program is intended to generate universal social security, a policy of basic health care and a minimum income, to ensure incentives for family farming, to propose an agrarian reform, and to ensure specific assistance for the semi-arid region of the country (CONÇALVES, 2001).

In the field of public policies, characterized by their broad scope, being applied throughout the national territory, there are projects aimed at school meals, which is specifically expanded by Federal law nº. 11,947 of 2009, which defines school meals as a fundamental right (ANJOS; CALDAS, 2018), the distribution of food stamps, the creation of popular restaurants with food distribution, the development of a specific program to open a food bank, in addition to emergency programs aimed at the transfer of income to families in rural areas (CONÇALVES, 2001).

At the beginning of the implementation of Fome Zero, there is an involvement of civil society, given the constant movement on the part of public authorities in the creation of advertisements to raise awareness about the policies implemented by the program (VASCONCELOS, 2005). Among the practices that are implemented in 2003 is the development of the Family Agriculture Food Acquisition Program (PAA), through which the public power guarantees small farmers the anticipated purchase of products, without bidding and at prices different from those common in regional markets, and the food is simultaneously donated to beneficiary associations (ANJOS; CALDAS, 2018).

Among the initial objectives of the Fome Zero program are the fight against hunger and poverty, and the creation of a food and nutritional security system through public policies and regulatory acts (DELGROSSI; et al, 2019). In addition, an annual expenditure of R\$ 13.4 billion is initially established to carry out the set of public policies (ANJOS; CALDAS, 2018).

Regarding the results achieved by the program in question, the Food and Agriculture Organization states that, due to the efforts of the executive branch, Brazil has achieved the internationally established goals for combating hunger, reducing the percentage of the population in poverty from 24.3% to 8.4% for the period 2001 and 2012, respectively, in addition to reducing by 25% the number of people with severe food insecurity (FAO; IFAD; WFP, 2014).

From Fome Zero, Brazil achieves the Millennium Development Goals for 2015, and, consequently, the preferred program undergoes a process of internationalization and is applied in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, being called Zero Hunger, and appearing as a reference in the methods of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 regarding the elimination of hunger and poverty (ELVER, 2019).

In this sense, it is established that the Fome Zero program, as a conglomerate of structural and specific public policies, establishes as its primary objective to reduce hunger rates nationally and ensure food and nutritional security. Regarding the results of the program, the originally intended goals were achieved during the first decade of analysis (2004-2013) and it became an international model for fighting hunger in the South American, African and Asian continents.

As originally noted, public policies aimed at reducing poverty and hunger can be implemented in different ways, depending on the political-ideological parameter followed by the executive branch in each management. Based on this, it is noted that in 2009 the Fome Zero program was modified to expand the National School Meals Program (PNAE), determining that, of the funds allocated to food passed on to municipalities by the federal government, at least 30% must be used to purchase products from local family farms. The results show that, in 2014, this policy reaches 42.2 million people, therefore, there is an increase of 27.1% in the number of subjects benefited, in relation to the data collected in 1995 (ANJOS; CALDAS, 2018).

In 2019, a weakening linked to the promotion of federal public policies to eradicate hunger is verified, given that the National Food and Nutrition Security Council is extinguished by Provisional Measure No. 870/2019, which becomes Federal law 13.844/2019 (CASTRO, 2019).

Due to the social setbacks, both the reduction of investments in social agendas by the public authorities and the legislative reforms related to labor issues in 2017 (ALPINO, et al, 2020), added to the economic consequences resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an exponential growth of hunger on national soil, causing the country to return to the hunger map, since more than 5% of its total population is in severe food insecurity (ALVES, 2021).

In the year 2020, public policies aimed at fighting hunger undergo significant changes. Firstly, due to the economic crisis, derived from the respective health crisis caused by COVID-19, an emergency basic income policy is instituted through Federal law 13.982/2020. However, it is understood that due to the difference in the cost of living between Brazilian regions, the policy of standardized aid proves to be, in some cases, insufficient to compensate for the loss of income of citizens (TROVÃO, 2020).

Moreover, the PNAE is now executed through the purchase of foodstuffs by states and municipalities, followed by distribution to families responsible for students in the public network, however, there is difficulty in the implementation of this policy by some federative entities (ALPINO, et al, 2020).

It is concluded that the evolution of public policies to combat hunger developed by the Brazilian federal government has its apex during the first decade of application of the Fome Zero program (2004-2013), having Brazil, from the international perspective, the role of the model to be followed in relation to the reduction of food insecurity. However, because of the changeability in the application of this type of policy, which depends on the ideological components of the executive branch, its effectiveness in reducing hunger among the Brazilian population is eroded, and the closure of CONSEA, along with other legislative setbacks, has an impact both on the levels of food insecurity and on the elaboration and application of public policies to contain this phenomenon.

## 4 A COMPARATIVE STUDY

This chapter seeks to establish a comparison between what is developed in the two previous chapters and, through a historical view, determine how public policies derived from the Fome Zero program, as well as other legislative reforms, impact the evolution of food security in Brazil.

Initially, about the data referring to 2004, because it comprises the first IBGE report (2010) to be analyzed, it is taken as a parameter of comparison. In this aspect, as the Fome Zero program has been in place since 2003 and its development has continued through the following years, it is possible to verify the impact of public policies through the analysis of data made available by the PNAD of 2009.

Even with a population growth of approximately 10,109,000 inhabitants between 2004 and 2009 (IBGE, 2010), there is a reduction in hunger levels, both in absolute numbers and percentages. From this, it can be seen that the policies developed in the first years of Fome Zero, such as the acquisition of products from family farms through PAA and the distribution of these agricultural products, are efficient in changing the reality of the phenomenon and achieving the goals originally proposed by the program.

The change in Fome Zero in 2009, expanding the destination of food obtained from family farming for school meals, has its visible results from the data for 2013. Given the increase in the number of inhabitants and households in a situation of food security throughout the country, it is possible to determine that, until then, the public policies developed by the Union have proven effective in removing Brazil from the hunger map.

Before analyzing the influence of public policies on the data for 2017-2018, it is necessary to determine how another political change affects food security: the labor reform. The first aspect to be observed is that such legislative change, by determining the possibility of fractioning the intra-day break, directly impacts the diet of workers, especially in the qualitative aspect, since the smaller amount of time for feeding makes people choose faster foodstuffs with lower nutritional value (MACHADO, 2018).

In addition, the legislative reform in the labor field addresses changes in the modalities of labor contracts, such as the liberalization of the hiring of outsourced workers, and the expansion of tem-



porary, partial and intermittent contracts. The aforementioned changes contribute to the increase in the number of workers considered informal, not only in the service sector, in which this predominance already exists, but in other sectors such as industry, for example (KREIN; COLOMBI, 2019).

The higher incidence of workers in informal situations and, consequently, without a fixed income, implies the existence of a growing degree of marginalization (CASTEL, 1997) which, in turn, affects the availability of food due to the precariousness of market infrastructure to serve a given locality (AGUILAR-ESTRADA; et al, 2019). In this sense, it is possible to determine that the labor reform, by the change regarding labor contracts and the intra-day break, directly impacts the state of food security.

The change in food security levels in the 2017-2018 biennium by IBGE (2020), when compared to previous data, does not result from a radical change in the public policies applied by the federal government, but from legislative changes, such as labor reform, which directly impact purchasing power and the quality and availability of foodstuffs consumed, thus causing a decrease in the number of inhabitants with food security.

Regarding the data for the triennium 2019-2021 (FAO; et al, 2022), the growth of the percentage of inhabitants in a situation of severe food insecurity, compared to 2017-2018, stems mainly from the extinction of the National Council for Food Security and Nutrition (CONSEA). Such fact, according to Inês Castro (2019), implies both the reduction of incentives for research focused on the right to food, and the functioning of the National Food and Nutrition Security System, thus compromising the development and application of public policies.

In this aspect, the federal executive power's decision to extinguish CONSEA directly affects the promotion of public policies aimed at reducing the amount of food-insecure populations.

The data for 2021-2022 show an increase in hunger in Brazil, with the following causing factors: 1) the reform of the labor legislation in 2017; 2) the extinction of CONSEA in 2019; 3) the health and economic crisis resulting from COVID-19; 4) the relative insufficiency of the basic income/emergency aid policy; 5) the obstacles in the implementation of PNAE public policies by state and municipal governments. It is affirmed, therefore, that the presence of 15.5% of the Brazilian population in a serious state of food insecurity (REDE PENSSAN, 2022) is the product of a historical process of precariousness of the worker's social rights, added to the sanitation crisis and the bad administration by the executive power, both at the federal level and at the regional and local levels.

Meanwhile, it is not an isolated factor that causes the return of Brazil to the hunger map, but the increasing legislative changes and public policies adopted by the executive branch, generating a precariousness in the programs to fight hunger and in the mechanisms used by it to ensure food security.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the exposition, it is intended, therefore, to test the hypothesis originally established in this research. It is proposed, at first, that there is a correlation between the historical evolution of public policies to fight hunger and the increase in the number of food-insecure inhabitants in Brazil. From this, a comparison is established between the year of application of the public policy, as well as its continuity, and the measurement of hunger that takes place afterward.

Comparing the data from 2004 with the 2009 collection, taking into account that Fome Zero was implemented in 2003, it can be seen that public policies aimed at the purchase of foodstuffs from family farms and subsequent distribution, play an essential role in increasing food security in the Brazilian population during the first comparative period, and that the reduction of hunger is more present in the Northeast region.

Correlating the changes that occur in Fome Zero from 2009, such as the expansion of the distribution of food in schools through the PNAE, with the perceptible changes in the data for the 2013 collection, it can be seen that the amount of population living with food security increases, reaching the highest levels ever, demonstrating the effectiveness of public policies to combat hunger in achieving the proposed objectives.

Even taking into account that policies related to the eradication of poverty and hunger have their planning and execution dependent on the ideological component of the governance in place, this research does not analyze changes related to the budget allocated by public authorities, but essential changes that impact the way these policies are developed and implemented.

About the data from the 2017-2018 POF, it can be seen that what causes a considerable increase in hunger throughout the national territory, when compared to the 2013 collection, are not failures in public policies, but rather changes of a legislative nature that directly impact the diet of a portion of the population, both in a quantitative and qualitative aspect.

It can be seen, therefore, that the difference observed between the years 2013 and the biennium 2017-2018 is not directly due to problems linked to policies to combat hunger, but to indirect factors that influence the availability and nutritional character of the food consumed.

The hunger levels that are verified through the FAO and the Brazilian Research Network on Food and Nutritional Security and Sovereignty - PENSSAN surveys for the years 2019-2021 and 2022, respectively, are consequences of the immutability of the factors that cause the increase in food insecurity in 2017-2018 and the supervenience of modifications in public policies to fight hunger, such as the extinction of CONSEA, the application of emergency basic income policies in an insufficient way to contain the economic crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the poor implementation of PNAE by local governments.

Given the above, the research hypothesis proves to be partially true, since the evolution of public policies during the first decade of the 21st century (2004-2013) goes simultaneously as the increase in food security throughout the country, thus demonstrating a denial of what is established at the threshold of this study.

However, during the second decade (2013-2022), it can be seen that essential changes in the way public policies are developed, such as the extinction of CONSEA, cause an exponential increase in the number of food-insecure populations. It is also verified that this growth does not start due to changes in policies, but due to changes in labor legislation that impact the right to food.

Thus, the partial veracity of the research hypothesis is because, even though there is an increase in the food-insecure Brazilian population as public policies evolve historically, this growth does not derive solely from them, but is part of political-legislative modifications that, only afterward, are accentuated by the precariousness in the elaboration and application of public policies to fight hunger.

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