

Main Public Policies on Food and Nutrition in Brazil: from Getúlio Vargas to 2024

Principais Políticas Públicas de Alimentação e Nutrição no Brasil: De Getúlio Vargas até 2024

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RESUMO

Ao longo das décadas foram implementadas várias políticas públicas de alimentação e nutrição numa tentativa de melhorar a situação da fome no país, porém, sem muito sucesso, já que segundo o relatório da Organização das Nações Unidas para a Alimentação e a Agricultura, em 2023 ainda existiam 21 milhões de brasileiros em situação de insegurança alimentar no país. Com isso, o objetivo deste estudo é fazer um mapeamento das principais políticas públicas de alimentação e nutrição no Brasil, desde 1930 até 2024. Para a realização deste estudo foi feito uma revisão narrativa longitudinal da literatura, com abordagem qualitativa. O que se pode concluir é que as políticas públicas de alimentação e nutrição, são marcadas por descontinuidades, não cobrem a todos e tem grande influencia do governo que está no poder no momento em que aquela política está sendo executada, tornando-as mais vulneráveis.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Fome; Segurança Alimentar; Políticas Públicas de Alimentação.

ABSTRACT

Over the decades, several public food and nutrition policies have been implemented in an attempt to improve the hunger situation in the country, however, without much success, since according to the report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in 2023 there were still 21 million Brazilians in a situation of food insecurity in the country. Therefore, the objective of this study is to map the main public food and nutrition policies in Brazil, from 1930 to 2024. To carry out this study, a longitudinal narrative review of the literature was carried out, with a qualitative approach. What can be concluded is that public food and nutrition policies are marked by discontinuities, do not cover everyone and are greatly influenced by the government in power at the time the policy is being implemented, making them more vulnerable.

DESCRIPTORS: Hunger; Food Security; Public Food Policies.

RESUMEN

A lo largo de décadas, se implementaron varias políticas públicas de alimentación y nutrición en un intento de mejorar la situación del hambre en el país, sin embargo, sin mucho éxito, ya que según el informe de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura, en 2023 todavía había 21 millones de brasileños en situación de inseguridad alimentaria en el país. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este estudio es mapear las principales políticas públicas de alimentación y nutrición en Brasil, de 1930 a 2024. Para realizar este estudio, se realizó una revisión narrativa longitudinal de la literatura, con enfoque cualitativo. Lo que se puede concluir es que las políticas públicas de alimentación y nutrición están marcadas por discontinuidades, no cubren a todos y tienen gran influencia del gobierno que está en el poder en el momento de implementarse, lo que las hace más vulnerables.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Hambre; Seguridad Alimentaria; Políticas Públicas de Alimentación.

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INTRODUCTION

Hunger in Brazil is an age-old problem that continues to this day. As recently as 2023, Brazil had 21 million people who were food insecure⁽¹⁾. In Brazil, the doctor Josué de Castro was one of the pioneers in researching hunger in the country and its consequences for workers' lives. Josué de Castro's research gave visibility to food and nutrition in the country. Then, in 1938, during the government of President Getúlio Vargas, the minimum wage law and the so-called minimum essential ration were regulated⁽²⁾.

Over the decades, various public food and nutrition policies (PPAN) have been implemented to try to combat hunger, in addition to the creation of laws to guarantee Food and Nutrition Security (SAN) in the country, such as the Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security (LOSAN). However, it is possible to observe through surveys and analysis that there are flaws in the implementation of these laws and public policies.

The inclusion of the issue of FNS on the Brazilian government's agenda, although it has achieved a number of victories over the years, has had a number of problems, such as restrictions on resources and low coverage due to the size of the country. As a result, the fight against hunger has been marked by advances, but also setbacks and discontinuities, depending on the agenda of the government that was in power at the time, causing a scenario of fragility in the fight against hunger in the country⁽³⁾.

In Brazil, the right to food is provided for in Article 6 of the 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, through Constitutional Amendment 64,

which included food among the social rights of Brazilian citizens. The state is therefore obliged to promote and protect adequate food for all Brazilians.

Thus, the aim of this study is to analyze the HIPs in Brazil, from the era of President Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s to the year 2024, their impacts, setbacks and advances. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to an understanding of the current scenario of hunger in the country, and potentially lead to ways and strategies to combat it.

METHOD

This study is a longitudinal, retrospective narrative review of the literature, which adopted a qualitative approach to analyze HNLP in Brazil, from the era of President Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s to 2024. Google Scholar and databases such as the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) were used as search engines. The search also extended to relevant government databases, such as gov.br, to obtain official documents and policy reports.

Government reports, legislation, academic articles and policy evaluation reports related to HNLP in Brazil were included for data collection. The selection of studies was based on the relevance and pertinence of the documents in relation to the objective of analyzing public food and nutrition policies in Brazil.

RESULTS

As well as depending on the government's agenda, HNAPs are directly influenced by the government in power at the time the policy is being implemented or planned. It also depends on other factors, such as the managerial and

hierarchical structure of the institutions involved in the implementation and monitoring process, which is essential for detecting whether the program has had the desired impact⁽⁴⁾.

It is also extremely important for these public policies to be complied with, and for there to be permanent dialogue with civil society, for whom these public policies are created, both for their development and for monitoring after their implementation⁽⁴⁾. In an attempt to solve the problem of food and nutritional insecurity in Brazil, in the 1930s, the minimum wage was regulated in Brazil, during the government of then president Getúlio Vargas, through Decree Law No. 399, April 30, 1938.

The minimum wage was created with the aim of guaranteeing workers a minimum standard of living, capable of ensuring their basic needs. In the 1988 constitution, during the country's re-democratization, the minimum wage was defined with the aim of covering all workers' needs. It was unified throughout the country in order to combat unequal wages between regions, as well as having the obligation to be adjusted annually in line with inflation, in order to maintain workers' purchasing power⁽⁵⁾. However, despite the minimum wage having this aim, it is unable to cover workers' basic needs, including food, due to inflation and the cost of living. With a compromised income, it is not possible to guarantee food and nutritional security for individuals.

SAPS:

After the minimum wage was regulated, the Social Security Food Service (SAPS) was created in the 1940s, under the Getúlio Vargas government. The SAPS was a "popular restaurant" set up

to serve workers who were linked to the social security system. Its purpose was to provide adequate food at a popular price to keep workers healthy, combat hunger and malnutrition among the working class and increase productivity. SAPS had as many as 42 restaurants spread across various cities in the country and operated for 27 years until it was abolished in 1967 by the military government, which in turn claimed that SAPS was used to host meetings of trade unionists who were against the government of the time ⁽⁶⁾.

PNAE:

Another important PPA was the National School Feeding Program - PNAE, which was created in 1955 and is still in force today. The PNAE is the most important school food and nutrition program in Brazil. It is a federal program that works by transferring federal financial resources to states and municipalities to contribute to school meals for students in each state and municipality. The PNAE covers all stages and modalities of basic education in the municipal, district, state and federal networks and in the entities qualified as philanthropic or maintained by them, in the confessional schools maintained by non-profit entities and in the community schools agreed with the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities.

Today, the PNAE serves more than 40 million students throughout Brazil, and its existence is fundamental to guaranteeing school meals ⁽⁷⁾. The PNAE also plays a social role in the country, since Article 14 of Law No. 11.947/2009 establishes that at least 30% of the value of federal PNAE funds passed on by the FNDE must be invested in the direct purchase of family farming products, a measure that stimulates the economic and sustainable development of communities ⁽⁷⁾.

PAT:

Another very important program, which is still in force today, is the Work-

ers' Food Program - PAT. The PAT was created in 1976, instituted by Law No. 6.321, of April 14, 1976, and is currently regulated by Decree No. 11.678/2023. The aim of the PAT is to encourage companies to provide food to workers, especially those on low incomes, with the aim of combating malnutrition and hunger in order to improve health conditions, but also to increase productivity. The cost of the PAT is shared between the company, the worker and the government. However, the management of the PAT is shared between the Ministry of Labor and Employment, the Special Secretariat of the Federal Revenue of Brazil of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health. The company that joins PAT receives tax incentives, such as income tax deductions, and in return must provide workers with meals, food cards and/or even basic food baskets. The program currently serves more than 21.5 million Brazilian workers, approximately 86% of whom earn up to 5 minimum wages, and is essential for feeding many workers ⁽⁸⁾.

Food allowance:

The Bolsa Alimentação program was a federal cash transfer program created in 2001. The program was aimed at low-income children under the age of 6 and pregnant women and was an attempt to provide financial assistance to families living in extreme poverty by helping to feed them. In addition to the food allowance, there were also two other important social programs, Vale Gás, run by the Ministry of Mines and Energy, and Bolsa Escola, run by the Ministry of Education - MEC ⁽³⁾.

According to Silva ⁽³⁾ the existence of different criteria for eligibility, separate databases for beneficiaries and varying implementation methods for each of these programs, including Bolsa Alimentação, have prevented more efficient coordination between them and other initiatives underway to reduce poverty and guarantee food security in the country.

Then, in 2003, some of the existing

social programs were unified, such as Bolsa Escola, Bolsa Alimentação, Auxílio Gás and Cartão Alimentação to create Bolsa Família.

Zero Hunger and Bolsa Família:

Among the most important food and nutrition programs in Brazil in the 21st century are the Zero Hunger program and the Bolsa Família program, both launched in 2003 by the federal government ⁽⁹⁾. The zero hunger program is a cross-cutting program with various measures and actions to combat hunger and poverty in the country. The aim was not only to combat hunger, but also the structural causes of hunger and to bring a sense of citizenship to Brazilians. The implementation of Fome Zero was accompanied by the creation of the Food Card Program and the Food Acquisition Program - PAA, the One Million Cisterns Program, among other initiatives to promote food security. The National Council for Food and Nutritional Security - CONSEA, was recreated as an immediate advisory body to the Presidency of the Republic, and a broad process of popular mobilization around the issue emerged.

The Bolsa Família program was part of the Zero Hunger program, and is the largest income transfer program in Brazil. The main axis of the program is the transfer of funds to families who are in a situation of poverty or extreme poverty. Over the years, the program has undergone some changes, and was even extinguished in 2021 and gave way to Brazil Aid, which was also an income transfer program, however, in 2023, with the inauguration of President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the program was activated again.

Brazil Aid:

Auxílio Brasil was presented as a reformulation of the Bolsa Família program. Auxílio Brasil brought some changes in relation to Bolsa Família, such as an increase in the average value of the benefits and the inclusion of new

categories of beneficiaries. However, Auxílio Brasil only lasted two years and was abolished in 2023 with the return of the Bolsa Família program.

Resumption of Bolsa Família:

The Bolsa Família Program was resumed in 2023, and in its relaunch, the Early Childhood Benefit was created, with the payment of an additional R\$150 per child between the ages of zero and six - 8.98 million children already covered in March ⁽⁹⁾. Also according to the Ministry of Social Development ⁽⁹⁾ The program was restructured with a per capita amount paid to each person in the family: R\$ 142; Each family receives at least R\$ 600; Depending on the family composition, it may be necessary to pass on the Complementary Benefit so that the household reaches the minimum amount of R\$ 600; Early Childhood Benefit (zero to six years): R\$150 per child; Family Variable Benefit: R\$50 for pregnant women, children and adolescents (seven to 18 years old); Nutriz Family Variable Benefit: R\$50 for families with children up to six months old; Extraordinary Transition Benefit: for specific cases, ensuring that no one receives less than they did in the previous program.

The Protection Rule, also introduced in June 2023, guarantees that even if a family gets a job and improves their income, they can remain in the program for up to two years, as long as each member earns the equivalent of half the minimum wage. The aim is to ensure greater financial stability and encourage employment and entrepreneurship. If the family loses its income after two years or has asked to leave the program, it has a guaranteed right to return. The benefit is paid again immediately ⁽⁹⁾.

DISCUSSION

Brazil has several public food and nutrition policies. The country's first public food and nutrition policy is almost a century old, but the country still

faces significant challenges in eradicating hunger. In 2022, the FAO released a report indicating that approximately 15 million Brazilians faced food insecurity. At the same time, the PENSSAN Network reported that around 33 million Brazilians were severely food insecure in the same period. Despite the discrepancies in the figures, both reports clearly show that the country is still facing this serious public health issue.

Of the various articles, documents and reports analyzed in this research, most show that the core of the problem seems to be social inequality. According to ⁽¹⁰⁾Brazil is historically marked by a development model that generates deep social inequalities, social exclusion and poverty, which leads to violations of human rights, including the right to food. As a historical construct, according to Silva ⁽³⁾poverty and hunger are related to the social inequalities that characterize the country, the unequal distribution of income and opportunities for social inclusion, generating problems such as unemployment and hunger.

Therefore, it can be understood that public food and nutrition policies were created to try to solve, or at least reduce, the problem of hunger, but apparently they don't solve its causes, which seem to be structural, with deep historical roots.

Public policies can also be classified according to the degree of intervention, and can be structural or compensatory/emergency. Structural policies seek to intervene in the entire chain that generated the problem, i.e. they are intended to intervene in the social determinants, which is why they tend to take longer and require more resources in most cases. Emergency public policies, on the other hand, try to alleviate the problem as quickly as possible and intervene in the determining factors.

It seems that the country's HNAPs are more of a compensatory or emergency nature than structural public policies, i.e. they are trying to alleviate a problem rather than solve it. Often, they seem to be more focused on providing assistance

and/or patronage than on solving problems. Therefore, it can be concluded that, ideally, when solving or trying to alleviate hunger, both types of public policy should be in place: emergency, which is palliative, to try to solve or alleviate the problem quickly, and structural, to solve the problem definitively.

Hunger has always been a problem that has haunted Brazil, even with various public food and nutrition policies in place. However, according to the FAO, Brazil had managed to get off the hunger map in 2014, but unfortunately Brazil's exit from the hunger map didn't last long. After political instability in the country, an economic crisis and even an impeachment process, Brazil was once again on the Hunger Map.

It is strongly believed that the dismantling of public food and nutrition policies in the country over the last decade has helped to weaken the hunger scenario in the country.

One example, according to Castro ⁽¹¹⁾was Technical Assistance and Rural Extension - ATER. ATER plays a crucial role in improving production, processing and sales methods in the rural environment. Through this service, the challenges faced by farmers are identified and strategies are suggested to improve their businesses, ensuring that they can continue to work in the field and carry out their agricultural activities successfully. According to data from the Transparency Portal, there has been a reduction in budget resources since 2016, when R\$280 million was invested, well below the previous year's figure of R\$631 million ⁽¹²⁾.

Possibly, this affected farmers who depended on and needed ATER services and were unable to pay for them, which had an impact on the production and marketing of foodstuffs. Then, only in 2023, with a new government in power, which then seemed to have a greater eye for the country's social causes, did the ATER budget grow again, to R\$195.24 million in 2023 and R\$246 million in 2024.

It is therefore clear that the issue of food insecurity and hunger is a complex one, so the solutions are also complex. Various programs, laws, councils, the union of civil society and government, research and, above all, structural public policies are needed to intervene in the social determinants that cause the problem of hunger.

When we take a critical and historical look at hunger and public food and nutrition policies in Brazil, it seems that the most efficient public policy to date has been the Zero Hunger Program, because it had several sub-programs that fought hunger on several fronts, such as the PAA, Bolsa Família, popular restaurants and the 1 million cisterns program. In addition, the program tried to bring

the notion of citizenship to Brazilians and tried to break with the structural causes of hunger, as well as covering a wide audience, from small farmers to those living in large cities.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the country's main public food policies over the years, one can clearly see the size of the problem and the need for further expansion of all the programs that are in place, in addition to breaking down the social structure that leads to this whole cycle of poverty and inequality.

Hunger is a serious and complex problem and has several structural bases, so it can't and shouldn't be combated

only with income transfer programs, but rather on several different fronts. Therefore, given the scenario that the Brazilian population finds itself in, there is a great need for emergency measures so that the country can get out of this situation.

The dismantling of public policies, such as the extinction of CONSEA in

2019 and resumed in 2023, seems to have leveraged the food insecurity situation in Brazil, along with budget cuts and the lack of attention to the zero hunger program. The expansion of public food and nutrition policies, both emergency, to combat the situation urgently, and structural measures, to tackle the root of the problem.

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