



Speaker Summary Note

Session: Latin America and the Caribbean

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Title: Perspectives from Brazil:
Rethinking how we each do business

In the last decade, Brazil has pioneered important efforts to redefine policies that relate agriculture, health and nutrition, rethinking the constraints that lead to hunger and malnutrition, while also facing the challenges represented by the demographic, epidemiologic and nutritional transitions and the local, national and global scenarios of the food chain and its economy.

Malnutrition, although not totally eliminated, because higher risks are still associated to socially vulnerable groups, as indigenous, afro-descendant and low income populations, has been drastically reduced. On the other hand, the Brazilian population is living longer and increasingly adopting unhealthy lifestyles, especially in relation to dietary habits, and, in consequence, overweight and obesity have become priority public health issues, as well as chronic non-communicable diseases are continuously rising and are placed among the main death and hospitalization causes in the country. Meanwhile, Brazilian economy grows stronger, population income has increased, bringing new consumers to the market (base of the pyramid) and, in the agriculture sector, homegrown agriculture, small farmers and large agribusiness enterprises coexist and often compete for land, labor force and other resources.

In Brazil, the major linkages between agriculture and health and nutrition have been through an intersectoral approach to social and economic policies, centered on food and nutrition security, on the Constitutional right to food and on the territorial organization of local actions, so food production, distribution, consumption and nutrient intake are all connected.

Since 2003, the Hunger Zero Program has symbolized this governmental priority on food and nutrition security, that, although, had already been stated years earlier, in the National Food and Nutrition Policy (1999), which reinforces these policies through its directives: guaranteeing access to food, promoting promote healthy diets and implementing food and nutrition surveillance from the local to the national level.

Some of the most important food and nutrition security policies include improving coverage and quality of primary health care (through Family Health Teams), redistributing income (especially through cash transfer programs, as the *Bolsa Familia* Program, which allies the access to food to basic social rights as health and education), stimulation of local agriculture (mostly through homegrown production) and the

school meal program (which covers over 45 million students and much purchase at least 30% of its food products from local producers).

From the health sector perspective, reinforcement of primary health care and food and nutrition actions have also played important roles in redefining health policies, improving access to health and nutrition care and articulating social policies in the local level. The territorial approach by primary health care has also allowed articulations with the *Bolsa Familia* Program, schools and social equipments, contributing to approximate the local food and nutrition security strategies to local food production.

Food and nutrition surveillance is also focused on this territorial and food and nutrition security approach, by providing information for policy and decision-makers through surveys, studies and health information systems, including the Food and Nutrition Surveillance System (Sisvan), fed directly at the local level, as an instrument for individual and collective surveillance for nutrition status and food consumption markers.

From the food and nutrition security intersectoral perspective, as was done within the National Food and Security Council (Consea), building monitoring and evaluation systems has also been a key element by gathering data sources from different sectors and organizations, helping to diagnose the situation of each of its dimensions (food production and availability, income and food expenditures, access to adequate food, health and education) and map links and perspectives for action.

National Expenditure Surveys have provided information for monitoring the fluctuations in food availability through time in Brazil, along with other relevant food consumption evaluations, which can guide agriculture and provision policies in order to promote healthier diets, by rethinking food supply, transportation and availability in order to facilitate healthy food choices for all the population, especially the most vulnerable groups.

In terms of key potentials and priorities for promoting health and nutrition through agriculture, the Brazilian experience has shown that production and demand must match at the local level, by respecting regional cultures, habits, climate and foods and the specific nutritional requirements of the populations and improving access to healthier foods (especially fruits and vegetables). Also, at the local, national and regional levels, agriculture, health and social policies must be articulated and strengthened in order to focus their efforts and multiply their outcomes, along with strong monitoring and evaluation systems which can subsidize all sectors and stakeholders in policy and decision-making.

Despite all achievements during the last decade, the main challenges in Brazil are still related to improving the articulation of food production, poverty, health and nutrition policies, for even more impacts on health and nutrition, especially in terms of infant mortality and malnutrition. The current governmental priority of eradicating poverty will certainly contribute to that, by setting a strong political environment for integrating local food production and poverty and infant mortality reduction policies and may as well help other countries in achieving their health and nutrition goals through articulated policies and improving the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in Latin America.