



World Food
Programme

Home-Grown School Feeding Project



BRAZIL

**A desk review of the National School Feeding Programme
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1. COUNTRY PROFILE

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America with its territory of 8.5 million square kilometres and a population of 186.4 million (2005 figures). It is currently the ninth largest economy in the world and is classified as an upper-middle income country; its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is US\$784.5 billion or US\$8,195 per capita (adjusted with purchasing power parity, UNDP 2006). Its demographic data shows that 30 percent of the population is below 15 years of age and thus Brazil is said to be a 'young' country (Montero 2005). While the country's agricultural products comprise the main source of export income, nearly 60 percent of the population work in the service sector and 80 percent of the population lives in urban areas. This indicates that Brazil has developed non-labour intensive, export-oriented agribusinesses; it is currently the largest producer of sugar, coffee and beef in the world and the second largest exporter of soy beans. It also owns the world's largest iron ore mine and it has been attracting international attention for its mass biofuel production.

Brazil's increasing national economic wealth and improved social welfare have not been distributed equally among its population. Brazilian society is known to be the most unequal one in the world; the top 10 percent of earners receive 47 percent of all national income while the bottom 40 percent of earners get less than 10 percent of the national income (The World Bank 2005). Approximately 35 percent of the population still lives on less than the minimum wage set by the federal government, which aimed to maintain the level of US\$100 per month (Rocha 2001). According to the latest Human Development Report, Brazil ranks 69th with a Human Development Index of 0.792, below countries like Bosnia Herzegovina, Cuba or Mexico. The report states that the inequality in the country is at the root of Brazil's social problems.

In Brazil, economic inequality is characterized by stark regional income disparities. Brazil is a federal republic consisting of 5,561 municipalities in 26 states and the Federal District. The states are classified into five regions: North, Northeast, Centre-west, Southeast and South. The tropical North and semi-arid Northeast are the poorest regions in the country and the Southeast and South are the richest. The Southeast generates 56 percent of the GDP while the North generates only 5 percent. On average, a person in the South earns BRL 12,167 (US\$6,463) annually and in the Southeast BRL 11,855 (US\$6,297); this drops to BRL 6,180 (US\$3,283) in the North and BRL 4,676 (US\$2,484) in the Northeast (IBGE 2004).

In 2002, the Brazilians elected Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) (who used to be a union leader in the Northeast) to be the first President of the Republic from the leftist Worker's Party. He won the election by manifesting a series of social programmes to combat poverty and promote equality in income distribution. The centrepiece of his social policy is Zero Hunger Project (Fome Zero), which started as Lula took office in January 2003. In the framework of this project, a family stipend programme called Bolsa Família was introduced, which developed social and educational programmes

introduced by the former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The Bolsa Família programme is currently considered one of the world's largest conditional cash transfer schemes and benefits more than 30 million poor people (i.e. about 16 percent of the national population). This programme gives BRL 15 (US\$7.97) per child monthly to families whose per capita income is less than BRL 120 (US\$63.74). A family whose per capita income is less than BRL 60 (US\$31.87) is provided an additional BRL 50 (US\$26.56) as the 'basic benefit'. With this cash transfer, children are expected to attend school, at least to complete primary level (primeiro grau, which is for those who are 7-15 years old). Lula created the Ministry of Social Development for the programme, which spent 14 percent of GDP in 2004 (The Economist 2005; Hall 2006).

1.1. Food Issues in Brazil

With the Zero Hunger Project, the Lula government has firmly placed the issue of food security (segurança alimentar) at the centre of its social policy. The root of the food security issue in Brazil dates back to the 1930s with the emergence of social nutritionists who worked to combat malnutrition in children, especially in rural areas in the Northeast. They sought food aid from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and put pressure on the federal government to establish national nutrition programmes. In the 1970s, some nutritionists started to disseminate 'alternative food' called "multimistura" in the North, which was later systematized in the Catholic Church network (Pastoral da Criança) and integrated into the policy of the Ministry of Health in the 1990s. While food aid phased out in 2003 in Brazil (WFP 2006), 20 percent of Brazilians are still said to consume less than the minimum daily caloric requirements (i.e. about 2,100 kcal) due to lack of income or resources to produce food (Cohen 2006). As a result, multimistura is still widely provided to children by local pastoral communities, especially in the interior of the poor North and Northeast regions (Viseu et al. 2005).

The school feeding programme in Brazil has been placed in the framework of food security policy and aims to reduce the number of malnourished children and improve the school enrolment rate. In recent years, the need to provide healthy, good quality food for children in Brazil began to be debated because nearly 40 percent of the population is overweight and 5 percent is obese (FAO 2005). In the richer South and Southeast regions, many municipalities have expressed interest in school meals as a means to improve the population's eating habits (MEC/INEP 2007).

The Zero Hunger Project has expressed concern for the conditions of malnourishment and overweight that coexist in Brazil in terms of 'human rights'. Under its Food Security and Nutrition Programme (Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional, or SAN), food of good quality and sufficient quantity is considered to be a human right that should be protected by the government (Braga 2004; Valente 2007). SAN has coined this as the promotion of 'food sovereignty'. In this political

environment, two concepts have emerged: that of 'food culture' (cultura alimentar) and of providing local food as part of the development of family agriculture. The concept of localized food security has been integrated into the National School Feeding Programme (Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar, or PNAE), which was decentralized in the mid-1990s (Braga 2004).

Currently, PNAE is administered by the National Fund for Educational Development (Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação, or FNDE). FNDE provided BRL 1.5 billion (about US\$797 million) in 2006, which was the largest amount used for school feeding in Brazil. The financial resources are transferred to all the municipalities across Brazil and the programme currently includes nearly 37 million students in the country's public schools that are registered in the Ministry of Education's school census.

1.2. Educational System in Brazil

In principle, PNAE includes public crèches and preschools (for those from 4 months to 6 years old) and primary schools (primero grau for those from 7 to 14 years old). The programme also includes a small percentage of philanthropic schools subsidized by the federal government and all the schools in the indigenous people's reserves and quilombos (settlements built by descendants of former slaves). Currently, the general coordinator of PNAE at FNDE is proposing to extend the programme to secondary schools (segundo grau for those from 15 to 18 years old) (Peixinho 2007).

Brazil also has a large network of private schools that have approximately 10 million students in 36,800 schools (FENEP/FGV 2005). In the private school network, the children mostly go home to eat or buy snacks in hamburger chain stores installed in the school canteens. Although data on school feeding in private schools are not available because they do not participate in the official school census, one early study showed that 18 percent of the school children in private schools in Rio de Janeiro were obese while less than 1 percent of the children in public schools in the same area were overweight (Gross et al. 1990).

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME IN BRAZIL

2.1. Antecedents: Centralized School Feeding Programme

PNAE, popularly known as Merenda Escolar or Alimentação Escolar, has been implemented in Brazil since the 1950s. It started as a national school feeding campaign that operated in some schools in the states of Bahia, Espírito Santo (the Southeast), Pará (the North) and Pernambuco (the Northeast). In 1955, this campaign was integrated into the First National Food and Nutritional Programme (Programa Nacional de Alimentação e Nutrição, or PRONAN). In the 1960s, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF provided powdered milk and other nutrients to preschools in the drought-stricken Northeast. This initiative was integrated fully into the national social protection policy of the military government, which launched the renewed national school feeding campaign administered by the Ministry of Education and its regional secretariats. In 1976, the Second National Food and Nutritional Programme (II PRONAN) was launched by the National Institute of Food and Nutrition (Instituto Nacional de Alimentação e Nutrição, or INAN) of the Ministry of Health. The II PRONAN was a highly centralized programme; food and other school materials were stored in central warehouses at the federal and state levels and then shipped out to schools. Due to precarious distribution systems in the interior areas in particular, the food was often spoiled before it reached the schools. The school food menu only consisted of non-perishable food items called formulados, which are mixtures of cereals and flour, powdered milk and meat and vegetable extracts which can be made in a dish by adding water or milk (Vianna and Tereso 2000). In reality, many schools in the interior did not regularly receive food and thus the school attendance was low, especially in the North (MEC/INEP 2007; Schreiber 2007).

PRONAN was renamed the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) in 1979. The programme has been designed to provide food to public and philanthropic crèches, preschools and elementary schools and covers 15-30 percent of the students' nutritional intake for 180-200 school days (Sampaio and Campino 1991; Spinelli and Canesqui 2002). PNAE was initially administered by the Foundation for the Student Assistance (Fundação da Assistência ao Estudante, or FAE), created in 1981 as part of the Ministry of Education. Since 1983, FAE had tried to decentralize (in Brazil, this is often called 'municipalize') the school feeding operation, mainly in the Southeast. This decentralization effort dwindled in other parts of the country, especially in the North and Centre-west, because of poor institutional coordination among governmental agencies responsible for the operation. In 1988, when the new constitution was made into law, the decentralization effort was revived to distribute school materials, transport and food, while programme management and food procurement was centralized until 1993.

In 1994, a new law finally came into effect to determine municipal governments' roles in PNAE (Law 9.913, 12/07/94). This new law was an initiative of the National Council of State Secretaries of Education, municipal governments and town counsellors, who had become increasingly critical of the centralized school feeding operation administered by FAE and the Ministry of Education. They protested against the policies of FAE and pointed out that the food sent by FAE to schools was not of the best quality and did not respect the local students' habits and taste. Moreover, FAE did not allow local governments to make decisions about the menu, the procurement process for their school networks or their local commerce and agriculture. The decentralization and privatization policies pushed forward by the Cardoso government, which was installed in 1995, responded to these claims.

2.2. Decentralization and Home-Grown School Feeding

The 1994 law obliges each municipality or state government to create a School Feeding Committee (Conselho de Alimentação Escolar, or CAE), which mainly functions as the fiscal body for PNAE at the local level. A CAE usually consists of one executive representative (from the municipal or state Secretariat of Education), one legislative representative (from the municipal council), two representatives of teachers, two representatives of parents (usually elected members of the Parents and Teachers Association) and one representative of a related segment of civil society, such as the Rural Workers' Syndicates, producers' associations or NGOs that support these producers. The members need to be re-elected every two years. By 1996, 3,257 municipalities across Brazil, principally state capitals and cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants, participated in CAE institutions and this 'municipalization' process (Spinelli and Canesqui 2002).

In 1997, the Cardoso government replaced FAE with the National Fund for Development of Education (FNDE) to be responsible for the disbursement of financial resources for school meals in each municipality. In 1998, the financial transfer from FNDE to local governments became automatic (BRL 0.13, US\$0.07 daily per student), reducing paperwork and facilitating local governments to arrange their own food procurement. In 2001, the transfer became a regular arrangement of ten instalments per year and each payment was expected to cover food for 20 school days (Provisional Law 2178, 28/06/2001). With this, local governments were obliged to spend 70 percent of the transferred money on basic foodstuff, preferably acquired from local producers in order to simultaneously enhance local economic development. In 2003, as the Zero Hunger Project started, the budget was raised to BRL 0.15 (US\$0.08) daily per student for municipal or state-run crèches, preschools, primary schools and philanthropic schools (mostly subsidized by the federal government) and BRL 0.22 (US\$0.12) for schools in indigenous people's reserves and quilombos. In 2006, this budget was raised to BRL 0.18 (US\$0.09) per student for public schools and BRL 0.35 (US\$0.18) per student for indigenous and quilombo schools.

Currently, in order to participate in PNAE, the state, Federal District, or municipal government must:

- apply for financial resources from FNDE, exclusively for school food;
- create a CAE to conduct the fiscal inspection, make a statement of account for every transfer and send a yearly statement every January;
- follow FNDE's instructions and rules to use the resources.

For example, FNDE suggests that the responsible government needs to involve at least one qualified nutritionist to guarantee the level of nutrition in each school meal when it creates the menu. It also regularly inspects the performance of the CAE in order to prevent irregularities in food procurement processes at the local level. If the CAE does not issue an account statement on time, FNDE can exercise the authority to stop the disbursement of the financial resources and, consequently, school lunches cannot be provided. FNDE and the Federal Account Tribunal (Tribunal de Contas da União, or TCU) started to provide manuals to all the municipalities in 2004 to prevent this from happening (TCU 2004). Even so, in 2007 about 1,000 municipalities did not send the account statements and properly constitute CAEs (Peixinho 2007).

While CAEs often do not function as expected (Pipitone et al. 2003) and may engage in 'usual favouritism', selecting private companies in the food tendering process that are related to local politicians and influential persons, CAEs are significant participatory mechanisms that involve representatives of different segments of the local community. According to FNDE, CAEs are expected to represent 'local reality' by developing menus and procuring food with respect for local eating habits or preferences for basic and fresh products (FNDE, Alimentação Escolar 2007). This links PNAE to regional agricultural activities that are partly supported by the Food Security and Nutrition Programme (SAN) of the Zero Hunger Project, which promotes programmes that support small-scale farmers. For example, the Programme of Food Acquisition (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos, or PAA), although still in the pilot phase, has promoted the direct purchase (*compra direta*) of vegetables from beneficiaries of rural credit programmes in agrarian reform settlement projects in six municipalities in the South and Southeast since 2003. The National Corporation of Provision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Provision acts as an intermediary in this process through agreements with state and municipal governments to donate these farmers' vegetables to local schools (CONAB 2007). As a result of the municipalization of PNAE, community participants have crafted food provision procedures that involve both governmental and non-governmental institutions.

3. PROCUREMENT MECHANISMS, FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES: THE CASES

In a decentralized PNAE, regions and locales throughout Brazil have different patterns of local participation, networks, procurement mechanisms, financial arrangements and governance structures. Brazil is a federal republic consisting of states that maintain a certain degree of autonomy in deciding these matters. Moreover, all the municipalities in Brazil have the same rights and obligations in national policies, whether it is São Paulo with a population of over 15 million or a small interior municipality of the North with 8,000 inhabitants. Therefore, outcomes of the same 'municipalization' policy can vary significantly from one municipality to another. While FNDE or the Zero Hunger Project emphasizes the importance of universality in school feeding as a part of food security and human rights (MDS 2007), PNAE needs to be reviewed in different locations to identify the necessary conditions for the best practices in home-grown school feeding.

The institutional arrangements for operating PNAE at a local level can be classified into five types:

1. municipality-oriented: the municipal government represents the executive power of the school feeding programme and passes its decisions to municipal and state schools in the municipal territory;
2. state-oriented: the State Secretariat of Education represents the executive power and passes its decisions to state and municipal schools in the state territory;
3. school-oriented: each school receives and manages its own portion of the budget;
4. a mixture: some of these management arrangements coexist in a municipality (Pipitone 2003);
5. private companies: local governments commission private companies to carry out the school feeding operation (MEC/INEP 2007).

Eighty percent of the municipalities use the municipality-oriented school feeding approach, though most of them have experienced several different modalities. Most of the municipal governments administer the public tendering (following the regulation of Law 8.666/93) and the State Secretariats of Education (and sometimes the Secretariats of Agriculture) often help municipal governments with the tendering processes and financial arrangements. In general, the tendering process is closely linked to menu development, which aims to achieve nutrition intake (15-30percent or recommended daily intake) as directed by FNDE (FNDE 2007). The nutrition intake usually focuses on vitamins, proteins and iron, which are mostly contained in fresh vegetables, fruits and meat. Fresh perishable produce is sought from local farmers, while public tendering is mostly done for basic non-perishable foodstuffs such as rice, beans, flour, salt, sugar and oil. Some municipalities and schools, in particular in

the South, have created school or community gardens (horta comunitária) to produce basic vegetables on their own.



Map of Brazil and Location of the Cases

3.1. The Case of the Municipality of Campinas, the State of São Paulo

The State of São Paulo has been promoting the decentralized school feeding programme since 1984 and the municipal government of Campinas has been one of the most active municipalities in the state to improve the quality of food in its school network. The municipality has a population of one million and PNAE in the municipality currently includes more than 160,000 students across 518 public crèches, preschools and primary schools. The school feeding programme in Campinas is considered to be one of the most successful models in Brazil and it was given an “Efficient School Food Management Award” in 2004 by President Lula.

Between 1997 and 2002, the municipal government commissioned three private agro-industrial companies to administer school feeding, in line with the privatization policies promoted by the Cardoso government. At the end of 2002, the municipal government decided not to renew the contract with these companies and ‘re-politicized’ the school feeding programme with its CAE, a Nutrition Coordinator affiliated with the Municipal Secretary of Education and the state-run Supply Centre and Assistance Services (Central de Abastecimento e Serviços Auxiliares, or CEASA).

In general, CEASAs operate in metropolitan city areas in Brazil as principal wholesalers of fruit, vegetables, meat and non-perishable industrial foods. CEASA-Campinas is the fourth largest in Brazil with more than 1,000 registered wholesalers and producers. For the local producers in Campinas and the interior of the State of São Paulo, this CEASA is the major commercialization and storage centre (Vianna and Tereso 2000). In Campinas, CEASA is the central operator of the school feeding programme.

In 2001, CEASA launched the Food Security Programme, which was fully integrated into the Zero Hunger Project in 2003. In this programme, CEASA created the Food Bank (Banco de Alimentos) which buys directly from small-scale farmers in the State of São Paulo through CONAB and donates to the poorest part of the municipality's population. In the same programme, it also initiated a project called Prato Cheio, which provides 6,000 basic food baskets (cesta básica) and over 10,000 sacks of vegetables and fruits, donated by wholesalers, to the beneficiaries of Bolsa Família. In the framework of the Food Security Programme, CEASA created the Department of School Food, which organizes menu development, food procurement and tendering and storage and sends nutritionists and cooks (merendeiras) to schools when requested. In 2006, it established the Administrative Centre of School Food (Centro Administrativo da Merenda Escolar) with financial help from a wholesaler, De Marchi. Currently, the Department of School Food has ten nutritionists and thirty other administrators who constantly create menus based on what is available to procure during the year (Tasse and Birua 2007).

The financial arrangements for the programme have been made between the municipal government, the State Government of São Paulo and FNDE (Vianna and Tereso 1997). According to a CEASA nutritionist, the cost of the school food depends on each menu but on average costs BRL 0.50 (US\$0.27) daily per child. FNDE currently provides BRL 0.18 (US\$0.09) daily per student, the State Government provides BRL 0.22 (US\$0.12) from its tax revenue and the municipal government provides approximately BRL 0.34 (US\$0.18) per student for complementing the menu and covering other costs (e.g. providing necessary cooking equipment and sending approximately 600 cooks to the schools) (Tasse 2007).

This new CEASA-oriented school feeding programme has facilitated the use of fresh vegetables and fruits in school meals four days a week and in one snack on the fifth school day. Before this arrangement, the menu was 'industrial', including items such as sweet rice, porridge or pasta and soy juice. Many children did not approve of the quality of the food and some took their own food to school or went home to eat (Norder 2007). After the new arrangement was introduced by CEASA-Campinas, the new menu was approved by nearly 80 percent of the students; it consists of meat and salad or chicken stew and fresh juice which are sent directly by the wholesalers who have contracts with the municipal government for the year. The cooks are trained twice a year at CEASA to learn nutritional aspects of menus, sanitary matters

and culinary experiments. These menus are tested at each school and need to be approved by CAEs organized in five different regions in the municipal territory of Campinas (Tasse 2007).

CEASA-Campinas is the point of commercialization of fruits, vegetables and meat for the producers in the State of São Paulo (Vianna and Tereso 2000). Each year the contracts are renewed and all the local producers deal with the Association of Wholesalers of CEASA-Campinas. Therefore, CEASA-Campinas' active participation in the school feeding programme is crucial in order to maintain the quality of food. Its homepage (www.ceasacampinas.com.br) provides tools for producers, such as forms to register at the tender and guidelines for schools to develop menus.

3.2. The Case of the State of Pará and its Interior Municipalities

It has been noted that the North region of Brazil needs to improve its institutional coordination for the school feeding programme; many of its municipalities often lack basic infrastructure such as clean water, electricity, roads and storage (Pipitone 2003; Spinelli and Canesqui 2004, MEC/INEP 2007). Improvement is especially needed for small-sized municipalities in the interior that are covered with the Amazon rainforest and cut by river tributaries. Also, in these interior municipalities, nepotism and favouritism tend to prevail, as local politicians are often relatives of local commercial groups (as in the recent case of the municipality of Abaetetuba in the north of Pará, see CGU 2005).

Under such conditions, the State of Pará, through the State Secretariat of Education, has been promoting a 'regionalization' process for school food since 1997. Many municipalities have started to buy fruits, flour and beans from local rural producers' cooperatives and associations supported by the State Secretariat of Agriculture (SAGRI), the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Corporation (EMATER) and local NGOs and university programmes. In doing so, municipal governments and the State Secretariat of Education provide financial support, along with FNDE, by combining the school feeding programme with agricultural extension services and associated funds. It aims to benefit local rural producers' cooperatives and associations that have difficulty commercializing their products in the interior because of logistical problems and the lack of an immediate market. In the south of Pará, where settlement projects of agrarian reform have been implemented, the food 'imported' from southern Brazil is often cheaper than the local products because the road conditions are becoming better and an increasing number of cargo trucks reach the Amazon.

In order to support small-scale producers in Pará, SAGRI and its department of family agriculture recently announced a new project to give technical assistance to one of the state's largest family agro-extractivist cooperatives, which has 2,500 family farmers who mainly produce pineapple, passion fruit and acerola. This technical assistance aims to guide the cooperative, whose main client filed for bankruptcy in 2006, to commercialize its products. One of the commercialization destinations has been identified as the State

Secretariat of Education, which initiated a new selection process for providers of school food including juice pulp. Although the project has not yet been properly implemented, this kind of effort has been sought in many municipalities in Pará.

For example, in the municipality of Castanhal in the northeast of Pará, nearly 60 percent of ingredients for school meals are regional products provided by small-scale farmers and extraction workers' cooperatives. The regional products include açaí, cassava flour, tapioca flour and cupuaçu fruit. Vegetables such as lettuce and cabbage are produced at a collective farm (*horta coletiva*) that was implemented as a residential project in an urban periphery of the municipality. These regional products are easier for students and their parents to accept. The School Garden Project to produce lettuce, cabbage, onions and coentros started at the beginning of 2007 in the municipality (SEDUC 2007). The State Secretariat of Education tries to disseminate this type of regionalization of school food by promoting seminars for municipal governments and their CAEs to discuss possible menus and financial arrangements. In the case of Castanhal, the municipal government provides 40 percent of the overall cost (about BRL 0.11, US\$0.06 per student per day, BRL 30 million, US\$15.76 million in total) because the budget from FNDE is not enough to entirely regionalize the school meals (Coordenadoria de Merenda Escolar, Castanhal, 2007).

3.3. The Case of the Municipality of Fortaleza in the State of Ceará

The case of the municipality of Fortaleza between 1998 and 2000 shows the downside of the current school feeding programme. During this period, the state deputy of Ceará led an illegal tendering process by favouring a particular enterprise through which he obtained 30 percent of the contract money for buying school food. The entire embezzlement scheme involved the Municipal Secretary of Education and the former mayor of Fortaleza who was the state deputy's father-in-law. The case was revealed in the municipal council because the school food was not delivered as scheduled and the account statements were not issued. The counsellors reported the possible corruption case to FNDE and auditors of FNDE denounced the irregularity. Finally in 2003, the state deputy and the mayor were impeached (though not convicted; this caused a huge public outcry in 2005).

This corruption case shows the importance of having an independent monitoring system in the governance structure. In 2004, for example, the municipal government of Fortaleza was denounced by its CAE because it did not properly store the food for school meals and so FNDE auditors found it to be rotten. FNDE sent a group of sanitary inspectors and collected more than two tons of food that had passed their validation dates, such as pasta, rice, sugar cubes, soybeans, maize, oil, chocolate powder, cassava flour and biscuits. The food stocked in more than 50 schools also had passed validation dates. As a result, FNDE ordered the municipal government to pay back the money used to buy the food which had become unusable. This time, the CAE's independence from the municipal government was crucial in discovering the mismanagement of the food stock and FNDE was able to act as the inspection authority. In order to prevent irregular practices that can occur inside the government, each party involved in the school

feeding programme needs to act as a watchdog to guarantee the regular provision of good quality school meals.

4. CONCLUSIONS

For many Brazilian school children, the school meal is the main meal of the day. Decentralization of the school feeding programme has been important because it provides opportunities for local governments, schools, producers, enterprises, parents and students to participate in deciding what the children should eat. It also resonates with current international food aid policies that promote local agricultural development through school feeding programmes by linking education to food production and commercialization. At the same time, we need to pay attention to the development of local institutions and modalities in promoting home-grown school feeding programmes.

In Brazil, the food for schools is increasingly being procured from local sources such as local wholesalers, producers' cooperatives, or school and community gardens. Currently, municipal and state governments are mostly responsible for procurement. CAEs make decisions for the state, which had been done by private corporations in the 1990s in many municipalities. At the same time, the increasing involvement of agricultural extensionists and NGOs working with small-scale farmers in local school programmes has enabled local government-run school feeding programmes to accept more home-grown food. Yet, the institutional coordination for local sourcing has been precarious in many municipalities, especially in the North. For instance, in the State of Pará, logistics and basic infrastructure need to be improved for small farmers' cooperatives and associations which sometimes do not know how to participate in the government's tender process or how to properly package their products for storage.

For the Lula government (re-elected in 2006), PNAE continues to be of central importance in its social policy. Financial arrangements are fairly straightforward, as FNDE automatically transfers designated amounts of money to each municipality. In most cases, the municipal or state government also contributes to the budget. This is especially necessary when new local products are used in the school menus because the government needs to train cooks and nutritionists. Some municipal governments cannot afford these new materials and go back to the old ways of procuring industrial food from commissioned enterprises. Therefore, regionalization has the possibility of expanding regional disparities because of the 'menu-oriented' pricing of school meals.

In Brazil, parents do not normally contribute to the school feeding programme unless they are part of the Parent-Teacher Association and thus can be elected as a member of CAE every two years. However, as seen in the case of a municipality in Pará, parents can organize the collective farm to provide fresh vegetables to schools and also can take turns cooking, as was done in private rural schools. In the official framework of PNAE, parents mostly can work as pressure groups in checking menus or denouncing irregular practices by politicians, as seen in Fortaleza.

In conclusion, in order to further promote home-grown school feeding and benefit poor families and small-scale producers, Brazil needs to improve institutional coordination among rural agricultural extension services with the education, health and nutrition policies, especially in the poorer North and Northeast regions. The school feeding programme has great potential to function as a catalyst between agricultural and social policies. For this to be successful, political independence of all the involved parties must be guaranteed to make the monitoring process effective. Without effective monitoring and active political engagement of the involved actors, corruption can also become decentralized.

In addition, home-grown school feeding needs to recognize and support different types of local participation. Because each locale has different climate conditions, infrastructure, local history, political background, economic activities and taste for food, actors must be allowed to exercise their flexibility and creativity in using existing wholesale markets or producers' cooperatives. Further, PNAE is a method of public school feeding in Brazil that coexists with private school networks and Catholic Church activities that focus on social nutritional improvement as part of the catechist movement. In order to make an overall evaluation of the home-grown school feeding programme in Brazil, we may need more detailed case studies of different networks in each region.

Brazil was once a beneficiary of WFP's Food for Education programme. Now it is expected to share its experience with other, mainly Portuguese-speaking, countries such as Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique (WFP 2006), especially in promoting local participation and securing children's entitlement to sufficient quantity of good quality food in the framework of food security. As one CEASA official said, school food is "not an expense, but an investment", which should give the country sufficient returns in the future.

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