

# The Brazilian Recipe against hunger

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**By José Graziano da Silva**

Feeding 9 billion mouths by 2050, when humanity will have a contingent 35% larger than that of today is not something that can be left to improvise.

An ecumenical repertoire of initiatives in the international cooperation plan and of local policies will have to be triggered in a progressive and articulated manner in order to increase the world food offer by 70% until that date, according to what is advocated by the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO).

No segment of rural production can be discarded; no scale neglected, for food to arrive on the table of the hungry.

One of the requirements of this crossing is the increase of 60% in the present level of agricultural investment. This will not occur if the international aid for development does not recover its focus on agriculture, which at present, only receives 4% of resources, against 17% in the 80's. Furthermore, the equation will not close, without a strong partnership between public and private investments in the developing countries, where governments should take over the food security as a state policy.

Whatever are the prospective calculations, the density of this marathon is directly related to the capacity of articulating three dynamics: a) due to environmental reasons and the end of frontiers, the productivity – i.e. research, fomentation and rural extension – will have a preponderant part in the process; and will answer for 90% of the additional foreseen offer; b) Latin America and Africa, the two last geographies with space to interconnect the effort of productivity to the incorporation of new areas, should provide an additional 120 million hectares to this planetary joint effort; c) contrary to what happened in the Green Revolution, in the 50's, this time the battle of production can not subtract the intersections with three modes of “hunger” which were then ignored: the “hunger” for jobs; the “hunger” for social rights, especially in the rural frontiers and the “hunger” for environment balance. Furthermore, the production battle should not underestimate the inter occurrences of financial speculation above the food security of the nations.

There is no business model or institutional panacea able to assimilate all the demands incorporated in this enterprise which will define a part of the XXI century. It is in this sense that the Brazilian experience emerges as an encouraging reference. Far from an untouchable model, with a rural history intrinsically opposite to glamorization, Brazil was able to combine the pragmatic policies and therefore smooth paths and establish a reasonable complementarity between distinct levels of attendance of food security and the world market of *commodities*.

Brazil elected family farming as a protagonist as well as investing heavily in agricultural research. The “conservative modernization” implemented in the Brazilian agriculture in the 70's, 80's and 90's, as well as multiplying the production in a notable

manner, undertook in three decades, a rural/urban transition which most of the rich countries took a century to do so. An exodus of 30 million people harvested conflagrated metropolitan peripheries and social and regional inequalities very much stressed in the rural space.

Economy set its hard circumstances, but later strategic decisions showed that regardless of how hard the circumstances, there are always choices to be made. Brazil chose to invest heavily on agricultural research, in directed credit policies and, with more emphasis, beginning with the umbrella of action of the “Fome Zero” (Zero Hunger Program), since 2003, Brazil elected family farming as a relevant protagonist in combating hunger and extreme poverty.

Only a few countries have a shelter of food security these days as the Brazilian one, which looks out to the emergency of exclusion but is careful in taking care of its origin, strengthening the base of the income pyramid, elevating the minimum wages, as well as family farming, guaranteeing credit, technical assistance and a captive demand divided in two relevant fronts.

By law, 30% of the daily school meal program for 47 million children and teenagers should be bought from small producers. On the other end, the federal government’s Program of Food Acquisition invested R\$ 3, 5 billions in the past seven years in the purchase of 3, 1 million tons of food from 160 thousand farmers. In average, 14 million people are benefited from these products every year.

The counterpart of these policies is that since 2003, the poverty rate in the rural areas has fallen from 52% to 33%; three million people left extreme poverty conditions in the fields (28 million all over Brazil) and the average income of family farming increased by 33%, against the national average of 13%.

Not less lustrous were the agribusinesses results. Brazil will harvest this year the largest production of grains in its history (some 157, 4 million tons). Brazil is a leader in different markets and in the last decades, its agriculture registered the largest profit in the world, 3, 5% a year, and it is still growing. It is this diversified repertoire of advances and the scientific knowledge which gave it support, thanks to Embrapa’s (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation) technologies assimilated in large and small scale that the country wants to share with other nations, in the marathon to win the race against hunger in the coming years.

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