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**Implementing a
Decentralized
National Food and
Nutrition Security
System in Brazil**

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**CASE STUDY #9-10 OF THE PROGRAM:
“FOOD POLICY FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: THE ROLE OF
GOVERNMENT IN THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM”
2012**

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Executive Summary

Brazil entered the new millennium with a stabilized economy and a better-nourished population enjoying greater access to health care and education than in the past. Economic growth and a strong government commitment to decreasing poverty and inequality during the first decade of the 2000s made it possible for Brazil to anticipate achievement of the Millennium Development goal of reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015 (CONSEA 2009a, b), with a concomitant 25 percent decrease in the prevalence of hunger (IBGE 2010a). A major factor in these advances was the Zero Hunger strategy, composed of an integrated set of actions spanning 19 ministries and secretariats, with poverty alleviation serving as one key aspect of a much broader approach to promoting food and nutrition security.

Aiming to consolidate the gains of the past decade, the president of Brazil signed a presidential decree in August 2010 outlining directives for the development of a National Food and Nutrition Security Plan and other steps necessary to implement the National Food and Nutrition Security System, founded on decentralized policy implementation and decision making. More than two decades of social mobilization to fight hunger and a constitutional commitment to decentralized decision making, combined with the concerted effort on the part of government and civil society during the past decade, have laid the groundwork for a decentralized food and nutrition security system.

The federal government's intersectoral approach and close collaboration with the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), an advisory council with a direct institutional link to the executive branch and broad representation from civil society as well as key government sectors and programs, has proven to be a successful model at the federal level. The challenge now is to replicate this model at the state and local levels, define responsibilities of the three levels of government, and find the right balance of inducements and obligations.

The presidential decree charges an inter-ministerial governmental body with formulating the first National Food and Nutrition Security

Plan, followed by the promotion of state and municipal food and nutrition security plans. Although the federal government is committed to decentralized control and recognizes that too many rules and regulations can interfere with the flexibility needed to adapt to local political-institutional arrangements, it requires instruments to fulfill its mandate to implement the law and monitor actions at the local level. What directives and instruments would you recommend be included in the national plan to meet this challenge?

Background

National Advances and Regional Differences

Brazil is larger in area than the continental United States and equally varied in culture, topography, and natural resources, with a population of more than 190 million. Although a growing number of people reside in urban areas—84 percent according to the 2010 census (IBGE 2010b)—the majority of the more than five thousand municipalities are small and strongly influenced by rural dynamics.

Health and living conditions have improved significantly over the past 20 years for the general population, but considerable inequalities remain, exacerbated by regional differences. The south and southeastern regions, where the major financial and industrial centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are located, are more prosperous and enjoy better infrastructure. The north and northeast, which include the Amazon and the semi-arid region, are characterized by less-developed infrastructure and industry, a more dispersed population, fewer public services, and much higher rates of poverty, particularly in rural areas.

Overall poverty fell from 20 to 7 percent of the population in just five years, between 2004 and 2009 (measured according to the World Bank indicator of \$2.00 per capita per day).¹ More

¹ The Brazilian measure of poverty is closer to \$4.00 per person per day (half a minimum monthly salary

significantly, extreme poverty (\$1.25 per day) dropped from 10 to 4 percent of the population in the same period, as income for the lowest 10 percent of the population grew at four times the rate of that for the wealthiest decile (World Bank 2010). However, 2010 data reveal stark regional differences, with incidences of extreme poverty of 16.8 and 18.1 percent in the north and northeast, respectively, compared with 2.6 and 3.4 in the south and southeast (MDS 2011).

As would be expected, these socioeconomic advances were accompanied by significant changes in the nutritional profile of the population and a marked decrease in hunger and food insecurity. In recent decades Brazil, like many emerging economies, has experienced rapid declines in undernutrition and an increase in overweight, obesity, and associated chronic diseases, particularly among the poor, in a phenomenon known as the nutrition transition (Batista Filho and Rissin 2003; IBGE 2004; Mondini and Gimeno 2011).

This problematic association between anthropometric indicators of nutritional status and income level, both common proxy measures of hunger, reinforces the importance of a direct measure of the experience of hunger at the household level. A national survey included a Brazilian adaptation of the U.S. Household Food Security Measure developed by Segall-Correa et al. (2009), and the results showed a 25 percent decrease in hunger (severe food insecurity) from 2004 to 2009. Food insecurity among Brazilians living in extreme poverty fell by 50 percent. Although the most significant advances occurred in the poorer regions of the country, pronounced regional differences remain, with much higher rates of moderate and severe food insecurity in the north and northeast (18.6 and 22.2 percent, respectively) than in the south and southeast (5.0 and 7.3 percent, respectively) (IBGE 2010a).

Well-targeted social programs composing a broad intersectoral strategy have played a key role in decreasing hunger and promoting greater equality and upward mobility and have been allied with significant job creation and

per family member). According to the Brazilian census bureau, the poverty rate fell from 32.4 to 22.6 percent of families from 2000 to 2010 (IBGE 2010b).

higher real wages.² The main income transfer program implemented in 2003, the Bolsa Família (Family Grant) Program, currently provides modest cash benefits to 13 million low-income families—essentially all of those living in extreme poverty—on the condition that they keep their children in school, keep their children's vaccinations up to date, and make monthly visits to the public health clinic for child growth monitoring and health checkups. However, this high-profile program is only one government initiative among nearly 30 that compose the Zero Hunger strategy.

The Anti-Hunger Movement in Brazil and the Zero Hunger Strategy

Since the early 1990s, actions aimed at ending hunger in Brazil have been driven by networks of well-organized social movements allied with religious leaders and members of academic communities from diverse fields. These networks pushed food security onto the public policy agenda, and in 1993 the first National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) was formed. Although this CONSEA had a short political life, social movements and institutions continued to mobilize around the issue of hunger and food security, and when Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva assumed the presidency in 2003, he declared ending hunger to be his government's number-one priority.

An Extraordinary Ministry of Food and Nutrition Security was formed in 2003 to implement what became known as the Zero Hunger Strategy. One year later, however, aiming to improve integration of poverty and hunger alleviation policies and programs, the government merged this ministry with the Ministry of Social Assistance and the Executive Secretariat of the Interministerial Council of Bolsa Família. The resulting Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS) is currently composed of five national secretariats: Food and Nutrition Security; Social Assistance (responsible for overseeing the Unified Social Assistance System); Income for Citizenship (responsible for managing the Bolsa Família Program); Institutional Articulation for Productive Inclusion; and Evaluation and Information Management. The

² The real value of the official minimum wage increased 50 percent from 2003 to 2010.

creation of the latter—an internal evaluation unit to monitor program implementation and effectiveness, with status equal to that of the other secretariats—was an unprecedented innovation. Another successful innovation was the appointment of a special Zero Hunger adviser to the Minister of Social Development to oversee the integration of the ministry's food and nutrition security (FNS) actions with those being carried out by ministries and institutions outside the MDS.

Another of the president's first acts upon assuming office was to reestablish the CONSEA as an advisory council with a direct institutional link to the executive branch and broad representation from social movements, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, universities, and research institutions, together with representatives from key government sectors and programs. The president and two-thirds of the members of the CONSEA are representatives of civil society, and one-third is composed of government representatives. The CONSEA was integrally involved in planning and monitoring the Zero Hunger strategy and has been a proponent and overseer of policies and legal landmarks to promote and protect the human right to adequate food, which was incorporated into the Brazilian Constitution in 2009. It operates as an effective network of policy communities and a space for participatory democracy where diverse stakeholder perspectives and interests are debated. These debates result in propositions that are presented to the executive branch, which in turn demands a response from government officials, many of whom are also participating members of the CONSEA. Members gather regularly in Brasília for working group meetings and plenary sessions and are an essential source of feedback "from the field" for government decision makers regarding FNS policies and programs.

One of the most important challenges of the national CONSEA is to foster state and local participation in FNS policy through the promotion of state and municipal FNS advisory councils. Policy advisory councils are a familiar feature of the political landscape in Brazil, which has cultivated participatory democracy through such councils and often requires their existence as a condition for receiving federal funds in areas such as health, education, culture, and

social services. Municipal participation in the Bolsa Família Program (BFP) is conditional on the existence of a local advisory council to monitor its implementation, for example.

What distinguishes FNS policy from these others, however, is the degree to which it relies on policies and actions in a diversity of other sectors, requiring a high level of cooperation among autonomous departments, often with little history of collaboration. This was but one of the many challenges faced by national decision makers charged with the task of consolidating and institutionalizing the advances of the past eight years through the development of the recently launched National FNS Plan and construction of a National Food and Nutrition Security System.

The National Food and Nutrition Security System

The National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) was instituted in 2006 with the passage of the National Food and Nutrition Security Law of 2006 (Lei Orgânica de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional). The definition of food and nutrition security adopted in the law is as follows:

The realization of everyone's right to regular and permanent access to enough food of good quality without compromising access to other basic necessities, and based on food practices that promote health, respect cultural diversity, and are environmentally, culturally, economically, and socially sustainable.

The breadth of this definition is reflected in the Zero Hunger strategy, which includes poverty alleviation as part of a broader approach that spans everything from sustainable economic and agricultural practices to nutrition knowledge and food habits.

SISAN objectives, according to the law, include formulation and implementation of FNS policies and plans, stimulation of the integration of the efforts of government and civil society, and promotion, monitoring, and evaluation of FNS throughout the country. The presidential decree, signed in August 2010, stipulates that

this is to be accomplished through intersectoral policies and actions executed by the government as well as nongovernmental organizations through decentralized decision making and collaboration among the three levels of government. This decentralized approach involving pacts between the national, state, and municipal governments is a reflection of the federalist system, which was consolidated in the 1988 Constitution.

The law also defines the components of the SISAN and their respective responsibilities:

1. *The National FNS Conference.* Organized by the CONSEA every four years, the conference is responsible for defining directives and priorities for National FNS Policy. Participants are delegates from local and regional FNS councils, with broad representation from social movements and local organizations and institutions, governmental and nongovernmental.
2. *The CONSEA.* The CONSEA is responsible for presenting the proposals resulting from the National FNS Conference to the executive branch as well as monitoring the implementation of the FNS actions in collaboration with the other components of the SISAN. It is also responsible for establishing permanent mechanisms of communication with institutions and organizations engaged in FNS activities at the state and local level to promote dialogue and integration of FNS actions.
3. *The Interministerial FNS Chamber (Câmara Interministerial de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional, or CAISAN).* This government body, composed of representatives of 19 ministries and special secretariats whose actions interface with FNS policies, is responsible for formulating, implementing, and monitoring the National FNS Plan based on directives emanating from the CONSEA.
4. *Government institutions at the national, state, and municipal levels whose actions interface with FNS policies and programs.*
5. *Private nonprofit social assistance organizations and other nongovernmental*

organizations that are interested in being part of the system.

Guiding principles of the SISAN include universal access; preservation of people's autonomy and dignity; social participation in the formulation, execution, and monitoring of FNS plans and policies at all levels of government; and transparency.

Brazil's systemic approach to FNS policy, which acknowledges the interdependence and mutual relations among the multiple factors that affect FNS at different levels of society, follows a pattern set in other policy areas in that country. Many examples of decentralized government systems are already in place, including the Unified Health System and the Unified Social Assistance System. What distinguishes the SISAN from these important precedents is that it is not autonomous with respect to goals, institutional structure and resources, but rather depends on cooperation among associated systems, most of which have their own spaces for social participation (Maluf 2009). SISAN operates by organizing and monitoring actions in many governmental and nongovernmental sectors and integrating them into a FNS policy (Burlandy 2009). Thus, the SISAN outlines directives and proposes integrated actions based upon a complex dialogue involving participants from other systems, each with their own autonomous decision-making processes.

The "open" nature of this system (Maluf 2009; MDS 2008) makes it difficult to impose standards, establish clear lines of authority and funding, and form an integrated strategy out of the multiple parts. Whereas the MDS is responsible for many of the main FNS programs that make up the system, some key elements, such as the National School Meals Program, the Program to Strengthen Family Farming, and various programs specific to nutrition (monitoring, education, and nutritional supplementation), pertain to other ministries (Education, Agrarian Development, and Health, respectively). An overview of the policies and programs aimed at promoting food and nutrition security appears in Table 1.

Table 1: Programs and Actions Corresponding to Different Dimensions of Food Security

Program	Ministries responsible
<i>Dimensions 1 and 2: Food production and availability</i>	
National Program to Strengthen Family Farming	MDA
Family Farming Food Procurement Program (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos – PAA)	MDS/MAPA/MDA
Minimum price guarantee	MAPA
Produce and Livestock Market Modernization Program	MAPA
Agrarian reform	MDA
Agro-biodiversity Program	MMA
Fishing and aquaculture	MPA
<i>Dimension 3: Income/access and food expenditures</i>	
Bolsa Família income transfer program	MDS
Disability benefits	MDS
Social security benefits	Ministry of Social Security
Minimum wage policy	MTE
<i>Dimension 4: Access to adequate food</i>	
National School Meals Program (universally available in public schools)	Ministry of Education
Food for specific population groups (indigenous populations, homeless rural workers, and other vulnerable groups)	MDS / MAPA / Ministry of National Integration
Rainwater catchment cisterns	MDS
Very low-cost popular restaurants	MDS
Food banks	MDS
Community kitchens	MDS
Supplementary food program for workers	MTE
<i>Dimension 5: Health and access to health services</i>	
Vitamin A and iron supplementation	Ministry of Health
Promotion of healthy eating habits and lifestyle	Ministry of Health
Family Health Program	Ministry of Health
Child Immunization Program	Ministry of Health
Sanitation and water	Ministry of Health
<i>Dimension 6: Education</i>	
Literacy programs	Ministry of Education
Basic education policy	Ministry of Education
<i>Dimension 7: Traditional populations</i>	
Traditional communities	Ministry of Justice
Regularization of landownership of traditional communities	Ministry of Justice/MDA
Food security and sustainability in indigenous populations	MMA

Source: CONSEA 2010.

Note: MAPA = Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply; MDA = Ministry of Agrarian Development; MDS = Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger; MMA = Ministry of the Environment; MPA = Ministry of Fishing and Aquaculture; MTE = Ministry of Work and Employment.

Many of the programs listed in Table 1 have a well-defined, consolidated institutional structure. Others, however, depend on much more heterogeneous or intersectoral institutional arrangements. The BFP, for example, has a well defined and effective operational structure directed by the MDS but depends on the education and health sectors to monitor families' compliance with conditionalities for receiving the benefits.

One of the most innovative and complex programs is the Family Farming Food Procurement Program (PAA), which pays smallholder farmers a fair price for the food they produce, up to a given limit. The food is then donated to low-cost popular restaurants, nongovernmental social assistance organizations serving vulnerable populations, or the federal government's emergency food stocks. In 2009 the National School Meals Program adopted a policy of requiring public schools to allocate at least 30 percent of food expenditures to purchasing food directly from local family farmers. Thus, PAA is linked with other programs in other sectors, simultaneously supporting family farmers and local development and feeding populations at risk of hunger and food insecurity.

The PAA is under the jurisdiction of the MDS but is operated in partnership with the Ministry of Agrarian Development and the National Food Provisioning Company (Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento, or CONAB) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Representatives of these three ministries compose the Interministerial Managerial Committee of PAA, together with representatives from the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Planning and Budget, and the Ministry of Education. The program has various modalities of operation, which are often perceived locally as being different programs. The responsible sectors at the municipal level vary depending on the program modality, local institutional arrangements, and source of the initiative, typically involving the Departments of Agriculture, Social Assistance, or, more recently, Education. If more than one modality of the program is operating in a municipality under the responsibility of different departments, there are currently no structures in place to induce them to coordinate their efforts.

Food banks, community kitchens, and low-cost popular restaurants receive donations from the PAA and are also federally supported initiatives that compose the SISAN. Like the PAA, they depend on diverse local institutional arrangements for their operation, typically being operated by municipal governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),³ or even private companies.

Although the law stipulates an important role for NGOs in the SISAN, this presents both challenges and opportunities. The government has successfully partnered with national, regional, and local NGOs to strengthen and expand preexisting local FNS initiatives such as food banks, community kitchens, and popular restaurants, as well as the construction of rain-water catchment cisterns in the semi-arid northeast. However, the lack of an adequate legal framework for public funding of NGOs is a constraint to this partnership, and the diversity of partner organizations at the local level poses a dilemma for government control of the programs.

This flexible approach to decentralized program management has the advantage of respecting preexisting local processes, conforming to the diversity of local arrangements and initiatives arising from different sectors, and avoiding the imposition of a rigid institutional structure that may attribute responsibility to government officials who are less engaged in or committed to the issue. On the other hand, as alluded to earlier, such an approach poses a tremendous challenge with respect to program control and monitoring. Equally daunting is the difficulty of coordinating and integrating these initiatives and others at the local level to compose a FNS system.

A 2007 study conducted in 15 metropolitan areas in Brazil identified the following impediments to local management of FNS policy (MDS 2008):

³ In this text, the term "nongovernmental organization" is used to refer to national and regional organizations as well as smaller, local nonprofits (including churches) that provide social assistance and educational services.

- Programs were being implemented by different government sectors—or even the same sector—in a nonintegrated manner and with little relationship to the larger objective of food and nutrition security.
- Very few state and municipal governments had coordinating bodies to oversee the integration of FNS programs and policies.
- There was little correspondence between the planning of FNS policy and operational and budgetary processes.
- FNS actions were not being monitored and evaluated.
- Municipal governments were not investing in FNS actions and human resources (most of the resources invested in FNS are from federal sources).
- Municipal decision makers did not consider FNS policy a priority.
- Government decision makers and civil society lacked understanding and awareness of the theme of FNS.
- There were few municipal FNS advisory councils formed to participate in FNS policy making and help coordinate and monitor actions.
- There was little dialogue between the municipal and state levels on the issue of FNS policy.

The strategy to guarantee food and nutrition security in Brazil, the directives for implementation of the SISAN, and the challenges facing policy makers responsible for its implementation raise several policy issues.

Policy Issues

Defining the Best Operational Structure for an Open, Intersectoral FNS System

Implementing the SISAN will require an operational network built on the infrastructure and public services associated with existing FNS programs and actions in various sectors, including actions being carried out by nongovernmental partners. Laws applying to many of the individual programs that compose FNS policy specify

the responsible governmental departments at the local level, but no single department or sector is responsible for FNS policy as a whole. Who should be in charge of such an intersectoral policy? What is the best managerial arrangement? What are the mechanisms for coordinating the components of this open system? What structures should be promoted at the local level to get sectors with little or no history of collaboration to work together in an integrated manner?

Given that the SISAN has various centers of power in different sectors and levels of government, coordinating bodies capable of mobilizing the network and promoting the equitable distribution of resources play an essential role. One mechanism of coordination is the national CONSEA, which carries out this role through dialogue and negotiated agreements among representatives of government and civil society. Its effectiveness has yet to be replicated at the state and local levels, however, where the composition and institutional location of municipal FNS advisory councils often prevent them from playing an effective role in intersectoral policy formulation and implementation (Maluf 2008).

The other established coordinating body at the federal governmental level is the CAISAN, responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring the National FNS Plan based on directives emanating from the CONSEA. The operational structure within state and municipal governments, however, is poorly defined and currently depends on the diversity of local institutional arrangements described earlier. The sector that takes the lead in municipal and state FNS policy tends to determine the shape that policy will take—which dimensions will be prioritized and how they will be transformed into integrated, intersectoral actions. Local processes have been respected up to now, and as a consequence there is little standardization among states and municipalities.

To join the SISAN, states and municipalities must meet several conditions outlined in the 2010 decree. These conditions include the formation of intersectoral governmental bodies to coordinate FNS policy and FNS advisory councils modeled after the national CONSEA. Currently, all but three state governments have officially committed to joining the SISAN by

fulfilling the requirements within one year, including formation of intersectoral governmental bodies, and eight have already met conditions for immediate affiliation. Only a handful of cities have governmental coordinating bodies. While all states currently have FNS advisory councils, these vary considerably in their level of effectiveness, and a relatively small percentage of municipalities have formed such councils.

States and municipalities seeking to become part of the SISAN are required to develop a FNS plan within one year of signing the agreement. National FNS policy makers caution against following a standardized recipe for these plans, arguing that the building of decentralized FNS systems should be locally defined and negotiated based on local political, social, and institutional conditions (MDS 2008).

The theme of food security continues to perplex policy makers, however, particularly at the local level, and they often do not see how their own FNS-related actions fit into the bigger picture and relate to those being carried out in other sectors. Thus, instruments are needed to promote a shared conceptual framework that integrates the many dimensions of FNS and promotes intersectoral management of actions as diverse as buying food from family farmers, emergency food assistance, nutrition education, and income-generation activities.

State and municipal governments must be encouraged to strengthen their ties with non-governmental partners engaged in FNS activities and to support existing networks and initiatives to improve integration of activities within a given territory. However, the imposition of obligations by the government on nongovernmental partners poses a unique dilemma. Whereas some partners rely heavily on public resources to carry out their actions, presumably giving the government some leverage, many do not.

Defining the Roles of the Three Levels of Government

The challenges of an intersectoral approach are compounded by decentralized decision making, as well as the open nature of the FNS system. While the federal government requires a means

of implementing FNS policy and programs and monitoring them to inform decision making at the national level, the specific obligations of national, state, and municipal governments have yet to be established. In addition, the limits defined by the federative pact in Brazil confer a reasonable degree of autonomy on states and municipalities.

Under the federalist constitution, municipalities are not obligated to carry out policies or follow federal program standards except in the health and education sectors. One instrument used to resolve this dilemma consists of joint management agreements between the federal government and municipal governments. The majority of the government programs mentioned, including the BFP, are operated by local governments based on signed agreements with the MDS that establish roles and responsibilities for implementation of the programs as well as minimum institutional standards for program operation.

However, the political-institutional difficulties faced by a large share of Brazil's municipalities can have important consequences for the SISAN and its local-level programs. Financial and human resources and the administrative capacity to plan, implement, and monitor FNS policy and programs vary considerably among regions, states, and cities. Federal and state support (financial, technical, and political) will be necessary to build capacity and to address the often complex local processes that contribute to inequitable access to public programs and actions.

Local political will is essential to the successful planning and implementation of food security actions, but some state and local governments are resistant to supporting policies that are perceived as being highly politicized and associated with the incumbent political party. Thus, mechanisms must be found to overcome the politicization of the issue and promote the participation of state and local governments in the SISAN.

A specific challenge posed by decentralization in the context of the SISAN is the implementation of an institutional arrangement to promote intersectoral dialogue among decision makers and program managers at the three levels of

government in an integrated manner. The Unified Health System, for example, has trilateral and bilateral commissions that promote dialogue among state, municipal, and federal decision makers and where pacts are made with respect to goals and objectives. A similar arrangement will be in place in the case of the SISAN, but the voluntary and trans-sectoral nature of the system will make it more difficult to agree on goals and instruments.

Monitoring FNS Policy in an Open System

Another reason it is important to promote awareness and understanding of the concept of FNS is to enable state and local government officials to develop integrated, intersectoral actions, including monitoring. It is important to define an intersectoral conceptual framework and methodology for collecting information on FNS policy and programs that integrates data from diverse sectors in a way that is useful for federal, state, and municipal decision makers.

The national CONSEA has defined indicators to monitor each of the seven dimensions of FNS presented in Table 1 using data that are readily available at the national level. Not all of these indicators, however, are disaggregated by state, region, and municipality, and few are available at a submunicipal level, which would be of particular interest to local policy makers. State and municipal-level indicators will need to be defined, as well as the degree of standardization of such indicators among states and municipalities.

Monitoring and evaluation are advanced at the national level, but the culture of data collection to inform program management at the local level, as well as the capacity and infrastructure needed to do so, vary considerably from one municipal government to another. Local governments are often lacking in experience, trained staff, and other resources necessary to plan, implement, and monitor FNS policy and programs.

The monitoring challenge is further complicated by the constellation of NGOs that partner with local government to provide FNS programs. This constellation differs from one region and city to another and includes many organizations

with no prior obligation to collect information on their activities and provide it to the government. Local nonprofit organizations, in particular, tend to have limited capacity to collect and provide information on their FNS-related activities and the populations they serve.

Stakeholders

People at Risk of Hunger and Food Insecurity

The most important stakeholders are people at risk of hunger and food insecurity, whose vulnerability should decline with the implementation of an effective system to guarantee their right to adequate food. People with uncertain access to enough food of good quality, whether because of low or unstable incomes, inadequate social support, crop damage, or other situations of acute or chronic crisis, would be able to enter the FNS system in one sector and be referred to services in other sectors. Ideally they would have a voice in FNS policy through municipal FNS advisory councils, although promoting the representation of the most vulnerable population groups, like the homeless, indigenous populations, poor families in rural areas, and residents of urban slums, remains a challenge.

People who are already in the system by virtue of participating in existing food and nutrition security programs would benefit from increasing integration among the programs, which should result in more efficient bureaucratic processes and a better referral system capable of linking them to services in other sectors.

Smallholder Family Farmers

Implementation of an effective FNS system would create opportunities for smallholder family farmers by strengthening intersectoral implementation and management of the PAA. This change would link small farmers more effectively to potential recipients of their produce, such as the school meals program, social assistance organizations, CONAB, and local markets, and improve their incomes. They would stand to receive more support for their associations and cooperatives and more technical assistance to improve their farming techniques.

Local Social Assistance Organizations Associated with FNS Initiatives and Programs

The nongovernmental partners in the system—such as orphanages, homes for the elderly and victims of domestic violence, and organizations that provide emergency food assistance and job training and promote income-generation activities—stand to benefit from being part of an integrated system, but they may have to conform to certain conditions in order to be included. Although they could lose some degree of autonomy in exchange for receiving benefits, they would have a greater voice and enlarged network through the creation of local FNS advisory councils.

Local Government Leaders: Elected Officials and Appointed Heads of Relevant Sectors

Much of the onus for implementing the SISAN will fall on local government leaders. Their leadership, commitment, networking capability, and political savvy are central to its success. However, social pressure and inducements through federal funds are still required to give FNS political priority at this level. Local governments will be asked to invest more time and resources, but the integration of programs should improve the efficiency and synergy of their actions. They could benefit from a more fluid relationship with state and federal governments and an influx of more resources. For some, their political careers could be influenced by the degree of success of FNS policy implementation and its effects on the local population.

State-Level Leaders

Government leaders and heads of relevant sectors at the state level will also be asked to invest more time and resources to implement the SISAN, with the same expectation that the efficiency and synergy of their actions will improve over the long run, benefiting the population they serve. They will need to reinforce collaboration both horizontally (among sectors) and vertically (with federal and municipal governments). Like their counterparts at the local level, their political capital could be improved or diminished, depending on how

their actions are judged. State-level leaders of social movements and organizations may or may not forfeit some level of autonomy in exchange for more formal integration in the SISAN and a greater voice through participation in state FNS advisory councils.

Decision Makers at the Federal Level

Ministers, secretaries, department heads, and program managers involved in FNS policy at the federal level stand to gain considerably from implementation of the SISAN. In addition to having a defined structure to work within and a higher level of institutionalization for their actions, they would have a stronger, more organized, and integrated decentralized base. State and municipal governments would be better equipped to share responsibility for FNS policy, implement it locally, and provide the feedback needed at the federal level to inform policy making and program management. Such benefits should compensate for increased demands on their time and resources early on.

Civil Society Engaged in the Issue of Hunger and FNS

The CONSEA would benefit from capacity building and increased sharing of responsibility at the state and local levels, but it will also no doubt be called upon to assume additional responsibilities. The experience of the CONSEA has shown that FNS councils and other spaces for social participation are more effective where social movements and civil society organizations are well organized. Thus, while they stand to benefit from the creation and improved effectiveness of state and municipal FNS advisory councils, social movements and organizations will need to rise to the occasion and take advantage of the opportunity to have a greater voice in the definition of FNS policy.

Policy Options

Defining the Best Operational Structure for an Open, Intersectoral FNS System

Policy options with respect to governance of the SISAN must address (1) the best institutional location for the CAISAN at the federal level; (2) mechanisms to induce the formation of

intersectoral FNS chambers within state and local governments; (3) mechanisms to induce the creation of municipal FNS advisory councils and improve the effectiveness of existing state and municipal FNS advisory councils; (4) obligations of NGOs who want to be part of the SISAN and legal parameters for receiving public funding; and (5) instruments to promote a shared understanding of the dimensions and intersectoral nature of FNS policy among government decision makers and their nongovernmental partners, as well as induce integration of FNS actions in different sectors.

Currently the CAISAN is located institutionally within the MDS, the main ministry responsible for FNS policy. Because this arrangement could challenge its legitimacy in the eyes of the other ministries, as well as their commitment to intersectoral goals and programs—with repercussions at state and local levels as well—one policy option would be to move the CAISAN out of the MDS and locate it within the Executive Office, like the CONSEA.

Another policy choice is related to the formation of intersectoral FNS chambers and FNS advisory councils at the state and municipal governmental levels. While the federal government cannot obligate states and cities to create these coordinating bodies, it is a condition for receiving federal funding for certain FNS actions, written into the joint management agreements. Some standards regarding the structure and attributes of these coordinating bodies could be included in the agreements, although this introduces the risk of constraining innovation and imposing structures that do not respect local institutional arrangements.

Joint written agreements could also be used to specify the obligations of NGOs who want to be part of the SISAN, although it would be necessary to define the most appropriate governmental level for drawing up such agreements. Some NGOs carry out actions only at the municipal level, whereas others are regional or even national. Again, the federal government (MDS) could provide guidelines for agreements at state and municipal levels to introduce a degree of standardization, but care must be taken to avoid standardized approaches that interfere with local arrangements and innovation.

Various options exist for promoting understanding of the intersectoral nature of FNS policy and programs and inducing integrated management. Written agreements between the MDS and local governments often include conditions that encourage integration of MDS programs at the local level. In the case of the BFP, for example, the agreements specify that municipalities will prioritize BFP beneficiaries for other relevant services, including income-generation and job-training programs (see Lindert et al. 2007 for an excellent discussion of the governance structures of the BFP). Similar inducements could be included in other joint management agreements related to FNS policy.

State and municipal FNS conferences could play an important role in promoting understanding of the intersectoral nature of FNS policy and programs by encouraging local debate. Federal and state governments and the CONSEA could also play a more direct role by promoting such conferences and providing training to local decision makers and other stakeholders. Mechanisms for states and municipalities to learn from each other's successful initiatives could be created, and partnerships with universities could be promoted to carry out capacity-building activities.

Defining the Roles of the Three Levels of Government

Defining the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government also involves setting the right balance between standardization and flexibility and between obligation and inducement. What actions should state and municipal governments be induced to take, and how strong should the inducements be? Also, how might inequalities in institutional, political, and financial capacity be addressed?

The federalist system concedes political autonomy to state and municipal governments, but this arrangement does not translate into a lack of obligation to implement policies. The incorporation of the human right to adequate food into the Brazilian Constitution in 2009 implies mechanisms for demanding that this right be guaranteed at the local level. Options include civil law suits and public hearings, as well as organizing and educational activities to mobilize the population to demand access to FNS programs not available in their area.

The federal government's relation with state and municipal governments, which is characterized in the National FNS Law as "collaboration," requires instruments to formalize state and municipal participation in the national system. Thus, while the law does not obligate states and municipalities to participate, state governors will receive protocols of compliance from the CAISAN outlining the steps required to participate in the national system and the corresponding incentives. Joint management agreements will need to be drawn up between the federal government and state and municipal governments to establish roles and responsibilities for implementation of the programs, as well as minimum institutional standards for program implementation and monitoring.

Several fields of action naturally fall under state responsibility. One is state-level policy and implementation of programs in areas that are relevant to FNS and would stand to benefit from a more concerted regional approach, such as agricultural production, education, health, and nutrition. State governments could play a key role in promoting regional initiatives and interaction among municipalities. Another field of action, already mentioned, consists of training and educational activities to increase awareness and understanding of the issue and capacity building to design, implement, and monitor FNS policy at the local level.

An effective model for coordinating SISAN actions at the federal, state, and municipal levels consists of the trilateral and bilateral commissions that currently play an important role in the Unified Health System. In the case of FNS, however, these commissions will need to be composed of empowered representatives from the various sectors that interface with FNS. Pacts regarding policy goals and objectives, as well as managerial and financial responsibilities at each level, could be negotiated and agreed upon by commission members.

Conditions attached to federal funding of programs at the state and local levels have strong potential to induce arrangements perceived to be beneficial for the institutionalization of the SISAN. However, most of the conditions mentioned—such as conformity of state and local FNS governing bodies to certain standards, periodic municipal and state FNS conferences,

and reporting of specified program information in a standardized format to the federal government—would require mechanisms of financial and technical support from the federal level to state and municipal governments to help them meet such conditions. This points to important policy choices regarding shared responsibility among the governmental levels for the costs, especially in light of the unequal institutional, financial, and political capacities of state and local governments.

Thus, another key policy option emerges pertaining to the federal government's resource allocation priorities in the construction of the SISAN. Options include prioritizing (1) states and municipalities with better administrative capabilities and/or experience in FNS policy, which may be more likely to make efficient use of the resources; (2) regions, states, or municipalities with higher rates of poverty and food insecurity; (3) states and municipalities with greater proven interest in implementing FNS policy; or (4) those with a history of resistance or lack of interest. Another policy choice would be to stipulate that states and municipalities with more resources pay a larger share of the public investment in FNS actions than poorer ones.

Monitoring FNS Policy in an Open System

Any discussion of a monitoring system implies a conceptual framework of what is to be monitored—an issue that is linked to understanding of and consensus on the concept of FNS. Policy choices regarding monitoring are again related to the tensions between central and local control.

Promotion of a culture of monitoring, and definition of state and municipal-level indicators, could be done with varying degrees of involvement from the federal level, either directly from the government or through the CONSEA in its social oversight role. The federal government could define a minimum level of information needed at the national level to monitor programs. Policy questions concern the degree of standardization of such indicators among states and municipalities as well as mechanisms for sharing the costs of training and infrastructure needed to collect and manage the information.

It may be useful to adopt some form of centralized, computer-based FNS information system that would allow state and municipal governments to periodically enter data and that would ideally be integrated with existing systems in the different sectors. Such a system could encourage adoption of certain indicators and improve integrated management of FNS actions. NGOs that seek to be part of the SISAN could be required to enter data as well, as a condition for receiving funding or donations.

One instrument that has proven extremely useful in the context of the BFP is the Decentralized Management Index (*Índice de Gestão Descentralizada*, IGD), a composite index made up of four indicators identified by the MDS as key to the quality of program implementation.⁴ It encourages municipalities to monitor and prioritize certain actions by providing financial incentives for municipalities with higher scores. It is also useful for identifying municipalities experiencing managerial difficulties, which then receive additional technical support to improve the quality of program implementation.

The BFP has additional on-line systems that facilitate integrated management of data, such as the Conditionalities Management System and another more comprehensive system currently being implemented to improve intersectoral management—horizontal as well as vertical—called the BFP Management System.

It is worth noting that the federal government is motivated to invest in sophisticated information management systems for the BFP because of the program's size. Other programs that compose the Zero Hunger strategy, like the PAA and food banks, represent much smaller budget items and are also more structurally complex. A less costly option could be the development of information management software programs

that could be downloaded by municipal governments. Such programs could help promote, standardize, and facilitate the collection of information considered key for monitoring FNS policy.

However, even if on-line information management systems or software were developed, most local governments and their nongovernmental partners would need technical and financial support to improve their capacity to monitor and provide information. This issue refers back to the question of which level of government should be responsible for providing such assistance. It is clear that the policy issues and options outlined here are highly interrelated, a situation that reinforces the appropriateness of a systems approach to food and nutrition security policy.

Assignment

The CAISAN was charged with formulating the first National Food and Nutrition Security Plan⁵ and the promotion of state and municipal food and nutrition security plans. Although the federal government is committed to decentralized control and recognizes that too many rules and regulations can interfere with the flexibility needed to adapt to local political-institutional arrangements, it requires instruments to fulfill its mandate to implement the law and monitor actions at the local level. What directives and instruments would you recommend be included in the national plan to meet this challenge?

⁴ The four indicators are (1) the percentage of eligible families on the Unified Social Assistance database system (used to register families for the BFP and other benefits) with complete and consistent records; (2) the percentage of families whose records have been updated in the past two years; (3) the percentage of children receiving BFP benefits with complete information on school attendance; and (4) the percentage of families with complete information on health conditions.

⁵ The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan for 2012–2015 was launched in August 2011 and can be accessed (in Portuguese) at <http://www.mds.gov.br/gestaodainformacao/biblioteca/secretaria-nacional-de-seguranca-alimentar-e-nutricional-sesan/livros/plano-nacional-de-seguranca-alimentar-e-nutricional-2012-2015/plano-nacional-de-seguranca-alimentar-e-nutricional-2012-2015>.

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