



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

**CENTER**  
FOR SUSTAINABLE  
SOCIETY RESEARCH



## **FOOD INEQUALITIES IN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL: A DILEMMA OF OUR TIME**

CSS WORKING PAPER SERIES  
Working Paper No.8 – November 2022

Antônio Inácio Andrioli\* and Ricardo Favaretto Antunes\*

\* Federal University of Fronteira Sul (UFFS), Brasil

## Center for Sustainable Society Research

The **Center for Sustainable Society Research (CSS)** is an interdisciplinary research center of the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at Universität Hamburg. Currently, scientists at all career levels are carrying out research at the CSS in a variety of disciplines including sociology, political science, business, economics, law, and journalism and communication studies.

Research at CSS aims to increase the understanding of social and economic institutions and the processes of modern societies with respect to sustainability. The CSS is particularly involved with the reconfigurations induced by climate change, considered a central driver for sustainability transformations.

The CSS Working Paper Series publishes high quality research papers across the broad field of topics researched at CSS.

<b>Editorial board</b>	Prof. Dr. Stefan Aykut, Prof. Dr. Frank Adloff, Prof. Dr. Kerstin Lopatta
<b>Institution</b>	Center for Sustainable Society Research Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences Universität Hamburg Welckerstraße 8 20354 Hamburg Germany
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:css.wiso@uni-hamburg.de">css.wiso@uni-hamburg.de</a>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://uhh.de/wiso-css">http://uhh.de/wiso-css</a>
<b>ISSN</b>	2699-8327
<b>DOI</b>	<a href="https://doi.org/10.25592/css-wp-008">https://doi.org/10.25592/css-wp-008</a>
<b>Image Credits</b>	unsplash

### To cite this paper:

**Andrioli**, Antônio Inácio and **Antunes**, Ricardo Favaretto: Food inequalities in Argentina and Brazil. A Dilemma of our Time. CSS Working Paper Series No 8, Hamburg, <https://doi.org/10.25592/css-wp-008>.

## Abstract

The article aims to assess the current situation of food inequalities in Argentina and Brazil. The two countries are considered the most industrialized and economically developed in Latin America, and have historically coexisted with growing rates of social inequality, poverty, and hunger. In other words, they are rich and hungry territories at the same time. The most recent publications on hunger indicate an increase in food insecurity (FI) in this region, due to the loss of the population's purchasing power, the concentration of land, the agro-export model of commodities, and the reduction of public policies aimed at combating poverty. The potential to produce wealth contrasts with the unfair distribution of income and the increase in impoverishment, including in the countryside.

## Key words

Inequality. Food sovereignty. Food insecurity. Hunger.

# FOOD INEQUALITIES IN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL: A DILEMMA OF OUR TIME

Antônio Inácio Andrioli and Ricardo Favaretto Antunes

## Introduction

The situation of food insecurity (FI) has a long history throughout Latin America, but it is from the 20th century onwards that its theme acquires greater importance, which has increased the availability of information about it. And it is especially in Argentina and Brazil that the paradox of a constant increase in agricultural production contrasts with the difficulty of access to food, even to a greater extent in regions with agricultural predominance.

Regarding the Spanish-speaking country, the present work was carried out through searches for the keywords “food sovereignty” and “Argentina” in the following databases, with the number of results in parentheses: Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (*Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* - FLACSO) (21), Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Buenos Aires (*Facultad de Agronomía de la Universidad de Buenos Aires* - FAUBA) (35), Scielo databases (7), Google Scholar (1,030), the theses and dissertations portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* - CAPES) (3,429) and CAPES journals (268). Searches were also carried out in news portals, publications of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as well as on Argentine government websites, such as the *Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuária* (INTA) and the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos* (INDEC). The articles were selected according to their relevance to prepare the present study, prioritizing publications carried out in the last 10 years.

In general, the works demonstrate the difficulty of dialog on the food issue in governments that can be considered neoliberal<sup>i</sup>, or States that are exploited by the Global North. Other facts that denote the difficulty of making the debate on food sovereignty public are the information on agricultural production, which does not have transparency on data on food production in developing countries. Argentina's 2020 census is delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey is carried out every 10 years, as in other countries, and the latest data for 2010 recorded a population of 40 million. But according to the most recent publication, the current population reaches 47 million.

In relation to Brazil, the main sources of information used are the reports of the Brazilian Research Network on Sovereignty and Food Security (*Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar* - PENSSAN). In the 2022 report, produced in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the dizzying increase of 14 million hungry people in one year is highlighted. Compared with the previous report from 2021, it was identified that 19 million Brazilians were suffering from hunger at the end of 2020, rising to 33.1 million people in 2022 (REDE PENSSAN,

2022, p. 84). Food inequalities vary regionally in Brazil, with a higher incidence in the North and Northeast regions. In addition, there is a significantly greater difference for women, between blacks and mixed (pardos), and between those with lower income and lower levels of education. In addition, there is greater severe FI in rural areas and in situations of water insecurity. That is, people live with thirst and hunger at the same time.

The present analysis is necessary because of the agricultural production model reaching these countries, that are known as food commodity exporters, but notably the poor class suffers from hunger, food insecurity and underemployment conditions. Deindustrialization, added to neoliberal policy, creates an instability where the agricultural economy focused on supplying the external market causes a lack of basic food to guarantee the nutrition of the population.

It is noteworthy that the countries of the present study adopted the neoliberal position as a state policy, in the period 2014-2019 in Argentina, under the government of Mauricio Macri, and in Brazil with Michel Temer, 2016-2018, followed by Jair Bolsonaro, 2018-2022, which makes us reflect on the impossibility of market self-regulation. Both countries have similar characteristics in the way they are exploited through commodities.

The hegemonic agricultural model works by destroying the possibilities of a social welfare state, near by what the Latin American people know as “buen vivir”, something like “good living”. Hunger and food insecurity are symptoms of the policy exercised in these countries, causes of a structure that privileges agribusiness, which, in addition to disorganizing food production, causes damage to nature and creating jobs without social protection.

## Hunger and malnutrition in Argentina

Argentina, with a population of 47 million, produces food for 450 million people (PARDO, 2018; FAO, 2022). In sparsely populated areas such as Patagonia, there are conflicts between transnational companies, which intend to create large estates, and the Mapuche people, originally from the region, estimated at 4 million people (HILARIO, 2017). According to the *Instituto Pensamiento y Políticas Públicas* (IPYPP) (2020), the poverty rate is higher in Buenos Aires, Chaco, Salta, Río Negro, and Neuquén, five of the 23 provinces distributed throughout the territory. Of the 21.3 million poor people, 44.3 % are located in the province of Buenos Aires, where the level of indigence is high and water rationing frequently affects the locality.

Public policies aimed at curbing hunger during the Covid-19 pandemic were summarized in dealing with the problem in an emergency way, such as transferring income to the population through a food card (*tarjeta alimentaria*) and public restaurants (*comedores*), as well as the creation of an emergency family income (*Ingreso Familiar de Emergencia* - IFE) and an emergency assistance program for work and production (*Programa de Asistencia de Emergencia al Trabajo y la Producción* - ATP). The IFE reached 9 million people, mainly helping informal workers to supplement their income (IPYPP, 2020).

In the report presented by the FAO (2021) on food and nutrition security in the world, data on malnutrition, FI, and obesity in Argentina and Brazil were released (p. 178, 179 and 191) (Table 1):

	Undernourishment in the total population (2018- 2020)	Severe FI in the total population (2018-2020)	Moderate or severe FI in the total population (2018-2020)	Prevalence of obesity in the adult population (2016)
<b>Argentina (%)</b>	3.9	12.6	35.8	28.3
<b>Argentina (in millions)</b>	1.7	5.7	16.0	8.6
<b>Brazil (%)</b>	<2.5	3.5	23.5	22.1
<b>Brazil (in millions)</b>	Not notified	7.5	49.6	33.3

**Table 1.** Source: FAO data (2021), prepared by the authors.

Table 1 presents data on FI and its degrees, such as moderate, severe, and malnutrition; and data on obesity, considered as a dietary disorder, therefore as an FI situation are also included. Adding the cases of malnutrition, severe or moderate FI, we have the percentage of 52.3 % of the population in FI, or 23.4 million people, not counting children and those under 18 years of age who suffer from a lack of adequate food. There is a lack of cross-data that reveals the reality of the population. For example, was the percentage of obese people counted as moderate or severe insecurity?

As a rule, moderate FI situations are cases in which the person or family needs to commit part of their income to other essential expenses for their survival, such as rent or medication, failing to prioritize the necessary costs of their food. As we well know, when we need to save money for other essential expenses, one of the most effective ways is to consume cheap food. This list includes ultra-processed foods; however, these foods, widely commercialized in the markets, are also the cause of diseases such as diabetes and obesity, due to their large amount of sugar, carbohydrates, among other contents.

FI affects different strata of the population. Children need adequate food during this period of life because of the relationship between education and learning. Public policies are often aimed at this audience, precisely because of the importance of cognitive development in this age group. Table 2 shows data on weight loss in children under 5 years of age, as well as the number of overweight children.

	Number of children under 5 years of age who experience weight loss (2020)	Number of children under 5 years of age who had growth delay (2020)	Number of children under 5 years of age who are overweight (2020)
<b>Argentina (%)</b>	1.6	7.8	12.9
<b>Argentina (in millions)</b>	0.1	0.3	0.5
<b>Brazil (%)</b>	Not available	6.1	7.3
<b>Brazil (in millions)</b>	Not available	0.9	1.1

**Table 2.** Source: FAO data (2021), prepared by the authors.

According to the FAO, 40 % of the population of Argentina is considered poor, hunger affects 4.5 million children, and access to food is decisive for analysing FI, considering the value of “healthy diets” and the level of poverty of the population: “Because of the high cost of healthy diets and the persistence of high levels of poverty and inequality of income, healthy diets continued to be inaccessible for some 3,000 million people in all regions of the world” (FAO , 2021, p. 8).

The FAO understands that the problem of malnutrition and FI is an income problem, correlated with lack of employment. In contrast, despite other factors that interfere with the food system and that affect income, such as the primarization of the economy, the FAO attributes extreme weather to one of the causes of FI in Argentina and Brazil (FAO, 2021, p. 200). Other FI-causing factors considered by the institution are conflicts and the weakening of the economy.

Just as it is important to have data on FI, some diseases or health problems may indicate its incidence, such as anaemia, which puts the lives of women at risk during childbirth and causes low birth weight (Table 3):

	Prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age 15-49 years (2019)	Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding among children up to 5 months (2019)	Prevalence of low birth weight (2015)
<b>Argentina (%)</b>	11.9	Not available	7.3
<b>Argentina (in millions)</b>	1.3	Not available	<0.1
<b>Brazil (%)</b>	16.1	Not available	8.4
<b>Brazil (in millions)</b>	9.2	Not available	<0.2

**Table 3.** Source: FAO data (2021), prepared by the authors.

Although there are public policies to ensure the nutrition of women of reproductive age and new-borns, the programs were insufficient at the time of the pandemic due to factors related to the economy, such as lack of employment and precarious working conditions. Sordini (2022) highlights the cycle of food crises in Argentina, in which the population was rescued by

the State in 1983, 2002 and 2019, which demonstrates the persistence of social problems related to access to food. Although the main problem is the lack of food, it is clear that food production exceeds the population's consumption. Thus, the fight against hunger is a political issue.

The first formalization of the State's commitment to the right to food was Law No. 23.056 of 1984, which founded the *Programa Alimentario Nacional* (PAN), recognizing hunger as a problem of access to food, as well as other programs that allocated a quantity of dry food to families. In 1990, self-production initiatives appear, showing an approximation with agroecology and food sovereignty:

The Pro-huerta (Pro Kitchen Garden) program for national self-reliance, the Comprehensive and Solidarity Food Program (*Programa Alimentario Integral y Solidario* - PAIS) with provincial jurisdiction and the Comprehensive Food Development Program (*Programa de desarrollo alimentario integral* - PRODAI) through the Municipal Huertas (Kitchen Garden) Program come into force. The PAIS program also implemented collective organization to make community purchases. The provincial program (PAIS) was discontinued in 1992 and the others remain in effect, with thirty years of experience in promoting the availability, accessibility and variety of food (SORDINI, 2021, p. 6).

Due to the duration of these programs, their efficiency is perceived, as well as the importance of permanent public policies with principles of food sovereignty, such as the institutionalization of markets and possibilities for self-production. Other important programs are linked to ensuring adequate food for breastfeeding women, which ensures the lives of children in situations of social vulnerability. In this sense, as published by Sordini (2021), there were programs in continuity from 1993 to 2014 with a focus on the municipality, called the *Comisión de Lactancia Materna* (CLAMA) program, as well as *Plan Vida*, aimed at mothers and sons/daughters since 2004, still in force, seeking to reduce malnutrition and infant mortality.

Since 2002, with a new food crisis, the *Programa Nacional de Nutrición y Alimentación del Plan Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria* (PNSA) was created, focused on food security, decentralizing actions to the provinces, with the participation of the Ministry of Social Development. The program provided for the delivery of food in school and community canteens, subsidy for consumption and supplementation of food, financing and technical support to promote food self-production, food and nutrition promotion, and education (SORDINI, apud LAVA, 2008). The programs *Pro-Huerta*, *Probienestar*, *Plan Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria*, *Plan Mas Vida*, *Asistencia Alimentaria Especial*, *Complemento Alimentario Fliar*, and *Atención Domiciliaria para Adultos Mayores* are still active (SORDINI, 2021).

Despite the importance and efficiency of current policies, other programs were created to act at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, in an emergency, in which underemployment conditions prevail in urban areas. This health condition showed some of the vulnerabilities of society at a time of crisis, which tends to worsen considering the continuity of extreme weather phenomena caused by human exploitation and migration in the 21st century.

Other secondary data help us understand the difficulty of dealing with food sovereignty, such as the fact that 90 % of Argentina's population is urban and 40 % of it is located around Buenos Aires. Such data demonstrate that overpopulated cities constitute a market for most of the food produced in the country (CARBALLO, 2018). The situation in rural areas stands out, where conflicts affect 63,843 families, covering 9.3 million hectares. According to Carballo



(2018), seven fundamental issues related to the agricultural sector and food sovereignty were highlighted. These are pesticides, family farming, land and territories, the production model, seeds, marketing and training, and research.

Publications on food sovereignty in Argentina show that there is a need to democratize food, given that the paradigm of scarcity generated by overpopulation is outdated. Still, in the case of Argentina, a rural subpopulation can be seen, followed by a densification of the region around the federal capital and other provincial capitals.

## Hunger and malnutrition in Brazil

Brazil is experiencing one of the worst political and economic moments in its history. FI is the most serious indicator of a country that has been successful in recent public policies to fight poverty. In 2014, the country left the hunger map, to which it returned after 4 years. With the dismantling of public policies aimed at strengthening the production and distribution of food that took place precisely in a context of economic crisis and increasing social inequality, and was deepened in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation became alarming.

In 2022 there are 125 million people living with FI, with more than 33 million in a situation of hunger, according to the II National Survey on Food Insecurity in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Brazil, produced by PENSSAN. Compared to the previous report, this represents an increase of 14 million hungry people in just one year, from 9 % in December 2020 to 15.5 % of the population in April 2022.

In terms of number of people, this means that 14 million new Brazilians began to live with hunger, since we had 19.1 million at the end of 2020, and at the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022, this number rose to 33.1 million. Another relevant aspect in the analysis of social inequalities in Brazil is the fact that Food Security (FS)<sup>ii</sup> remained stable, at levels just above 40 %, even considering the reduction of 6.7 million people who previously had full access to food. Clearly, this percentage of FS corresponds to the segment of the Brazilian population that was protected from the impacts of economic, political and health crises that inflict suffering on the remaining 60 %. The same trends were observed in the population living in rural areas of Brazil, however, with prevalence of moderate or severe FI higher than those observed in urban households (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 73).

The increase in unemployment and the decrease in purchasing power resulting from accentuated inflation have increased the economic instability of families, whose most immediate reflection is the growing indebtedness. And in families with lower purchasing power, the percentage of their income spent on food purchases tends to increase, so even if food security has remained stable, hunger (severe FI) only tends to increase afterwards.

With unemployment, this stability disappeared and there was a significant worsening of the indices, since the FS was reduced by 5.2 percentage points, while the severe FI increased from 21.4 % to 36.1 %. It is known that one of the indicators of the financial dynamics of families is the increase in indebtedness, discussed earlier in this Report, which presents an unfavourable relationship in relation to families' access to food. FS remained stable, but severe FI increased significantly. It is always good to remember that apparently small changes in percentages,

especially in severe FI, can mean millions of people who start to live daily with a lack of food on their plate (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 82).

As there is an increasing number of families that no longer have mechanisms to defend their income to preserve their food purchasing power, that is, they are completely unprotected and unable to solve the problem of hunger, it appears that growth of the economy alone is not enough, requiring a proactive action on the part of the State. Therefore, it is urgent for governments to implement policies to generate income and promote adequate and healthy food. In the same way, the State needs to fight inflation again, rebuilding food stocks and strengthening food production in family farming.

The Zero Hunger program, introduced in 2003, was a positive measure and signalled the need for a new development project for Brazil. The program aimed firstly at fighting hunger in an emergency situation, and secondly, serving as a structuring policy that integrated a series of public measures capable of altering the structure of social inequalities in Brazil. At first, the program was relieving the hunger of millions of families, but it ran the risk of becoming a compensatory and welfare policy, given the way in which policies to combat hunger have historically been developed in Brazil and the limited availability of resources (ANDRIOLI, 2017).

Both Zero Hunger and the agrarian reform, announced in Brazil as priorities by some governments, were at odds with the macroeconomic policies of these same governments, which sought to increase the primary surplus and to pay interest, representing a drastic cut in spending on social programs. Comparing the amount that governments spent on interest with the budget of programs to combat hunger, they can be considered compensatory. At the same time, emergency aid programs need to be intensively organized by the population to avoid instrumentalization of the interests of the State (ANDRIOLI, 2020).

On the other hand, it was precisely the potential for aggregation and mobilization that characterized these programs as structuring policy. If on the one hand it is necessary to change the current macroeconomic policies to advance the social programs of governments, on the other hand it is fundamental that they actually function as public policies that integrate social measures in a single perspective and are capable of mobilizing civil society on a large scale. Since, as the most recent reports on hunger in the country indicate, in its current economic situation, “the growth of poverty, added to the inflation of food prices and the dismantling of effective policies only accentuates inequalities and leads to poverty for the social groups and regions historically more affected” (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 7).

And, as is common in periods of economic instability, FI begins to reach not only those who were already in a situation of vulnerability, but also sectors of the middle classes that are increasingly losing their purchasing power: “In this sense, alarming levels of FI and hunger are part of the context of crises that continue to make a growing population vulnerable, now incorporating segments of the middle classes that were previously more socially protected” (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 20).

There are important disparities to be analysed in relation to FI in this continental-sized country, which reproduce the other historically existing inequalities. Although food insufficiency is a reality in all Brazilian regions, a much greater intensity was identified in the North and

Northeast regions. Likewise, the highest rates of hunger in Brazil are located in rural areas, precisely where food should be produced, with FI reaching “more than 60 % of households, and with higher prevalence in its most severe forms, with moderate and severe FI” (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 36).

Also in relation to families in which women are the reference person, FI rates are higher, even in those with higher incomes. “That is, more than 6 out of 10 (63.0 %) households with female heads were at some level of FI. Of these, 18.8 % were in a situation of hunger” (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 50).

Racial discrimination also accompanies hunger rates in Brazil, and while these inequalities are permanent, they are more severe in middle-income groups:

At the beginning of 2022, the proportion of FI was higher in households whose heads identified themselves as black or pardos. Similar to what was observed in gender inequality, of these, 6 out of 10 households whose heads identified themselves as black or pardos lived in some degree of FI, while in households whose heads were of self-reported white race/skin colour, more than 50.0 % had guaranteed FS (REDE PENSSAN, p. 51).

Other relevant data regarding the hunger statistics in Brazil involves the education of the population: “In 42.5 % of the households with heads with up to 4 years of schooling, their residents had moderate or severe FI — therefore, there was a compromise in the amount of food for consumption” (REDE PENSSAN, p. 52). This information can be especially important, considering that the FI of many families is directly related to being able to access information about government programs and aids.

Another important feature of the Brazilian case involving schooling is related to the availability of food offered to children in schools, such as the National School Feeding Program (*Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar - PNAE*), unfortunately interrupted during the pandemic period. “The PNAE was absolutely unable to meet the needs of families with school-age children, in this period of the pandemic” (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 66). Subsidized restaurants, as well as school meals, are often the only form of access to food for the unemployed population with no income. They can also be considered essential for feeding children, but they are usually difficult to access due to their location, only in larger cities and away from the periphery, causing additional transportation costs for most poor families. Like malnutrition, lack of food can influence children's intellectual development, deepening inequalities in the future.

Finally, there is a correlation between FI and water insecurity. That is, in addition to water being considered a food, it is essential for food production, and the people who are most affected by hunger in Brazil also live with a lack of access to water.

In the I VIGISANiii, there were already indications of a relationship between FI and Water Insecurity. With the inclusion of the water scale in this II VIGISAN, it was possible to verify that about 12 % of the general Brazilian population lived with restricted access to water, and that severe FI was strongly associated with it. Of those Brazilian households with water insecurity, 42.0 % were also in a situation of severe FI, that is, they lived with thirst and hunger” (REDE PENSSAN, 2022, p. 70).

The available figures show that State action can change this situation, and the experience of governments has shown that this is possible. In addition to promoting better production and greater access to food, it is essential that public policies take into account the historically existing inequalities that deepen in crisis situations. Only in this way will it be possible to build the necessary conditions for food sovereignty, considering the right to healthy and adequate food as a fulfilment of citizenship and the recognition of the dignity of the human being.

## The future of food sovereignty in Argentina and Brazil

In addition to the recent publication on food security in the world, Carlos Carballo (2018, p. 26) interprets, in the book *Soberanía alimentaria y desarrollo: caminos y horizontes in Argentina* (Food sovereignty and development: paths and horizons in Argentina), the data provided by the FAO on the “food balance” and “food needs”, demonstrating that the food available in that territory exceeds the average world consumption. He concludes, therefore, that the world food system has failed because the country is unable to fulfil the right to adequate food.

Sordini (2022) points out that the Argentine government tends to temporarily alleviate the conflict, treating the symptom of hunger, but not its causes, failing to promote a profound change in the food system. Food policies in Argentina have been in force for over 35 years, so the way to deal with the problem of hunger favours the return of problems related to food production. It was identified that the country has been suffering from food deficiencies, from insecurity to food shortages, which reached 30 % of the population throughout the twentieth century, despite the advance of industrial agriculture and grain production.

According to Filho and Scholz (2008), Argentina was the first country to enact specific laws on Food and Nutrition Security (*Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* - SAN) in Latin America, starting in 2003.

The analysis of Food Sovereignty in Argentina must be framed within the broader and more comprehensive process of the struggle for the economic, social and political sovereignty of a dependent capitalist Latin American country, a traditional food exporter and in which a major food problem has always been present — although rarely admitted socially and politically —. (...) As a consequence of the historical difficulties in producing food or accessing it, additional difficulties caused by malnutrition have been added in recent decades (CARBALLO, 2018, p.39).

The food policies of Argentina are weakened by the lack of adequate food in schools and subsidized restaurants, which seems to be related to the advance of neoliberalism in the country. Nevertheless, with the institutionalization of food policies and their regulation, the Family Farming Law can be a key to advancing in the sense of food sovereignty. Despite the approximation of the meaning of “food safety”, it is highlighted that organizations and social movements prefer the concept of food sovereignty, spread by the Via Campesina organization, demonstrating in an integral way the transformations necessary for the fulfilment of peoples’ rights (GARCIA GUERRERO; WAHREN, 2016).

The idea of food sovereignty advocates that it is not enough to produce in the form of monocultures that leave aside biodiversity and endanger nature with the use of external inputs such as agrochemicals and synthetic fertilizers, also risking the way of life of farmers and

traditional peoples. In this way, nature acts as a provider of fundamental rights, but even this possibility is being destroyed by the current production model.

In this sense, food security could not be guaranteed in the context of an agricultural model oriented towards the external market and characterized by the expansion of monocultures; and adequate access to food can only be ensured to the extent that the conditions of autonomy are given that allow the needs of the people to be identified, taking into account their cultural patterns and sustainable forms of production, both ecologically and socially (GARCIA GUERRERO; WAHREN , 2016, p. 338).

Regarding the concept of sovereignty, Carballo (2018, p. 43) questions what should be the subject of sovereignty. Each person or family? Each community, all the inhabitants of each region or each country? The people? That sovereignty must be in respect of what? About access and suitability of foods? Only in relation to food? Would it be possible for us to be sovereign in some specific point, more dependent in others?

Therefore it is important to think about the rights and duties of the States, as well as how society and actors are key in forming basic food prices and other essential goods; how to increase the participation of family farming in order to achieve food sovereignty, being able to use the policies that achieve success; and finally, the identification of factors that hinder decision-making in the daily life of people from different social sectors (gender, occupation, hours, work relationships, urban or rural residence) so that we can redesign strategies and advance concretely with food sovereignty (CARBALLO, 2018).

Due to urban overpopulation and malnutrition, we have as a result diseases such as type II diabetes and obesity, treated by the same companies that supply food and agrochemicals. At the same time as the demand for healthier foods increases, criticisms arise about the agricultural production model in health and the environment. According to Iturralde (2016), more than half of the daily food intake of Argentinians is wheat flour and sugar, a diet deficient in fruits and vegetables. In this sense, the government is committed to the publication of food guides, through the Ministry of Health of the Nation (2020), intending to improve the eating habits of the population by means of consumption.

Argentina is among the five largest grain exporters of the world (FAO, 2022). To elucidate the political problem of hunger, we can divide the production of grain by days of the year and, again, between the population, arriving at a quantity of 9.32 Kg of grain available daily for each citizen. Obviously, this production is not intended for the Argentine population, therefore, the agribusiness model failed at combating hunger and FI.

As everything indicates, food sovereignty is distant, because a structure was created that depends on agribusiness to continue supporting food security. In this way, the main challenges of the food system are: (1) the urbanization and or dispossession of rural areas, which facilitate the growth of shantytowns and the unhealthiness of the new urban dwellings; (2) the concentration of production, processing, and marketing, which act in the appropriation of natural goods, through the use of inputs, access to technology, and markets; and (3) as well as the re-primarization of the economy, which affects the overexploited countries as a whole.

It is necessary to provide a sense of food sovereignty, which has at its core the philosophy of the expression “*sumak kaysay*”, translated into Spanish as “living well” or “good living”. We must, therefore, learn to live well in order to live together. Understand that in order to live well, if we eliminate a living species, we will be compromising the whole of nature.

Living Well or Good Living, is life in its fullness. It is knowing how to live in harmony and balance, in harmony with the cycles of Mother Earth, the cosmos, life and history, and in balance with all forms of existence. And that is precisely the path and the horizon of the community; it implies first knowing how to live and then coexist. You cannot Live Well if others live badly, or if Mother Nature is damaged. Living well means understanding that the deterioration of a species is the deterioration of the whole (HUANACUNI, In CABALLERO, 2018, p. 131).

In the case of Argentina and Brazil, it is clear that too many commodities are produced, such as soybeans, which are largely used by Europeans, Americans and Chinese to feed animals, mainly pigs and birds. Currently, soybeans are also used as fuel for vehicles in the form of agro-diesel. That is, the soybean monoculture has destroyed the environment and the local food production, to supply the animal production and the fuel needs of rich countries.

In the final analysis, hunger is a result of the concentration of the means of production, which prevents the distribution of income. As already mentioned, there is no lack of food, but simply, lack of access to available food by the poor population. To solve the problem, the implementation of the agrarian reform provided for by law in both countries could contribute, as access to land is of strategic importance because of its potential for food production. A massive and qualified agrarian reform, combined with the strengthening of family farming, is decisive to guarantee that tens of thousands of marginalized people can produce and feed themselves. The most recent FI data show that the number of people marginalized by lack of access to food in Brazil amounts to the entire population of Argentina. A greater incentive to food production in these countries, as well as the restriction of policies that favour monocultures destined for export, tend to result in lower prices for the population's food and promote the dynamization of the internal market, contributing to economic growth, to the generation of businesses, and to the reduction of exclusion and social inequality.

It is clear that this requires government action and a commitment to the country's food sovereignty. The financing of rural credit, technical assistance, or the development of small agro-industries and direct marketing networks are essential for this, because they reduce the dependency of farmers in the agro-industrial complex on large multinationals and their technological model. The creation of new marketing channels and the resumption of food stock policies by governments is essential to make food production accessible to potential consumers who are currently excluded. In addition, strategies for the creation of jobs and income in the cities, support for self-government initiatives for workers in companies, for social technologies, and for the expansion and strengthening of the solidarity economy are strategies for social inclusion that accompany a project of development based on the reduction of social inequalities. But it is clear that immediate measures are also necessary. In this sense, actions to fight hunger have an important role, as long as they are seen from the perspective of overcoming hunger, and as long as they are incorporated into broader and more coherent social policies that alter the pattern of income concentration in society.

## Final Considerations

It is increasingly necessary, even in times of crisis, to build alternatives for the future beyond food security, including the search for autonomy and freedom for the peoples of the Earth. With the inclusion and social mobilization of these peoples as subjects of rights, there can be an awareness of the good life and its principles that are close to the search for food sovereignty. What seems to be taking place in the countries of the Global South is the erasure of their colonial memory, at the same time as the inclusion of traditional peoples in democratic participation is made invisible, so that this same portion of the population suffers from the restriction of rights, at the same rate as rights over goods and natural resources are accumulated by transnational corporations.

Hunger and food insecurity are therefore a political problem. To overcome it, governments must enforce the right to drinking water and healthy food, reduce waste, and cut food fuel production and global meat consumption. But above all, it is crucial to keep farmers producing and able to use agroecology as a tool to support democratic, solidary, and sustainable models for the production and consumption of healthy foods.

In contrast, a series of experiences in agriculture in Argentina and Brazil demonstrate that the family farming model, based on diversified production and reduced use of external inputs, is more efficient and adequate to guarantee food sovereignty and can be combined with programs to combat hunger. Therefore, it is important to consider the type of agriculture to be promoted. The model focused on monocultures for export will certainly lead, as we know from history, to more concentration of income, more poverty, and more hunger.

Both countries share social problems as unemployment, food insecurity and abandonment of the countryside. This conjuncture makes it impossible even for citizens who wish to go against the hegemonic model of production and return to the countryside. At the same time, it's necessary to rebuild nature to maintain the balance of ecosystems, maybe this way it will be possible solving the three problems listed above and preparing for the next foreseen crises, already in progress, which are the climatic and migratory ones.

By modifying the agricultural production model to the family farming model with a agroecological approach, it would be possible to improve the FI index, as well as to solve socio-environmental problems. It is necessary to change consciousness to adopt agroecological practices, enabling a structural advance, modifying the lifestyle so that the South countries could be prepared for environmental problems that add to social problems such as unemployment and FI.

As a suggestion to complement this article, about Brazil, we have the publication by Joaquim Gonçalves da Costa, the book "Food Sovereignty: material, practical-political and utopian dimensions", as well as "Ideas to postpone the end of the world" and "Paths to the culture of well-being" by indigenous Ailton Krenak. About Argentina, there are works and articles by Santiago Sarandón and Walter Pengue, agronomists who defend agroecology as a new paradigm in response to the civilizational crisis and the model of agricultural production considered exhausted.

## References

- ANDRIOLI, A. I. *Soja orgânica versus soja transgênica: um estudo sobre tecnologia e agricultura familiar no noroeste do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul*. Chapecó: UFFS, 2017.
- ANDRIOLI, A. I. *Brasilien zwischen Hoffnung und Illusion. Kritische Blicke auf ein Land in der (Öko-) Krise*. München: Oekom, 2020.
- CARBALHO G., Carlos. *Soberanía alimentaria y desarrollo: caminos y horizontes em Argentina*. 144p. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Mónadanomada, 2018.
- CLARA ITURRALDE. *¿Cómo comemos los argentinos?* 08/12/2016. [https://www.clarin.com/nutricion/alimentacion-alimentacion-saludable-nutricion-argentinos-costumbres-habitos-comer\\_0\\_SJ13CnYwmg.html](https://www.clarin.com/nutricion/alimentacion-alimentacion-saludable-nutricion-argentinos-costumbres-habitos-comer_0_SJ13CnYwmg.html). Accessed July 13, 2022.
- COSTA, Joaquim Gonçalves da. *Soberania alimentar: dimensões material, pratico-político e utópica*. 1ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, LPP, 2021.
- FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA y UNICEF. 2021. *El estado de la seguridad alimentaria y la nutrición en el mundo 2021. Transformación de los sistemas alimentarios en aras de la seguridad alimentaria, una nutrición mejorada y dietas asequibles y saludables para todos*. Roma, FAO. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4474es>. Accessed July 13, 2022.
- FAO. *Nota informativa de la FAO sobre la oferta y la demanda de cereales*. 08/07/2022. Disponível em: <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/csdb/es/>. Accessed July 13, 2022.
- FAO. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003. Monitoring progress towards the World Food Summit and Millennium Development Goals*. Roma FAO, 2003.
- FERREIRA, Leila da Costa. *A questão ambiental na América Latina: teoria social e interdisciplinaridade*. Organizadora: Leila da Costa. Campinas, SP. Unicamp, 2011.
- FILHO, Niemeyer Almeida, and SHOLZ, Vera. *Soberanía Alimentaria y Seguridad Alimentaria: ¿Conceptos Complementarios?* Encontro da SOBER, 2008.
- FOME ZERO: *Report of the Joint FAO/IDB/WB/Transition Team Working Group*. Brasília, Governo Federal, 2002.
- GARCIA GUERREIRO, Luciana; WAHREN, Juan. *Seguridad Alimentaria vs. Soberanía Alimentaria: La cuestión alimentaria y el modelo del agronegocio en la Argentina*. Trab. soc., Santiago del Estero, n. 26, p. 327-340, jun. 2016. Disponível em <[http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1514-68712016000100019&lng=es&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1514-68712016000100019&lng=es&nrm=iso)>. Accessed July 13, 2022.
- HILARIO, Alvaro. *El pueblo mapuche no lucha por la propiedad de la tierra, sino por un modo de vida en la tierra*. 04/12/2017. Rebellion. Disponível em: <https://rebellion.org/el-pueblo-mapuche-no-lucha-por-la-propiedad-de-la-tierra-sino-por-un-modo-de-vida-en-la-tierra/>. Acesso em Julho de 2017.
- INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADÍSTICA Y CENSOS. *Censo nacional de población, hogares y viviendas 2010: censo del Bicentenario : resultados definitivos*. Serie B nº 2. - 1a ed. - Buenos Aires: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos - INDEC, 2012.
- IPYPP – Instituto Pensamiento y Políticas Públicas. *El mapa Argentino del Hambre y la Pobreza: El impacto social de la pandemia em las Provincias*. Equipo de trabajo: Claudio Lozano, Agustina Haimovich, Ignacio López Mieres. Coordenação: Ana Rameri. Publicado em 28/10/2020. Disponível em: <https://ipypp.org.ar/2020/10/28/el-mapa-argentino-del-hambre-y-la-pobreza/>
- KRENAK, Ailton. *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*. 1ª ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019.
- KRENAK, Ailton. *Caminhos para a cultura do bem viver*. 2020.
- MAMANI, Fernando Huanacuni. *Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien: filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias regionales andinas*. Lima, Peru: Coodinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (CAOI), 2010.
- MINISTERIO DE LA SALUD DE LA NACION. *Guías Alimentarias para la Población Argentina*. Buenos Aires, 2020.
- PARDO, Daniel. *Por qué hay hambre en Argentina si se produce comida para 440 millones de personas (10 veces su población)*. British Broadcasting Corporation. 04/09/2018. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-45303359>. Accessed July 13, 2022.
- REDE BRASILEIRA DE PESQUISA EM SOBERANIA E SEGURANÇA ALIMENTAR E NUTRICIONAL (REDE PENSSAN). *VIGISAN – Inquérito Nacional sobre Insegurança Alimentar no Contexto da Pandemia da Covid-19 no Brasil. Olhar para a Fome*. São Paulo: Fundação Friedrich Ebert/Rede PENSSAN, 2021.



REDE BRASILEIRA DE PESQUISA EM SOBERANIA E SEGURANÇA ALIMENTAR E NUTRICIONAL (REDE PENSSAN). **II Inquérito Nacional sobre Insegurança Alimentar no Contexto da Pandemia da COVID-19 no Brasil** [livro eletrônico]: II VIGISAN: relatório final/Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar – PENSSAN. São Paulo: Fundação Friedrich Ebert/Rede PENSSAN, 2022.

SORDINI, María Victoria. **The politics of hunger: a permanent emergency in Argentina**. Revista de Sociologia e Política [online]. 2022, v. 30, e004. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-98732230e004>. Epub 10 Junho 2022. ISSN 1678-9873. Accessed July 13, 2022.

## Translation

John Carpenter, BSc (Open), Dip. Comp. (Open)

with support by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa e Inovação do Estado de Santa Catarina (Fapesc)