Brazil and FAO, the path to cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean

A historical alliance for promoting sustainable development and food security in the region
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A historical alliance for promoting sustainable development and food security in the region
### Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**  
FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAORLC)

**GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL**  
Brazilian Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ABC/MRE)

**Julio Berdegué** – FAO Assistant  
Director-General and Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean

**Maya Takagi** – Regional Programme Leader

**FAO representation in Brazil**  
Rafael Zavala - Representative

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**Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme and the transformation of agri-food systems:**  
Design and management for innovative projects

- Production systems in Latin America and the Caribbean: Family farming and Brazil-FAO International Cooperation as a driver of economic inclusion in rural territories  
- Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 Initiative | Food Security from the standpoint of sustainable production to eradicate hunger permanently by 2025.
- Cotton | Diversified production systems as a strategy for sustainable rural development
- Dialogue between FAO, Governments and Civil Society | Strengthening family farming in in LAC countries

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**Better Production** | More sustainable consumption and production models, inclusive production chains, and resilience of agri-food systems to climate change

- School feeding from the perspective of the human right to adequate food
- Promoting food security and overcoming poverty: ongoing efforts by Brazil and FAO in the LAC region

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**Better Environment** | More efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems, sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems

- The role of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme in producing evidence for better natural resource governance
- Agro-environmental policies in LAC countries | Strategy to reduce poverty and food insecurity
- A network for aquaculture in the Americas
- Responsible governance of land tenure in Latin America and the Caribbean

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FAO and ABC/MRE Steering Committee: Maya Takagi, Luiz Carlos Beduschi, Joao Marcelo Intini, Cecilia Malaguti e Plinio Pereira  
Text prepared by: Clarita Rickli, consultant.  
Translation: Daniel Alves  
Translation review: Marie Jankovic  
FAO and ABC/MRE Coordination: Joao Marcelo Intini and Plinio Pereira  
FAO and ABC/MRE Communication Team: Palova Brito, Paulo Beraldo, Erikson Aponte and Janaina Plessmann
In 2008, due to the growing interest of other developing countries in learning about successful Brazilian policies in the area of food and nutrition security (FNS) and agriculture, the Brazilian Government initiated a partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to share Brazil’s experience through South-South cooperation, based on FAO’s comparative advantages.

Under the scope of this partnership, the implementation of Trilateral South-South Cooperation projects for the benefit of developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa began in 2012, with technical support from Brazilian Cooperating Institutions (BCIs) such as the National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE, by its acronym in Portuguese), the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA, by its acronym in Portuguese) and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA).

It is crucial to highlight that Brazil conducts its cooperation actions in accordance with the constitutional mandate of Article 4, item IX, of the Federal Constitution, which states that “in its international relations, the Federative Republic of Brazil is governed by”, among others, the principle of “cooperation among peoples for the progress of humankind”. This mandate enforces the pursuit of an international order that favours peace and prosperity for all peoples.

By reaffirming its commitment to South-South cooperation objectives and methods, the Brazilian Government intends to contribute to the creation and transfer of knowledge among partners in a mutual learning process, free of conditionalities. Strengthening family farming and fighting against food insecurity are considered key issues for Brazilian South-South cooperation.

The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC, by its acronym in Portuguese) will continue to build innovative solutions to face the enormous difficulties that mark this challenging and unprecedentedly modern time we are experiencing in the midst of this persistent pandemic. And we will do so together with our valued partners. At the same time, we will continue to implement the necessary measures to continue developing shared cooperation projects.

I am very pleased to announce the launch of this publication, which captures the main achievements of the Brazil-FAO partnership over the past 14 years, promoting capacity-building in other developing country partners, and corroborates our intentions to seek joint solutions to face future challenges for cooperation initiatives.

Ruy Pereira
Director of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC, by its acronym in Portuguese)
Design and management for innovative projects

Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme and the transformation of agri-food system

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect the needs of a world in constant transformation. In particular, the need to ensure food and nutrition security to everyone implies facing a reality where, on one side, people are going hungry, while on the opposite side, food is produced in sufficient quantities: and in the middle of these two scenarios, an abyss of economic, social and environmental needs. The initiatives implemented by the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme aim to “unite the two ends” through innovative projects that are capable of balancing this reality, with a focus on fighting poverty, achieving zero hunger, and strengthening sustainable agriculture.

Hand in hand, the Government of Brazil, through the Brazilian Cooperation Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE, by its acronym in Portuguese), and FAO have been building a historical partnership that identifies best practices, innovations, skills and experiences developed by Brazilian institutions and makes them available for knowledge exchange. The essence of this cooperation is for the countries involved to experience a rich process of capacity building and mutual learning.

Since 2008, the work of international cooperation in Brazil has gained a new direction. The country’s success in developing and implementing public policies aimed at issues that converge with FAO’s agenda has opened up space for new alliances. At that moment, a new trajectory of sharing not only knowledge, but also experiences in implementation, monitoring, governance and cross-sectoral work began.

In recent decades, Brazil has invested in the idea of building prosperous and inclusive rural areas through food and agriculture, contributing to better living conditions for society as a whole. A trajectory of important results for the transformation of agri-food systems, which contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Family farming is at the centre of this new scenario: about four million family farmers, who produce most of the food Brazilians consume every day (Censo/IBGE/2017). An important social actor capable of boosting local economies, making more sustainable use of the environment, providing fresh and healthy food to populations, and strengthening the social fabric in rural territories.

Family farming is the main supplier of fresh and healthy food for students on a daily basis. The National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) was a major milestone of this moment. Since 2009, the NSFP has brought into focus the vision of school meals as a Human Right, with family farming as the main supplier of fresh and healthy food for students on a daily basis.

The TSSC Brazil-FAO Programme has contributed to its international projection concerning the promotion of sustainable development. It is a valuable political capital and encourages the development of technical bodies in the exchange of experiences with other countries.

If, on the one hand, the Brazilian initiatives caught the attention of other countries that started to request more cooperation from Brazil, on the other hand, the internal results achieved in this period reinforced the country’s decision to support other nations in the region.

In 2019, the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO-RLAC) started to implement the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028. The Decade will offer the opportunity to recognize the importance of this productive sector, which is crucial to the global action plan against hunger and poverty.
Taking into account the priority issues of the institutions and countries involved has been, at the same time, the great challenge and one of the most significant achievements of the alliance between Brazil, FAO and the other countries participating in cooperation activities. A continuous adaptation and a technically robust posture of all those involved has allowed for the readjustment of eventual changes requested by the countries in new agreements, throughout the activities, without losing the progress achieved.

This fruitful alliance has resulted in important progress towards the SDGs, including the construction and implementation of policies such as School Feeding in the region, and has created spaces for dialogue, like the MERCOSUR Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF, by its acronym in Spanish). Such results have contributed significantly to the strengthening of family farming, the inclusion and autonomy of women, and the generation of opportunities for rural youth in LAC countries.

The protagonism assumed by Brazil in the Latin American and global scenario is noteworthy in this process. Through South-South cooperation projects, themes that have been developed at the national level have gained scale at the global level, reinforcing Brazil’s leadership role in the agenda to fight hunger and poverty.
COVID-19 Pandemic
Greater uncertainty calls for new initiatives

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the scenario of hunger and malnutrition at the global level, already affecting three billion people across the planet — almost 40 percent of humanity. According to the Regional overview of food security and nutrition 2021 - the number of hungry people in the LAC region increased from 13.8 million in 2019, to 59.7 million in 2020. To achieve the Zero Hunger goal in the world, among other challenges, food must be available and accessible to those who are hungry. To achieve this, it is essential to combine short- and long-term processes with the leading concept that adequate and healthy food is a universal Human Right, taking into account aspects such as production, access, nutrition, sustainable use of natural resources, and the way of life of individuals and communities involved.

In early 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the beginning of the pandemic, new challenges arose for the actions contemplated in the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme. The work took on a new format, without losing sight of the dialogue between the partners. As in the rest of the world, methods and ways of communicating and working some methods and communication and working strategies needed readjustment. Face-to-face technical exchanges, the main activity in cooperation, gave way to webinars, virtual technical conversations, remote hearings, production of new documents and programmatic frameworks using digital tools that brought the different stakeholders closer and facilitated fluidity in cooperation agendas.

FAO Programme Officer in Brazil
Gustavo Chianca
FAO Programme Officer in Brazil

This is a long-lasting, meaningful and, above all, very innovative partnership.

The benefits of Cooperation

The new challenges to achieve the SDGs have required trilateral South-South cooperation initiatives to adopt an innovative design and, as a consequence, to deepen partnership with shared responsibilities and mutual gains.

Innovation
Experiences and knowledge related to the design, implementation, monitoring, intersectoral work, and governance of public policies are shared with partner countries through the projects — a process that yields important gains for all those involved.

Longevity and durability
Over the past few years, within the scope of Brazil-FAO cooperation, the demand for medium and long-term projects has increased, requiring a longer duration. The longevity and durability of the partnerships between the stakeholders involved are some advantages of this new format.

Mutual benefits
At the same time that cooperation actions open new doors for Brazil, the exchange of experiences with other countries promotes the improvement of Brazilian technologies and public policies, based on critical reflection and capacity building, among the technical staff of partner institutions.

Credibility
The actions resulting from the projects implemented by the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme have contributed to Brazil achieving even more credibility in international forums, as they show external recognition that Brazilian best practices can be a reference for other countries.

Funding
The projects developed under the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme stimulate the inflow of funding from the countries involved as they contribute to the implementation of public policies and stimulate international actors to fund new initiatives.

Governance
In a horizontal way, this cooperation is based on shared governance and implementation in order to improve the flow of experiences and knowledge between Brazil and the partner countries.
Better Production

More sustainable consumption and production models, inclusive production chains, and resilience of agri-food systems to climate change
Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture are the main purposes of the second SDG: Zero Hunger (SDG2).

To an increasing extent, this challenge requires guaranteed access, consumption and production supported by efficient and inclusive production chains at local, regional and global levels, thus ensuring the resilience and sustainability of agri-food systems even in the face of climate and environmental changes.

To face this challenge, family farming emerges as a strategic element for social and economic inclusion in the territories, resulting in better living conditions for thousands of families. These farmers are men and women, indigenous peoples, river dwellers,artisanal fishers, descendants of traditional peoples and communities, responsible for producing most of the food consumed on a daily basis. These farming families have as their vocation the production of healthier foods from the nutritional point of view, based on more sustainable productive practices, from the environmental point of view.

Improving programmes and public policies, fostering better nutritional practices and supporting technologies to increase agricultural productivity are actions leveraged by the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme. An important partnership that has contributed to increase the availability and improved access to food for the most vulnerable population, inspiring other countries that face similar challenges.

The Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative 2025: Contribution of the Federative Republic of Brazil through South-South Cooperation has been contributing to restore food and nutrition security in the countries of the region for more than a decade. The humanitarian character of the initial period (2010 to 2016) paved the way for a more comprehensive format of trilateral South-South cooperation, starting with the new phase that began in 2016.

The project is currently implemented through a set of cooperation actions, bringing technical assistance to countries, populations and rural communities in emergency or potentially vulnerable situations — either by rehabilitating or supporting the maintenance of production processes, always respecting their local methods, realities, customs and potential. The “umbrella” format of the project encompasses and develops several initiatives, either regional (more recently reaching the Central American Dry Corridor countries: El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala), or national, resulting in relevant experiences that serve as an important driver for social and economic inclusion in the territories and promote better living conditions for thousands of families.

The Hunger-Free Latin America and The Caribbean 2025 Initiative: Food security from the standpoint of sustainable production to eradicate hunger permanently by 2025

Sowing ideas is also a way of cooperating. The role of Brazil-FAO cooperation is to strengthen this sowing process, facilitating and accelerating the circulation of knowledge that contributes to the achievement of common goals among the countries of the region. Among the experiences, the project “Sembrando Capacidades” (Sowing Capacities) stands out, which has contributed to important advances in Colombia.

In Colombia, similarly to Brazil, rural, family and community-based agriculture (ACCF, by its acronym in Spanish), as family farming is defined in that country, plays a key role in rural development, covering 74 percent of agricultural units and producing around 70 percent of all fresh food. Recognizing and valuing knowledge and productive practices is determinant for the sector to achieve its potential for economic, social and environmental transformation. A reality that bears resemblance to Brazil, which in recent decades has been structuring a set of policies and programmes to strengthen its family farming sector, which is responsible for producing most of the food consumed in the country on a daily basis.

It is necessary to maintain the institutional focus, extending the vision of Brazilian cooperation beyond the governments in office, with family farming as the core issue capable of boosting local economies, making more sustainable use of the environment, providing fresh and healthy food to their communities for the benefit of the market while strengthening the social fabric.

Luiz Carlos Beduschi
Regional Development Policy Officer at FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

From this convergence, the “Sembrando Capacidades” (Sowing Capacities) initiative was born, through trilateral South-South cooperation between Brazil, Colombia and FAO. Over two years, the project brought together methodologies and approaches to facilitate the empowerment of farmers and their organizations and the generation of innovation on a territorial scale to promote better production and, consequently, better nutrition in a better environment.

Omar Franco Torres
Vice-minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Colombia

Knowledge management in favor of rural, family and community-based agriculture in Colombian territories has been essential for the achievement and improvements of public policies in favour of this important sector in the country.

Ronaldo Ferraz
FAO Coordinator for the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 Initiative project

PARTNERS: Hungry-Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative 2025, Contribution of the Federative Republic of Brazil through South-South Cooperation: •Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) •Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA) of Brazil •Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) of Colombia •Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) •Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Guatemala •Ministry of Agriculture of El Salvador •Ministry of Agriculture of Honduras •Ministry of Agriculture of Guatemala. Sowing Capacities: •Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) •Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA) of Brazil •Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) of Colombia •Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) •Ministry of Agriculture of El Salvador •Ministry of Agriculture of Honduras •Ministry of Agriculture of Guatemala. •Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisas Agropecuárias (Embrapa) •Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento do Brasil •Ministry of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic •Ministry of Agriculture of Guatemala •Ministry of Agriculture of Honduras •Ministry of Agriculture of El Salvador. •Asociación de Entidades Estudiantiles de Asociación Técnica e Estudiantes Rurales de Guatemala (ASBAREA) •Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (Embrapa) •Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento do Brasil •Ministry of Agriculture of El Salvador •Ministry of Agriculture of Honduras •Ministry of Agriculture of Guatemala •Ministry of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic. •Centro de Estudios en Desarrollo Rural (CEDER) •Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento do Brasil •Ministry of Agriculture of El Salvador •Ministry of Agriculture of Honduras •Ministry of Agriculture of Guatemala •Ministry of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic.
Harvested fruits: Different actors were mobilized by cooperation and have contributed to driving new agroecology and organic production policy cycles and to opening up spaces for family farming in debates on sustainable rural development, with some highly transformative results in Colombia:

Dynamization of Territorial Innovation Systems (STI, by its acronym in Spanish) and contributions to the implementation of the Agroecological Policy.

Law No. 2046 of 2020 | 30 percent of public procurements to be purchased from family farming; impacting more than 3 million Colombian farmers.

Resolution 464 of 2017 | A guiding framework for comprehensive State action to strengthen the social, economic, and political capacities of rural, family and community-based agriculture.

Innovation in times of pandemic

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, new ways to articulate the actors involved in cooperation actions had to come out. The activities planned in the framework of the “Sembrando Capacidades” (Sowing Capacities) project were intensified, exceeding the project’s goals and allowing to share policies and exchange territorial experiences, reaching a much larger number of people involved.

About 50 virtual events were organized, with the participation of more than seven thousand people and the production of an extensive technical and communicational material, which is available in the repository created by the project.
As one of the 20 most significant commodities on the world market in terms of value, cotton is strategic in developing countries. In Latin America and the Caribbean, cotton production involves family farming as an important actor for sustainable development. Family farmers produce from the perspective of diversified agri-food systems where cotton occupies a central position for income generation. This production modality takes into account factors that influence the promotion of environmental preservation and healthy eating, such as access to land, water, and means of production, processing methods, supply, commercialization and distribution, as well as the choice, preparation, and consumption of food, and the generation and destination of residues. With this differential, cotton cultivation in the region plays an important role in fostering better living conditions among farming families, besides being an essential activity to promote food and nutrition security and to fight hunger and poverty.

Cotton cultivation in the Latin American and Caribbean region dates back thousands of years. Data from the +Cotton project indicate that in 2019, out of the more than 130,000 cotton growers in Latin America, 73% are family farmers.

The foundation for building the +Cotton project, which began in 2013, is based on Brazil’s successful experience in cotton production, the world’s second largest exporter and fourth largest producer, according to the Brazilian Association of Cotton Producers (Abrapa).

The connection of these farmers to sustainable markets has been the focus of regional and national cooperation efforts, promoting products and co-products of the “agro-textile-fabrics system” while strengthening family farming, enabling the generation of income for thousands of families. The actions cross borders and drive the strengthening of the cotton chain in partner countries, focusing on the sustainable production of cotton fiber.

Inclusion of youth and women cotton farmers and access to differentiated markets

Some of the activities integrated to cotton crops carried out by rural women cotton farmers: rescue of native seeds and seed production, planting and cultivating cotton (especially the colored variety), artisanal crafts, animal husbandry, and family food security through intercropping.

The gender approach is one of the priorities of the +Cotton project, besides other equally important ones, such as indigenous people, rural youth, and resilience to climate change. The project’s activities include training these groups for the differentiated cotton market which values the production that comes from family farming.

In Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, around 700 artisan women and their organizations have already received training in business plans, market access and product improvement.

In Paraguay and Colombia, 700 young students have been trained under the +Cotton project.

In Peru, more than 5,000 pima cotton-producing families, organized under the COSTACH cooperative, are taking part in a pioneering pilot project in Latin America to register information, transactions, and traceability of lint production and transparency in the region’s textile industry through a blockchain initiative. Via the +Cotton project, the cooperative receives advice on markets and support for this pilot.

The +Cotton project is an initiative that respects the characteristics of each country in which the exchange of Brazilian experiences takes place; these experiences are adapted according to the local reality and characteristics, thereby building up on the knowledge of each region.
Technological innovation and the challenges arising from the pandemic

Technological innovation is present in the projects implemented in each partner country under the regional +Cotton initiative. To name a few, the use of drones in Ecuador, a machine prototype for family farming developed by Embrapa Cotton, mechanized harvesting in Peru, cotton ginning machines in Paraguay and Ecuador, and small machines to process cotton for artisanal crafts in Colombia and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, innovative methodological alternatives applied to cooperation experiences helped the project to know the effects of the crisis in participating countries. Through digital tools, information was taken and brought from the field, especially for the maintenance of remote technical assistance and rural extension to family farmers.

The LazosApp platform, driven by the +Cotton project and the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM, by its acronym in Portuguese) of Brazil, is an example of innovation that gained even more importance during the pandemic. The initiative bridges the digital gaps in the rural sector and aims to promote innovation in agricultural practices among family farmers and rural youth in Latin America. The action has reached rural youth in three agricultural schools in Paraguay and is now reaching Ecuador and Colombia.

Innovation also defines the horizontal management model implemented by +Cotton, between ABC, FAO and the countries, building the necessary references for the implementation of trilateral South-South cooperation projects through knowledge sharing and participative construction of the project implementation process.

With the support of the +Cotton project, carried out in the framework of the Brazil-FAO cooperation, countries are moving forward in formulating national plans for cotton and improving their competitiveness strategies.

The +Cotton project supported the elaboration of the National Programme for Bolivian cotton production, approved by the Ministry of Rural and Land Development (MDRyT, by its acronym in Spanish) in 2021. The CCA-348 Mandiyuti seed was replicated, in support of the Center for Tropical Agricultural Research (CIAT, by its acronym in Spanish) and is available for the cotton sector.

The project supported the development of a plan to strengthen the national capacity for cotton research and extension, as well as the establishment of the national ATER desk. The Brazilian cotton variety BRS 336, from Embrapa Cotton, was also validated, with positive results in terms of adaptation and productivity.

The cotton trading desk was reactivated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG, by its acronym in Spanish) and the Inter-institutional Technical Team (ETI, by its acronym in Spanish) was formed. Five white and three colored cotton varieties from Embrapa Cotton were validated, contributing to the exchange between the countries.

The project supported the elaboration of the National Cotton Plan, under the leadership of the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Irrigation (MIDAGRI).

Cotton has positioned itself as one of the government’s ten priority crops in the National Development Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR, by its acronym in Spanish).
Producing food involves preparing the land, choosing and caring for the seed, so that it sprouts and develops to its full potential. These are actions the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme cares for. The creation of spaces for dialogue with the different stakeholders — civil society, international organizations, governments, the private sector, parliaments, and academia — is an appropriate environment to cultivate ideas and overcome obstacles in the face of shared problems.

The Brazilian experience of the last few decades, filled with a set of programmes and public policies aimed at strengthening family farming, has been seen as a reference and inspiration among the other countries in the region.

These initiatives have served to make cooperation actions more convergent in the region, as they open spaces for the participation of civil society organizations in the design, management and evaluation of public policies for family farming.

Among the outcomes, it is worth highlighting the strengthening of the agenda of the Mercosur Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF/Mercosur), the support to the establishment an Alliance for Food Sovereignty (a platform for political dialogue between sectors of rural and urban areas), the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Working Group on Family Farming, and the contribution to the adoption of a regional agenda focused on gender policies.

The following projects illustrate the environment of shared construction: "Strengthening the dialogue between FAO, Governments and Civil Society" (2008 to 2018), and "Strengthening Family Farming and Agrarian Reform Settlers in the Region: Pathways to Sustainable Development" (ongoing project).

People articulating around common problems through the application of innovative technologies strengthens the region politically. Following the example of Brazil, which used to treat agriculture as a sectorial problem, since 2000, with the approval of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), it began to be considered a political issue.
Family farming and the Road to Sustainable Development Goals

In order to keep strengthening family farming policies towards the achievement of the SDGs, the project’s current stage aims to support capacity building of the technical and managerial staff of government, institutions and farmers’ representations for the development of differentiated policies for the sector. An extensive exchange of knowledge takes place through the exchange of experiences and best practices, and the generation of evidence on policies and programmes that have facilitated market access and services for family farming.

The implementation of these projects within the framework of Trilateral South-South Cooperation considers the importance of regional space as a place to build opinions and consensus for decision-making.

Pedro Boareto
FAO Coordinator for FAO/INCRA and FAO/MAPA Projects

From dialogue to practice | outcomes that have impacted production improvement in the LAC region

- Creation of family farmer national registries, public procurement from family farming.
- Land tenure regulations and control.
- Educational programmes for the rural youth.
- Gender equality policies with a focus on rural women.
- Dissemination of laws for the protection of family farmers in case of environmental or climate disasters.
Fighting hunger and ensuring food and nutrition security in all its forms
Brazil is a world reference in school feeding policies. A distinction earned thanks to the historic decision to link this issue to the Human Right to Adequate Food and the initiative to strengthen the role of family farming as a key player in supplying healthy food to schools.

Brazil’s commitment to support other countries in strengthening their School Feeding Policies results from the understanding of the importance of this structuring tool in building a sustainable world that respects the right of all to adequate and healthy food.

The results achieved by the projects “Strengthening School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean” (2009 to 2018), and “Consolidation of School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean” (since 2018), under the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme, reaffirm this commitment.

The year 2009 represented a historic milestone for school feeding in Brazil. The transformation became effective when the vision of food as a right was extended to all students in primary education and started to occupy the centre of a national policy, with the enactment of the specific Law on School Feeding (SF). An important step towards significant advances in education and health in the country, especially in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Another major innovation of the Law on SF was the purchase of food produced by family farming to be served in schools. Since then, the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) determines that at least 30 percent of these items must come from this important productive sector.

Brazil’s National SF Policy guarantees, with the same public funding allocated, higher quality food served to students (more than 40 million people — children, youth, and adults — in 150 000 public schools, representing almost half of the total number of students served in the whole LAC region), improved income and living conditions for those who produce the food (more than 4 million farming families), and incentives to the local economy, through public purchases in short commercialization circuits (5 570 municipalities throughout the country).

This successful experience in Brazil has crossed borders and gained repercussion throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. As of 2009, the demand for technical cooperation on School Feeding has intensified, especially since it is a multi-sectoral and cross-cutting policy in the fight against poverty and other social issues.

When facing the challenge of ending hunger, and since Brazil can contribute to other countries structuring their own School Feeding policies, there is no other path left to take than that of Cooperation.

Karine dos Santos
General Coordinator of the National School Feeding Programme of FNDE/Brazil

PARTNERS | Strengthening School Feeding Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean and Consolidation of School Feeding Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean:
• Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC)
• National Education Development Fund of the Ministry of Education in Brazil (FNDE/MEC)
• Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with the participation and continuous support of the countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean.
Fighting obesity and overweight

Knowing how to make healthy food choices, not only for oneself but also for the benefit of future generations and the planet, is an aspiration aligned with the SDGs. Individual attitudes collectively contribute to better nutrition, better production, a better environment, and, consequently, a better life for everyone.

The LAC region faces many challenges in making healthy food available to everyone. The most expensive region to eat healthily also has eight out of ten people overweight or obese. This reflects the lack of access to healthy diets and the low quality of the food, especially among the most vulnerable population.

Brazil-FAO cooperation actions on school feeding emerge as an essential strategy to reverse this worrying picture, especially among the most vulnerable population. Altogether, the School Feeding Programmes implemented in the region serve about 85 million people — children, young people and adults who find at school a valuable opportunity to access adequate food.

A regulatory framework for Brazil’s Law on SF, published in 2022, established that 75 percent of the items purchased for School Feeding must be either fresh or minimally processed foods. A State action that reaffirms, based on the law, the importance of offering healthy food to students and of strengthening family farming to meet this demand.

Institutionality, permanence and sustainability of the School Feeding Policy

Supporting the drafting and implementation of a law on school feeding at the national level is paramount to strengthen the institutionality, permanence and sustainability of the actions intended at local level. This is how school feeding is consolidated as a State policy, guaranteeing, among other benefits, the resources for its execution. The initiatives of this cooperation support the partner countries to move forward in this regard. Since the project began in the region, six countries have passed their laws on school feeding: Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Pandemics

At school or at home, adequate food is everyone’s right

The COVID-19 pandemic brought social isolation and, with it, the challenge of continuing to feed, adequately and healthily, the students in their homes. In Brazil, the role of school feeding as a State policy was once again decisive. The food, until then prepared and served in the school environment, started to be distributed in the form of kits delivered to the students’ families.

This required rapid adaptation, both of the law and logistics, as well as a shared action of the different levels of government — federal, state and municipal — and an intense participation of the school community. The unprecedented experience was quickly shared with the other countries through the direct channel established in the cooperation actions. The innovation in the potential use of virtual tools — webinars, remote meetings and training sessions — allowed for a qualified and exponential outreach to the cooperation’s target audience.

One of the highlights was the participation of 21 countries in dialogues and debates about the permanence of SF supply during the pandemic.

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The Sustainable School Feeding Network (RAES, by its acronym in Portuguese) is one more response from Brazil to the global commitment to improving food quality and promoting a healthier and more sustainable food system worldwide. Conceived in 2018, as part of the project “Consolidation of School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean”, RAES is a permanent space for dialogue between countries, in which experiences, best practices, and actions to strengthen school feeding programs are shared, even in times of pandemic.

Every day in schools, Brazil feeds more than 41 million students with quality and efficiency. Added to this challenge, the country has made itself available to dialogue with other countries. This joint construction is based on the understanding that everyone can have adequate and healthy school meals. Partner countries have responded positively in this dialogue process.

Najla Veloso
Coordinator of the project Consolidation of School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean

The year 2009 was marked by a strong recession at the global level, resulting from the effects of the global financial crisis that began in 2007. The same year, in Rome, at the World Summit on Food Security, FAO insisted on the international commitment to eradicate hunger from the face of the Earth by 2025. A position defended by several actors worldwide, opening space for new partnerships or reinforcing existing ones towards common objectives: eradicate poverty, hunger, and reduce malnutrition.

In Brazil, the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme gave rise to several actions and projects. Among them, the initiative “Support for National and Subregional Strategies for Food and Nutritional Security and Overcoming Poverty in Countries of Latin America and Caribbean” [2008 to 2018].

The cooperation between the Government of Brazil, FAO and partner countries was an incentive to share experiences and lessons learned, benefiting from the comparative advantages and synergies between the parties to increase the scale of South-South cooperation initiatives and favour actions with greater impact.

A strong multi-sectoral articulation with the government of the countries resulted in strengthening the institutions responsible for Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) policies. At the centre of this effort was the support to the implementation and monitoring of FNS agendas, strengthening the link between governments and civil society towards a more integrated action in the region.

Based on the principle of complementarity of trilateral South-South cooperation, some actions were added to other projects and initiatives of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme, such as the Strengthening of School Feeding Programmes in the LAC region, the Mercosur Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF Mercosur), and the Parliamentary Fronts Against Hunger.
State institutions in LAC countries focused on the issues of Food and Nutrition Security and overcoming poverty

- Definition of the conceptual framework for family farming.
- Support for the institutionalization of spaces for dialogue with the civil society.
- Support for legal and normative frameworks on FNS.
- Support for the design of “Public purchases from family farming” (2014-2015).
- Support for the drafting of “Public purchases from family farming for School Feeding”: PROALIMENTOS Programme (2015).
- Advice and technical assistance in the creation of spaces for dialogue with civil society, aimed at designing and implementing public policies for food and nutrition security.

Food and Nutrition Security in the political agenda of the countries in the region

Outlines for the construction of new scenarios

Without disregarding the cooperation principle of respecting the countries’ sovereignty, their specificities and rhythms, and coordinating actions jointly, based on local realities, the project contributed to:

- Raise awareness of national actors on food insecurity paradigms; promote a gender approach in FNS policies and its instruments.
- Reinforce the importance of multisectoral work, monitoring and evaluation of FNS policies.
- Build capacity to measure the state of food insecurity, through training for the implementation of the Latin American and Caribbean Food Security Scale (ELCSA, by its acronym in Spanish).
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More efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems, sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems
Food, environment and health are interconnected in the quest for a better life. It is not enough to eat. It is necessary to eat based on healthy, sustainable, and regular choices. This is why SDG 2 includes "Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture", a perspective that takes into account the production of healthy food and a sustainable use of land and other natural resources.

To achieve this goal, Brazil needs to overcome the challenges of a continental-sized territory (8,516,000 km²) with enormous biodiversity. Added to this is the cultural diversity of its inhabitants — more than 210 million people with varied lifestyles, realities and needs.

In recent years, Brazil has been seeking ways to achieve a federal public governance capable of integrating the different agendas of sustainable development: environment, food production and sustainable consumption, access to land and food as a right for everyone.

The Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme is organizing demands, bringing together experiences, and systematizing knowledge and know-how to help this process. In a shared way, with a focus on improving the governance of natural resources, the knowledge produced has been used to design and implement public policies that contribute to adequate use of land and marine space.

In LAC, positive experiences have served as examples for other countries, within the framework of trilateral South-South cooperation. The project "Strengthening Agro-Environmental Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean through Dialogue and the Exchange of National Experiences" [2012 to 2018], reinforced the role of agro-environmental public policies as tools for reducing rural poverty and food insecurity.

The eradication of hunger is a constant task of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme until Zero Hunger in LAC countries is achieved, as foreseen in SDG2. With a continually growing population, the region is experiencing increasing pressure on its natural resources, and the impacts of environmental degradation affect the most vulnerable social sectors.

In this challenging scenario, sustainable development is the way forward, where health and environment are intertwined in the search for ways to produce and consume food properly and are a structural part of the agro-environmental analysis.

This requires improving the analysis of different sectoral policies, creating more spaces for dialogue and proposals for public policies that contribute to adequate use of land and marine space.

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Agro-environmental policies versus climate change

Local solutions to a global problem

Addressing common problems at the regional level starts with finding local solutions. The Voluntary Guidelines for Agro-environmental Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean is designed to guide the implementation of sectoral actions and governance systems that strengthen local ownership and social participation, with an impact on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and aquaculture. An instrumental framework that seeks to contribute to the SDGs.

At the 2018 FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, the decision was made to disseminate the Voluntary Guidelines for Agro-Environmental Policies among LAC countries. In a scenario of global changes, this was a way to contribute to improving public policies for sustainable rural development, integrating society, territory, environment, and economy into policies applied from the interaction of different social and institutional actors. Commitments such as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development create a favorable context in the countries for developing and adopting strategic instruments with an agro-environmental focus.

Studies on Agro-Environmental Policies

A “portfolio” of successful experiences in agro-environmental policies to promote food security and fight hunger in the participating countries: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Paraguay.

The orientation of the Brazilian agro-environmental policy seeks to contemplate multiple objectives: improving productivity and food security, fighting poverty, and promoting environmental conservation. The agro-environmental strategy is built from normative bases on which programmes are constructed focusing on productive, social and environmental goals.

By Chile gradually incorporates the concepts of sustainability, clean production, equity and quality into the forestry and agricultural sector. The agro-environmental approach in the policies implemented in the country addresses the basic pillars of regulation in the agriculture and forestry sector.

In Costa Rica, numerous agro-environmental public policy instruments in the country incorporate the challenges of climate change, food security, ecosystem goods and services, watershed management, and land use planning and management, among others. The systematized experiences have resulted in transformative processes for agriculture.

In Colombia, agricultural policy instruments are increasingly incorporating the environmental dimension, recognizing that environmental services are decisive for the productivity and long-term sustainability of agriculture.

In Mexico, an emphasis is put on agrobiodiversity resources and traditional agricultural knowledge in different forms of land use. Traditional production systems contribute to guarantee food sovereignty, promote rural development and fight poverty in both rural and urban areas.

Development programme implemented in the Paraguayan agricultural sector are beginning to include a cross-cutting component in environmental issues, addressing the issue of sustainable rural development from a damage-mitigation standpoint (soil degradation, climate change, production versus preservation of natural resources, management of forestry systems, etc.).

In Panama, the agricultural production with an agro-environmental focus, territorial and environmental planning guarantees a territorial balance between the use of natural resources (land, water, soil) and their conservation, focusing on the population’s well-being, the maintenance of sustainability and the competitiveness of agricultural production.

In Cuba, the agricultural and environmental sectors have come together, achieving even more relevant results. The agroecological movement has reorganized agricultural production and family farming, allowing the development of new scenarios with biological, productive, economic, energy, and environmental efficiency.

In Nicaragua, agricultural policy instruments are increasing the environmental dimension, recognizing that environmental services are decisive for the productivity and long-term sustainability of agriculture.

In Panama, the agricultural production with an agro-environmental focus, territorial and environmental planning guarantees a territorial balance between the use of natural resources (land, water, soil) and their conservation, focusing on the population’s well-being, the maintenance of sustainability and the competitiveness of agricultural production.

The project has created an integrated vision that guides discussions in the areas of food production, food security, and the environment. It is essential to strengthen capacities, identifying the needs for inclusive institutional development, governance, and governability, which are key factors for the implementation of agro-environmental policies.

Jéssica Casaza
FAO Coordinator for the project “Strengthening Agro-Environmental Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean”
A network for Aquaculture in the Americas

Despite being the fastest growing agri-food sector in the world and with huge potential for expansion in Latin America and the Caribbean, aquaculture has been impacted by the climate crisis and the interruption of production and consumption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiatives to strengthen this activity are critical for sustainable development in order to contribute to the fight against hunger and poverty in the region.

Created in 2010, at the initiative of the Brazilian Government by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Aquaculture Network of the Americas (RAA, by its acronym in Spanish), which initially brought together 20 countries, was an important tool for the sustainable development of this sector.

The work of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme, through the “Activation of Services and Consolidation of the Aquaculture Network of the Americas” project, further strengthened the actions of the Network, facilitating its operation as an independent body. In coordination with the region’s governments, the work addressed the requests for information on best aquaculture practices; access to markets; value chains; institutional strengthening and normative development; incorporation of under-resourced population strata — such as women and indigenous peoples.

As part of the project, the Regional Programme for the Construction and Operation of Demonstrative Agri-Aquaculture Farms (“Programa Regional de Construcción y Operación de Granjas Agro-Acuícolas Demonstrativas”) was implemented to strengthen the capacities of “resource-restricted aquaculture producers” (AREL, by its acronym in Spanish) and micro and small-scale aquaculture producers (AMyPE, by its acronym in Spanish) in LAC countries. A cooperation initiative involving Brazil, FAO, and the governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, and Paraguay.

Antigua and Barbuda | response to environmental issues

In 2008, Hurricane Omar traveled an unusual path in the western Caribbean Sea, affecting Puerto Rico, Sotavento Islands, Montserrat, and Venezuela. In response to the damage caused, especially in the agricultural sector, within the framework of the “Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture” goal, training was provided to extensionists for the construction of Demonstrative Agri-Aquaculture Farms. Results include, among others, an increase in awareness and interest in fish consumption in bars, hotels, and restaurants on the island.

Colombia | response to gender and value chain issues

The establishment of Demonstrative Agri-Aquaculture Farms with the participation of women fish farmers brought innovations to the tilapia value chain, with the processing and use of fish skin for high quality by-products. The project contributed to increase business and environmental awareness.

Costa Rica | strengthening farmers settled under the Agrarian Reform

Demonstrative Agri-Aquaculture Farms were established with the participation of the Llano Bonito de Guatuso rural settlement, an area rich in springs, with rivers and tributaries that originate in the Sierra Volcanic region of Guanacaste. Strengthening technical capacities for cultivation and developing basic managerial and commercialization skills are examples of noteworthy results.

Guatemala | food security for indigenous people

The Agri-Aquaculture Demonstration Farms have contributed to tackling food insecurity and the high levels of exclusion of the indigenous population, especially in rural areas, to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and strengthen rural economy. As a result, the units continue to operate as Learning Centres for Rural Development, integrated to the National Rural Extension System.
Responsible Governance | Of Land Tenure in Latin America and the Caribbean

For family farming to fully unfold its vocation to produce food and contribute locally to food security while generating jobs, income and local development with inclusiveness and guaranteeing a better life for thousands of families, these must have the right to access land.

Since its adoption in May 2012, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, negotiated at the Committee on World Food Security by the Council of Representatives of Member Nations, civil society and the private sector, has been used in the LAC region as a tool to address these challenges.

In 2017, the High-Level Meeting on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fishing and Forests in the LAC region, was organized by FAO and the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform of Brazil (INCRA, by its acronym in Portuguese). The need to move forward regarding land management systems, institutional strengthening, reduction of gender and youth gaps in access to natural resources, and concrete mechanisms for South-South cooperation between the countries were highlighted issues.

The operational response came with the project called “Support for the strengthening of responsible governance of tenure in the Americas”, a joint initiative between FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency and INCRA, in the framework of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme. The project relates to local challenges through the support to activities for the implementation of the Guidelines at regional and national levels. As part of its main objectives, the project aims to assist in developing tools for land and natural resources management through technological innovation and institutional strengthening.

In 2021, the cycle of exchanges on Technological Solutions for Land Management (“Soluciones Tecnológicas para la Administración de Tierras”), carried out in three virtual events, presented an overview on the subject considering the regional scenario. This cycle was an expressive contribution in identifying measures and solutions with potential for replication in the different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and promoting dialogues for building a joint action agenda on the subject.

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Land tenure governance in LAC countries is facing historic challenges, such as unequal access to, and management of natural resources, high level of informality in land tenure, and limited access to natural resources for marginalized groups of population (women, indigenous peoples, the youth and smallholder farmers).

A cooperation project is efficient when it helps to build strong relationships between the technology and knowledge providers and the recipients, so that it is not just a one-off effort.

Alan Bojanic
FAO Representative in Colombia

PARTNERS | Support for the Strengthening of Responsible Governance for Land Ownership:
•Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC)
•Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA) do Brasil
•Organização das Nações Unidas para a Alimentação e a Agricultura (FAO).

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