



Effects of the Reduction of the Food Purchase Program Resources for the Family Farmer

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ABSTRACT: The Food Acquisition Program (FAP) created in 2003 during the first term of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva represents a change in the way family farmers are benefited. However, in the period of 2019-2022 (Bolsonaro's Government) the setback in the implementation of social policies, which began during President Dilma Rousseff's second term, worsened. In this context, this article sought to investigate the effects of the partial implementation of the FAP on the lives of family farmers in the municipality of Maracanaú-CE in that period. This is an excerpt from the dissertation "Evaluation of the Municipal Food and Nutrition Security Policy in the Municipality of Maracanaú-Ceará", which was developed through a Fourth Generation Assessment from February to November 2022, using the Hermeneutic Circle Dialectic. The informants were family farmers benefiting from the program. Empirical data were constructed through individual semi-structured interviews, field observation and field diary, which allowed creating the empirical categories: Benefit of participating in the FAP; Challenges for maintaining family farming in recent years and Support from municipal managers to family farmers. The study concluded that the partial execution of the FAP due to the reduction in the transfer of federal resources had effects regarding the guarantee of sales, the reduction of sales and the value of products, on the conditions for purchasing equipment and supplies. This situation was worsened by insufficient support from municipal management in terms of providing resources and technical assistance, which generated instability in the segment and discouraged people from continuing with family farming. These findings allow us to reflect on the importance of the FAP to keep family farmers in the field, generate security and stability, and promote quality of life not only for the segment, but for consumers who seek healthy food produced in a sustainable way.

KEYWORDS: Food Acquisition Program, Family Farming, National Food and Nutritional Security Policy.

INTRODUCTION

The Food Acquisition Program (FAP) created in the first term of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2003, through Law N. 10,696, has as its main objectives to promote access to adequate food, encourage family farming and promote food supply through the formation of strategic stocks [1].

The FAP represents a change in the way family farmers (FF) are benefitted, characterizing itself as a structuring program by acting in the implementation of actions within the scope of agricultural policies, favoring the inclusion of small producers by guaranteeing the purchase of production, and promoting food security and nutrition of people in social vulnerability [2,3,4]. This occurs through the distribution of family farming products through the social assistance network and the inclusion of these products into some institutional programs such as the National School Feeding Program (PNAE, *Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar*), which by law must invest 30% of its resources in the states and municipalities in the purchase of family farming products [5].

Therefore, by guaranteeing a sales market through government purchases, the FAP reduces the risk of arrears for small credit-borrowing farmers, making up for the lack of structuring public policies for family farming, characterizing itself as an important marketing channel for products in this segment, as well as generating improvements in the production and organizational process [6].

These aspects highlight the character of the FAP as a decisive measure for improving the income of small farmers and strengthening other Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) policy actions, such as encouraging the consumption of foods without pesticides and with better nutritional value [7,8,9].

Hence, considering the structural causes of hunger in Brazil, the FAP contributes to the effectiveness of the FNS policy, since it is related to the policy's ability to transform the primary causes of the problem using structuring actions, that is, capable of



reversing the situation of food insecurity for the individual, the social group and the country through potential impacts on the causes of food insecurity, whether they are political, economic, social or cultural in nature [10].

In accordance with its objectives, the FAP benefits two audiences: consumers, characterized as individuals in a situation of food and nutritional insecurity served by the social assistance network, and suppliers benefiting from Law N. 11,326, of July 24, 2006, namely family farmers able to provide food to the FAP, fish farmers, foresters, extractivists and artisanal fishermen, indigenous peoples, remnants of rural *quilombolas* and other traditional peoples and communities in accordance with criteria established in specific regulations [6,11]. Thus, the FAP includes population groups that are historically invisible to public policies as beneficiaries. Access to the program by supplier beneficiaries requires the presentation of two documents, the Individual Taxpayer Registration (CPF, *Cadastro de Pessoa Física*) and the Pronaf Declaration of Aptitude (DAP, *Declaração de Aptidão do Pronaf*) [6].

However, in the period 2019-2022 (Bolsonaro's Government) the setback in social policies, which began during President Dilma Rousseff's second term and worsened after her impeachment with the approval of Constitutional Amendment number 95/167.[12], had consequences for the National Food and Nutritional Security Policy (PNSAN, *Política Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional*) with the significant reduction in resources in the Government's budget and consequent partial execution of several programs, such as the FAP and the PNAE, and the extinction/replacement of others, such as the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Policy and the Productive Inclusion Program for Women [13].

The devaluation of family farming in the period is evident, given the vetoes of Bills n. 735/2020 and 823/2021, which provided for emergency aid for family farming with proposals for development, credit, agricultural insurance and an emergency public purchase proposal. Furthermore, in the aforementioned scenario, agriculture was classified as small, medium and large, denoting the government's denial of the existence of family farming, classifying it by size [13].

In this context, this article sought to investigate the effects of the partial implementation of the Food Acquisition Program on the lives of family farmers in the municipality of Maracanaú, state of Ceará, Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

This study is an excerpt from the dissertation "Evaluation of the Municipal Food and Nutrition Security Policy in the Municipality of Maracanaú-Ceará", which was developed through a Fourth-Generation Assessment (AQG, *Avaliação de Quarta Geração*) from February to November 2022.

The study scenario was the municipality of Maracanaú, state of Ceará, Brazil, chosen for its leading role in structuring the local National Food and Nutritional Security System (SISAN, *Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional*), being the first municipality in Ceará to create the Municipal Food and Nutritional Security Plan [14], and above all, for its effort to maintain the continuity of FNS actions, despite setbacks at the national level.

Maracanaú is part of the Metropolitan region of the city of Fortaleza, the state capital city, and has an estimated population of approximately 230,000 inhabitants, geographically divided into three districts: Maracanaú, Pajuçara and Mucunã [15]. The municipality is the largest industrial hub in Ceará, with approximately 175 industries from different sectors, being the third Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the state [15]. However, even though it is a municipality with great employment opportunities, many social inequalities still persist, with almost 60% of the population included in the Federal Government's Social Benefit Registry [15].

The larger study included four groups of interest: family farmers benefiting from the FAP; managers and technicians involved with the implementation and execution of FNS policy programs, projects and actions in the municipality; and users of FNS equipment and social assistance network. This excerpt focuses specifically on the group of family farmers and in this group the study had five participants.

The information was constructed through observation in the research field, semi-structured individual interviews, and field diary records.

Initially, field observation was carried out, which was important to familiarize the researcher with the research field [16], which allowed, through direct observation, a greater understanding of the informants' perspectives in addition to the perception of particularities that are not communicated in the interviews. Therefore, a visit was made to the family farmers' plantations. Two



interviews were carried out at the farmers' place of residence/activity and three took place via video calls using the Google Meet tool, as this method showed to be more viable for the informants.

The observation records and some aspects of the interviews were made in the field diary, an instrument that went beyond the record of what was seen and heard, as it also contained personal perceptions about reactions and feelings – in short, the sensations felt and those observed [16].

The AQG method is characterized as a constructivist methodology of which research process involves different constructions from different informants. From these constructions, central ideas emerge that must be appreciated by the group of informants, a process that results in new information and increased levels of clarification, allowing maximum consensus. In AQG, the parameters evaluated are the claims, concerns and questions (CCQ) brought by the individuals participating in the assessment, understanding the claims as favorable constructions, the concerns as negative statements and the questions as disagreements between the informants about the assessed object [16,17,18].

To carry out the AQG, the dialectical hermeneutic circle (CHD) technique was used according to Guba and Lincoln [17], with adaptations made by Mielke et al. [18] and Wetzel [16]. Following this framework, the operationalization of the CHD started with the selection of the first respondent (R1), who had a strategic position among family farmers as he was the president of the Menino Jesus de Praga Association, which brings together family farmers of the municipality and, who at the time was the president of the municipal Council for Food and Nutritional Security (CONSEA). The first construction (C1) resulted from the analysis of this initial interview. The same interview was then carried out with the second informant, or second respondent (R2). During the interview with R2, R1's perceptions were introduced to R2's comments. The analysis of the second interview generated the second construction (C2), and this process was repeated until the interview with the fifth informant (R5), and the achievement of the fifth construction (C5). Thus, the answers of each respondent, in addition to bringing their own conceptions, generated comments/criticisms about the answers/conceptions of the previous informant in a succession that suggests, at the end of the interview process, more substantiated data by aggregating individual conceptions and at the same time what each informant considers about what was said by the other.

During the process of analyzing and interpreting the results, the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) [16,19,20,21] was used. Initially, the information units were identified through the horizontal reading of the interviews and field observation data. By adapting Wetzel's proposition [16], we constructed empirical categories from the identified units, which correspond to the claims and concerns in the AQG nomenclature. According to this nomenclature, we did not identify issues exposed by the informants.

The statements that illustrate the results are named FF, followed by the order number in which the interviews were carried out.

The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Ceará (CEP-UECE), CAAE N. 54395721.5.0000.5534 under Opinion number 5.228.571.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The empirical categories created from the information units were: Benefit of participating in the FAP; Challenges for maintaining family farming in recent years and Support from municipal managers to family farmers, then presented and discussed.

Benefit of participating in the FAP

As a favorable construction related to the FAP, it was verified that the main benefit arising from participating in the program is the guaranteed sale of products, generating incentives for family farmers to continue planting and even expand their production.

If I work and sell, I have income. If I produce and don't sell, I wither, I can't sell. It was a guaranteed sale (selling to the FAP), although it was little, but you know you have a place to sell (FF1).

At least you planted a lot and had that assured place for you to place (sell to the FAP). We were sure we wouldn't have the product go to waste (FF2).

During the years when the FAP was in operation, it was very good for the farmer. Before it was more difficult, because the PNAE sometimes didn't exist and as the PNAE is mostly bought by co-ops because



without the co-op the common farmer can't do it. The FAP strengthens, it has greatly improved people's lives (FF1).

For us it was and is wonderful, we are eagerly waiting for it to return because it is stopped and it is an income that we have (FF4).

The acknowledgement of the sales guarantee as a benefit of the FAP was also identified in the study by Perin et al. [22], who associated the role of the program in the commercialization and guaranteed sale of family farming products, increasing agricultural production in this segment and investment in the production and acquisition of goods.

This is a crucial point, according to Mota et al. [23] the reality of most family farmers is the non-sale or insufficient sale of their products because they do not have enough marketing places where they can sell their production. Thus, by accessing the FAP and having the guarantee of selling their production, family farmers begin to use more production areas and implement new technologies [24].

In this study, the FF mentioned the purchase of equipment with resources from the FAP or from other public programs/projects, which help both their agricultural production and the production of products that add value to it, such as cake and pulp produced by family farmers in the municipality.

This is practically a pulp factory, so there is a pulper. In agriculture it is still manual; I request the tractor from the city hall through the Agriculture department, and sometimes it comes. Our focus today is the production of pulp, cake and vegetables (FF1).

For the cake, I have a mixer, blender and a 12-kg industrial oven (FF3).

As it can be observed, the FAP has shown to be a motivating program for family farming, as it provides improvements and increases in production and increases the chances and conditions for entering new markets and institutional food purchasing programs. This reality observed in Maracanaú-CE was also identified in other studies, whose findings show that the program is an instrument to boost family farming and its organizations [25,26,27].

Challenges for maintaining family farming in recent years

As a concern or negative statement regarding the FAP, the FF expressed the consequence of the changes that have occurred in recent years in the central government regarding the investment in social programs in general. Regarding the FAP, the transferred resources gradually decreased, generating negative impacts for the beneficiaries, resulting in a reduction in sales and the value of products and the consequent discouragement of people who have this activity as their main source of income.

And what has discouraged the farmers? They produce and have nowhere to sell, and often when they go and sell they don't find a fair price, so that makes them give up (FF1).

I can do it, but it's been like this for some time now; the value has decreased a lot, and there are certain things that are not worth selling because the price is low. Then, as I already have certain customers because of the organic products, I prefer to sell them to my customers (FF5).

This reality depicts the situation of a segment that for many years has been in the periphery regarding public policies and that received stimulus and motivation with the FAP, given its proposal to structure and improve family farming in the country through the purchase of products at prices above the market value, as a way of stimulating and structuring agricultural production.

This finding is similar to the study carried out by Silva and Mattos [28] in the state of Pernambuco, where family farmers chose to sell their products in other marketing channels, given the low value paid by the FAP.

Evidently, the reduction in federal resources had a negative impact on family farming in Maracanaú, which was potentiated by the municipal management's option to benefit as many farmers as possible. This decision, however, was not accompanied by the funding necessary to achieve the program objectives.



It's only R\$3,500 reais a year, it was supposed to be R\$6,000 and something, this year it was supposed to be R\$7,000. But since there are many farmers and the benefits aren't enough for everyone, what do you do? It is divided, they hold a meeting and it is divided among the farmers, so that more people can benefit (FF3).

This commercialized value is below that reported by other studies that indicate values between R\$6,500.00 and R\$8,000.00, already considered low for each farmer [29,30,31]. According to some studies, this amount does not meet the basic needs of farmers and represents an obstacle to greater adherence to the FAP program [32,33,34].

This discouragement contributes to the abandonment of family farming as a form of survival and the search for other activities that, although do not bring the satisfaction and fulfillment of being the owner of one's own form of production, provides a certain stability:

The FAP was a security for the farmer; at these times I see a lot of farmers giving up because they haven't had it for almost four years. So the farmers leave their field and go to work under a formal contract, earning a minimum wage to support a family. So they completely left their context and went to another area because they were totally ousted, the public policies didn't reach them (FF1).

In recent years, the reduction in resources transferred by the FAP has caused uncertainty among farmers regarding their continuity, generating many concerns, especially among those who have not been able to enter other markets to sell their products [35], which compromises the farmer's and their family's livelihood, because in many cases the resources from the sale of products are an important or even total part of the family income [36,37].

Support from municipal managers to family farmers

This category also emerged as a concern or negative statement among the informants, when asked about the source of resources to maintain their agricultural activities, they mentioned using their own resources and pointed out as a limitation the lack of support from public management, specifically from the Family Farming Secretariat. They understand that it is the role of this department to seek partnerships that guarantee the sale of products and promote the improvement of practiced agricultural techniques, which in practice does not happen.

What's lacking is for the agriculture department to open up new paths, talk to companies that make food here in Maracanaú to establish partnerships with small farmers. There is a lack of dialogue between farmers and businesspeople (FF1).

The resources are really up to us, because there are no resources that offer benefits to us (FF2).

We don't have technical support, not even from Ceara Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company (EMATERCE) or the city hall, much less [...] I think we should have more assistance, although our products have more value because they are organic, I think we deserve to be more assisted, have more guidance, have more help because we need help, but we don't have that help, we are not well assisted (FF5).

These results regarding the difficulties/concerns of family farmers are similar to those found by Jesus et al. [38] in a study carried out in Belém, North Region of the country, and reinforces the historical deprivation of the North and Northeast regions in the field of support and effective public funding of social policies that contribute to their growth and development. This support is a facilitating factor in the commercialization of family farming products, both regarding technical assistance for agricultural practices and in the establishment of partnerships between public authorities and associations or co-ops to fund the acquisition of supplies, machinery, equipment and vehicles [39,40].

The lack of technical assistance in the assessed reality does not only concern agricultural practices; family farmers also resent the lack of this assistance in preparing projects for the FAP, in resource management and accountability, an aspect also listed



here as a difficulty/concern, as the lack of knowledge about management techniques is common in this segment. Studies indicate that incorrectly filling out information limits access to the program and contributes to delayed payments [41,42,43,44,45].

CONCLUSION

In the context of the partial execution of the Food Acquisition Program resulting from the decrease in financial transfers that occurred from 2016 and worsened in the period between 2019-2022, it was found that important contributions of the program to the stability and improvement of the lives of family farmers, such as the guarantee of product sales and conditions for purchasing equipment/supplies suffered setbacks, bringing concerns/difficulties to the segment.

Among these difficulties, the reduction in sales and value of products and the insufficient support from municipal management in the provision of resources and technical assistance, whether regarding agricultural practices or bureaucratic and formal aspects in the creation of projects to request FAP funding stand out.

The FAP is important to keep family farmers in the field, generate security and stability, and promote quality of life not only for the segment, but for consumers who seek healthy food produced in a sustainable way.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that during the field research it was possible to perceive a feeling of hope among farmers related to the change of government at the federal level, as well as the desire for this change that could mean the resumption of the FAP and the strengthening of family farming. The change has occurred and we expect that hope and wishes will be fulfilled.

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Cite this Article: Lizyane Camila Oliveira Vieira, Maria Marlene Marques Ávila (2023). Effects of the Reduction of the Food Purchase Program Resources for the Family Farmer. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 6(12), 8615-8622