**12th May, 2023.**

[**Purpose:**](https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2023/call-input-recovery-covid-pandemic-report) **To inform the Human Rights Council report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, focusing on Recovery from Covid Pandemic**

Contribution from Idec - Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defense

1. **Which government programs and measures were effective during the pandemic in ensuring that people had access to good food? Please identify those measures you think should be expanded and made permanent.**

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly amplified problems that were already underway in Brazil. In addition to the health emergency and inappropriate responses by the former government, we had an increase in inequality with a drop in the purchasing power of families, resulting in more than half (58.7%)[[1]](#footnote-1) of the Brazilian population living with some degree of food insecurity. Brazil went back to the situation experienced in the 1990s. In this context, income transfer programs such as *Bolsa Família* (temporarily renamed *Auxílio Brasil*) were essential to prevent the calamity from becoming widespread and as an anti-cyclical policy, with a multiplier effect on income and stimulus to the economy. Unfortunately, many of the food and nutritional security policies were being weakened or even discontinued, contributing to the tragic outcomes we have had in our country. We can mention the extinction of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Consea), the weakening of the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), among others, which ended up further harming already vulnerable segments.

1. **What specific measures would you like your government to build upon or implement that would enable: 1. A just transition for workers; 2. Strong land/water rights and genuine agrarian reform; or 3. Holding corporations accountable?**

We believe that all these strategies are connected and must be tackled through income distribution policies and the reduction of huge inequalities. Unfortunately, the bases for the transformation of our food systems pass through structural questions built by historical processes of decades of exclusion. Access to land and natural resources is a fundamental issue in the country, marked by a huge concentration of land and wealth. In the same way that it is necessary to guarantee policies to protect decent work, in the rural areas and in the cities, with special attention to women, it is essential to favor policies for income distribution and access to universal fundamental rights such as education and health. It is necessary to oppose the logic of food systems dominated by agribusiness and other corporations, with excessive use of pesticides, valorization of commodities and monocultures, in addition to the low generation of decent jobs.

1. **What government measures or programs can better connect small, local food producers to consumers?**

In 2021, the [Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defense (Idec)](https://idec.org.br/) published the [Agenda for Action](https://alimentandopoliticas.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Agenda-for-Action-FINAL-ENG.pdf), which contains recommendations and proposals to transform current hegemonic food systems. Among the strategies we suggest there is, for example, the [Map of Organic Fairs](https://feirasorganicas.org.br/), a tool that connects small agroecological producers to conscious consumers. In addition to creating ways to avoid one or more intermediaries, it is necessary to allow favorable conditions for production, among the main federal public policies aimed at family farming and small holders, we point out the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (Pronaf), the Guaranty-Safra benefit, the Direct Acquisition Program of Family Agriculture (PAA), the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), and technical assistance and rural extension services[[2]](#footnote-2).

1. **What government measures or programs can better encourage local agroecological practice and movements?**

Also in 2021, Idec promoted a [mass media campaign](https://guiaalimentar.org.br/) for the protection and promotion of the [Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population](https://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/publicacoes/dietary_guidelines_brazilian_population.pdf) (BDG). Although it is a globally recognized policy, the guidelines had suffered constant attacks from sectors contrary to its core messages for sustainable and healthy diets: preferentially consume fresh and minimally processed foods and avoid ultra-processed foods. Idec shares the concepts presented by the [Global Syndemic](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2818%2932822-8/fulltext), we believe that the multiple outcomes of malnutrition - from hunger to obesity and other non-communicable chronic diseases - and climate change, share the same factors and determinants, that is, a transition process of dietary pattern consumption, strongly supported by large corporations, which induce diets high in sodium, fats and sugar, what we called “[corporate diets](https://alimentandopoliticas.org.br/en/2021/11/fian-brazil-and-idec-launch-comics-about-industry-interference-in-food-systems/)”. Just as the BDG, it is the role of the state to implement policies that facilitate access to a healthy diet, in all its aspects: availability, access, utilization and stability. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased vulnerabilities, making it more important for us to be aware of what food is being made available. In Brazil, ultra-processed foods have become cheaper while fresh and minimally processed foods are becoming more expensive, thus driving unhealthy food consumption. Idec[[3]](#footnote-3) urgently defends the creation of fiscal policies and the implementation of nutrition strategies to stimulate the consumption of healthy foods, as presented in this [scientific article](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/public-health-nutrition/article/what-to-expect-from-the-price-of-healthy-and-unhealthy-foods-over-time-the-case-from-brazil/98FE380C358CCD2B25E99FFC7A4A8B9F).

1. **What should an international coordination plan responding to the food crisis and based on the right to food focus on and include?**

Idec fights for the right to adequate and healthy food and believes that this will only become possible through regulatory measures and fiscal policies to incentivize consumption of healthy foods and disincentivize the consumption of ultra-processed foods. We believe that the Latin America and the Caribbean region is standing out for having innovative policies that have already accumulated strong scientific evidence, such as front-of-package warning labels (FoPWL) to indicate to consumers which products contain excessive amounts of nutrients and ingredients of concern; and taxation on less healthy foods and beverages and subsidies on the healthier ones. Not only that, it is essential to regulate environments, protect institutional spaces - such as schools and hospitals - from aggressive marketing strategies, as well as safeguard the processes of formulation and implementation of public policies from the interference of the private sector, especially from the ultra-processed food and beverage industry. We have successful [experiences](https://iris.paho.org/bitstream/handle/10665.2/55055/PAHONMHRF210014_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) that need to gain scale and be widely defended by UN agencies and other actors who value public health. All strategies in this agenda must be guided by the defense of countries' food sovereignty and the human right to food as non-negotiable values. Countries must invest in governance structures that promote the construction and improvement of intersectoral, coordinated and complementary policies, which have public health and social justice as a common vision. The same must be achieved at the multilateral level, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), especially after its reform, is a space to catalyze and strengthen the governance of food systems oriented to the public interest, based on the framework of human rights. It is the CFS that must be strengthened and not multistakeholder initiatives, which do not have a mandate or clear traces as to their donors and multiple interests.

Contact Person:

Lorenza Longhi (e-mail: lorenza.longhi@idec.org.br)

1. https://pesquisassan.net.br/2o-inquerito-nacional-sobre-inseguranca-alimentar-no-contexto-da-pandemia-da-covid-19-no-brasil/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.gov.br/mda/pt-br [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://alimentandopoliticas.org.br/pesquisa/alimentacao-saudavel-sera-mais-cara-do-que-a-nao-saudavel-a-partir-de-2026/#sobre-a-pesquisa [↑](#footnote-ref-3)