

Scaling-up Local Development Initiatives: Brazil's Food Procurement Programme

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Brazil aims to eradicate extreme poverty in the country by scaling-up policy initiatives for 'productive inclusion' and incorporating all extreme poor households into the country's non-contributory social protection scheme. *Brasil sem Miséria* (Brazil without Misery), targets the Brazilian population living below the extreme poverty line of R\$70 (US\$35) a month—approximately 16.2 million people (Gov. of Brazil, 2012). According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) almost 47 per cent of those living below this benchmark are located in rural areas while the Northeastern region of the country has the highest percentage of extreme poverty.

Nehring and McKay (2013) examine Brazil's Food Acquisition Programme (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos*, PAA) and the extent to which it is supporting family agriculture and contributing to increased food security by strengthening local food markets. The PAA is a flexible programme with numerous modalities and implementation structures from the federal to municipal level. PAA also stands as manner for the Government of Brazil's to guarantee access to food in the proper quantity, quality and regularity according to the needs of populations living in food and nutritional insecurity, as well as to promote social inclusion in rural areas by strengthening family agriculture (Chmielewska and Souza, 2010). With this promise in mind, Nehring and McKay thus seek to document the design and operations of the programme, including actors involved in design, implementation and monitoring, and also shed light on the potential for scaling-up the programme both in country and possibilities for South-South knowledge building.

Drawing upon quantitative and qualitative secondary data, as well as primary qualitative data based on field research conducted in Northeastern Brazil in April 2012—a region with the highest proportion of extreme poverty in the country and where one in four rural households live on just over US\$1/day (US\$35/month) (Gov. of Brazil, 2012)—the authors seek specifically to investigate the implementation and potential for scaling-up of the Direct Purchase with Simultaneous Donation (*Compra para Doação Simultânea*, CDS) modality, which comprises of over 80 per cent of all PAA purchases (Nehring and McKay, 2013). They observed the PAA-CDS modality in the Northeastern states of Piauí and Ceará, which have some of the highest levels of rural poverty and inequality in the country. Their interviews ranged from federal policymakers to local food producers selling through the PAA. At the state level, Nehring and McKay engaged with the implementation of the programme and interacted with municipal managers as well as institutions receiving food through the PAA.

While most of the programme's benefits appear to go to the producers many other outcomes were observed to improve the local economy and municipal participation. The authors noticed that when the municipal government was involved with the organization of the programme, there were unintended results that strengthened farmer cooperation, municipal engagement and

market knowledge. The PAA projects provide a mechanism of governance to connect food insecure populations with their municipal government while also integrating the participation of local producers in the programme, and by extension, establishing linkages between stakeholders; urban-rural and citizens-policy makers. Further, by establishing a price reference, the PAA allows producers to be aware of local, fair prices for their produce and organize production around an assured and consistent market, reducing uncertainty.

Based on their research findings, Nehring and McKay highlight four key issues that need to be carefully and rigorously considered to not only strengthen and scale-up the PAA, but potentially for other food procurement programmes: (1) Targeting and coverage; (2) timely payment delivery; (3) organization of farmer capacities; and (4) transportation. These issues, both collectively and individually, represent common weaknesses identified by family farmers and community leaders participating in the PAA in Brazil's Northeast.

The PAA operates a relatively small annual budget (currently around US\$500 million) and is a more than viable option for the Government to strengthen smallholder production and incorporate them into local, and even national, economies. Current expansion under *Brasil sem Miséria* has introduced a new payment method via a debit card (overcoming some issues with payment delays in the past) and the programme's budget continues to expand each year. This expansion has the potential to increase the programme's exposure and perhaps integrate the PAA into the national food supply chain that establishes local integration of production and consumption.

To scale-up the PAA, Nehring and McKay offer a framework for expansion based on three different pathways, all of which can work in a synergistic and complementary manner: a 'horizontal' expansion would require covering new areas across the country; a 'vertical' expansion refers to increasing the institutional capacities across local, state, and national levels; and a 'functional' expansion represents the potential for new modalities and/or strengthening existing ones to increase participation.

Scaling-up the PAA is, and should continue to be, a priority of *Brasil sem Miséria*, on its productive inclusion dimension, to not only alleviate hunger and malnutrition, but also to strengthen the productive capacity of family farmers and to create more resilient and sustainable localized food systems.

References:

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