

The National Council for Food and Nutrition Security: dynamics and agenda (2006-2016)

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Abstract *Food insecurity is a worldwide public health problem. In Brazil, the configuration of a Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) policy has gained prominence in the government agenda since 1980. We highlight the creation of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) aiming at articulation between sectors and social participation. This article examines the role of CONSEA in coordinating FNS policy in Brazil from 2006 to 2016. The research was based on the approaches of historical institutionalism and used the dynamics of action and the CONSEA agenda as axes of analysis. The methodological strategies carried out were: bibliographic review, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. It was observed that CONSEA was marked by an expressive performance by civil society and variable participation of government representatives. Regarding the agenda, conflicting topics were much debated, but had little impact on the adoption of legal and normative measures. It is concluded that the strengthening of CONSEA, combined with the confrontation of economic interests, adequate financing and the performance of the State in social protection, are essential for overcoming challenges, implementing the FNS policy and promoting the health of the population.*

Key words *Food and Nutrition Security, Public Policies, Intersectoral Collaboration and Social Participation*

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Introduction

Food insecurity affects the population unequally and is related to health conditions such as malnutrition, overweight, obesity and chronic non-communicable diseases¹. The topic has been featured in the areas of health, nutrition and social sciences and has been included in the public policy agenda of several countries².

Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) policies has shown a fragmented path in Brazil³. Within the context of redemocratization, the I National Conference on Food and Nutrition, held in 1986, mobilized many organizations in society, including academics and professionals. In the subsequent decades, under a new legal constitutional framework, there have been changes in Food and Nutrition policies, highlighting the configuration of the conception of Food and Nutrition Security, the consensus around the Human Right to Adequate Food (DHAA), the creation of a supra-sectoral national council and the appreciation of intersectoriality⁴.

Intersectionality is essential in FNS policies, which cover various sectors of the economy and different social actors, including production, supply, marketing, food access and consumption. In view of this complexity, institutional coordination mechanisms between areas have been developed to ensure the implementation of policies⁵.

We highlight the creation of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), in 1993, as an advisory body tied to the Presidency of the Republic, being a space for intersectoral liaison and negotiation between the State and civil society in the development of policies in this area⁶. At first, CONSEA promoted the approach between government sectors and society, combining political pact and social control³. However, it faced constraints and limits for effective action, largely due to the restrictive panorama of public spending, culminating in its revocation by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1995⁷. Later, in 2003, during the first mandate of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, CONSEA was re-created, maintaining the same characteristics, with the majority participation of civil society and representation from various ministries⁸.

With regard to the National FNS Policy, the Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security, established in 2006 in a participatory way, represented the enshrinement of a comprehensive and intersectoral concept of the policy, in addition to enshrining the principles that guide it:

universality, autonomy and respect for human dignity; social participation and transparency⁹. The Law established the National FNS Policy and the National FNS System, comprising CONSEA, Conferences, the Intersectoral Chamber for Food and Nutrition Security (CAISAN), private institutions and a set of agencies and entities from different sectors at all levels of government. It also defined CONSEA's attributions in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, in accordance with the National Conferences on FNS, including the proposal of guidelines for the National Plan for Food and Nutrition Security (PLANSAN) to CAISAN¹⁰. In this regard, it expressed concern about the institutionalization and continuity of policies in the government's agenda⁴.

The extinguishment of CONSEA in 2019, after changing the federal government, prompted an immediate reaction from organizations and entities from different areas, including international ones, which expressed the risk of weakening FNS policies¹¹.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the performance of CONSEA from 2006 to 2016, aiming to explore its dynamics and agenda in that period, in order to contribute to the understanding of its relevance in intersectoral coordination and in ensuring social participation in the FNS policy.

Methodology

The research was based on the theoretical framework of the historical institutionalism, with emphasis on the studies developed by Thelen *et al.*¹², focusing on the performance of CONSEA as one of the coordination instances of the National FNS Policy, from January 2006 to May 2016. The initiation year is the enactment of the Organic Law, which provided a new institutional framework for CONSEA's action. Previous studies addressed the re-creation and performance of the Council until 2006^{13,14}, with gaps in knowledge about the performance of this instance from that year onwards. The study ended in 2016 due to the ministerial restructuring resulting from the government transition related to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, which changed the context and relations between agencies and actors involved in the policy. The years 2017 and 2018 were not analyzed, as the profound political and institutional changes in the country would require specific studies, including the analysis

of the process that led to the extinguishment of CONSEA in 2019.

The research techniques involved bibliographic review on FNS policies, document analysis (laws, decrees, standards, official publications and documents from CONSEA and CAISAN) and analysis of the content of 17 semi-structured interviews carried out with actors who participated in the Council in the period, such as representatives of government (8) or civil society (9).

As for document analysis, we highlight the following sources: 58 agendas and 55 minutes of meetings, 103 recommendations and 116 explanatory statements issued by CONSEA. The documents, which are unavailable on the Council's official website, were requested through the Federal Government's Electronic System for the Citizen Information Service.

For the organization, systematization and analysis of data, two axes have been privileged: structure and dynamics of action; and CONSEA's agenda. The first axis is related to the description of the structure, internal organization, composition (government agencies and civil society entities) and operating dynamics, including the participation of representatives in meetings. The second axis concerns the content analysis of the topics put on the agenda at the meetings and documents submitted by CONSEA (explanatory statements and recommendations).

Results

Structure and Dynamics of CONSEA's action

In 2007, CONSEA was composed of one third of government representatives, comprising ministers of state and special secretaries, and two thirds of civil society representatives, chosen based on criteria approved by the National Conference on FNS¹⁵.

Its organizational structure consisted of a General Secretariat and an Executive Secretariat; the Steering Board; the Standing Committees; the Working Groups and the Committee of Presidents of State Councils and of the Federal District for FNS¹⁶.

According to the interviews, the Steering Board was a decisive instance in the construction of the agenda, establishing a democratic process for the selection of topics for the plenary sessions. The topics were previously discussed by

the Standing Committees or working groups, which prepared proposals for consideration at the plenary session. The Permanent Committees were recognized as a relevant space for dialogue between areas for government and civil society action, for in-depth debates and for the preparation of documents and topics for discussion at the plenary sessions. However, limitations in the liaison between such instances were identified by two presidents of the Council who were interviewed.

The collective decisions were sent to the Presidency of the Republic and government agencies, through recommendations, explanatory statements and resolutions. The recommendations contain propositions addressed to a specific public agency. Explanatory statements are analytical documents with propositions submitted to the Presidency of the Republic. The resolutions address deliberations on the organization and internal functioning of CONSEA¹⁶.

The government representation at CONSEA, corresponding to one third of the members, comprised 21 bodies in 2016. Chart 1 systematizes changes in government composition over time.

Another decree was published in December 2016, updating the names of the ministries that made up CONSEA after the ministerial reform that transformed the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS) into the Ministry of Social and Agrarian Development. Concerns about the duties of the members and the dynamics of functioning of the Board were noticed in view of such changes.

With regard to the composition of civil entities, there was also variation over the period under review. Chart 2 shows that the civil entities that were members of CONSEA in 2016 were representatives of different sectors and political areas. Thematic national networks and forums (10 vacancies), formed by organizations created, mostly, in the late 1980s, stand out in the composition of CONSEA as representatives of civil society. The relevance of the performance of the members of the Brazilian Forum for Sovereignty and Food and Nutrition Security (FBSSAN), three of whom were presidents of the Council, should be highlighted.

Based on the analysis of the minutes and attendance lists, we explore the participation of government agencies in the meetings during the study period, as illustrated in Graph 1.

MDS attended all meetings, usually with more than one representative. The ministers of

Chart 1. Government representation at CONSEA and decrees determining changes in its composition from 2007 to 2016.

Decrees	Composition of government agencies
Decree 6,272, dated November 23, 2007 - It determined that CONSEA would be composed of 57 members. - One third would be government representatives (19 agencies)	I. Office of the President's Chief of Staff II. Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger III. Ministry of Foreign Affairs IV. Ministry of Finance V. Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply VI. Ministry of Education VII. Ministry of Labor and Employment VIII. Ministry of Health IX. Ministry of Planning, Budget, and Management X. Ministry of Science and Technology XI. Ministry of the Environment XII. Ministry of National Integration XIII. Ministry of Cities XIV. Ministry of the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic XV. Special Secretariat for Women's Policies of the Presidency of the Republic XVI. Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality of the Presidency of the Republic XVII. Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic XVIII. Ministry of Agrarian Development XIX. Special Secretariat for Aquaculture and Fisheries of the Presidency of the Republic
Decree 8,226, dated April 16, 2014 - After this decree, the Ministry of Justice became part of CONSEA - The Special Secretariat for Aquaculture and Fisheries of the Presidency of the Republic was transformed into the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture	XX. Ministry of Justice
Decree 8,743, dated May 04, 2016 - The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture is no longer part of CONSEA, as it was extinguished by President Dilma Rouseff in 2015 - It included the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality, Youth and Human Rights	XXI. Ministry of Culture XXII. Ministry of Women, Racial Equality, Youth and Human Rights

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

the MDS who held the position during the period attended more than half of the plenary sessions. The Ministry of Health also had the presence of more than one representative in most of the meetings, underlining the low rotation of members of said body.

The participation of the Ministry of Education was significant, especially considering the presence of representatives of the National Education Development Fund (FNDE). There were

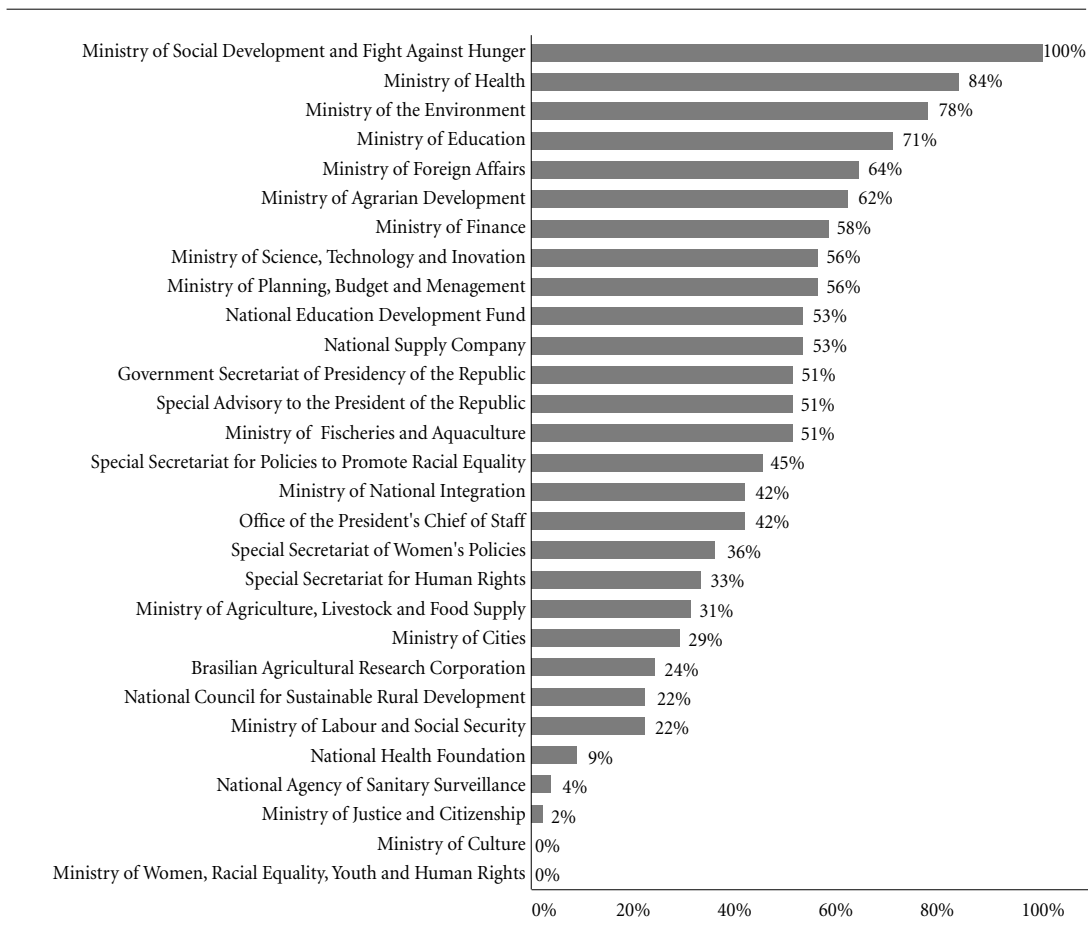
meetings with simultaneous representation from the ministry and the FNDE (in this case, with no rotation). It is noteworthy that the members of the Ministry of Education identified themselves not only by the body, but they also mentioned the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), suggesting the importance of such a program in the debates in this area with CONSEA.

With regard to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we can highlight the high attendance and

Chart 2. Lists of civil entities classified by sector/subject in 2016.

Sector/Subjects	Vacancies	Entity
Traditional Peoples and Communities	4	Association in the Settlement Areas of the State of Maranhão (ASSEMA)
		National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS)
		National Confederation of Fishermen and Aquaculturists (CNPA)
		National Network of Afro-Brazilian Religions and Health
		National Forum on Food and Nutrition Security of Terreiro Peoples
		National Confederation of Quilombola Black Rural Communities (CONAQ)
Indigenous Peoples	2	Articulation of Indigenous Peoples in the Northeast, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo (APOINME)
		Articulation of Indigenous Peoples in the Northeast, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo (APOINME)/Aty Guaçu
		Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB)/UMIABI
		Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of the South (ARPINSUL)
Family farming, rural workers and agrarian reform	3	National Confederation of Agriculture Workers (CONTAG)
		National Federation of Men and Women Family Farming Workers (FETRAF)
		Peasant Women's Movement (MMC)
		Small Farmers' Movement (MPA)
Semi-Arid Region	1	Brazilian Semi-Arid Articulation (ASA)
Black Population	1	Black Pastoral Agents (APN)
		Black Women's Network for Food and Nutrition Security
Special needs individuals	1	National Federation of Celiac Associations of Brazil (FENACELBRA)
		National Diabetic Care Association (ANAD)
Trade union federations and professional bodies	4	Unified Workers' Central (CUT)
		General Workers' Central (CGTB)
		Trade Union Force
		Federal Council of Nutritionists (CFN)
		Brazilian Nutrition Association (ASBRAN)
National Networks with Religious Matrix	3	Caritas Brazil
		Pastoral Care Branches
		National Evangelical Social Action Network (RENAS)
		Children's Pastoral Care
Professional representation and study entities	1	Institute of Socioeconomic Studies (INESC)
National Thematic Networks and Forums	10	National Articulation of Agroecology (ANA)
		Brazilian Forum on Solidarity Economy
		National Union of Cooperatives for Family Agriculture and Solidarity Economy (UNICAFES)
		National Network of Social Mobilization (COEP)
		National Commission of the Citizen Education Network
		Brazilian Forum for Sovereignty and Food and Nutrition Security (FBSSAN)
		National Forum for Urban Reform (FNRU)
		NGO Ação da Cidadania (Action of Citizenship)
		Brazilian Institute of Consumer Protection (IDEC)
		ALANA Institute
Brazilian Association of Graduate Studies on Collective Health (ABRASCO)		
Experts and researchers	5	Expert/Researcher
Entities and human rights	2	NGO Terra de Direitos (Land of Rights)
		FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN)
Business Entities	2	National Confederation of Agriculture (CNA)
		Brazilian Food Industry Association (ABIA)
		Brazilian Supermarket Association (ABRAS)

Source: Brasil²⁴.



Graph 1. Participation of government representatives in CONSEA meetings from 2006 to 2016.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

little alternation of its representative, whose participation was praised in the minutes and interviews, also causing the issuance of a notice of repudiation for his dismissal in 2016.

In relation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA), we emphasize its low participation and the presence of the National Supply Company - CONAB (a state-owned company tied to MAPA) in more than half of the meetings, represented, in general, by the same member.

It should be noted that the bodies with significant performance at CONSEA, especially the MDS and the Ministry of Health, had significant participation in CAISAN, with the same representatives in both instances. According to an interviewee, that was important for the Council's discussion to be submitted to the Chamber in a more qualified manner.

In general, there was a timid involvement of ministers with CONSEA, except for the representatives of the MDS. The participation of other ministers was due to the emphasis given to themes within the scope of their body. Of the 21 ministries making up the Council, 8 areas had the participation of these actors: Social Development and Fighting against Hunger (in 29 meetings); Agrarian Development (4); Fisheries and Aquaculture (2); Health (1); Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (1); Cities (1); Policies to Promote Racial Equality (1) and Women Policies (1).

On several occasions, civil society representatives mentioned as one of CONSEA's challenges the strengthening of the participation of ministers and the reduction in the rotation of government representatives in the meetings. It was also reported that government representatives often

lacked decision-making power, which would weaken the resolutions of the plenary sessions. However, such managers had different possibilities of contribution, at the technical and operational levels of the everyday politics.

With regard to civil entities, there was a change of board members and an inversion of position between full members and alternates. However, some civil society entities maintained the same representative throughout the period under review, such as: National Articulation of Agroecology; Brazilian Forum for Sovereignty and Food and Nutrition Security; Expert/Researcher for the Socio-Political Approach sector; National Federation of Celiac Associations of Brazil; Committee of Entities to Fight Hunger and for Life; NGO Action of Citizenship; National Evangelical Social Action Network, and Brazilian Semi-Arid Articulation.

According to the actors interviewed, the participation of representatives of traditional peoples and communities, the Brazilian Forum and the National Articulation of Agroecology was expressive in the meetings. Organizations that voiced ethnic, racial and DHAA themes had an important impact on government institutional-ity and contributed to the establishment of specific committees. The interviews also revealed the strengthening of the debate around ethnic and racial issues, starting with the representation of the black population and traditional communities on the CONSEA agenda.

The low participation of business entities related to the food industry and agribusiness should be noted. During the period studied, only the Brazilian Food Industry Association, the Brazilian Supermarket Association and the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock maintained the interface with CONSEA. Council members also indicated the absence of other sectors of the private initiative and social movements.

However, the majority composition of civil society representatives and the holding of the presidency by a member of this segment gave CONSEA a peculiarity as a possible space for contestation, in addition to formulating proposals and monitoring the policy. Civil society valued this arena given its visibility and a certain degree of influence on government action. However, the effectiveness of their participation depended on the government's receptiveness. As CONSEA was able to give a voice to vulnerable segments, some sectors of the government in some cases felt threatened. In this sense, clashes

and alliances between government and civil society were noticed.

Topics and debates: CONSEA's agenda

CONSEA's agenda included priority issues for civil society and the government, involving a variety of topics, expressed on the agendas, recommendations and explanatory statements. The broad scope of the FNS policy has been observed, with the participation of various agencies and actors. According to a former president of the Board, there was an interest in working on several topics that could potentially be translated into comprehensive policies and programs. According to the document analysis carried out within the research, the most frequent topics are indicated in Chart 3.

The topic "Planning/Management of CONSEA" was frequently placed on the agenda, which may be related to the effort to institutionalize and strengthen that instance. In policy planning, discussions on the PLANSAN (2012-2015), the Multi-Year Plan (PPA) and the Intersectoral Plan for the Prevention and Control of Obesity also stood out.

PLANSAN, an instrument that materializes the policy, was widely debated at CONSEA and in the technical committees and plenary sessions of CAISAN regarding its methodology for elaboration and challenges for implementation and monitoring. In the interviews, the Plan was highlighted as an important strategy for connecting the sectors and promoting intersectorality, considering the various subjects and strategies covered.

The PPA was also included on the agenda, with an emphasis on the methodology for developing the FNS intersectoral thematic program. The preparation of that program involved civil society participation in discussion forums across the country. Interviewees highlighted the challenge of developing an intersectoral program that is strategic and with robust goals to achieve the area's purposes, which would have represented an achievement for CONSEA.

In relation to the budget, the debates expressed the dissatisfaction of board members with the low contribution of funds allocated to the FNS area and the limited capacity of the Council to interfere in the funding of programs under the management of the ministries. It should be noted that this set of themes appeared frequently in the explanatory statements from 2006 to 2012 and in 2016. Most explanatory

Chart 3. Topics most frequently put on CONSEA's agendas, recommendations and explanatory statements from 2006 to 2016.

Documents	Subjects	Attendance (%)
Agendas	CONSEA planning/management	86
	Organization of Conferences	52
	Policy planning	34
	Budget	29
	Food and Nutrition Security Programs	22
	Human Right to Adequate Food	19
	Family farming	12
	Traditional peoples and communities	10
	Fighting Extreme Poverty and "Brazil Without Extreme Poverty" Plan	9
Recommendations	Semi-Arid Region	28
	Traditional peoples and communities	24
	Transgenic Plants	11
	International Agenda	9
	Food and Nutrition Security Programs	7
	Food Labelling and Advertising Regulation	5
	Budget	1
	Human Right to Adequate Food	1
Explanatory statements	Budget	14
	Organization of Conferences	8
	Traditional peoples and communities	7
	Transgenic Plants	7
	Food and Nutrition Security Programs	6
	International Agenda	5
	CONSEA planning/management	5
	Semi-Arid Region	3
	Human Right to Adequate Food	2
	Family farming	2
	Fighting extreme poverty	2
	Policy planning	2
Food Labelling and Advertising Regulation	1	

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

statements requested additional budget for various programs and actions. According to the interviews, the budget was identified as an element of dispute, as well as the challenges posed by budget restrictions and the unequal distribution of funds between programs, resulting in strong limitations for the implementation of the FNS policy. However, some government representatives pointed out the budget as being an important mechanism to effect intersectoriality, especially after the development of PLANSAN and the FNS thematic program in the PPA. The two documents mentioned above had a prominent place on the agenda at CAISAN, a body composed of different government sectors, becoming an essential instance in the intersectoral coordination

of FNS policies. It is noteworthy that the main subjects included in CAISAN came from the debates held at CONSEA, which demonstrates the similarity of the discussions and the possibility for the Chamber to develop solutions and build responses with the ministries. According to the interviewees, the possibility of direct dialogue between governmental actors in both instances – at CONSEA and at CAISAN – contributed to the execution of the proposals issued by CONSEA.

Regarding specific topics, the Intersectoral Plan for the Prevention and Control of Obesity featured on the agendas of CONSEA and CAISAN between 2011 and 2014, due to the frequent participation of representatives of the Ministry of Health in those instances, which underlined

the increase in overweight and obesity in the Brazilian population. In 2014, 52.2% of the Brazilian population was overweight¹⁷. The Plan sought to organize the guidelines in a coordinated and intersectoral way to fight overweight and obesity and their determinants in the country, which required the involvement of various ministries and civil society. In this context, the Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population also gained prominence in the debates.

The PNAE and the Program for Food Acquisition (PAA) also stood out on the agenda. The debate on the PNAE bill was intense from 2006 until its official publication in 2009. Interviewees underlined the congressional dispute and the delay in passing the law, but they emphasized the reconstruction of the PNAE as an achievement of the Council. One of the interviewees highlighted that the reformulation of the PNAE by CONSEA was facilitated by the centrality of the FNS in the federal agenda during the Lula government. The creation of the PAA was also highlighted as an outgrowth of a CONSEA proposal, becoming an example of intersectoral construction.

Despite CONSEA's leading role in the discussion and reformulation of said programs, reflecting on advances, some recommendations and explanatory statements related to the PNAE suggested new measures for its improvement and consolidation of access to family farming products for indigenous groups, traditional peoples and communities, and institutional markets. The PAA, in turn, according to interviewees, has been stripped over time, with changes in political orientation and a reduction in funds.

CONSEA also played a leading role in building consensus on the right to food. The debate on DHAA, in addition to being transversal to other issues, encompassed proposals for the approval of the Constitutional Amendment (PEC 47/2003), which included this right in the Federal Constitution.

The topic on family farming was related to the Family Farming Harvest Plan and coordinated the debate on marketing, the relationship with the national programs for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF), School Feeding and agrarian reform. Although agrarian reform is not a frequent topic on the Council's agenda, it has always been present in the debates, as well as the use of pesticides and the issue of risks linked to the sale and consumption of transgenic foods.

The discussion on traditional peoples and communities covered the national policy for this segment and the challenges of incorporating the

ethnic dimension into the agenda linked to economic and social development. The topic of indigenous peoples was a frequent one, associated with the challenges of agrarian reform, territorial and property rights. As of 2011, the subject was present in many recommendations to the Legislative Branch, as well as in explanatory statements, with emphasis on the request for speed or prioritization of processes that ensured the titling of lands occupied by indigenous peoples. One interviewee underlined the frequency of the topic, but also the difficulty in making progress. The historical process of invasions of the lands of indigenous peoples in Brazil shows the importance of this subject and the relevance of the State's role in the construction of public policies aimed at these peoples¹⁸.

The recommendations regarding transgenic foods expressed the divergences of CONSEA members about the nature, impacts and possible harmful effects on the population's health. Such claims had to be submitted to a public agency; however, most were addressed to the President of the Republic. In large part, the purpose of the explanatory statements regarding transgenic foods was to submit to the President the same recommendations issued by CONSEA to other bodies.

It should be noted that civil society, as well as most of the ministries attending the Council meeting, except for MAPA, was against the liberation of transgenic foods. Due to the government's adverse responses to the Council's requests, some interviewees were skeptical about the effectiveness of controlling the transgenic food marketing process. After the interviews, it was found that the current production model in the country based on agribusiness had the support of the federal government, which gave MAPA political and economic strength. According to the testimonies, the agency was the main opponent of measures to control and restrict the sale of transgenic foods.

The recommendations regarding the regulation of food labeling and advertising emerged in 2012, 2013 and 2014 and were generally submitted to the Legislative Branch. During that period, the recommendations aimed to ensure approvals or prioritization in the processing of bills, some of which had been in Congress for years.

Finally, CONSEA's concern about improving the dialogue with the Government and monitoring the referrals was identified, since many recommendations and explanatory statements did not have substantial repercussions.

Discussion

The analysis of the research results allowed us to identify, in the period studied, the establishment of internal spaces for CONSEA aimed at the liaison of sectors and political actors, such as the Standing Committees and the Steering Board that contributed to intersectorality and dialogue between the State and civil society, corroborating the evidence of the study carried out by Nascimento¹⁹. The liaison between different Committees proved to be important for expanding the scope of debates and for communication between representatives of civil society and the government.

With regard to the participation of government representatives, there was an expressive engagement of some areas and actors at CONSEA. The leading role of the MDS should be highlighted, as the main body responsible for FNS policies in the country. Another study had pointed out the low political priority of the area by the MDS as a difficulty identified by board members²⁰. In this research, it was possible to notice the significant and assiduous performance of the MDS within the scope of CONSEA during the analyzed time frame, including the expressive participation of ministers in more than half of the plenary sessions. The MDS also had a relevant role as leader of CAISAN, the collective and intersectoral instance of the federal government for the operationalization of policies in the area. The existence of the Council contributed to reinforcing the space of the FNS policy within the MDS, in the federal government and also among national policies. Despite the predominant relationships of dialogue, collaboration and complementation between CONSEA and CAISAN, tenseness sometimes occurred if civil society representatives at CONSEA and at the Conferences considered that the Chamber would be giving insufficient responses to the demands. Furthermore, different conceptions, priorities and strategies may prevail in an instance formed only by governmental actors and the other being mostly non-governmental.

In addition to the relevance of the MDS to the area, the survey revealed the active and frequent attendance in the plenary sessions of four ministries: Health, Environment, Education and Foreign Affairs, with low turnover of their representatives, suggesting the involvement of these areas with the FNS policy. Another study carried out in a state CONSEA, from 2003 to 2007, also pointed out the engagement of areas such as

Health and Education²¹. The low attendance of some government agencies, such as MAPS, and the high turnover among representatives from other governmental areas, have been pointed out by several interviewees as limits to the Council's performance.

Previous studies had indicated that the most expressive participation in CONSEA meetings tends to be that of civil society representatives, while the participation of government representatives in general is more oscillating and limited²². Despite the existence of conflicts due to the heterogeneity of the Council, a joint and continuous work process between society and government was observed in the daily life of this instance, as government representatives on the Council are generally people who have been working on the FNS agenda for a long time.

It was identified that, between 2006 and 2016, some civil society entities were represented by the same actors. Another study pointed out that the low turnover of representatives indicates a difficulty in renewing and building new leaders²². However, it has been observed in the research that organizations with low turnover took on a strategic role of participation in policy and program implementation.

The study has revealed that business entities from the food industry and agribusiness had low participation in CONSEA meetings, a result also found by other authors^{5,15}. The withdrawal of these sectors can be explained by the expansion of discussions and proposals in the Council regarding structural changes in the economic development model, which would have negative repercussions for the private sector⁴. Furthermore, it is considered that the channels of pressure and dispute of interests for these actors may not include CONSEA.

In general, in the period under review, CONSEA was an important instance of civil society participation and intersectoral articulation around the FNS policy. CONSEA was innovative given its diversified participation (including actors traditionally excluded from decision-making spaces) and the majority of civil society, and because it is chaired by an actor from this segment. The inclusion of networks, civil society organizations, state actors and market representatives and, therefore, multiple voices and narratives, favors democracy and the collective construction of public policy in FNS. The Council was also favored by the priority given to the theme in the presidential agenda during the two mandates of President Lula, with strong international projec-

tion. Due to these characteristics, CONSEA can be considered a successful space for building social participation around FNS in the country.

The extinguishment of CONSEA by provisional presidential decree in early 2019 was identified as a retrogression and an affront to democracy by several actors, organizations and social movements, which reacted in defense of the guarantee of the DHAA and the FNS agenda¹¹. The National Congress accepted the proposal to adapt the bill on the federal structure so that CONSEA could be recreated, demonstrating the relevance of civil society in monitoring and social control of the policy. However, in June of the same year, President Bolsonaro vetoed the re-creation of CONSEA. Parliament and civil society remained engaged in the efforts to re-create this important space, which is strategic for social participation and intersectoriality in the formulation and implementation of FNS policies.

Regarding CONSEA's agenda, the inclusion of programs that were not only related to access to food was identified by another study as an important institutional reconfiguration⁴. In this sense, this research has also revealed the diversification of CONSEA's agenda over time. Although initially the emphasis was given to specific programs, later, the Council started to address broader and intersectoral issues.

The elaboration of PLANSAN, for example, represented an intersectoral achievement. This study has identified that the technical committees, especially within CAISAN, contributed to the intersectoral construction of PLANSAN, in liaison with CONSEA. The participation of civil society was relevant in the preparation of that instrument, defining its priorities by conducting the National Conferences on FNS.

The analysis of the debated themes has revealed that the FNS is a complex agenda, permeated by conflicts of interest. When the government does not take part in dialogues, does not participate or opposes it, the Council is weakened and has limited capacity for action. The issues discussed by CONSEA and identified by the research as the most conflicting and challenging for the policy have been: budget, traditional peoples and communities, transgenic foods and advertising of food labeling and advertising.

With regard to budget, another study had already argued that the FNS area does not have a fund, such as the National Social Assistance Fund (FNAS). The FNS budget is dispersed across several ministries, which was identified as a challenge by interviewees¹⁹. This research has also

identified financial constraints and low budget execution of the programs over time. It can be said that the limited capacity of the Council to interfere in the funding of programs under the management of the ministries is even more affected by the insufficient release of funds by the government compared to what was suggested by CONSEA.

Issues related to traditional peoples and communities, transgenic foods and food regulation and advertising have been emphasized by many recommendations addressed to the Legislative Branch. However, these subjects, as well as the issue of pesticides and agrarian reform, had little repercussion in the National Congress, with no substantial legal changes in the period studied. The historical difficulty in modifying the agrarian structure in Brazil may explain the difficulty faced by CONSEA to effectively advance in this area²³. In light of this, the study indicated as a limitation of CONSEA the lack of liaison with the Legislative, being necessary to strengthen the strategies for acting with said Branch.

In fact, just as the interface with the Legislative Branch has been fragile, the confrontation of the economic interests of private corporations has been quite ineffective. Even during the Lula administration, which was more receptive to the FNS agenda, the Council had limited influence on issues considered to be structuring, such as the regulation of pesticides.

In general, the recommendations and explanatory statements did not receive many responses from the National Congress, federal government agencies and the Presidency, which suggests the Council's low capacity to influence policy decisions in critical areas. The study has identified that 21 of the 103 recommendations analyzed did not contain information about the destination agency, which also indicated the weakness of that instrument to guide the State's action, especially with regard to issues involving disputes of broader interests.

Conclusion

The research showed that CONSEA was an important space for policy formulation in the area of FNS in the period under review, favoring dialogue and liaison between different government agencies and civil society entities. The role of the Council proved to be relevant for the affirmation of the right to food and the formulation of FNS policies aimed at different population segments,

especially the most vulnerable, indicating its importance for social protection.

However, dealing with structuring issues was hampered by limits on the effectiveness of the Council's action with regard to the repercussion of its recommendations on the Legislative Branch and the Executive instances with greater decision-making power, especially on issues that mobilize strong economic interests, such as regulation of the use of pesticides and the food industry.

The following are considered limitations of the study: the summarized format of the minutes, which did not allow for greater detailing of the meetings, the impossibility of monitoring the CONSEA plenary sessions and the analysis period does not cover the years 2017 and 2018, given the profound political and institutional changes in the period, which culminated in the extinguishment of CONSEA. Although theoretical aspects have not been deepened in this article, the results of the empirical study contribute to the reflection on the complexity of intersectorality and social participation in the implementation

of public policies.

The prioritization of the FNS issue on the federal agenda would be essential to ensure progress, given the need to confront economic interests in this area, which sometimes collide with health objectives. Ensuring adequate funding and strengthening collective and participatory instances are critical for the sustainability and effectiveness of policies in this complex area.

Amidst the scenario of instability and the political and economic crisis in the country, aggravated since 2015, the extinguishment of CONSEA in 2019 represented the dismantling of a space that facilitated social participation and intersectorality in the construction of a strategic policy. Other studies are needed to track the performance of the Council from 2017 to 2018 and the effects of its extinguishment as from 2019, since the liaison between the State and civil society and the strengthening of intersectoral coordination are fundamental, in democratic contexts, to guarantee public policies that promote social welfare and improve the population's health conditions.

Collaborations

VD Moraes participated in the conception of the article, analysis and interpretation of data and writing of the article. CV Machado participated in the conception of the article, analysis of results, writing and final review of the article. R Magalhães participated in the conception of the article, analysis of results, writing and final review of the article.

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