



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE RIGHT TO SCHOOL MEALS

*A contribution from
Brazilian civil society*



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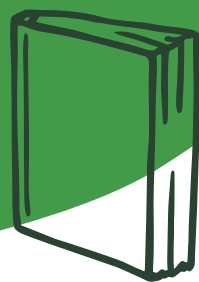
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Abrandh

Brazilian Action for Nutrition and Human Rights

CAE

School Feeding Council

CAF

National Registry of Family Farming

Cecane

Collaborating Center for School Food and Nutrition

CGU

Office of the Comptroller General

Conanda

National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents

Consea

National Council for Food and Nutrition Security

CPA

Corporate political activities

DPU

Federal Public Defender's Office

EAN

Food and Nutrition Education

EJA

Youth and Adult Education

EMTI

Full-time High School

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FNDE

National Fund for Educational Development

FNS

Food and nutritional security

HRtAF

Human right to adequate food

HRtAFN

Human right to adequate food and nutrition

Idec

Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defense, Institute for Consumers Defense (current)

LDB

Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education

Losan

Organic Law on Food and Nutritional Security

Mapa

Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

MDA

Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming

MDS

Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger

MEC

Ministry of Education

MPF

Federal Public Prosecutor's Office

NCDs

Non-communicable diseases

ÓAÊ

School Meals Watch

ODS

Sustainable Development Goals

ONU

United Nations

Opas

Organização Pan-Americana de Saúde

PAA

Food Acquisition Program

PAT

Workers' Food Program

Pnaab

National Policy on Food Supply

Pnae

National School Feeding Program

Pnapo

National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production

PNSAN

National Food and Nutritional Security Policy

POT

Work Operation Program

Pronaf

National Program for Strengthening Family Farming

PSE

School Health Program

RtF

Right to food

Sisan

National System for Food and Nutrition Security

TCU

Federal Court of Accounts

TM

Technical manager

UPPs

Ultra-processed products

WFP

World Food Programme

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PRESENTATION



Schools are more than just places for academic learning – they've become critical spaces for promoting health and nutrition. As hubs where children eat daily and form lifelong habits, schools play a vital role in encouraging healthy diets. After all, no one can learn on an empty stomach.

In 2022, approximately 180 million school-age children were living with some form of malnutrition, and 1 billion children were at risk of food insecurity worldwide (Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition, 2023). The persistence of hunger has been followed by a rapid global transition in eating habits, with diets increasingly based on the consumption of ultra-processed products (UPPs), which has had a significant impact on the increase in overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

In a context of global syndemic – when three major contemporary

crises converge: malnutrition, obesity and climate change –, respecting, protecting and promoting adequate food in school environments is therefore imperative. This requires the engagement of all people, organizations, movements and national states committed to education and the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN).

In recent years, national school feeding programs have been widely promoted as a response to these global challenges, driven by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and encouraged by international co-operation. Governments in different countries are creating or expanding such programs as a strategy to combat hunger, ensure student retention in schools and strengthen local economies.

However, in many countries, these are top-down initiatives, with limited budgets, low social participation, and

significant reliance on, and influence from, international agencies and philanthropic organizations. We must be attentive to the commercial interests that the huge food procurement markets for school feeding programs awake in the food industry, and how it can compromise the supply of adequate and healthy locally purchased food.

Brazil has one of the largest and oldest school feeding programs in the world. Over a history of more than 70 years, Brazil's National School Feeding Program (Pnae) has established itself as a robust universal policy, accessible to all students in the public education system and based on important principles of the right to food. This is the result of decades of challenges and adjustments driven by broad and democratic processes of civil society's engagement and social participation.

The Pnae model has served as a reference for many countries, due to three aspects that are at the heart of its policy design: i) the democratization of public procurement and the opening of new markets for family farming; ii) restrictions on the supply of processed and ultra-processed foods; and iii) participation and social control.

Despite widespread international recognition and numerous South-South cooperation initiatives promoted by the Brazilian government, in partnership with international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), and important international networks such as the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and the School Meals Coalition, there are still low social participation in this spaces. There are also few exchange learning initiatives among global civil society when it turns to school meals. In a global context of permanent threats to the right to food and imminent risks of conflicts of interest in food policies, international civil society collaboration is fundamental.

FIAN Brasil and the School Meals Watch (ÓAÊ) have produced this book to share civil society experience in advancing this work. Based on our participatory experience in the drawing and monitoring the Pnae, we understand that national school feeding programs are an important tool for guaranteeing the right to food and promoting healthy and sustainable food systems. We also believe that the engagement and active social participation of rights holders

and organized civil society are fundamental for these programs to: adopt a people-centered perspective, democratize food procurement, and be grounded in environmental, climate and food rights and justice. Finally, there should national policies developed free from food industry interference and corporate capture.

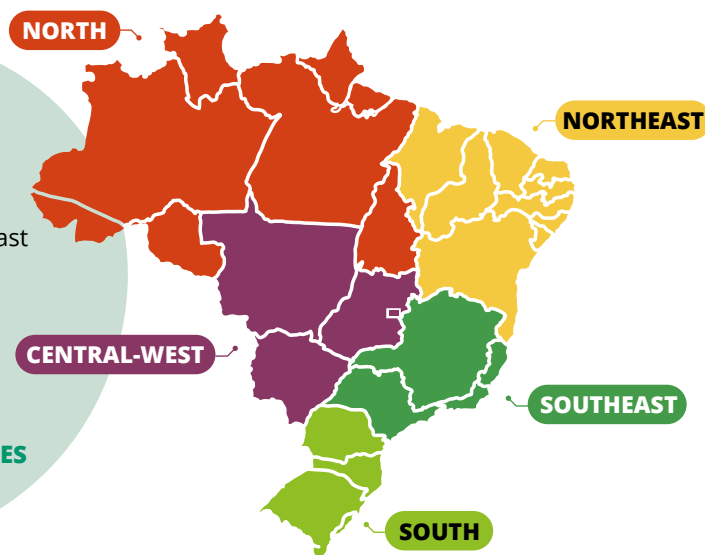
Through this publication, we share our view on the Brazilian experience, based on the understanding that it is not a linear trajectory of pure success, nor a model to be copied. Quite the contrary. The history of the Pnae is a long and unfinished journey of mistakes and successes. Its design and implementation serve only as inspiration, not as a "good practice" to be replicated. Ensuring the right to school feeding is a daily struggle, a permanent field of disputes and inte-

rests, and a huge challenge from the point of view of implementation. With this movement, we intend to open a new chapter of knowledge sharing and international solidarity, based on attentive listening, horizontality and commitment to HRtAFN . This dialogue is intended to inspire and strengthen our capacity for national advocacy and international networking in the promotion of adequate school feeding programs.



SPECIFICITIES OF BRAZIL

- **5 GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS**
North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast and South
- **26 STATES AND 1 FEDERAL DISTRICT (DF)**
- **5.570 MUNICIPALITIES**



A federal system with a decentralized administrative and political model composed of three levels of government:

- ① **Federal Government**
- ② **States**
- ③ **Municipalities**

Taxes are collected at each level, but with a significant concentration at federal level.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES IN PUBLIC POLICIES

Federal Government (the Union): defines guidelines, coordinates nationwide public policies, transfers funds to states and municipalities to finance national policies and collaborates with states and municipalities to implement these policies.

State Governments (States and the Federal District (DF)): implement public policies within their jurisdictions, adapt federal guidelines to local needs, have the autonomy to create and manage education, as well as health policies, often following federal norms and guidelines.

Municipal Governments (Municipalities): these are the smallest units in Brazil's administrative division, which are closest to citizens. They implement and execute most public policies and play a leading role due to the decentralization established by the 1988 Federal Constitution.

The Brazilian education system is divided into:



Basic Education



Higher Education
(undergraduate and graduate levels).

BASIC EDUCATION

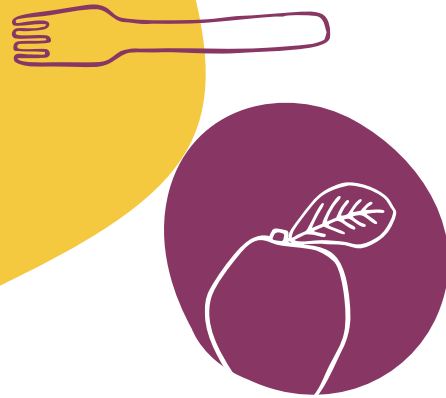
- **Early Childhood Education:** daycare for children aged 0 to 3, and preschool for children aged 4 and 5.
- **Primary Education:** for students aged 6 to 14.
- **Secondary Education:** for students aged 15 to 17.
- **Youth and Adult Education (EJA):** for individuals who did not complete primary and/or secondary education within the regular age range.

The main Brazilian public policy for adequate and healthy food in schools is the **National School Feeding Program (Pnae)**.

Within the scope of the Pnae, municipalities, states, the Federal District and federal schools are the **implementing entities**.

In the context of Brazilian public policies, the terms peasants, small farmers, small producers or small-scale farmers are grouped into a single category: **family farming**.

1 THE RIGHT TO FOOD



International Commitments to the Right to Food

The right to food is a fundamental principle internationally enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which recognizes food as a human right that is essential for a dignified life:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services (...).
UN (2020)

Over the decades, through various other treaties and international agreements, the understanding of this right has been expanded. Two indivisible dimensions have been incorporated into it: the **right to be free from hunger and malnutrition** and the **right to adequate food**.

The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its

procurement. (...) The right to adequate food will have to be realized progressively. However, States have a core obligation to take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger as provided for in paragraph 2 of article 11, even in times of natural or other disasters.

UN (1999)

The fulfillment of the human right to adequate food (HRtAF) goes beyond simply ensuring that individuals do not go hungry or receive the necessary calories and nutrients from food. It involves guaranteeing the availability of **diverse foods that are safe from a sanitary standpoint, free from contaminants, pesticides and genetically modified organisms**. The food supply must respect and value national and regional **food cultures**.

The HRtAF also depends on ensuring:

- **access to financial resources or natural resources**, such as land and water for obtaining food;
- **access to information**, so that individuals can make informed and responsible food choices;
- **no obstruction to the fulfillment of other rights**, meaning that individuals or families should not have to choose between buying food or buying medicine, for example.

FIAN adopts the term **human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN) worldwide** to emphasise a broader, integrated and inclusive vision of the right to food. This

concept incorporates the right to nutrition and to quality food as an inseparable part of the HRtAF.

PRINCIPLES OF HRTAFN



MORE THAN SIMPLY FIGHTING HUNGER

Food must be nutritious, safe, culturally appropriate and meet the needs of different population groups (children, the elderly, people with specific needs etc.).



CONTINUOUS AND STABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

Everyone must have regular, uninterrupted access to quality food, even in adverse situations such as natural disasters or economic crises.



STATES HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ADOPT CONCRETE MEASURES

States must implement policies that ensure the availability of and regular access to quality food for the entire population (such as school feeding programs, support for family farming etc.).



RECOGNITION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

Food policies must respect and take local cultural traditions and practices into account. Adequate food is linked to the identity and well-being of communities.



PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Communities and rights holders must actively participate in decisions that shape food policies, in order to promote a democratic food system with policies that reflect the real needs and aspirations of each community.



EQUITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

All human beings have the right to access adequate food without discrimination. Food policies must include vulnerable and marginalized populations who often face barriers to obtaining quality food.



IMPLEMENTATION OF MONITORING AND PROTECTION SYSTEMS

States must establish systems to monitor food and nutritional security. They also need to protect the right to food, including mechanisms to address food insecurity and malnutrition. States must also be prepared to respond efficiently to food crises.



RULE OF LAW

The State must respect its legal obligations and act in accordance with national and international legal frameworks. In this way, it ensures that the Human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN) is promoted continuously and consistently.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Those responsible for food policies must be accountable and ensure transparency at all stages of the implementation of food programs, so that the population can demand the full realization of HRtAFN through legal and administrative mechanisms.



Learn more about HRtAFN with the [Basic Course on the Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition \(HRtAFN\)](#) by FIAN Brasil

By adopting the 2030 **Agenda for Sustainable Development**, members of the United Nations (UN) collectively committed to implementing the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in their countries, promoting policies and strategies to achieve these goals by 2030. The SDGs most directly related to HRtAFN are shown in the figure below.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS LINKED TO HRTAFN



Brazil, like the countries that have signed international treaties and agreements related to HRtAFN, is committed to **respecting**, **protecting**, **promoting** and **fulfilling** this right through laws, public policies and actions at national, state and municipal levels that promote

Source: based on Burity et al. (2010) and FIAN Brasil (2021).

the production, distribution and access to adequate food for all. This commitment aims to contribute to the food and nutritional security of the population. As established in the Organic Law on Food and Nutritional Security (Losan):

Food and Nutritional Security (FNS)
consists of the realization of everyone's right to regular and permanent access to quality food, in sufficient quantity, without compromising

access to other essential needs, based on health-promoting food practices that respect cultural diversity and are environmentally, culturally, economically and socially sustainable.
Law n° 11.346 (2006)

These countries also commit to refraining from taking any measures that pose a threat to or violate human rights and ensuring mechanisms for the protection of these rights (Burity et al., 2010).

Social Participation as a Driving Force

One of the main pillars sustaining HRtAFN in Brazil is the constant mobilization and social participation of organizations and social movements, including land, food, agroecology, women and other various collective initiatives. These organizations demand and propose the creation of laws and programs that incorporate the perspectives of food sovereignty and rights. This mobilization strengthens and enriches the processes of policy development. At the same time, it creates networks of resistance against setbacks and abuses of power by authoritarian governments, large corporations and transnational entities (Valente, 2019).

The active participation of Brazilian civil society has been consolidated as

a key institutionalized guideline and practice for the realization of HRtAFN. This participation takes place in the establishment of councils, especially in the National Council for Food and Nutritional Security (Consea) and reflects the understanding that HRtAFN cannot be ensured through top-down policies or strictly governmental decisions. It is necessary to create spaces for **dialogue, participation and social oversight**, where civil society – including social movements, non-governmental organizations, family farmers, women and traditional peoples, among others – plays an active role in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of public policies.



GOOD PRACTICES

Strengthening HRtAFN Through Social Participation Mechanisms

In Brazil, the consolidation of HRtAFN as an essential right was supported by important movements from organized civil society, which led to the establishment of the **National Council for Food and Nutritional Security (Consea)**. Consea is a **state body**, linked to the Presidency of the Republic, with an **advisory** role in providing **guidance** to the government on policies related to food and nutritional security. Composed of 1/3 government representatives and 2/3 civil society representatives, Consea has contributed to making food and nutrition issues a political priority. A pioneering participatory governance model, it brought together efforts from various sectors and promoted national Food and Nutritional Security conferences with the participation of up to 2,000 people. Participatory governance encourages social participation and ongoing civic engagement.

Countries seeking to advance the implementation of the right to food can benefit from establishing councils that bring together various sectors of civil society and governments, to ensure that public policies reflect the realities and demands of rights holders. These channels for dialogue and monitoring encourage transparency and inclusion, which are essential to guaranteeing HRtAFN effectively and sustainably.

Laws, Policies and Programs in Brazil

In Brazil, the right to food is institutionally guaranteed by a robust set of national legislations.

- The **Organic Law on Food and Nutritional Security (Losan)**, enacted in 2006, establishes the responsibility of public authorities to guarantee the right to adequate food, creates the National Food and Nutritional Security System (Sisan), and defines principles and guidelines for the national Food Security policy.
- The **National Food and Nutritional Security Policy (PNSAN)**, established in 2010, has the general objective of promoting food and nutritional security and ensuring the human right to adequate food (HRtAF) throughout the national territory.
- **Constitutional Amendment nº 64**, of 2010, formally incorporated the right to food into Article 6 of the Federal Constitution, consolidating this right among the social rights guaranteed by the Brazilian Constitution.

*Article 6. Social rights include education, health, **food**, work, housing, transportation, leisure, security, social security, protection of motherhood and childhood, and assistance to the needy, as established by this Constitution.*
Federal Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, 1988.

Thus, the Brazilian state is obligated to adopt policies to ensure the right to food and to provide both the necessary ethical and legal framework, as well as guiding principles for these policies. From the perspective of the Losan and the principles of HRtAFN and food

and nutritional security, other important legal frameworks have been established for various public policies related to food, such as the **National School Feeding Program (Pnae)**, the main Brazilian strategy for guaranteeing HRtAFN in schools.

In addition to Pnae, there are other Food and Nutritional Security policies and programs currently underway in Brazil to guarantee HRtAFN. Some examples are:

- Food Acquisition Program (PAA), food procurement to food access policies
- Bolsa Família, conditional cash transfer program
- National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (Pronaf), consisting of credit and insurance policies
- Popular Restaurants and Community Kitchens, providing access to subsidized meals
- Cistern Program, for the collection and storage of rainwater in semiarid regions
- Food Banks
- National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production (Pnapo)
- School Health Program (PSE)
- National Policy on Food Supply (Pnaab)

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ Is your country a signatory to international treaties and agreements related to HRtAFN? If so, which one?
- ▶ Are there national legal frameworks that institutionalize the right to food?
- ▶ What are the main national policies aimed at ensuring HRtAFN?
- ▶ What role does civil society play in your country regarding food policies? Are there formal mechanisms for social participation?



2. ADEQUATE AND HEALTHY SCHOOL FEEDING

School Feeding Environments

The **promotion of health** encompasses a set of strategies aimed at improving the quality of life of individuals and communities, including the **promotion of adequate and healthy eating**. The effectiveness of these actions depends on strong coordination

between the health and education sectors. Therefore, schools are fundamental spaces. They host children and adolescents for a significant part of the day and directly influence their habits, as well as their physical, emotional and social well-being.

MEETING OF TWO TERMS

As mentioned, the most widespread term globally is “human right to adequate food (HRtAF)”, while FIAN prefers “human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN)”. In Brazil, however, the main laws, regulations and reference documents subsequent to the Losan of 2006 use the term “adequate and healthy food”.

In a socio-historical reconstruction of the origin of the expression, Paiva et al. (2019) found that it was a convergence between the terminology “adequate food”, previously consolidated in the fields of food and nutritional security and so-

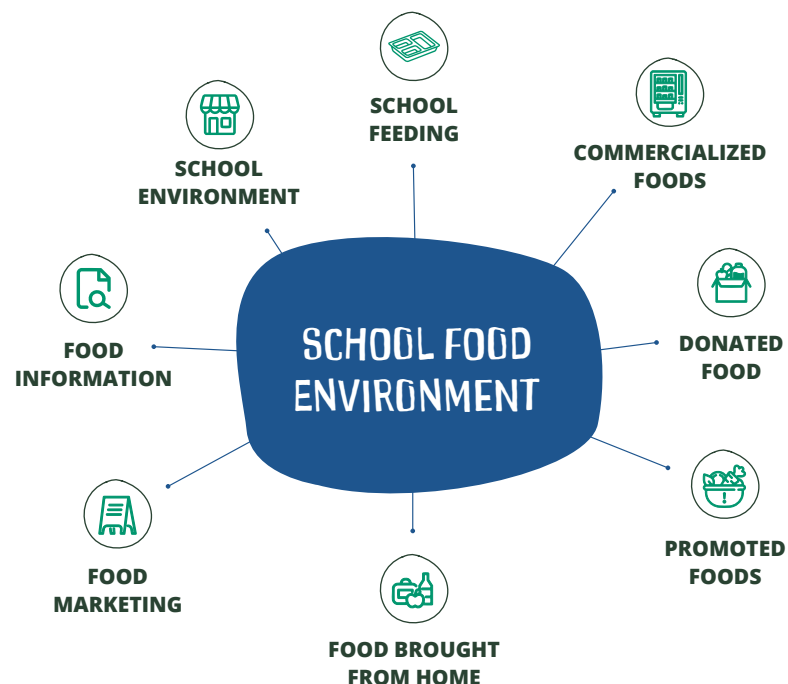
We have kept “adequate and healthy food” in the transcriptions of the regulations cited. Food environments influence our food choices, either positively or negatively, and this is not different in schools. Therefore, the **school food environment** includes all spaces, infrastructure and conditions both inside and around school facilities that are related to food. This environment encompasses the types of foods available and the pla-

ces where food is offered, obtained, purchased and consumed, such as convenience stores, kiosks, cafeterias, street vendors and vending machines. It also includes information about food and nutrition, such as food promotion and pricing, marketing, advertisements, branding, food labels, packaging and promotions (FAO, 2019).

cial development, and “healthy food”, originally established in the field of health (particularly nutrition) and more assimilated in society.

We recognize the different trajectories and the alignment between the nomenclatures. In this book we primarily use “adequate food”, with “adequate food and nutrition” in the passages most associated with the understanding of HRtAFN.

COMPONENTS OF THE SCHOOL FOOD ENVIRONMENT



Respecting, protecting and promoting adequate feeding means transforming the school into a space that fosters sustainability and food practices relevant to the biological and sociocultural aspects of the students (MS, 2013). To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure conditions that:

- provide everyone with access to healthy, quality foods and beverages at affordable prices (when applicable);
- provide information that supports healthy and conscious choices;
- keep the school free from the promotion and dissemination of food and beverage advertising and marketing communications.

So, in the school food environment, a comprehensive approach is important – one that combines the provision of healthy foods with **Food and Nutrition Education (FNE)** activities. Regulatory measures are also necessary to protect the school environ-

ment from the supply, marketing and advertising of ultra-processed products to ensure that schools are both safe spaces and promoters of health (Interministerial Ordinance nº 1,010, 2006; FAO, 2019).



Read the publication **School Food Environment: a guide for Managers** by the Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defense (Idec, now the Institute for Consumers Defense).

Brazilian Milestones in Promoting Adequate School Meals

Brazil has been making progress toward creating healthier school environments that promote adequate and healthy eating. This progress is based on national regulatory instruments that serve as references for promoting this type of nutrition.

The *Food Guide for the Brazilian Population* and the *Food Guide for Brazilian Children Under 2 Years* are

the most important guiding milestones for promoting healthy eating in schools. The alignment of the Pnae with these milestones reflects an integrated approach that prioritizes the provision of fresh and minimally processed foods while reducing the presence of ultra-processed products in school meals.

FOOD GUIDE FOR THE BRAZILIAN POPULATION

The guide integrates health, culture and sustainability, serving as a cornerstone for the promotion of food and nutritional security in Brazil. Developed by the Ministry of Health, its most recent version, from 2014, reflects advances in scientific evidence and understanding of the impact of diet on health. It emphasizes types

of foods, preparation methods, and cultural and social contexts, rather than focusing solely on specific nutrients. This guide uses the **Nova Classification**, developed by Brazilian researchers, which establishes four major categories of foods based on their level of processing.

NOVA CLASSIFICATION



Fresh and Minimally Processed Foods

Fresh foods: foods obtained directly from plants or animals without undergoing any alteration – for example: fruits, vegetables, greens, roots, tubers and eggs.

Minimally processed foods: fresh foods without the addition of salt, sugar, oils, fats or other substances, which have undergone minimal alterations such as cleaning, the removal of unwanted parts, fractioning, grinding, drying, freezing and similar processes. For example: dried, polished and packaged grains or grains ground into flours; washed roots and tubers; chilled or frozen meat cuts; pasteurized milk.



Cooking Ingredients

Products extracted from fresh foods or directly from nature and used by people to season, cook and create culinary preparations, like oils, fats, sugar and salt.



Processed Foods

They are made or manufactured essentially by adding salt, sugar, vinegar or oil to fresh or minimally processed foods. For example: pickled vegetables, fruits in syrup, cheese, bread, salted meat, canned sardines and tuna and tomato extract or concentrate.



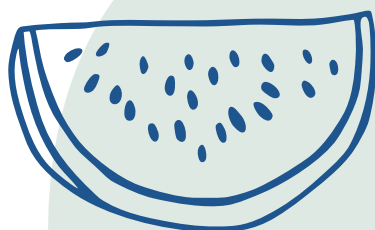
Ultra-Processed Products

Manufactured through multiple stages and processing techniques, with the addition of ingredients including salt, sugar, oils, fats and substances used exclusively in industrial processes, aimed at extending the shelf life of products or giving them colours, flavours, aromas or textures, which make them appealing for consumption. For example: soft drinks, filled cookies, packaged snacks and instant noodles.

The *Food Guide for the Brazilian Population* affirms that **fresh or minimally processed foods, prepared using traditional cooking methods, should always be favored over ultra-processed foods**. The four recommendations are:

- make fresh or minimally processed foods the basis of your diet;
- add oils, fats, salt and sugar in small amounts when seasoning and cooking food and dishes using traditional cooking methods;
- limit the use of processed foods, consuming them in small amounts as cooking ingredients or as part of meals favouring fresh or minimally processed food;
- avoid ultra-processed food.

Read the full text of this important milestone in Food and Nutritional Security in Brazil: [Food Guide for the Brazilian Population](#).



FOOD GUIDE FOR BRAZILIAN CHILDREN UNDER 2 YEARS

Published by the Ministry of Health (MS) in 2019, this food guide provides evidence-based recommendations to ensure the health and the human right to adequate food (HRAf) for

children under 2 years of age. It reinforces the importance of breastfeeding and the introduction of healthy complementary feeding.



Access [Food Guide for Brazilian Children Under 2 Years](#) here.

REGULATION FOR ADEQUATE AND HEALTHY FEEDING IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Decree nº 11.821/2023 establishes the principles, objectives, strategic pillars and guidelines that should conduct the promotion of adequate feeding in schools. The decree com-

plements the Pnae, as it includes private schools and regulates the sale and advertising of food within the school environment.



Access the [Decree nº 11.821 from December 12, 2023](#) here.



GOOD PRACTICES

The Regulation of Canteens is Possible: Experiences From the Municipalities of Rio de Janeiro and Niterói

In Brazil, there is no specific national law that uniformly regulates cafeterias in public or private schools. However, some federative entities, such as the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Maranhão, and the Federal District, have strong laws on this matter.

Recently, there have been two successful municipal initiatives aimed at regulating school cafeterias in public and private early childhood and elementary schools in the municipalities of Rio de Janeiro and Niterói, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Law nº 3.766/2023, from Niterói, and Law nº 7,987/2023, from Rio de Janeiro, prohibit the offering and sale of ultra-processed foods. These achievements resulted from initiatives led by civil society organizations, which developed model bills to negotiate with legislators and carried out communication and advocacy campaigns.

At a national level, this mobilization has led to the publication of Decree nº 11.821/2023. Despite being an important regulatory act, it does not have the force of law. Instead, it serves as a guideline for actions across the country to support the development of regulatory measures that are better suited to local realities.

Learn more about the document that served as a reference for drafting the model bills: [Healthy Eating in Schools: a Guide for Municipalities](#).



Read the [Practical Guide for a Healthy Cafeteria](#), by Instituto Desiderata. This guide is intended for managers and staff responsible for school cafeterias, providing guidance on how to implement healthy cafeterias in alignment with the Ministry of Health recommendations.

FOOD SALES REGULATIONS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In 2022, the National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE) published a technical note that, in addition to presenting its position on the subject, provided guidelines on food sales in public Basic Education schools.



Access the [Technical Note nº 2974175/2022 from the FNDE here](#).

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ Are there national dietary guidelines in your country? Do these guidelines take a position on the risks associated with the consumption of ultra-processed products?
- ▶ What is public opinion in your country regarding the regulation of the sale, donation and advertising of ultra-processed foods in schools? Are there regulatory instruments governing the school food environment in your country?



The Harmful Effects of Ultra-Processed Food

The environmental and health crises we currently face have a disproportionate impact on children and adolescents. Worldwide, approximately 180 million school-aged children suffer from some form of malnutrition, and 1 billion children are at risk of food insecurity. "These conditions negatively affect growth, development and education, increasing the risk of morbidity and mortality among children and young people (Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition, 2023).

School feeding plays a crucial role in addressing these risks, especially in the context of the **global syndemic** (Swinburn et al., 2019), which is characterised by the intersection of three major contemporary crises: undernutrition, obesity and climate change. These interconnected and mutually reinforcing phenomena have profound impacts on human health, food systems and the environment.

Ultra-processed food plays a central role in this global syndemic. Scientific research has shown the multiple negative health impacts associated with the consumption of these products (Global Food Research Program, 2021). The research also highlights the reasons why ultra-processed food should be avoided:

- it has poor nutritional quality
- it promotes excessive calorie intake
- it increases the risk of developing obesity and other chronic diseases, such as diabetes, certain types of cancer and depression, among others
- it negatively affect culture, social life and communities
- it has negative environmental impacts due to packaging and the production methods of its main ingredients, which are mass-produced using intensive pesticides and genetically modified crops, such as soy, wheat and corn.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ Is the rise in obesity alongside undernutrition also a trend in your country?
- ▶ If so, what can be done within the school environment to help reverse this trend?



3. THE NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM (PNAE)



The Path to the Right to Adequate and Healthy School Feeding

The Pnae is one of Brazil's oldest and most robust public policies for Food and Nutrition Security (FNS). However, it is important to understand that its long trajectory has been shaped by many challenges, adjustments and demands from civil society until it was consolidated as a universal national policy grounded in the principles of the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN).

The program dates back to the 1950s, when school feeding was still a policy that served a very small number of students. It was managed in a centralized manner, based on industrialized food, and was highly dependent on international humanitarian aid.

Over the years, the Pnae's concept, design, and institutional framework has undergone significant restructuring. These changes have expanded its reach and strengthened its commitment to food and nutritional security to:

- include fresher and healthier foods;
- value food culture and local eating habits;
- respect the agricultural vocation of each territory;
- promote the development of the local economy.

These advances have been driven, progressively, by political and social changes, as well as by the institutionalization of the fight against hunger and the promotion of food and nutrition security on the government agenda through the creation of public policies and legal frameworks (ÓAÊ, 2021; WFP & FNDE, 2021a).

School meals came to be recognized as a student right in the 1988 Federal Constitution, which established the right to primary education as a duty of the State and included adequate food as an essential component of this right. From that point on, school meals became a continuous public policy under state responsibility, no longer a temporary or emergency initiative (WFP & FNDE, 2021b).

Article 208. The duty of the State with education shall be fulfilled through the guarantee of:

VII - assistance to students in primary education through supplementary programs of educational materials, transportation, school meals and health care
Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, 1988.

The incorporation of a rights-based perspective into the Pnae was formalized in 2009, with the enactment of **Law nº 11,947/2009**, also known as the **Pnae Law**. This law transformed the program into a state policy guided by the principles of the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN).



SCHOOL MEALS IN BRAZIL OVER THE DECADES

1950

The beginning of school meals in Brazil

- Targeted assistance
- Centralized management by the Federal Government of menus, purchasing and distribution
- No national/state budget
- Dependence on international humanitarian aid
- International donation of ultra-processed food
- Disregard for local food habits and culture
- Provision of snacks (not school meals)
- Low coverage (focused on vulnerable areas) and irregular service

- Begging of meal provisions
- Expansion of coverage
- Provision of standardized, low-diversified foods, disconnected from local food culture

1960

Establishment of the School Lunch Program

- Centralized purchasing from large national suppliers
- Provision of one meal per day
- Offering ultra-processed and non-perishable products for ease of storage and transportation*

* Formulated foods (soups and porridges), powdered milk, cookies and other processed products

1970

Establishment of the name National School Feeding Program (1979)

- Coverage of all students in public and philanthropic primary schools
- Centralized national purchase of processed and ultra-processed products
- Initial, timid decentralization (municipalization) of the purchase of fresh foods
- Pressure from the food industries to maintain centralization

1980

School meals recognized as a right and a duty of the State in the 1988 Federal Constitution

1990

Popular mobilization to combat hunger

- Creation (1993) and extinction (1995) of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Consea)
- Decentralized implementation with direct transfer of federal funds to states and municipalities
- Mandatory establishment of the School Feeding Council (CAE) in states and municipalities for receiving federal funds

- Reinstatement of Consea (2003)

- Inclusion of the Pnae in the "Zero Hunger" Strategy
- Creation of reference and support units for the Pnae called School Feeding and Nutrition Collaboration Centers (Cecanes)

2000

Establishment of the "Zero Hunger" Strategy (2003) and the strengthening of intersectoral collaboration

2009-2010

Approval of the Pnae Law, based on the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRAFN) (2009), and establishment of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PNSAN) (2010)

- Universalization of the Pnae for Basic Education during the 200 school days of the academic year*
- Inclusion of Food and Nutrition Education (EAN) as a priority axis
- Institutionalization of the School Feeding Councils (CAEs)
- Mandatory presence of a nutritionist as the technical manager at all stages of the Pnae
- Minimum of 30% of federal funds allocated for purchases from family farming
- Priority given to organic and/or agroecological foods

* Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education and Youth and Adult Education (EJA)

- Second extinction of Consea (2019) and its reinstatement (2023)
- Restriction of 20% of federal funds for the purchase of processed and ultra-processed products
- At least 75% of funds must be used to purchase fresh or minimally processed foods
- Establishment of a minimum per capita requirement for fruits, vegetables and legumes

2020

Alignment of the Pnae guidelines with Brazilian dietary directions

Learn more about the history of school meals in Brazil with the timeline [From Policy to Plate: Understanding the History of School Meals](#), from the portal O Joio e O Trigo, and the policy brief [The Legal and Policy Basis of Pnae: Building a Path toward Sustainable School Feeding](#), by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE)



WATCH OUT!

The Historical Influence of the Food Industry on School Meals

Like many countries of the Global South, school feeding in Brazil began with a strong dependence on international humanitarian aid and was influenced by the interests of the food industry. That's the case of American Aid, in the context of the Cold War. The United States needed to stabilize its prices and find markets for the dehydrated and ultra-processed food developed for its military. The U.S. government purchased surplus products from the food industry to donate or sell to other countries through its cooperation agencies. These products included powdered milk, margarine, dehydrated soups and nutrient-fortified flour. Thus, these foods were introduced into other markets while simultaneously strengthening political alliances in the context of the Cold War (Peixinho, 2013; Schottz, 2017).

This political and economic strategy reflects geopolitical strategies of domination. Driven by the profit interests of the food industry, these actions have been renewed over time. In Brazil, it may be said that this dynamic has been broken, but the food industry continues to exert constant pressure on the Pnae and on food policies. It is essential to stay alert to these strategies and understand how they materialize within international cooperation and humanitarian aid, in order to protect the health and food sovereignty of populations. The inclusion of biofortified foods and seeds in school feeding programs is one of the emerging trends, which clearly reflects the food industry's interest in incorporating its products into food access policies.

The incorporation of the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN) into the design of the Pnae (FIAN Brasil, 2021b) can be demonstrated through the following elements:

- universal access for all students in public schools, without any form of discrimination
- provision of meals throughout the entire school year on a regular and continuous basis
- menus based on fresh or minimally processed foods, with restrictions on the supply of ultra-processed products
- the supply of diverse and safe food, giving priority to organic and agroecological production methods
- respect for local culture, traditions and eating habits
- the accommodation of special dietary needs and specific health conditions (such as students with diabetes, hypertension or celiac disease, among others)
- the democratization of public procurement through the mandatory purchase of foods produced locally by family farmers
- the creation of School Feeding Councils (CAEs) at state and municipal levels as a mechanism for participation and social accountability

WATCH OUT!



Without monitoring and social participation, the Pnae cannot be effectively implemented.

The Pnae's trajectory, from 1950 to the present day, is the result of many struggles, mistakes, successes and the constant vigilance of civil society. There are still many challenges ahead in order to ensure the program truly meets the needs and specificities of all Basic Education students, respecting the guidelines established in its legal and institutional frameworks.

Despite how much the Pnae has progressed, there remains, for many municipalities and schools, a significant gap between what the program's regulations establish and the reality of its implementation. Therefore, continuous engagement from civil society is essential. On the one hand, this engagement keeps the issue of the right to adequate school feeding on the political agenda. On the other, it exposes conflicts of interest and violations of the program, aiming to prevent setbacks and to pressure for effective enforcement of Pnae guidelines in all schools.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ Is the school feeding program in your country regulated? If so, through which legal instruments?
- ▶ Are these instruments sufficient to ensure adequate school meals as a right?
- ▶ Is the school feeding program in your country universal, meaning that all students in public schools have access to it? If not, are there prospects for it to become universal?



Objective, Guidelines and Scope of the Pnae

The scope of the Pnae goes far beyond the distribution of food in schools. According to the Pnae Law – Law nº 11,947 of June 16, 2009 – the program aims to:

contribute to the biopsychosocial growth and development, learning, academic performance and the formation of healthy eating habits among students, through food and nutrition education activities and the provision of meals that meet their nutritional needs during the school year.

Among them are the promotion of healthy eating, through the adaptation of menus that recognise local food cultures, and support for sustainable development and the strengthening of local economies, through the mandatory purchase of products from family farming. The set of Pnae guidelines reinforces its intersectoral approach, which relies on collaboration among various government sectors to effectively promote healthy and sustainable food systems.

To achieve its objective, the Pnae Law establishes six important guidelines.

The Pnae Guidelines

1.

PROMOTION OF ADEQUATE AND HEALTHY EATING

Food must be varied and safe.

It must respect culture, traditions and healthy eating habits.

It should meet the age group, health conditions, and specific care needs of students.

2.

FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION (FNE)

FNE must be incorporated into the teaching and learning process through the school curriculum.

The topics of food, nutrition and the development of healthy practices should be addressed from the perspective of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS).

3. UNIVERSALITY OF COVERAGE

All students enrolled in state Basic Education are entitled to free school meals..

4. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND CONTROL

The community must monitor the implementation of the Pnae to ensure the provision of healthy and adequate school meals.

Municipalities and states must establish School Feeding Councils (CAEs).

5. SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Incentives must be provided for the purchase of diverse and locally produced foods, preferably from family farming.

Priority should be given to indigenous peoples, *quilombola* communities, agrarian reform settlers and women in food procurement.

6. RIGHT TO SCHOOL FEEDING

Access to food must be guaranteed equally.

Equal access to food should respect biological differences related to age, health conditions and social vulnerability.

Learn about **Law nº 11.947, of June 16, 2009**, known as the Pnae Law.



GOOD PRACTICES

The Influence of Civil Society in the Formulation of the Pnae Law

The approval of the bill that led to the Pnae Law was made possible by a favorable context both within the Federal Government and civil society. At the time, the Brazilian government was strongly committed to fighting hunger, promoting intersectoral policies and strengthening social participation. This coincided with support from organized actors advocating for the bill, including social movements, experts and organizations dedicated to Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) and education.

The National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Consea) played a central role in this process, strengthening the coordination between the government and civil society to ensure that social demands and needs were incorporated into the law, despite strong resistance from large companies supplying the school feeding market (ÓAÊ, 2021). The main aspects that shaped the bill are presented below.

Demand for Quality and Culturally Appropriate School Meals.

Civil society advocated that school meals be nutritious, adapted to local eating customs and promote students' health. As a result, the bill incorporated guidelines ensuring the nutritional quality and cultural appropriateness of the foods served in schools. Subsequently, civil society's demands led to guidelines restricting the offering of processed and ultra-processed foods.

Incorporation of Family Farming in the Food Supply. One of the most innovative aspects of the bill was the requirement that at least 30% of the funds be used to purchase food from family farms, with priority given to agrarian reform settlers, indigenous peoples, *quilombolas* and women. The goal was to strengthen the local economy and ensure that students had access to fresh and healthy foods instead of the ultra-processed products (UPPs) that previously dominated the program. This was a true paradigm shift toward the democratization of public procurement and the most important response to the demands of rural social movements.

Intersectorality and Alignment with Nutritional Guidelines. The integration of the Pnae with health, social development and rural policies was a priority. The bill established guidelines aligned with the dietary recommendations of the Ministry of Health to promote healthy eating that would help prevent chronic diseases and encourage the development of proper eating habits from childhood.

Strengthening Mechanisms of Social Control and Transparency. To ensure transparency, civil society proposed strengthening the role of the School Feeding Councils (CAEs) as oversight bodies. The law established that CAEs should operate in all Brazilian municipalities and states, with autonomy to monitor the Pnae, evaluate the quality of the food and ensure that menus are adapted to local and cultural realities.

Regarding its coverage, the Pnae spans the entire national territory. It is present in all public Basic Education schools across all 26 states and the Federal District, as well as in all 5,570 Brazilian municipalities.

In 2021, the program provided approximately 50 million meals per day and involved around 8,000 nutritionists and 80,000 school feeding council members (Alvarez, 2022).

SCOPE OF THE PNAE IN 2024



**145 THOUSAND
SCHOOLS**



**38 MILLION
OF STUDENTS***

** Approximate number*

The number of meals provided per day varies according to the length of time that infants, children and students stay at school.

MEALS PROVIDED BASED ON STUDENTS' TIME AT SCHOOL

Time at school	Meals
Part-time daycare centers	at least 2
Full-time daycare centers	at least 3
Part-time schools	at least 1
Full-time schools	at least 3

SCHOOL MEALS AT PRIVATE SCHOOLS

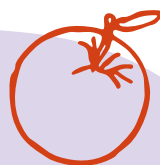
The Pnae does not regulate school meals at private schools. However, many of the Pnae's recommendations can be implemented in these schools. In practice, this depends on whether the schools or families provide adequate food, either through school cafeterias or by sending food from home. The factual outcome is that **public schools have become much healthier food environments compared to private schools** (Carmo et al., 2018).

FNDE Resolution nº 06 – dated May 8, 2020 – is the main regulation that governs various aspects of the Pnae. It aligns the Pnae's guidelines for food procurement and provision with the recommendations of the Brazilian dietary guidelines.

MAIN GUIDELINES OF FNDE RESOLUTION Nº 06

PRIORITIZING FRESH AND MINIMALLY PROCESSED FOOD

- A minimum of 80% of funds transferred by FNDE for the purchase of this category of food



REDUCING PROCESSED FOOD AND ULTRA-PROCESSED PRODUCTS

- A limit of 15% of funds transferred by the FNDE for the purchase of processed and ultra-processed foods
- A maximum of 5% for processed cooking ingredients
- Limitations on the offering of meat products, canned foods, dairy liquids with additives or sweeteners, cookies, crackers, bread or cake, sweets, margarine or vegetable cream

PROHIBITING ULTRA-PROCESSED FOOD FROM MENUS

- No ultra-processed meat, sweets, gummies, crisps, soft drinks, and other products with low nutritional value
- Prohibition on offering industrial trans fats



PROHIBITING CERTAIN FOOD FOR CHILDREN UNDER 3 YEARS OLD

- No UPPs should be given to this age group
- No sugar, honey or sweeteners should be offered for children of this age group



Access the [FNDE nº 06/2020 Resolution here](#).

The guidelines restricting the supply of processed and ultra-processed food are still new but their implementation is progressing rapidly. A study shows that in 2019, before the new rules were published, 40% of Brazilian municipalities already used less than 20% of Pnae funds to purchase processed and ultra-processed foods, showing that it's possible to accomplish the proposed guidelines (Nupens/USP and ÓAÊ, 2023). However, it's important to acknowledge some challenges including the lack of financial resources, the strong political influence of large suppliers and the resistance from the school community to accept restrictions.

EVIDENCE ON THE IMPACT OF THE PNAE ON STUDENTS' HEALTH

Studies show the positive effect of the Pnae on dietary consumption (Boklis-Berer et al., 2021a; 2021b). Adolescents who consume food provided by the Pnae five times a week are more likely to have a higher overall diet quality, which includes healthy ingredients such as beans and vegetables. They also have a lower regular consumption of soft drinks compared to adolescents who do not consume or consume school meals less frequently. Furthermore, adolescents catered for by the Pnae during the entire school week have lower prevalences of overweight and obesity (11% and 24%, respectively) compared to adolescents with low adherence to the program (those who consume fewer than five meals per week). These significant findings appear to be linked to the strength of the program's dietary and nutritional guidelines.



Read [here the FIAN Brasil booklet: Adequate Food and Nutrition in the Pnae: More Fresh Food, Less Ultra-Processed Food](#), which discusses the Pnae rules based on FNDE Resolution nº 06 and shows the challenges schools face in implementing them.

Food and Nutritional Education (FNE)

Food and Nutritional Education (FNE) is an essential strategy for promoting health and adequate healthy eating, for achieving food and nutrition security, and for fulfilling the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN).

Brazil's main reference for FNE is the *Reference Framework for Food and Nutrition Education in Public Policies*, published in 2012 by the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS), which establishes the following concept of FNE:

Food and Nutrition Education (FNE), in the context of fulfilling the Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition and Food and Nutrition Security (FNS), is a field of knowledge and a continuous and permanent practice that is trans-disciplinary, intersectoral, and multi-

professional. It aims to promote the autonomous and voluntary adoption of healthy eating habits. FNE practices should use problem-posing and active educational approaches and tools that foster dialogue with individuals and population groups, considering all stages of the life course, all steps of the food system, and the interactions and meanings that shape food behavior.

Based on this concept, FNE is not merely the transmission of information. It seeks to promote critical reflection on eating practices, conscious choices, and their impacts on public health and the environment. Schools and the school community play an essential role, not only as spaces for learning, but also as active agents of social and cultural transformation.



Access the [Reference Framework for Food and Nutrition Education for Public Policies](#).

Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) was defined as a cross-cutting theme in the Brazilian Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC)¹ and, in relation to the Basic Education curriculum, in the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB)² – Law nº 13.666/2018. In the educational context, its approach is based on a pedagogical model that values the continuous integration between theory and practice. This allows students to connect concepts and practices with their realities and daily experiences, bringing greater meaning to their learning.

In addition to being part of the objective of the National School Feeding Program (Pnae), Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) constitutes the second guideline of the Pnae Law, and is, therefore, a fundamental and structuring pillar of the program:

II – the inclusion of food and nutrition education in the teaching and learning process, integrated into the school curriculum, addressing the topics of food and nutrition and the development of healthy life practices, within the framework of food and nutrition security.

Law nº 11,947 (2009)

Food and nutrition education actions are the responsibility of the education departments, in coordination with education and nutrition profes-

sionals. The FNE reference framework makes it clear that FNE can and should be carried out by various actors and professionals. In this sense, it is integrated into a wide range of fields, practices and sectors, both within governmental spheres and in academic, private and civil society organizations.

Managers, teachers, educational coordinators, cooks, nutritionists, family farmers, members of school feeding councils, parents or guardians can (and should) actively participate in FNE activities and are all important in the implementation of the Pnae. It is essential to integrate FNE into everyday school practices, including cooking workshops, school garden production and activities involving the school community.

1. The BNCC is a normative document that defines the learning and development rights of all students in Brazil, from early childhood education to upper secondary education. It establishes the competencies and skills that must be developed at each stage of basic education, ensuring a common foundation for the entire country while allowing states and municipalities the autonomy to adapt curricula to their local contexts.

2. The LDB is a broader and fundamental piece of legislation that organises the entire Brazilian education system, establishing principles, objectives and guidelines for the federal, state, as well as municipal education networks. It serves as the legal foundation for the development of educational policies in Brazil.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO PROMOTE EAN TRAINING:

In 2018, the Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Fight Against Hunger (MDS) released the publication **Principles and Practices for Food and Nutrition Education**, with the purpose of providing guidelines for Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) activities.

In 2022, the National Fund for Education Development (FNDE) published a technical note entitled **Food and Nutrition Education in the PNAE: Social Actors and Possibilities for Action**, which provides recommendations for the various actors involved in the implementation of the Pnae.

In 2024, the Municipal Department of Education of São Paulo released the **Food and Nutrition Education: Pedagogical Guidelines**, as a guide for all stages of Basic Education.



GOOD PRACTICES

The Indigenous Project “Sabor da Terra”

Every year, the **Ñandejara Indigenous Municipal School**, belonging to the **Guarani and Kaiowá people**, carries out the **“Sabor da Terra” project**. This food and nutrition education (FNE) strategy, focused on preserving the community's food culture, was conceived and is implemented by Indigenous teachers. Throughout the first semester of the year, both theoretical and practical activities are conducted with the students. The project culminates in a large annual event, open to the entire community, where all the material and knowledge produced during the activities is showcased.

The project takes place as part of a subject called **“Indigenous Knowledge”** and involves activities such as land management, cultivating native seeds and preparing traditional recipes. Students conduct field research with their families to map out the foods produced in the village, as well as cultivation and preparation methods. They also do hands-on activities aimed at raising awareness about self-sustainability and the food sovereignty of village families.

Learn more about the **indigenous project “Sabor da Terra”** by accessing the publication [**Sowing Guarani and Kaiowá Culture: Food Education at the Ñandejara School.**](#)

Guardian Mothers

The Guardian Mothers is an initiative of the city of São Paulo aimed at generating income and promoting the social inclusion of women in situations of social vulnerability, especially mothers of students in the municipal school system. Participants receive a monthly grant and develop activities such as setting up and maintaining more than 1,200 educational school gardens.

The Food and Nutrition Education Journey

The Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) Journey is an initiative of the National Fund for Education Development (FNDE) that has been held since 2017, focusing on the promotion of healthy eating. Its goal is to foster debate and the implementation of FNE activities within school environments and to bring visibility to initiatives carried out in schools served by the Pnae across the country. Schools interested in participating register their FNE activities, and the ones with the best practices are given prizes.

Learn more about
[**the FNE Journey.**](#)



WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ Is Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) an integral part of any school feeding programs in your country?
- ▶ How do you think FNE activities can be aligned with the food culture and diverse local eating habits?



Management and Intersectorality of the Pnae

The management of the Pnae is shared among the federal, state and municipal governments. At a federal level, the Pnae is coordinated by the **National Fund for Education Development (FNDE)**, an autonomous agency linked to the Ministry of Education. The FNDE is responsible for

defining the general guidelines for the program's planning, implementation, control, monitoring and evaluation, as well as transferring financial resources to the Pnae's implementing entities (WFP and FNDE, 2021b; FNDE, 2020).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PNAE IMPLEMENTATION: IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES

- **Municipal Governments:**
Early childhood education and elementary schools.
- **State Governments and the Federal District:**
High schools.
- **Federal Schools:**
High schools that directly implement the Pnae.

The implementation of the Pnae at the local level is carried out directly by state governments, the Federal District (DF), and municipal governments, through their departments of education, as well as by federal schools. The implementation of the program includes:

- using FNDE financial resources to purchase food;
- complementing financial resources to ensure infrastructure and staff for meal preparation;
- accountability and financial reporting;
- providing meals in schools;
- Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) activities.

CHALLENGES OF DECENTRALIZATION



The decentralization of the Pnae, which began in 1994, had numerous benefits. It brought program implementation closer to territories and schools and provided greater autonomy to municipalities. This model has allowed national guidelines to be aligned with local needs and specificities, has enabled menus to be adapted to the food identity of each locality, while encouraging the purchase of fresh, seasonal foods from local family farming. However, decentralization also poses significant challenges.

The level of organization and capacity of program managers varies widely across the country's regions, resulting in uneven implementation. Some municipalities demonstrate strong capacity to implement the Pnae in accordance with its guidelines and to manage and complement the financial resources transferred by the FNDE. Others face financial, structural and

administrative weaknesses that hinder their ability to comply with the program's guidelines (Alvarez, 2022; ÓAÊ, 2023).

Monitoring and oversight of the Pnae throughout Brazil are also significant challenges, especially if addressed exclusively and centrally by the Federal Government. In this context, the role of the School Feeding Councils (CAEs) and the Collaborating Centers for School Feeding and Nutrition (Cecanes) is essential.

To address the challenges of decentralization, it is crucial to conduct ongoing training processes for managers and school feeding council members, which currently occur sporadically and fall short of needs.

Another important aspect of the Pnae's management design is intersectorality. To go beyond merely providing meals, the Pnae combines different sectors related to health, education, agriculture, local economy and sustainability. One of the main expressions of the program's inter-

sectorality is the mandatory direct purchase of food from family farming. This guideline requires effective coordination between the agriculture and education sectors to align the development of school menus with the agricultural mapping of the territories.

To ensure intersectorality in school feeding, the Pnae Management Committee was established at the federal level. The committee brings together representatives from various ministries and government agencies to coordinate initiatives aimed at strengthening the procurement of products from family farming, and is tasked

with ensuring that food, agricultural, and health policies are aligned. The committee also includes an advisory group composed of representatives from civil society and different sectors involved in the school feeding production and consumption chain.

Management of Resources and Food Purchasing

Due to the number and diversity of implementing entities, most of which are municipalities, the Pnae needs to have the capacity to adapt its management approaches. Currently, there are three financial resource management models of the Pnae that can be adopted by the implementing entities.

MODELS OF PNAE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

CENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT

The FNDE transfers funds to the implementing entity, which is responsible for the operational management.



The implementing entity purchases food items.



The delivery of the food items is made directly by suppliers to the schools or may be intermediated by state-run central supply warehouses.

Most implementing entities choose this model.

DECENTRALIZED OR SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

The FNDE transfers funds to the implementing entity.



The implementing entity transfers the funds to schools.



The schools directly purchase the food items under the responsibility of the school management.

This model can create an overload for schools and tends to receive insufficient guidance from implementing entity nutritionists.

MIXED MANAGEMENT

The FNDE transfers the to the implementing entity.



The implementing entity purchases non-perishable food items and distributes them to schools.



The implementing entity transfers funds to the schools for the purchase of perishable food items.

This model is widely adopted in large cities.

Source: prepared based on Aguiar and Calil (2022) and Alvarez (2022).



THE PNAE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Federal Government authorized the distribution of Pnae food directly to students' families. Some local governments organized themselves - including allocating additional funds from states and municipalities - to support distribution. Others did not, resulting in the absence, targeting, or irregularity of deliveries. There was strong advocacy from civil society, the public prosecutor's office, the public defender's office, teachers' unions, and other groups to pressure state governments and municipalities to deliver food that complied with Pnae guidelines. Unfortunately, the guarantee of healthy and adequate food was not achieved in many areas (Plataforma Dhesca Brasil, 2020). However, it is important to highlight that the distribution of school meals to families in times of emergency is one of the most effective strategies for ensuring food security in such situations. This approach should be valued, especially in light of climate change.



Management of Resources and Food Purchasing

There are four ways to implement school meal services. Each implementing entity can choose one of these operational models, which involve hiring the necessary staff, purchasing food items, preparing meals and distributing them to the students.

OPERATIONAL MODELS FOR MEAL DELIVERY

Self-Managed Model	Outsourced Models	Mixed Model
The implementing entity is responsible for all stages of meal operations.	Full Outsourcing: the implementing entity hires a company to be responsible for all stages of meal operations.	The implementing entity combines self-management and mixed outsourcing, selecting which stages of meal operations are handled by contracted companies.
	Mixed Outsourcing: the implementing entity is responsible for purchasing and delivering food items, while a company is hired to handle the remaining stages of meal operations.	

The choice to outsource meal operations is made by local public managers, even though it is not a form recommended by the FNDE. Unfortunately, this operational model has been expanding in some states and municipalities.

In the mixed model, there are different ways to outsource stages of meal operations. The company may provide general services or labor, or supply products such as food items, utensils and equipment, among others. The level of outsourcing adopted has a significant impact on the results of the Pnae. Studies indicate that outsourcing leads to a decline in the quality of service and school meals offered, as well as several other issues (Bicalho, Daniela & Russo, Giorgia (2023).

WATCH OUT!
Challenges of Outsourcing School Meals

- WORK PRECARIZATION**
high turnover, low wages, and insufficient training of professionals.
- CONTRACTUAL ISSUES:**
inadequate bidding processes, overpricing, cartel formation, and lack of clear criteria for price acceptability.
- COMPROMISED QUALITY:**
food items not meeting contract specifications, failure to comply with menus and low food quality.

- LEGAL IRREGULARITIES:**
non-compliance with the requirement to use at least 30% of funds for purchases from family farming.
- DEFICIENT OVERSIGHT:**
failures in monitoring by the implementing entities and issues with manual meal control in schools.

Outsourcing does not resolve the management flaws of school feeding programs and further aggravates structural problems. Therefore, this form of meal operation requires strict and coordinated controls to ensure quality, food safety and transparency. Additionally, a significant portion of the program's budget, usually already insufficient, is diverted as profit to private companies.

Meal Preparation

Pnae meals can be prepared in two types of kitchens.

TYPES OF KITCHENS

Centralized kitchen	Decentralized kitchens (in schools)
Meals, except for some specific preparations, are prepared in a central kitchen that serves all students and are later distributed either ready for consumption or for finalizing at the schools.	All meals are prepared and distributed at the school itself, where the food is already stored.

The decentralized kitchen is the ideal model, since the food is prepared directly at the schools, ensuring fresh and culturally appropriate meals. This kitchen model also allows for closer interaction between the kitchen staff and the students. To achieve this, it is essential that implementing entities provide the necessary infrastructure and invest in qualified

human resources and continuous training for cooks.

In this regard, it is essential that schools have well-equipped kitchens, comfortable dining areas, appropriate spaces for food storage and equipment that ensures safety and quality in meal preparation.

School Feeding Professionals

The quality of school meals depends not only on the food purchased but also on the work of qualified and

properly valued professionals. In the Pnae, nutritionists and cooks are essential pillars to ensure that students

have access to healthy meals aligned with the program’s guidelines.

The responsibility for ensuring adequate workforce lies with the implementing entities – or the outsourced companies – which must hire nutritionists, cooks and guarantee decent working conditions, continuous training, and appropriate remuneration. Each implementing entity must have qualified nutritionists and at least one nutritionist as the technical manager (TM).

Nutrition professionals play a key role in executing purchases from family farming, as they are responsible for designing the menus, which must be planned based on the agricultural production of each territory. In this sense, it is essential that they work in close coordination with the agriculture departments of the implementing entities, as well as with family farmers, associations and family farming organizations.

This coordination ensures alignment between the supply from local fami-

ly farming and the nutritional needs of students. In addition, nutritionists are responsible for training and guiding cooks to ensure that meal preparation follows good hygiene practices and food safety standards.

Cooks play a fundamental role in the daily life of schools. Therefore, they must be valued and properly compensated for their work. In some countries, kitchen work in schools is often carried out by volunteer mothers.

Cooks do not only prepare and serve meals. They also play an important educational role by sharing knowledge about food and building relationships with students. Cooks are often the ones who encourage students to try new food, promoting healthier eating habits in a practical and accessible way.

The combination of qualified nutritionists, valued and well-trained cooks, and appropriate infrastructure is essential to ensure that students truly receive adequate meals at school.



GOOD PRACTICES

Valuing Pnae Cooks

The main way to value cooks is through fair remuneration and the guarantee of their labor rights and decent working conditions. However, there are also complementary ways to promote their recognition and appreciation.

Best School Meal Recipes

The federal government and some state governments organized a contest of recipes from each region, aiming to disseminate healthy and tasty preparations across the country, linked to Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) initiatives. The recipes were evaluated based on criteria such as creativity, innovation, use of regional foods, promotion of local food traditions, and feasibility of being replicated in other schools. You can see the 15 winning recipes – five from each Brazilian region - [here](#).

Reality show “Life of a School Cook”

The Federal Government, in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Brazil, produced the reality show “Life of a School Cook”. The competition included regional qualifying and elimination rounds. Five professionals – one from each region of the country – competed in the final stage. Watch the show and listen to the “Life of a School Cook” podcast [here](#).

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ How do the different levels of government (national, regional and local) in your country collaborate to implement public policies? How does this work in the case of school feeding?
- ▶ How are school meals organized and prepared? Who are the members of the school feeding workforce? Are these people paid and provided with training?
- ▶ What are school kitchens and cafeterias like? Do they require improvements in terms of safety, quality and infrastructure?
- ▶ What would be a good combination for a managing model for school feeding in the context of your country?



Pnae Financing and Budget


The Pnae is funded exclusively with public resources from the National Treasury, secured in the Federal Budget. The National Fund for Education Development (FNDE) annually transfers financial resources to the implementing entities (states, the Federal District, municipalities and federal schools) in ten monthly installments, covering 200 school days (20 days per month). The federal budget allocated

to the Pnae in 2024 was BRL 5.7 billion (approximately USD 937.5 million)³.

The annual amount to be transferred is calculated based on the number of school days, the number of students enrolled in the implementing entity's school network – according to the previous year's School Census – and the per capita amount per student, which varies depending on the type of school, the education level and the educational modality.


3. BRL = reais, brazilian currency. USD = United States dollars.

CALCULATION OF THE FEDERAL AMOUNT TRANSFERRED TO IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES




Annual Transfer

=




Number of Students

×



Number of School Days

×



Per Capita Amount per Student*

* According to the level and type of education, as shown in the table below.

PER CAPITA VALUE PER SCHOOL DAY (2024)

Teaching Stages and Modalities	Value in BRL	Value in USD*
Daycare Centers	1,37	0.25
Pre-schools	0,72	0.13
Indigenous and <i>quilombola</i> Schools	0,86	0.16
Elementary and High School	0,50	0.10
Full-time Education	1,37	0.25
Full-time High Schools	2,56	0.47
Specialized Educational Support and Extracurricular Activities	0,68	0.13
Youth and Adult Education	0,41	0.08

* According to the exchange rate on August 5, 2024: BRL 5.45 per USD.

Per capita values are intended **exclusively for the purchase of food items**. The budget transferred by the FNDE to the implementing entities has a **supplementary nature**, as established by the 1988 Federal Constitution, which means municipal and state governments need to supplement the amounts allocated for food purchases. Additionally, these governments cover personnel costs (nutritionists, cooks etc.) and bear operational expenses such as cooking gas, water, electricity and investments in infrastructure, including equipment like stoves, freezers, refrigerators and kitchen utensils (ÓÃ and Fineduca, 2022).

The ability to supplement these funds depends on the financial capacity of states and municipalities, which may be limited in areas with lower revenue or greater economic vulnerability. In some cases, the lack of supplementation is due to a lack of political prioritization. However, in many municipalities, FNDE funds are the main source of financing for school meal purchases, which results in insufficient and/or low-quality meals (ÓÃ, 2024a).

Another important point regarding the own resources of states and municipalities is that state and municipal governments have the autonomy to legislate over them, and Pnae guidelines apply only to the funds provided by the Federal Government. Therefore, large municipalities and capitals, which are able to contribute significantly more than the FNDE, often find loopholes to bypass these guidelines. This is very common, for example, when the management of school feeding funds is outsourced.

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THE FIGHT FOR THE AUTOMATIC ADJUSTMENT OF PNAE

The Pnae does not have a permanent mechanism for annual adjustment, which makes the program

vulnerable to fluctuations in food prices, with a tendency to worsen in the context of multiple overlapping crises – especially the climate crisis – that affect food systems and, consequently, food and nutrition security. (ÓAÊ, 2024b).

In practice, adjustments are made occasionally, depending on the interests of the Federal Government and the elected members of Congress, and are subject to intense budgetary disputes. Moreover, these adjustments are random, lacking a transparent and predictable methodology and official indicators, and they fail to compensate for the gap caused by inflation losses (ÓAÊ, 2024b).

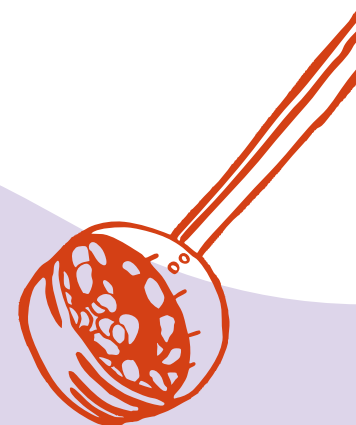
In 2021, civil society, led by the School Meals Watch (ÓAÊ), launched the **Adjust Pnae Now** campaign, an initiative that advocates for the approval of a law establishing a mandatory annual adjustment of the Pnae based on a national inflation index. The campaign is ongoing.

The ÓAÊ and partner organizations have produced several technical briefs on the adjustments of the Pnae's per capita amounts. These documents are used to raise awareness among decision-makers (such as members of Congress and Pnae managers) and to promote public engagement. Active participation of civil society is crucial to pressure the federal executive and legislative branches to prioritise the Pnae and strengthen HRtAFN.

Access the technical briefs produced by ÓAÊ and partner organizations [here](#).

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ Who finances school feeding in your country?
- ▶ Is the funding sustainable and sufficient to meet the needs of all students?
- ▶ What would be the most suitable funding model for the reality of your country?
- ▶ Is there recognition that school meals are a necessary social investment for the country's development?



4. PUBLIC PROCUREMENT FROM FAMILY FARMING



Family Farming as a Public Policy Subject

Family farmers around the world face significant barriers to accessing both public and private markets. In Brazil, this began to change in the 1990s. Driven by demands and mobilization from civil society and peasant movements, national policies specifically aimed at family farming began to be developed.

One of the most important milestones in Brazil, fundamental for the proper functioning of public procurement, was the definition of the category “family farmer and rural family entrepreneur” through the National Policy for Family Farming and Rural Family Enterprises – Law

nº 11,326/2006. The establishment of this law was a direct result of the peasant movement struggle. By setting clear and official criteria to define who qualifies as a family farmer, these producers began to access specific policies, such as rural credit, technical assistance and commercialization programs, with the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and Brazil's National School Feeding Program (Pnae) as key examples. According to the law::

A family farmer and rural family entrepreneur is defined as someone who carries out activities in rural areas while simultaneously meeting the following requirements:

I - does not own, under any title, an area larger than four (4) fiscal land units

II - predominantly uses family labour in the economic activities of their establishment or enterprise

III - derives a minimum percentage of the family's income from the economic activities of their establishment or enterprise, as defined by the Executive Branch

IV - manages their establishment or enterprise together with their family.
Law nº 11.326 (2006)

The political identity of family farming and the public policies specifically designed for this sector are fundamental to the management model of public procurement within the Pnae. It can be stated that the democratization of public procurement for school feeding, combined with a direct purchasing mechanism from family farmers, was only made possible because family farming had already been consolidated as a recognised category eligible for public policies.

NATIONAL REGISTRY OF FAMILY FARMING (CAF)

The CAF (Cadastro Nacional da Agricultura Familiar – National Registry of Family Farming) is the main instrument for identifying and formalizing family farmers. It is a national database that gathers information about family farming production units and their members. Registration with the CAF is a prerequisite for family farmers to access public policies, including credit, agricultural insurance and technical assistance and rural extension services, as well as programs such as the National School Feeding Program (Pnae) and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA). The CAF is issued by entities accredited by the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming (MDA).

WATCH OUT!

The **democratization of public procurement for school feeding in Brazil** is a political process aimed at challenging the industry and large food distribution networks, as it seeks to break the concentration of supply by a small number of large companies. This democratization is only possible through the logic of decentralized and local purchasing. On the one hand, this requires the organization of family farmers, and on the other, the establishment by the state of formal conditions for public procurement.

It is not possible to replicate the Brazilian process in other countries. Each country has its own conditions and specificities. However, the democratization of procurement requires close dialogue between peasant organizations and governments. Therefore, the establishment of social participation councils is essential, where various government sectors – especially education and agriculture – together with civil society, can engage in dialogue and design the necessary rules and strategies for the proper functioning of public procurement.

How Public Procurement for the Pnae Works

Two of the main barriers that prevented the Pnae from fully meeting the guidelines of providing fresh, healthy and culturally appropriate food was the lack of specific public procurement strategies and the excessive bureaucratic requirements. This situation ended up favoring large suppliers while excluding family farmers. These barriers reinforced the competitive disadvantage of fam-

ily farming compared to large-scale producers (Schneider, Mattei and Cazella, 2004; Cerqueira, Rocha and Coelho, 2006).

In this context, the approval of the Pnae Law in 2009 was a historic achievement. The law established that at least 30% of the program's funds must be used to purchase food directly from family farming. This

procurement must be carried out without a **bidding process**, through a mechanism called **"a public call for procurement"** (*chamada pública*).

The "public calls for procurement", which are exclusively for family farmers registered with the government, streamlined and simplified the purchasing process, opening up a new market worth 1.5 billion BRL. Moreover, the law prioritizes agrarian reform settlements, indigenous and *quilombola* communities, as well as formal and informal women's groups, thereby strengthening social inclusion and food justice.

The procurement of food from family farming is intrinsically aligned with the principles of the Pnae. It encourages production diversification and the strengthening of local food systems, contributing to the development of local economies and promoting the social inclusion of diverse family farmers.

Of the total financial resources transferred by FNDE under the PNAE, at least 30% must be used to purchase food products directly from family farmers and rural family entrepreneurs or their organizations, with priority given to agrarian reform settlements, traditional indigenous communities, quilombola communities and formal and informal women's groups.

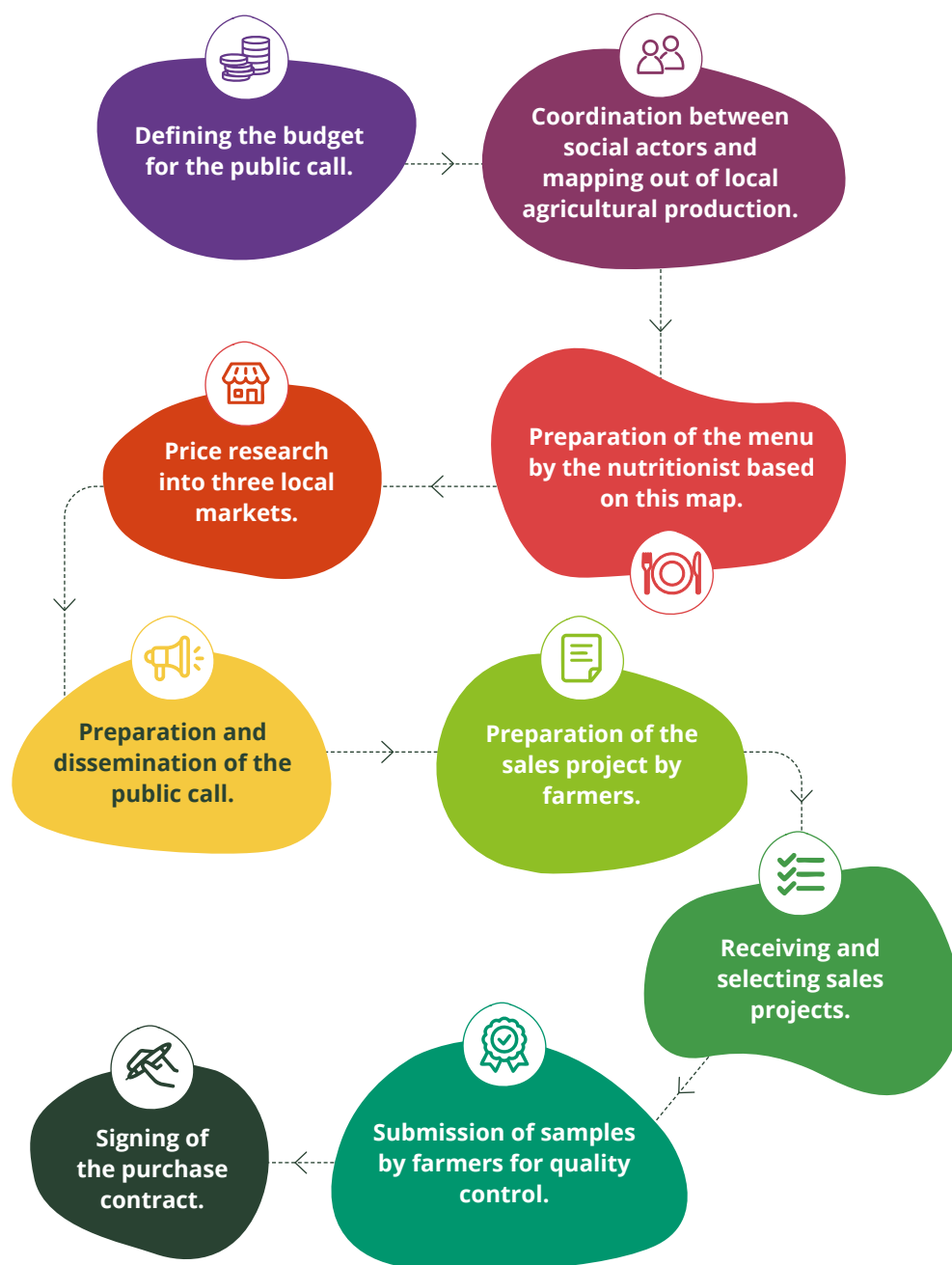
Law nº 11.947 (2009)

In addition, it guarantees a stable market for family farmers. Unlike when they sold only to intermediaries, farmers supplying the Pnae have greater assurance of being able to sell their production, allowing for better planning.

Public procurement from family farming, regulated by FNDE Resolution nº 06/2020, follows specific administrative procedures and is carried out locally, mainly by municipalities. Family farmers can submit sales proposals as formal groups, informal groups, and/or as individual suppliers, as long as they are registered in the National Registry of Family Farming (CAF).

The approval of proposals depends on the submission of the required documents and a sales project. The selection must follow the priority criteria specified in the regulations. Once a proposal is selected, a contract is signed, outlining the rights, obligations and responsibilities of both parties, which generally remains valid for one year. It is common for farmers to receive technical assistance – either from public agencies or nonprofit organizations – especially for agricultural mapping and the preparation of the sales project.

PROCESS OF DIRECT PURCHASE FROM FAMILY FARMING FOR SCHOOL MEALS



There are key aspects that are essential for the successful implementation of direct purchasing from family farming for the Pnae. These aspects are outlined below.

STRONG COORDINATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS



It is crucial to establish dialogue and cooperation between the departments of education and agriculture, representatives of family farming, nutrition professionals, the procurement sector of the implementing entity and other actors who serve as facilitators, such as local agencies for technical assistance and rural extension, as well as the School Feeding Council (CAE).

MAPPING LOCAL PRODUCTION

This mapping allows for understanding the seasonality of foods and local agricultural supply, which is why it is essential for the preparation of menus and the public call for bids.

MENU PREPARATION



The nutrition professional must plan the menu taking into account the mapping of local agricultural production, seasonality and socio-biodiversity foods. They must also respect nutritional guidelines and local eating habits, promoting the appreciation of regional food culture and encouraging a healthier and more diverse diet. To achieve this, the nutritionist should engage with farmers and local organizations representing family farming to participate in the mapping process, understand the quality of the produced foods and, when necessary, provide training to producers on processing, packaging and the delivery of products.

PRICE DEFINITION



Unlike conventional bidding processes, which primarily select the lowest-priced proposal, purchases from family farming adopt the concept of the best price. The food price for the public call is determined based on research from at least three local markets, prioritizing street markets. The cost of inputs such as freight and packaging must be added. Besides, there is the possibility of up to a 30% price increase for organic or agroecological products, which encourages sustainable farming practices.



PUBLIC CALL FOR DIRECT FOOD PURCHASE

Published by the executing entity, it contains the list of foods, quantities, frequencies, prices and essential requirements. With the public call, farmers can prepare their sales proposals according to the demand. It also defines priority criteria, such as closer proximity and priority groups. The calls must be widely publicized and remain open for at least twenty calendar days.

Learn in detail about the FNDE manual [Acquisition of Family Farming Products for School Feeding](#).



Learn more about how family farming purchases work for the Pnae in practice with the booklet [How to Sell for School Feeding: A Guide to the Pnae for Family Farming](#).



CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

The Pnae Law alone does not guarantee its effective implementation in the territories. Despite significant improvement, many obstacles still need to be overcome (Alvarez, 2022):

- lack of coordination between public agencies and involved stakeholders
- failure to incorporate the agricultural mapping of locally produced foods
- bureaucracy in obtaining sanitary inspection certification
- insufficient number of free technical assistance technicians in municipalities
- inadequate infrastructure in schools to store family farming products
- logistical difficulties faced by farmers to deliver products to schools
- low organizational capacity among farmers to overcome production scale challenges and ensure continuous supply
- delays in payments due to executing entities

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?



- ▶ In your country, where does the food for the school feeding program come from?
- ▶ Do family farmers in your country currently supply food, or could they potentially become suppliers for the school feeding program?
- ▶ What needs to be done to create or improve public procurement mechanisms for family farming?

Respect for the Cultural Diversity of Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities

One of the major challenges of the Pnae is adapting it to the realities of indigenous peoples, *quilombola* communities and traditional peoples and communities in their lands and territories. In addition to their cultural specificities, there are significant logistical challenges, especially in the Amazon and similar biomes, where food is often transported by river or purchased within the territories themselves.

Some of the solutions that have been implemented include setting higher

per capita amounts for indigenous and *quilombola* students, issuing specific public calls exclusively for these peoples and communities, and waiving sanitary surveillance registration requirements.

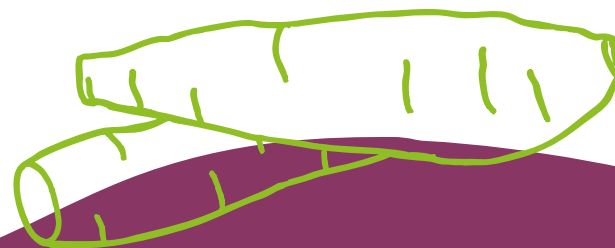
There is still a long way to go for universal policies like the Pnae to be fully effective in these contexts. This is a necessary measure of historical reparation in response to the crimes committed since colonization.

COLLABORATION WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM TO STRENGTHEN SOCIO-BIODIVERSITY ECONOMIES AND THE AUTONOMY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

With the aim of addressing the barriers that traditional peoples and communities face in accessing public procurement for the National School Feeding Program (Pnae), a national network was created within the Federal Prosecutor's Office (MPF) called Catrapovos Brasil. This network is composed of representatives from the justice system who work in collaboration with public administrators and civil society.



Learn more in the **Practical Guide: School Feeding for Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities**, published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (Mapa).



The main innovation done by Catrapovos was the publication of a technical note that recognizes school feeding as part of the production, self-consumption and food sovereignty strategies of traditional peoples and communities. The note established that foods produced by traditional populations, similarly to those intended for household consumption, are exempt from registration, inspection and sanitary surveillance. This technical note thus serves as a regulatory basis for specific public procurement calls directed at these communities, which has been particularly common in the Amazon region. It enables the local purchase of traditional foods for the National School Feeding Program (Pnae), such as cassava flour, fruit pulps, dried fish and other minimally processed foods according to local food culture.

Access the **Technical Note nº 03/2020/6ªCCR/MPF** [here](#).



GOOD PRACTISES

The Experience of the Açaí Direto na Escola (Açaí Directly to School) Project on the Marajó Island

The Açaí Direto na Escola project, implemented in the Amazon (Afuá municipality, in the state of Pará), is an innovative and sustainable model that combines high-quality school feeding with the promotion of local socio-biodiversity, by including açaí, a palm tree fruit, in school meals. This initiative, which integrates inter-sectoral efforts from the departments of education, health, agriculture and environment, demonstrates how to tackle challenges with creative solutions.

Operational Challenges

Complex Logistics - Access to riverside schools is limited, requiring expensive river transportation and alternative means such as small boats and bicycles.

Poor School Infrastructure - Many schools lack electricity and clean water, making it impossible to store fresh food.

Weak Coordination - There is a lack of technical assistance, proper documentation, support from the municipal administration and knowledge about Pnae regulations.

Menus Not Adapted to Region - The previous municipal administration prioritised processed foods due to a lack of investment and weak coordination with local producers.

Solutions Found for Açaí Supply

Direct Delivery - Local farmers harvest and deliver the fruit directly to schools on the same day it is prepared and distributed, which takes place once a week. This guarantees freshness, as well as nutritional and sanitary quality.

School Infrastructure - Açaí pulp extractors installed in school kitchens, allowing the fresh fruit to be processed directly on site.

Menu Localization - Inclusion of açaí and other foods from local socio-biodiversity, fully integrated into the local food culture.

Capacity Building - Training of school cooks in good practices for handling açaí and other foods.

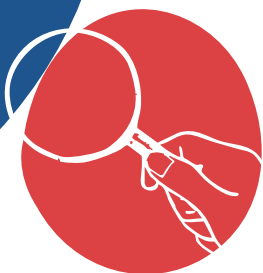
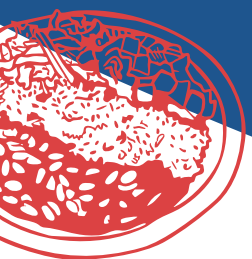
Environmental Sustainability - Collection and proper disposal of açaí seeds by the Municipal Department of the Environment.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ Does school feeding in your country reflect and respect the cultures, traditions and eating habits of indigenous peoples and traditional communities?
- ▶ What are the main challenges to ensuring culturally appropriate menus and fresh foods for schools in remote regions of your country?
- ▶ Are there mechanisms to establish effective dialogue and collaboration between school meal managers and indigenous peoples and traditional communities? Can this dialogue and collaboration be strengthened?



5. PARTICIPATION, MONITORING AND SOCIAL CONTROL OF SCHOOL MEALS



Active Participation of Society in the Pnae

Active participation from society is a fundamental element for the effective realization of the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRAFN) and for the development and maintenance of public policies such as the Pnae. The progressive realization of HRAFN implies not only obligations on the part of the State, but also shared responsibilities among various social actors, including individuals, the school community, social movements and civil society organizations. These actors play a crucial role in making this right a reality, whether by participating in social monitoring mechanisms, supporting food policies or demanding that the standards ensuring HRAFN are upheld.

With the Pnae and other public policies, it is essential to ensure the oversight of the proper use of public resources and the quality of the services provided. This type of monitoring and follow-up carried out by society is known as **social control**.

Social control can be understood as the participation of citizens in public management, oversight, monitoring, and control of the actions of the Public Administration. It is an important mechanism for preventing corruption and strengthening citizenship.
CGU (2012)

The 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution – known as the Citizen Constitution – opened space for greater participation of civil society in public

policies by guaranteeing mechanisms that facilitate dialogue between governments and the population. These mechanisms promote increased societal involvement in the formulation,

management and oversight of public policies. The implementation of these mechanisms occurs through the creation of councils at federal, state and municipal levels.



Learn about the [Guide for Councilors of the National School Feeding Program \(Pnae\)](#), published in 2017 by the National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE) and the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU).

School Feeding Council (CAE)

Social oversight of school feeding is primarily carried out through the School Feeding Council (CAE), which must be mandatorily established in all states and municipalities in Brazil.

The CAE is a collegiate body with a supervisory, permanent, deliberative and advisory role.



CAE ATTRIBUTES

COLLEGIATE

It is composed of a group of people **representing different segments of society** (parents, teachers, non-governmental organizations and governments), it makes decisions **collectively**, considering the diversity of opinions and interests.

INSPECTOR

As a means of control, it **monitors and verifies the execution of the Pnae**.

PERMANENT

It is **continuously active and operational** and performs its function uninterruptedly

DELIBERATIVE

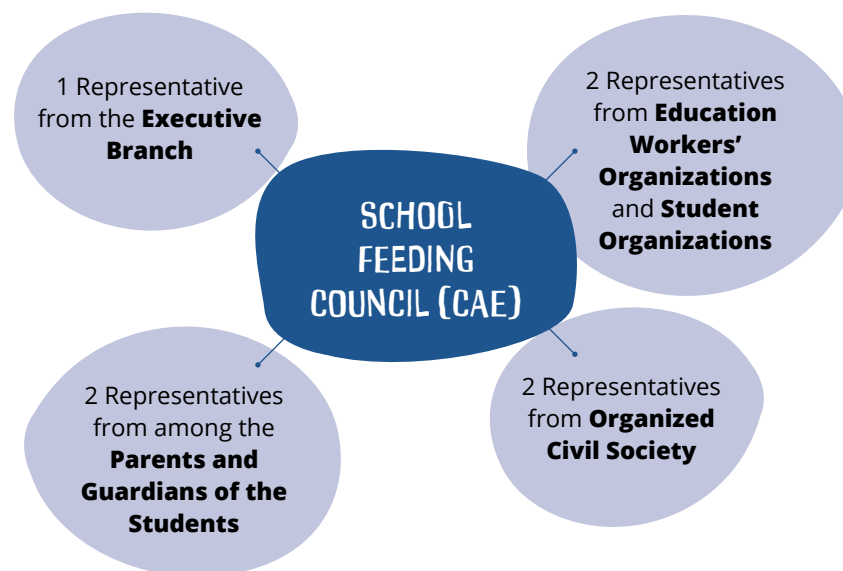
It **proposes improvements** to the Pnae **and makes decisions**, with the power to do so, such as approving or rejecting financial statements.

ADVICE

It plays a **guiding and supporting** role, helping school and municipal management to implement and improve the Pnae, suggesting practices that guarantee efficiency and effectiveness.

The council members who make up the CAE are volunteers, elected in a specific assembly, with a four-year term. Among its duties, the CAE must monitor and oversee the various activities and processes related to school feeding.

COMPOSITION OF THE CAE



CAE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Monitor and supervise compliance with Pnae guidelines
- Monitor and supervise the application of financial resources
- Ensure food quality
- Analyze the accountability of the executing entity
- Report irregularities
- Prepare the internal regulations and the annual action plan of the council

To ensure the legality, efficiency and effectiveness of the Pnae, the School Feeding Councils (CAEs) operate in many municipalities in coordination with other councils, such as municipal food and nutritional security councils, education councils and the federal and regional nutrition councils. This collaboration may also include the Federal Public Defender's Office (DPU), the Federal Public Ministry (MPF) and the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU).

The CAEs play a crucial role in the enforceability of the HRTAFN, as they enable civil society to monitor and

oversee the implementation of the Pnae. When they manage to be active and autonomous, these councils promote an environment of transparency where society can demand improvements and report irregularities to strengthen the program's sustainability and quality. However, the effective involvement of civil society through the CAEs depends on adequate conditions for their operation, which does not always happen. This includes autonomy, infrastructure, human resources, financial support, and all the aspects that allow the council to fully exercise its functions.

REPORTING IRREGULARITIES

The School Feeding Councils (CAEs) are not the only means of overseeing the Pnae, especially when it involves serious irregularities and corruption. At federal level, complaints can be submitted to the FNDE Ombudsman's Office. However, anyone can also appeal to various justice system bodies, such as the federal and state public prosecutors' offices and public defenders' offices. FNDE Resolution nº 06/2020 establishes that complaints must be kept confidential and must include:

- a detailed description of the fact for investigation of the probable irregularity or illegality
- the probable date and location of the event and identification of the public agency and the person responsible for the irregularity or illegality

Collaborating Center for School Food and Nutrition (Cecane)

Collaborating Centers for School Feeding and Nutrition (Cecanes) were established in 2006 as a partnership between the FNDE and various universities. The goal of these centers is to develop research, teaching and outreach activities related to the Pnae. They represent an innovative

and strategic initiative to strengthen the program by combining academic knowledge with public management, playing a fundamental role in three main areas: **monitoring, training** and **social control**. Currently, there are 26 Cecanes distributed across several Brazilian states.



Learn about these **Collaborating Centers** on the [FNDE page](#) on the subject.

CECANE ACTIVITIES

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Technical visits to municipalities to identify challenges and propose



These visits promote transparency and continuous improvement and seek to ensure that the Pnae achieves its objective.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION

Training of school nutrition counselors, family farmers, nutritionists and municipal managers through workshops, courses and teaching materials.



These training sessions strengthen understanding of the Pnae and the implementation of the program's guidelines.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CONTROL

Technical support to CAEs and promotion of actions that expand civil society participation in Pnae monitoring.



This action reinforces democratic governance and the enforceability of HRTAFN.

In a country as vast as Brazil, the FNDE faces many challenges. The Cecanes act as an extension of the Federal Government, supporting various actions facilitated by the fact that these centers are located within the territories, closer to the frontline of the Pnae and its stakeholders.

Each Cecane develops its own specific projects, but all centers focus on a set of common themes related to:

- advising municipalities and states on the implementation of the Pnae
- promoting the adaptation of menus in indigenous and quilombola schools
- producing recipe books featuring regional culinary preparations
- holding regional workshops with family farmers to expand and strengthen their participation in the Pnae
- developing methodologies and conducting research on the Pnae, school feeding and health
- offering training and refresher courses for nutritionists, food handlers, school principals and school feeding council members
- providing technical support to FNDE for monitoring the Pnae through visits to municipalities

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ What are the challenges in your country to strengthening the active participation of civil society in relation to school feeding?
- ▶ Are there councils or committees for social oversight of the school feeding program in your country? How do they operate?
- ▶ What types of partnerships can be established with universities to improve implementation, monitoring and research on school feeding?

6. THREATS TO ADEQUATE SCHOOL MEALS



Large food and beverage industries employ highly effective strategies to pressure governments. This pressure aims to undermine, block or delay initiatives designed to develop, implement and strengthen public policies and regulations aimed at promoting

adequate diets. These actions are always driven by the pursuit of their own interests, even at the expense of the public interest, population health and the health of the planet.

Conflict of Interest in Food Policies

The actions of large food and beverage industries include practices such as:

- political influence through lobbying;
- undermining the scientific community and scientific evidence;
- blaming individuals for their food choices.

When corporations act in a systematic and organized manner, these practices are referred to as **corporate political activities (CPA)**. The influence exerted through CPA can be classified as **corporate capture**. When corporate capture occurs, it reveals the

subversion of public policies in favor of private interests. Moreover, when private profit-driven interests prevail over public interests, a **conflict of interest** is clearly established.

Learn about the **Big Food Dossier: how the Industry Interferes in Food Policies**, published by ACT Promoção da Saúde & Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor [Idec] (2022)



The **6th National Conference on Food and Nutrition Security**, held in 2023 in Brasília – the capital of Brazil –, defined the concept of **conflict of interest in Food and Nutrition Security (FNS)** as:

Situations in which the actions of individuals or groups are directly or indirectly influenced by considerations and motivations that may lead them to make decisions that go against the public interest and the guidelines of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy.

Consea (2023)

At the conference, partnerships between public authorities and companies, entities and private organizations involved in the production or activities related to the following were considered conflicts of interest:

- breast milk substitutes and related products targeted at children under 3 years of age
- ultra-processed foods and beverages
- alcoholic beverages
- pharmaceuticals used for the prevention and treatment of diet and nutrition-related diseases
- synthetic agrochemicals
- genetic manipulation or patent ownership of genetically modified seeds
- large-scale food retail trade



WATCH OUT!

Researchers and activists warn that the construction of the so-called Hunger Industrial Complex is underway in some countries. This initiative is driven by large corporate investments in food banks, through which companies donate primarily processed and ultra-processed products that are close to their expiration dates to be distributed to populations experiencing food insecurity. In doing so, they simultaneously promote their brands (Fisher, 2017).

In various national contexts, these companies also receive tax exemptions, turning into profit products that could no longer be sold on the market. As a result, they avoid paying taxes that could otherwise be invested in public policies (Moura & Santarelli, 2024). Alarming, these “donations” can even reach schools!

The food industry, therefore, offers false solutions to distribute its false foods, masking the problems of overproduction and waste generated by its dysfunctional agro-industrial models. In doing so, it seeks to establish a perverse link between food waste and food policies (Fisher, 2017).

These tendencies must be carefully considered in the development of food policies in general, and particularly in school meal policies.

Identifying and Preventing Conflicts of Interest in Schools

School meal programs have always attracted the attention of the food industry worldwide, especially manufacturers of processed foods and

ultra-processed products, due to the enormous potential of the institutional market these programs represent.

In Brazil, over the decades, the National School Feeding Program (Pnae) has been consolidated as a policy for promoting healthy and sustainable diets. Among the program's core principles are the restriction of processed foods and UPPs and the prioritization of fresh, minimally processed, local and seasonal foods.

Although this progress is highly beneficial for public health, it is unfavorable to large food industries, which have lost access to this segment of public procurement. As a result, the Pnae has become a constant target of the private interests of large agribusiness chains and the food industry.

The interference of these large corporations occurs mainly through lobbying in the National Congress, aiming to amend the Pnae Law for their own benefit. For instance, they attempt to insert provisions that guarantee a reserved market for products such as milk and meat, which distorts the program's objectives and undermines the public interest in the name of private profits (Moura & Santarelli, 2024). Therefore, the Pnae Law remains under constant threat and is the subject of ongoing defense by a vigilant civil society.

Large corporate chains also see the school environment as a strategic opportunity to influence the developing eating habits of children and adolescents. Since **marketing and advertising practices** targeted at children and adolescents, particularly in nurseries and elementary schools, are considered abusive in Brazil, such practices must therefore be prohibited (Interministerial Ordinance nº 1,010, 2006; Conanda Resolution nº 163, 2014).

For this prohibition to be effective, legal and regulatory norms are essential. They keep the school environment protected as a space free from conflicts of interest and ensure the **full protection of the rights of children and adolescents** (Law nº 8,069, 1990).

Conflicts of interest can occur in various ways, whether direct or subtle (FNDE, 2022a; Idec, 2024; ÓAÊ, 2023). It is important to be able to identify the food industry's advertising actions.

IDENTIFICATION OF FOOD INDUSTRY ADVERTISING PRACTICES



ADVERTISING

Posters, flyers, banners and other visual aids.



SPONSORSHIP

Financial resources for holding events or activities, such as competitions, olympics, cultural activities.

Provision of equipment and promotional materials to foment the sale of ultra-processed foods in the school cafeteria.



MERCHANDISING

Branding or messaging from manufacturers on items of interest to students, such as uniforms, notebooks and other school materials.

Disguised collaborations through pedagogical and/or social projects aimed at gaining the support and partnership of school principals and teachers.



PROMOTIONS AND DONATIONS

Actions that encourage the purchase of a specific product in exchange for gifts and participation in raffles.

Donation of free samples of ultra-processed products to students and school professionals.



Access the **Protecting Schools from Food Industry Interference** guide [here](#), produced by ACT Health Promotion.

It is crucial to emphasize that **there must be complete coherence between the recommendations of the school feeding program, the dietary guidelines and all other elements of the school food environment**. The entry of the food industry into the school environment undermines the institution's political and pedagogical autonomy and confuses students – especially younger

children – who struggle to distinguish genuine educational content from disguised marketing messages. It is also essential that the school community is aware and properly trained to identify and confront commercial interests that override the public interest, preserving the school environment as a space for learning, development and the protection of students (ACT Health Promotion, 2022).



GOOD PRACTICES

Regulation on the Identification and Prevention of Conflicts of Interest in the Implementation of the Pnae

In 2023, the National Fund for Education Development (FNDE) published a technical note on conflicts of interest within the Pnae, aimed at guiding the school community in identifying such threats. This regulation is extremely important to strengthen efforts to counter the interference of the ultra-processed food industry in public schools across the country. It includes two very useful tools:

- a decision tree for characterizing external actors
- a questionnaire to identify and prevent situations that may involve conflicts of interest, based on the tool developed by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Access the **FNDE's Technical Note n° 3228950/2022** and its tools [here](#).

WATCH OUT!



In many countries, school feeding programs are established by foundations and international cooperation agencies. **However, many of these institutions are not free from conflicts of interest**. Dependence on external funding from corporate philanthropy or from cooperation tied to the commercial interests of donor countries can create loopholes that allow private interests to override the public interest in ensuring adequate diets. This is particularly concerning in national contexts where there are no regulations to guide food policies, leaving students exposed to interests that are not aligned with public health.

It is important to be vigilant regarding initiatives that aim, for example, to introduce fortified ultra-processed products or to encourage farmers to use patented biofortified seeds. Such actions may be strategies to strengthen corporate brands and products in new markets.

Although this may not yet be a feasible reality in all countries, **the more autonomy governments have in financing their school feeding programs, the more protected from conflicts of interest these programs tend to be**. Governments must view school feeding not as an expense but as a national investment, allocating their own sufficient budgets to ensure the universal provision of healthy and adequate food in schools.

In Brazil, School Feeding Councils (CAEs) and organized civil society play a crucial role in monitoring the interference of the food industry in schools. Similarly, food and nutrition security councils and networks of civil society organizations, such as those that make up the **School Meals Watch (ÓAÊ)**, have been essential in

identifying and denouncing commercial interference and conflicts of interest. They also work to raise awareness among the various stakeholders involved in the National School Feeding Program (Pnae), including students, teachers and family farmers.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

- ▶ In your country, does the school feeding program face negative influence from large food and beverage corporations or the industrial agribusiness?
- ▶ Are there legal and regulatory mechanisms in place to prevent such interferences?
- ▶ How can civil society organizations act to prevent the corporate capture of the school feeding program?



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SCHOOL MEALS WATCH (ÓAÊ) AND FIAN BRASIL: KEEPING EYES ON PNAE

Brazilian civil society plays a historic and fundamental role in the formulation, monitoring, and social control of the Brazil's National School Feeding Programme (Pnae). Despite legal and normative advances, there is a huge gap between the rules and the program's implementation in a large country composed of more than 5,500 municipalities, under a

national reality of deep inequalities, differentiated political commitment and operational capacity. In addition, there are constant threats to the Pnae law and its guidelines. To inspire civil society action in other countries and encourage dialogue and international solidarity, we would like to share some of our experience.

About the School Meals Watch (ÓAÊ)

Created in 2021, the observatory is the main civil society network committed to the right to school feeding in Brazil. The ÓAÊ aims to amplify the voices of students, family farmers and school feeding professionals, to collectively advocate for the Pnae and raise awareness in society about the importance of providing adequate food in schools. It carries out campaigns and surveys, monitors the implementation of the Pnae, organizes and produces data and analysis

that subsidize communication and advocacy strategies.

ÓAÊ has an executive committee formed by FIAN Brasil and the Brazilian Forum for Food and Nutritional Sovereignty and Security (FBSSAN), and an advisory council made up of 20 organizations and social movements that participate in planning and collective action, through a strategy we nominate "collective communication and advocacy."

We advocate, on the one hand, the promotion of a healthy school food environment, protected from the supply of ultra-processed products and industry interference, and on the other, the democratization of local food procurement from family farms,

specially the accomplishment of the priority given to agrarian reform settlements, women, indigenous peoples, quilombolas, and other traditional peoples and communities (PCTs). We describe the main fronts of action of the ÓAÊ below.

"TELL US" CAMPAIGNS

Listening to rights holders and school feeding professionals takes place through national communication campaigns, combined with online surveys, which aim to capture the perceptions of students, family farmers, nutritionists, cooks and members of School Food Councils (CAEs) about the implementation and effectiveness of the Pnae.

Six national surveys have already been conducted, generating quantitative and qualitative data to inform communication and advocacy strategies towards the improvement of Pnae.



KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND COMMUNICATION

Every two years, the *ÓAE Dossier* is published, containing articles and interviews on topics that need to be explored in greater depth. There have been editions on the Covid-19 pandemic and on diversity and inequality within the Pnae. In November 2023, ÓAE launched a series of policy briefs to increase visibility to robust national academic studies, that demonstrate the advances and impacts of the restrictions on ultra-processed products and direct food purchases from family farmers

In 2024, the watch developed a monitoring methodology based on a matrix of indicators derived from federal government systems, organized according to six dimensions of analysis, published with the title *Para monitorar o direito à alimentação escolar* (Monitoring the right to school meals).

All these publications are available at ÓAE's online library, together with a selection of relevant publications and articles on the Pnae.



COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY

Collective advocacy, for the consolidation of Pnae as a permanent and efficient policy guided by the principles of the human right to adequate food and nutrition (HRtAFN), is the core strategy of ÓAE. Our advocacy work focus both in the National Congress and formal spaces for social participation, such as the Advisory Group of the Pnae Management Committee and the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Consea). This work is supported by technical notes and policy recommendations mainly to the National Congress and the Ministry of Education.



Photos: Roque de Sá/Ag. Senado

ONGOING CAMPAIGN FOR PNAE FUNDING

One of ÓAÊ's main strategies is the campaign "Reajusta Pnae" (Readjust Pnae) which proposes the creation of a legal mechanism to ensure annual financial adjustments to Pnae's budget, correcting inflation losses and ensuring greater budgetary predictability for food purchase. Currently, the programme does not have a permanent adjustment mechanism, which makes it vulnerable to inflation and food price volatility. Adjustments, when they occur, depend on the decision of the government in power and budget disputes in the National Congress, without a transparent and predictable methodology. This absence compromises the ability of states and municipalities to provide quality meals.



FIAN Brasil and school meals

FIAN Brasil – Organization for the Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition was founded in 2000. Its mission is to contribute to a world free from hunger and malnutrition, in which every person can fully enjoy their human rights, in particular the

right to food with dignity and self-determination. Based in Brasília, it is affiliated with FIAN International, an organization active in more than 50 countries.

One of FIAN's areas of focus is defending the rights of indigenous peoples and traditional communities, especially with regard to land and access to public policies. The focus on Pnae dates back to 2022, when we conducted two case studies on indigenous lands of the Guarani and Kaiowá peoples in Mato Grosso do Sul and the Tikuna in Amazonas. Based on fieldwork, we deepen our understanding of the dilemmas, solutions and barriers faced in providing adequate food in indigenous schools, and proposed policy recommendations. Two mini-documentaries on this case studies are available.



On the topic of school meals, FIAN has also published booklets, books and technical notes on the enforceability of this right; the history, structure and governance of public policy; and ways to provide fresh food. The knowledge produced is a resource for the advocacy work of FIAN, ÓAÊ and other organizations.



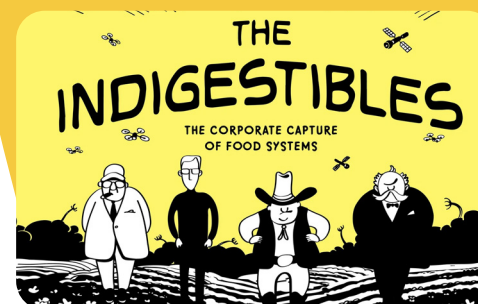
Among the content related to this topic, the organization's collection also includes the *Dhana Report* – a periodic assessment of the situation of this right and food security in Brazil –, a basic course on HRAFN, and materials on conflicts of interest and corporate capture.



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No one can learn on an empty stomach. It is distressing to think that 180 million school-age children were living with some form of malnutrition in 2022. The persistence of hunger has been accompanied by diets based on ultra-processed foods, which are harmful to health. When malnutrition, obesity, and climate change converge in a global syndemic, promoting adequate nutrition in school food environments becomes imperative.

In recent years, national programs in this regard have been encouraged by cooperation agencies and expanded by governments. This is great news, but it is often limited by processes with low budgets, low social participation, and porosity to commercial interests.

Brazil has one of the largest and oldest universal public policies in the world in this area, the National School Feeding Program (Pnae). In this book, we share our vision of the Brazilian experience, not as a purely successful model to be copied, but as a possible inspiration for the daily struggle for the right to school meals. Through this movement, we intend to open a new chapter of knowledge exchange and international solidarity.



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