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POSITION PAPER

AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS MONOTONY AND THE OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE AGAINST HUNGER AND POVERTY AND THE GLOBAL MOBILIZATION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Context and Rationale

The global agrifood system is far from reaching the long-standing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the goal of eliminating hunger and promoting healthy diets through sustainable production systems by 2030 (specifically SDG 2, though interconnected with all other 16 SDGs). In 2022, approximately 40% of adults and 20% of children globally were overweight or obese^[i]. There is substantial evidence linking these issues to dietary patterns that heavily feature ultra-processed food products^[ii]. Overweight and obesity now affect more people than hunger. In 2023, nearly 30% of the global population (2.3 billion people) experienced moderate or severe food and nutrition insecurity, meaning they lacked regular access to sufficient food^[iii]. The cost of a healthy diet increased globally in 2016, peaking at US\$3.96 per person per day in 2022^[iii]. This combination of conditions – on the one hand, an excess of certain foods and/or nutrients, and on the other, food shortages – is referred to as the double burden of malnutrition^[iv], and is currently observed in countries across all income spectrum, from low- to high-income nations^[v].

The monotony observed in agricultural landscapes and increasingly globalized dietary patterns – characterized by an excessive intake of animal-sourced foods and ultra-processed food products, primarily based on soy, corn, wheat, and sugar cane – lies at the heart of the global agrifood system crisis. This issue is linked not only to malnutrition in all its forms^{[vi], [vii]}, but also to significant environmental impacts^{[viii], [ix]}. Evidence shows that while over 7,000 species of edible plants have been identified and used for human consumption since the advent of agriculture^[x], 90% of humanity's current energy intake comes from just 15 cultivated plants, with more than four billion people relying on only three of them: rice, wheat, and corn^{[xi], [xii]}. Additionally, the genetic homogeneity of animals bred for human consumption contributes to the spread of infectious diseases and it is associated with the excessive and inappropriate use of antibiotics, leading to the proliferation of antimicrobial resistance^[xiii].

This erosion of biological and food diversity destroys ecosystem services that are fundamental to life itself and compromises human health^[xiv]. Additionally, the global agrifood system is responsible for one-third of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions^[xv]. The so-called hidden costs of the agrifood system surpass the market value of all humanity's food^[xvi].



In light of this, the G20 – the main multilateral international forum for economic cooperation, made up of 19 countries [Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Russia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA)] and two regional bodies (the European Union and the African Union)^[xvii] – has the responsibility to coordinate its policies and generate the political agreement and mobilization required to guarantee the ecological transformation of the global agrifood system. During the Brazilian presidency of the G20 (from December 2023 to November 2024), discussions on this issue are gaining traction with the creation of two main task forces: the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and the Global Mobilization Against Climate Change^[xviii]. In particular, the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, which was pre-launched in July 2024 in Rio de Janeiro, has the potential to provide sustained political momentum and foster collective action. It aims and has the necessary strength to create synergies with existing efforts to combat hunger and poverty, facilitate the mobilization of national and international financial resources, and enhance the implementation of public policies that support the large-scale transformation of agrifood systems.

The ongoing mobilization of the G20 to address the challenges of malnutrition and climate change is further highlighted by the preliminary statement justifying the creation of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty issued by the G20 presidency¹. It is thus believed and hoped that the members of the G20 will formally endorse and support this declaration, reaffirming their commitment to eradicating hunger and promoting policies and actions that foster healthy, sustainable, and equitable agrifood systems.

A thorough analysis of the current levels and gaps in the financing of food security and nutrition is the main focus of 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2024' - an annual report prepared jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners^[ix]. This highlights the relevance and urgency of this issue.

Another important aspect is that the policy instruments of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty are designed to primarily target the most vulnerable populations in terms of climate, environmental, social, and economic factors – a crucial element in promoting healthy, sustainable, and equitable agrifood systems.



¹ Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty Foundational Documents. Available at: <https://www.g20.org/pt-br/trilhas/trilha-de-sheperas/fome-e-pobreza>.

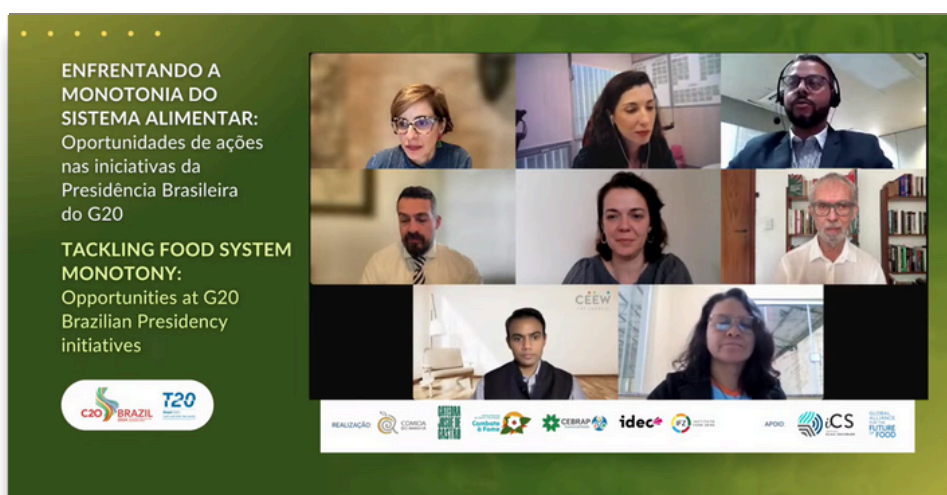
However, many actions are both urgent and necessary for the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and the subsequent G20 presidencies to advance in implementing innovative food policies that genuinely support local agrifood systems. In this sense, these policies need, in the first place, to value biodiversity (such as agroecological production models), and the knowledge of traditional people and communities and the food cultures of different regions; as well as to foster research and development to address the current monotony of agrifood systems^[xix].

Based on discussions from two side events held during the Brazilian presidency on this topic, this position paper aims to present some key reflections and recommendations for the G20 decision-makers and negotiators. These recommendations are intended to encourage commitment to an agenda focused on transitioning towards healthier, sustainable and equitable agrifood systems, thereby making them more sustainable in all dimensions.

Events

Two side events were organized under the *Think 20 (T20)* and *Civil Society 20 (C20)* engagement groups to address these issues², seeking to broaden the debate and influence decision-making in the G20 process on the urgency of transitioning to healthy, sustainable, and equitable agrifood systems. Their emphasis was on diversification of agricultural landscapes and of animal species bred for human consumption, as well as of contemporary dietary patterns.

The first event entitled *Tackling Food System Monotony: Opportunities at G20 Brazilian Presidency initiatives*, which was held on the 16th of May 2024, had two main topics: (i) The current monotony of agrifood systems and the challenges for ending hunger and food and nutrition insecurity, and ensuring healthy food for all, as well as for climate change mitigation and adaptation; (ii) Global South lessons on healthy and sustainable agrifood systems.



² The first event was held by the following institutions: Comida do Amanhã Institute, Josué de Castro Chair on Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems, Instituto Nacional de Ciência e Tecnologia Combate à Fome, CEBRAP Sustentabilidade, Instituto de Defesa de Consumidores (Idec) and Instituto Fome Zero (IFZ), with support of the Instituto Clima e Sociedade (iCS) and the Global Alliance for the Future of Food. The second event was held by Josué de Castro Chair on Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems, Comida do Amanhã Institute, Embrapa, CEBRAP Sustentabilidade, Idec, INCT Combate à Fome and IFZ, with support from iCS and the Global Alliance for the Future of Food.

The second event, entitled *G20 and the monotony of agrifood systems: The need for a new era of crop domestication & diets diversification*, which was held on the 12nd of June 2024, discussed the challenges posed by the current monotony of the global agrifood system, both in terms of promoting healthy dietary patterns/human health, and of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Potential strategies/scenarios for diversifying diets and agricultural production systems were also discussed.



For more information on the content covered by the events, please visit [Event #1](#) and [Event #2](#). To watch the presentations, please visit [Event #1](#) and [Event #2](#). A third forthcoming event within the framework of the One Planet Network Forum 2024, will focus on the importance of social participation in the improvement and innovation of public policies.

Recommendations

Together, the members of the G20 are responsible for around 60% of the world's agricultural land and 80% of the global trade in agricultural products , and therefore, they concentrate significant potential to influence the global agrifood system. On the other hand, the territories of traditional people and communities contain and protect most of the world's biodiversity .

Agrifood systems are complex systems and understanding them in a holistic and non-fragmented way, from the perspective of biodiversity conservation and regenerative awareness, is essential for addressing their main challenges, most of which are interconnected and stem from the current scenario of agrifood monotony.

Based on this context, the debates held with experts and, particularly the efforts of the Brazilian *pro tempore* presidency to mobilize the world's largest economies to tackle the different outcomes of malnutrition (via the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty) and of climate change, we highlight the following recommendations.

I. In order to address the **monotony of food production and to encourage practices favorable to the preservation and restoration of biodiversity**, it is crucial to reaffirm commitment to SDGs 2 and 3 (particularly targets 2.4³ and 3.4⁴), as well as SDGs 14⁵ and 15⁶. Therefore, we recommend that G20 members commit to:

1. Fund and provide adequate incentives for regenerative practices recognized by FAO^[xxiii] including organic agriculture, sustainable soil management, agroecology, agricultural diversification, conservation of agricultural biodiversity, moderate intensification of ruminant farming, regenerative and resilient agriculture, sustainable forest management, agroforestry, and diversification practices in aquaculture and fisheries. Many of these practices are upheld and perpetuated by traditional people and communities, particularly by women.

a. The necessary incentives include encouraging national and local governments to enhance public procurement policies aimed at healthy, sustainable, and diversified diets, which promote the supply of and access to healthy and socio-biodiverse foods, preferably from agroecological production and local family producers⁷.

b. The necessary incentives also involve avoiding the stimulation of ecosystem service destruction through agricultural subsidies. This entails adopting the COP15 Biodiversity proposal⁸, which suggests reducing subsidies by US\$ 500 billion per year, and redirecting these subsidies towards achieving social and environmental targets that enable the regeneration of losses caused by agricultural expansion and the monotony of production and harvests.

c. Promoting the dynamic conservation of agricultural systems of traditional people and communities, as advocated by the FAO program called *Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)*^[xxiii].

2. Ensure soil health and water quality by establishing international technical cooperation to reduce the use of chemical inputs, as well as support practices that improve ecosystem services (e.g. pollination and natural control of invaders). Also, to develop monitoring mechanisms to regulate and mitigate activities that could harm soil health is essential.

3. Curb trade in agricultural products from deforested areas. Among the necessary measures, complete traceability of the meat supply chain is a fundamental tool for identifying products linked to deforestation and other socio-environmental crimes, as well as making land use planning reports public, accessible and transparent.

³ "Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality".

⁴ "Reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being".

⁵ "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development".

⁶ "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss".

⁷ Brazilian programs and initiatives, such as the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), popular restaurants and community and solidarity kitchens, as well as programs to shorten consumption circuits, such as direct-from-the-producer fairs and community food production spaces in cities.

⁸ COP15 Biodiversity proposal. Available at <<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/cop15-ends-landmark-biodiversity-agreement>>.

4. Reduce and regulate the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry, which would reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance resulting from the monotony of intensive animal breeding for human consumption.

5. Interrupt the planning and installation of public and private infrastructures that promote the monotony of agricultural production and the global positioning of several Latin American countries as exporters of low value-added commodities. These infrastructures often serve as vectors for deforestation and harm to traditional people and communities.

II. To tackle the *monotony of human diets* and promote greater diversity in fresh and minimally processed plant-sourced foods, it is crucial to adopt evidence-based and effective solutions to discourage the consumption of products that threaten both human and planetary health. We therefore recommend that G20 leaders commit to:

6. Tax exemption and/or subsidies for fresh and minimally processed foods, combined with higher taxation on ultra-processed food products (whose low prices often hide substantial social and environmental costs), as recommended by WHO and the World Bank⁹.

7. The adoption, revision, and updating of national food-based dietary guidelines¹⁰, in line with FAO and WHO recommendations, to promote healthy, sustainable, and diverse dietary patterns. This includes encouraging the consumption of fresh and minimally processed plant-sourced foods, preferably locally produced, while respecting cultural and food traditions, and avoiding ultra-processed food products, as well as excessive meat consumption.

8. Adequate regulation of food labeling and advertising, preferably by adopting front-of-pack nutrition warning labeling for packaged foods¹¹ and restricting advertising and marketing of unhealthy foods.

9. The development of strategies for urban food systems to value local food production, combat food loss and waste and guarantee healthier food environments in cities.

10. Subsidizing and encouraging the production and dissemination of robust scientific evidence on regenerative food production practices, the social and environmental impacts of the transition from conventional to socially just agroecological models, and the impact of regenerative models on reversing food monotony.



⁹ For example, defining a healthy and sustainable basic food basket that prioritizes healthy food from more sustainable production processes.

¹⁰ For example, the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population published by the Brazilian Ministry of Health in 2014.

¹¹ Like the nutritional profile model of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

III. To ensure **fair and inclusive governance, guaranteeing human and fundamental rights**, we recommend that G20 members commit to:

11. Build and strengthen public policies that ensure the inclusion of civil society – especially traditional people and communities – in their drafting, improvement, and implementation processes, through participatory processes and transdisciplinary approaches that integrate and value traditional, indigenous, peasant and local knowledge.

12. Focus on aligning global priorities, improving multilateral coordination and coherence, and preventing, mitigating and managing conflicts of interest.

a. Ensure that health, food and nutrition policies of the G20 members are aligned with the commitments and guidelines established in multilateral forums, promoting global coherence.

b. Implement and strengthen mechanisms to prevent, mitigate and manage conflicts of interest in all policies related to health, food and nutrition, guaranteeing transparency and integrity in decision-making processes.

13. Adopt the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Food¹² and subsequent instruments negotiated internationally by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and endorsed by FAO, as a global consensus. Therefore, through specific public policies and programs built with broad popular participation, they can facilitate effective and universal access to the human right to adequate food at the local and territorial level.

14. Prioritize investments in technological solutions that do not exacerbate economic and social inequalities, both between and within countries, and allocate specific resources for small producers to develop adaptation strategies, ensuring that environmentally desirable solutions do not exclude these groups.

15. Finally, the sustainable transition policies of the G20 economies must include affirmative measures to support sectors in greater vulnerability, such as small businesses, small producers, and traditional people and communities, in order to make their adaptation strategies viable and prevent inequalities from worsening.

¹² Voluntary Guidelines. Available at: <<https://www.fao.org/right-to-food/guidelines/en/>>.

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