

Agroecology in the Brazilian Government Agenda: Developments between 2011 and 2014*

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Abstract:

Since 2003, in Brazil, the agroecological perspective has been present in punctual public policies of the federal government. In 2012, with a convergent action of the agroecological movement and the organic production, the National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production was created. This article presents a reconstruction of the process, while highlighting involved actors, as well as their demands and interests, ideas, and main forums. Despite its limitations and conflicts, the Pnapo is a benchmark and a political achievement, having insured the agroecological agenda in the public policies inter-related to rural development, food sovereignty, and the human right to adequate food.

Keywords: public policies, agenda setting, agri-food system.

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La agroecología en la agenda del Gobierno brasileño: desarrollos entre 2011 y 2014

Resumen:

Desde 2003, en Brasil, la perspectiva agroecológica ha estado presente en políticas puntuales del Gobierno federal. En 2012, con una acción convergente de movimientos agroecológicos y dirigidos hacia la producción orgánica, fue creada la Política Nacional de Agroecología y Producción Orgánica. Este artículo reconstruye dicho proceso, y destaca los lugares de los actores envueltos, al igual que sus demandas e intereses, ideas y foros principales. A pesar de sus limitaciones y conflictos, la Pnapo es un punto de referencia y un logro político, toda vez que ha asegurado la agenda ecológica en las políticas públicas inter-relacionadas con el desarrollo rural, la soberanía del alimento, y el derecho humano a la comida adecuada.

Palabras clave: políticas públicas, definición de la agenda, sistema del agro-alimento.

Introduction

Agroecology is a contemporary approach inserted in the construction of public policies that are concerned with rural development, food sovereignty, and the human right to adequate food (DHAA, in Portuguese). It has to be understood in the context of the agri-food system and the Brazilian political conjuncture since 2003, when support policies related to family farming and food and nutrition security promotion gradually gained prominence. But it was from 2011 to 2014 when agroecology found its way into the governmental and decision agenda of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil. After the President's decision, the process of elaboration of a National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production (Pnapo, in Portuguese) was set in motion.

Family farming, in the perspective here adopted, encompasses the peasantry (Wanderley, 2009; Ploeg, 2009), and is understood as the main social category of the agroecological proposal. Its 'target public', rationality and cultural, social, and economic characteristics are the structural elements of the agroecological praxis and theory (Perez-Cassarino, 2012).

Several terminologies were historically used referring to the same subject, such as peasant, small farmer, landsman, subsistence farmer, and family farmer. In view of this diversity, the term family farming encompasses, in Brazil, a diversity of terminologies, which, after the 1990s, were subject of a broad discussion and of several works on this social-professional category (Wanderley, 2003, 2009; Carneiro, 2008; Abramovay, 1998; Schneider & Niederle, 2008; Neves, 2007).

In addition to being conceptual, this discussion also has a normative aspect. In Brazil, family farmer and family entrepreneur are defined by the Law 11 326, from the 24th of July of 2006, with the alterations that followed. They are those who own an area smaller than four fiscal modules, employ mainly family workforce on their economic activities, and have a minimum percentage of the family income originated from economic activities of its establishment or enterprise, or from an establishment or enterprise run by the family. According to the law, foresters, fish farmers, extractivists, fishermen, indigenous peoples, and those who are part of remaining communities of rural quilombos and other traditional communities, are also considered farmers (Lei 11326, 2006).

The term agroecology exists since the 1930s. Nevertheless, its scientific importance was strengthened during the last 40 years, with the deepening of the theoretical reflection about the management of agroecosystems and the criticism of the model of agricultural development (Moreira & do Carmo, 2004).

Gliessman (2000) understands agroecology as a derivative of ecology and agronomy, under a strong influence from traditional farming systems from developing countries, mainly indigenous and peasant, which started to be recognized by several researchers as important examples of the management of ecologically founded agroecosystems.

Sevilla-Guzmán conceptualizes agroecology as the ecological management of natural resources through forms of collective social action, which he presents to the current civilizational crisis. Its strategy, of systemic nature, considers the participation of farmers, community organizations, and the relationship of articulated rural societies at the local level. Also, according to this author, that is how one can find the systems of knowledge (local, peasant, and/or indigenous) carriers of the endogenous potential, which support the ecological and sociocultural biodiversity (Sevilla-Guzmán, 2006).

Agroecology has become an important strategy for the analysis of social-environmental impacts and for the implementation of programs of rural development on “truly sustainable” bases (Moreira & do Carmo, 2004). In addition to being a strategy, it is stated as a field of knowledge, with the potential to guide transition processes to sustainable styles of agriculture and rural development (Caporal & Costabeber, 2002).

In Brazil, initially, the debate of the agroecological perspective focused on the criticism of the ‘Green Revolution’ and on the search for technological alternatives. Starting in 2002, the strategy became the political agenda contrary to the advance of the agribusiness over territories, and the construction of a peasant agriculture, which disputes public policies for its effectiveness. Therefore, one of the pillars of action of the agroecological movement creates the conditions to dispute a political agenda, the Brazilian State having then to take on its role of supporting and strengthening an agroecological based agriculture (Caporal & Petersen, 2012).

Based on those constant disputes in society in favor of a development model built upon agroecology as insurance to food and nutritional security, the agroecological movement places itself actively in the construction of the National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production (Pnapo, in Portuguese).

The goal of this work is to understand how agroecology was placed on the governmental agenda, which decisions were made, and in which context it occurred and developed the formulation process of the Pnapo and the National Plan for Agroecology and Organic Production (Planapo, in Portuguese).

There are a number of approaches in the field of public policies analysis useful to understand how a given subject is included on the governmental agenda and how public policies are formulated and implemented (Dye, 1976; Ham, 1993; Hill, 1993; Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Kingdon, 1995; Lindblom, 1981; Wildavsky, 1979). It is also considered appropriate to use Gramsci’s extended state approach to understand the performance of civil society and government in the Pnapo process. A noteworthy aspect of Gramsci’s extended state view is that –as a view on social relation– it comprises civil society, as well as political society, in a permanent interaction (Coutinho, 1999; Mendonça, 2014). This methodological tool helped to elaborate questions and analyses, and raise problems regarding our subject.

In addition, we incorporate the approach of the public policy cycle and neoinstitutionalism into this study. The neoinstitutionalism theory asserts that there are not only individuals or groups that have the relevant strength and influence public policies, but that the formal and informal rules that guide institutions do it as well (Hall & Taylor, 2003; Immergut, 2006). The public policy cycle offers a proposition analysis based on the idea of political process phases. Therefore, it provides a framework for a procedural analysis of politics (Baptista & Rezende, 2011; Frey, 2000; Rua, 2009; Saravia, 2006; Souza, 2012).

We resort to two analytical models: the Multiple Stream Model, developed by John Kingdon (Kingdon, 1995), and the Punctuated Equilibrium Model, by Frank Baumgartner and Brian Jones (True, Jones & Baumgartner,

2007). According to Capella (2012), those two models stand out as important tools in the process of analysis of public policies formulation and governmental agenda changes. They emphasize mainly the definition of a given agenda, and they try to understand why some questions get included on the political agenda, but others do not.

The formulation of the agenda, considered to be the first stage of the public policy cycle, is the inclusion of a given plea or need on the agenda, in the priority list of the public power. The second stage is the definition and analysis of the problem, consisting of the identification and the delimitation of a present or potential problem to the community, the determination of possible alternatives for its solution or fulfillment, the evaluation of actual costs, and the establishment of priorities. The formulation stage includes the selection and specification of the alternative considered most convenient, followed by a statement that declares the decision taken, by explicitly defining its objectives and its legal, administrative, and financial frameworks (Saravia, 2006; Frey, 2000; Souza, 2012).

According to Kingdon (1995), a policy is placed on the governmental agenda and starts to be part of the decision agenda when the three streams (problems, solutions, and political dynamics) couple. This happens in specific circumstances that he calls policy windows. These windows are open in certain moments, and their opening is caused by three mechanisms: indicators, key events, and feedback of governmental actions. In this context policy window is a shortcut to the insertion of problems on the agenda.

Frey (2000) considers the notion that this process does not always occur in sequence and stages, which would be an ideal type of political process. The division is a theoretical perspective. Hence, according to the model, in practice not all constitutive stages are present.

Therefore, the Pnapo is placed in a context that sets parameters regarding the constraints of public policies formulation. That context is characterized by the aforementioned modern agriculture, which was consolidated in the Brazilian agribusiness.

Methodology

In order to define our objectives, we try to formulate the key questions and to delineate this study by seeking a narrative that problematizes reality. We resort to literature review as a tool for constructing the object, configuring the questions, and implementing interpretations.

In developing our thesis, during the years 2015 and 2016, we used three main methodological resources: documentary research, semi-structured interviews, and secondary data analysis.

The documentary research was conducted through 15 texts, official documents, technical notes, and research reports prepared by the federal government, scholars of the rural and agroecological subject, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, we used audio transcriptions and reports of the three first meetings of the National Commission for Agroecology and Organic Production (Cnapo, in Portuguese), which had an agenda related to debates regarding the elaboration of the first Planapo. Furthermore, official governmental publications, such as laws, decrees, rules, and promotional material of politics were also used.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with social society representatives, social movements and entities in the agroecological field, and governmental executives involved in the process of elaborating the Pnapo and the Planapo. The interviews followed a pre-established script, seeking to identify actors involved in the related public policy, the ideas constructed by them, the selection and negotiation process, achieved advances, persistent challenges, and main merits of the policy.

Considering Kingdon's Multiple Stream Model, a first selection of interviews was made, based on key-posts and functions which were performed by the ones involved in the discussion process of the Pnapo. Another criterion

was the participation in moments related to decisions on the governmental agenda and to the formulation of the Pnapo as a representative of an entity, social movement, and political body. Altogether, thirteen interviews were made: six of them with government representatives and seven from civil society.

Concerning the quantity of interviews, we took into account the saturation point, in other words: the performance of a given number of interviews, up to a point when the inclusion of additional interviews would not add new information and the indication, by the interviewed themselves, of new people to be interviewed. A qualitative exploratory research, using content analyses method, based on the transcription of the interviews, was conducted.

Results

From the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidential term in 2003, important changes started to occur in the relations between State and civil society, especially concerning the direction of public policies. Actors formerly marginal in public arenas had the opportunity to participate and express demands, which was the case of social movements that dealt with agroecology and Brazil's organic agriculture (Grisa & Schneider, 2015).

That set of documents allowed us to access the actors involved, their demands and interests, the arenas and forums which construct them, the reference to the institutionalized public policy, and the changes it received throughout the development of the policy. It was also possible to reconstruct the process with its main challenges, limits, and advances throughout the elaboration of the Pnapo and the Planapo.

The results of the research showed that the agroecological approach gained importance in several public policies from 2003. It is worth highlighting actions and public policies of the State, aiming at family farming and guided by the promotion of food and nutrition security, such as: (a) the institutionalization of organic agriculture; (b) technical assistance and rural extension, with focus on agroecology; (c) educational and research initiatives related to agroecology; (d) Pronaf's lines of credit; (e) the policy of food and nutritional security, which includes the Minimum Price Guarantee Policy (PGPM, in Portuguese), the Food Acquisition Program (PAA, in Portuguese), and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE, in Portuguese); (f) support to management and sustainable usage of socio-biodiversity, and (g) the Rural Women's Productive Organization Program.

The convergent action of the agroecological and organic movements, notably the organizations of female rural workers and peasants, combined with a favorable political moment, was a fundamental key factor to the inclusion of this subject on the governmental agenda and the formulation of the Pnapo and Planapo.

In August 2011, the March of the Daisies (Marcha das Margaridas, in Portuguese) warned the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil about the necessity and urgency of a National Policy for Agroecology. This policy, which was already under discussion in the Ministries of Environment (MMA, in Portuguese) and Agriculture (MAPA, in Portuguese), gained relevance and was included on the decision agenda. Thus, the individuals involved in the National Coordination for Agroecology (ANA, in Portuguese) and in the National Commission for Organic Production (CNPorg) combined forces and assumed prominence in the spaces proposed by the Brazilian government to formulate and implement the Pnapo.

The March of the Daisies was organized, in 2000, 2003, 2007, and 2011, by a group of organizations, under the coordination of the National Confederation of Agriculture Workers (Contag, in Portuguese). It combined a number of women and feminist movements, associations, and unions. Those movements claim, propose, and ensure social, economic, political, sexual, and reproductive rights for both rural and forest women (Aguiar, 2015). Their claims, organized around those aspects, connected structural issues of the general subject of rural workers to specific demands of women. The Land Reform, for instance, a historical demand that appears on the agenda,

linked the strengthening of female prominence in family farming to the conservation of biodiversity and genetic heritage, as well as to the construction of agroecology and food sovereignty (Siliprandi & Cintrão, 2015).

In 2011, the fourth March of the Daisies took place under the first year of Dilma Rousseff's as President. Rousseff was Lula's successor and the first female President of the Republic of Brazil.

The 2011 March's agenda –handed to the National Congress and to the Federal Government– was publicly answered by President Rousseff, who announced a series of measures in response to the women's demands, concerning changes in credit programs, commercialization, access to land, and addressing violence.

During her speech, Rousseff committed herself to what came to be the National Plan for Agroecology and Organic Production (Pnapo, in Portuguese): “We will create a special work group to elaborate the Agroecology National Program, with the participation of social movements and women's organizations” (Brasil, 2011a, p. 1).[1]

According to testimony, because of the role the MMA was already performing in this agenda, it was designated by the President to establish the dialogue between civil society and the Brazilian government, in coordination with other ministries. Therefore, the Interministerial Work Group (GTI, in Portuguese) was created. Coordinated by the MMA, it also included the following ministries and independent entities: Ministry of Agricultural Development (MDA, in Portuguese); Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply (MAPA, in Portuguese); Ministry of Social Development (MDS, in Portuguese); Ministry of Education (MEC, in Portuguese); Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI, in Portuguese); Ministry of Finance (MF, in Portuguese); National Company of Supply (Conab, in Portuguese); National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Incra, in Portuguese); National Sanitary Surveillance Agency (Anvisa, in Portuguese); Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa, in Portuguese). The General Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic (SG/PR, in Portuguese) also became part of the GTI later.

The first task of the GTI was to identify goals and initiatives of the different ministries in the Multiannual Plan (PPA, in Portuguese) 2012-2015, related to the agroecological approach and the organic production, by preparing a document called “National Plan for Agroecology and Organic Systems of Production”. A draft was presented to the National Coordination of Agroecology (ANA, in Portuguese) and to the organic production Commissions for considerations and opinions.

This first document of the GTI, proposing a National Plan for Agroecology and Organic Production, contained five parts: an introduction, the objective of the plan, its dimensions, and implementation strategies. It presented problems like the inability of the current food production system to meet the world's need for food in a sustainable way, since world hunger and the intensive agriculture model have looted the natural resources of the planet, causing the intensification of soil degradation, undermining the water supply, and contributing to climate changes. Agroecology is presented in the document as a possibility to improve the sustainability of agroecosystems (Brasil, 2011b). The ANA sought a more active participation in talking with the GTI to outline propositions. Its suggestion to the MMA was to widen the dialogue, with the introduction of five regional Seminars to consult civil society organizations, as well as a national seminar.

The ANA elaborated a document to guide the discussions of the regional seminars in a workshop with several groups, including: Contag; Small Farmers Movement (MPA, in Portuguese); Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST, in Portuguese); Female Rural Workers Movement (MMC, in Portuguese); National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS, in Portuguese); Rede Cerrado (Cerrado Network); Semiarid Coordination (Articulação do Semiárido-ASA, in Portuguese); Rede Ecovida (Ecovida Network); Brazilian Association of Agroecology (ABA-Agroecologia, in Portuguese); Federation of Organs for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE, in Portuguese); Advise and Service to Alternative Agriculture Projects (AS-PTA, in Portuguese); Advisory Service to Popular Rural Organizations (Sasop, in Portuguese). The Federal Government was also invited to participate in the workshop.

This document contains perceptions of networks and social movements in the field of agroecology concerning the policy proposition of the government. It presents three premises of the agroecological field to the debate; considerations in regard of the process of elaboration and negotiation of the policy, and the guidelines for the regional seminars. Concerning the premises, the first one indicated the active participation of a diverse group of actors involved in the construction of agroecology –who historically constructed it respecting diversities and territorialities– as fundamental. The second one stated that agroecology should not be limited to the promotion of a niche market. The focus must be centered on the promotion of family farming, as well as on traditional and indigenous populations as the sociocultural and economic bases to rural development. The third premise deals with the development model, especially regarding rural development. According to the document, the propositions should lead to changes in models that concentrate income and factors of production (Articulação Nacional de Agroecologia [ANA], 2012).

According to the document, agroecology organizations saw the political context in which the debate was held as contradictory, but still with a few perspectives of improvement:

At the same time that transgenic production was receiving clearance, the use of agrochemicals was increasing and the forest and mining code was changing, etc., there were public policies formulated and implemented, that contributed to the strengthening of family farming and traditional people and communities. (Articulação Nacional de Agroecologia [ANA], 2012, p. 3)

The mentioned document (Articulação Nacional de Agroecologia, 2012) cited:

- the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (Pronaf, in Portuguese) for Agroecology and the Semi-arid, but the coverage and the execution were considered very low;
- the Policy and the Law of Rural Extension and Technical Assistance (ATER, in Portuguese), which represented a larger scale of ATER services, but was still mainly oriented towards a technical and methodological approach of spreading technologies to family farmers, although there were several innovative initiatives, from civil society organizations and public bodies, with agroecological focuses and methodological approaches, based on participation and the dialogue of knowledges;
- the Food Acquisition Program (PAA, in Portuguese) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE, in Portuguese), considered fertile fields of innovation that promote the increase and diversification of production, short circuits of commercialization associated with initiatives assuring food and nutrition security;
- other initiatives that also had more support of public policies, in the last years, which were the family farming fairs, farming and agroecological fairs, and support initiatives for the commercialization of family farming production;
- the programs executed in the Brazilian semi-arid by organizations that are part of the Semi-arid Coordination (ASA): the One Million Cisterns Program (P1MC, in Portuguese) and the One Land and Two Waters Program (P1+2, in Portuguese), considered programs that reassure actions aimed at concrete needs of the population, and which had a great impact on the territories, ensuring autonomy, quality of life, income, and food security.

ANA's perception of the preliminary proposition presented by the GTI, at the beginning of 2012, and also expressed in the document, is that it included many initiatives disconnected to each other, without coherence with productions accumulated by social society. Moreover, it had an extremely limited coverage and budget. It also revealed the fragility and fragmentation of governmental sectors that sought to introduce the agroecological discussion 'into' the government. Lastly, it indicated that they were fully aware that this was not a proposition of radical change in the hegemonic development model (Articulação Nacional de Agroecologia, 2012).

On the other hand, ANA's document described the government initiative as positive, and evaluated the interests of the government in carrying on, during the discussion of the Pnapo:

The government has the need to demonstrate its commitment to questions related to climate change, water, and biodiversity conservation, etc., which are on the base of the justifications of a 'green economy'. [...] At least announce it and 'propagandize' it that during the Rio+20. (Articulação Nacional de Agroecologia, 2012, p. 5)

The ANA organized several regional events and mobilized approximately 300 representatives of 150 social movement entities, civil society organizations, and regional and state networks, as well as professionals of universities and governmental bodies.

The General Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic (SG/PR), then under the Ministry of Gilberto Carvalho, showed disposition in maintaining a dialogue with that agenda. The SG/PR of Dilma's first presidential term had the task of directly advising the Presidency of the Republic on the relation and coordination with civil society entities and social movements, which included the creation of channels that could ensure popular consultation and participation in the discussion, and the definition of priority agendas for the country (Secretaria Geral da Presidência da República do Brasil, 2012).

A new version of the Decree of Pnapo and the Brazil Agroecological Plan was submitted to the civil society at a special meeting. The proposals already had some elements of the propositions presented by social movements and several civil society organizations (Secretaria Geral da Presidência da República do Brasil, 2012).

The Policy Decree was issued only two months after Rio+20, which was initially expected to happen during the date of its release, during the I Unit Gathering of Workers and Peasants, River Dwellers, and Forest People: for Land, Territory, and Dignity, which took place in Brasilia between the 20th and the 22nd of August of 2012. The gathering, organized by the civil society, brought together 38 organizations of workers conformed by peasants, river dwellers, and forest populations. It happened 51 years after the First National Congress of Farmers and Rural Workers on the Character of the Land Reform, which took place in 1961, in Belo Horizonte.

A new phase started with the publication of the Decree 7 794/2012. The Planapo, which was already in a construction process, was placed on the decision agenda. However, there was still need for decisions, complements, and adjustments.

In compliance with the Decree, the construction process of the Planapo was led and coordinated, in the scope of the Agroecology and Organic Production Inter-ministry Chamber (Ciapo, in Portuguese), by the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MDA, in Portuguese), in close dialogue with the National Commission for Agroecology and Organic Production (Cnapo), whose Executive Secretary was under the responsibilities of the SG/PR. Both the Ciapo and the Cnapo were bodies created by the Decree 7 794/2012.

In addition to the governmental bodies that composed the Ciapo, and the social organizations and governmental bodies in the Cnapo, the construction of the Planapo also involved nationwide organizations and social movements related to agroecology. In the Cnapo, the Planapo was debated in three meetings.

The Planapo was released by the President of Republic, Dilma Rousseff, in October 17th of 2013, during the closing ceremony of the Second National Conference for Solidarity Sustainable Rural Development (Cndrss, in Portuguese).

This process, as stated, was not continuous. The testimonies and documents consulted show comings and goings, interruptions, and also public dissatisfaction. One of those dissatisfactions was the absence of any reference to the social function of the land and to the universal promotion of the access to water.

The process described here presents how agroecology found its way into the governmental and the decision agendas of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, and into the participatory construction of a public policy formulation. During this trajectory of construction of the Decree and the Plan, an important promotion of dialogue –inside and outside the government– with the Brazilian society, happened.

Discussion

Agroecology became part of the governmental agenda since 2003, being included on the decision agenda in 2011. More specifically, since 2003 the environment for the agenda formation of public policies opened up to new themes and approaches, such as agroecology, and the restructuring and emergence of spaces for social participation (Grisa & Schneider, 2015).

Especially after 2004, according to Braga and Paludetto (2015), the favorable economic environment fostered several of the recent achievements, such as: improvement of life conditions for a large portion of the population, which was living in situations of misery and extreme poverty, and improvement of the employment and income configuration. Those improvements were due to an increase of the minimum wage, employment rate, and government transfers, responsible for reducing socioeconomic precariousness of important shares of the Brazilian society.

In 2014, the seventh consecutive direct election for President of the Republic of Brazil took place. This marked three consecutive terms of programmatic convergence, with the two presidential terms of Lula (2003/2006, 2007/2010) and Dilma's first one (2011/2014). Those administrations consolidated and executed a long awaited aspect of the popular and democratic agenda, which in turn was a product of the struggle of social movements.

In addition to government transfers to families, the expansion of services that were offered was also boosted, taking education as an example. Federal expenses in this area doubled between 2000 and 2010 (Fagnani, 2014).

The international economic crises of 2007/2009 again placed central issues of the Brazilian socioeconomic reality in a context characterized by productive, commercial, and financial globalization. At the same time, despite attempts of changing the content in different moments of historical time, the fact is that the political forces which replaced former liberal ones were, during the course of 12 years, also unable to implement a new development pattern, although advances concerning social issues in fact did happen (Braga & Paludetto, 2015).

It is in that contradictory context that social movements organized themselves to demand political, social, and economic changes. With this, perspectives for developing a policy based on principles began to be presented. Principles on which, starting in 2011, the Pnapo was formulated. Public administration constantly faced new challenges and had to handle different actors, ideas, and interests, which increasingly demanded processes to integrate environmental, social, economic, and cultural dimensions (Grisa & Schneider, 2015).

One of the institutions that were transformed into political arenas to discuss the insertion of an agroecological approach into public policies was the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Consea, in Portuguese). There was a convergence of themes and political platforms, which focus on the fields of agroecology and Food and Nutrition Security (SAN, in Portuguese). The disputes in the Consea and in the SAN's Conferences about the meaning of food, food culture, and healthy eating resulted in a guarantee that the promotion of sustainable systems based on agroecology had one of the Directives of the Organic Law of Food and Nutritional Security (Losan, in Portuguese) to support the incorporation of agroecology into institutional frameworks of policies such as PAA and PNAE, for instance.

The strengthening of a political arena linked to SAN, like the Consea –whose protagonists were organized within the civil society– brought the accumulation of practices of those organizations into public policies, and influenced the formulation and implementation process of the Pnapo.

Another political arena encouraging the discussion of the agroecological agenda was the National Council for Sustainable Rural Development (Condraf, in Portuguese). This accumulation made civil society entities feel the need for an action that articulated all those initiatives, which would need to be intersectoral.

As the National Coordination for Agroecology (ANA, in Portuguese) –created in 2003– was structuring itself and gaining space inside organizations and social movements, the debate about the agroecological approach in public policies also advanced. The fact that social movements linked to Via Campesina (Peasants' Way) embraced that agenda and were included in the formation of the ANA, was one of the decisive events for the consubstantiation of a vision and proposition of public policies with an agroecological approach, during recent years.

The strategic concept inside the ANA initially was, on the one hand, to construct a support fund for the development of agroecological practices and experiences, and, on the other hand, to insert the agroecological perspective into the many existing programs and policies. The second strategy was adopted and consolidated in the

policies of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER, in Portuguese), of Pronaf, of the Food Acquisition Program (PAA, in Portuguese), and of PNAE. A planned support fund, however, was not created.

This movement of creating spaces for an agroecological agenda in public policies happened in the context of a nationally elected government, which, from 2003 onwards, started to promote a series of agendas that did not have repercussion in the Federal administration until then.

Those discussions reached the female rural workers and peasants' movements, especially the labor movement and the Via Campesina, which combined feminism with agroecology and incorporated a proposition for an agroecological program in their practices and agendas. It should be noted that the insertion of women's groups –with their practices of productive backyards and small animals rearing, to mention just two examples– into programs such as the PAA and PNAE, consisted of ways to provide autonomy and space to women in the political dispute inside their entities, and thereby ensuring space for their political agendas (Siliprandi & Cintrão, 2015). As a result, during the fourth March of the Daisies, women presented a guideline to organize an Agroecology Program to the President of the Republic, Dilma Rousseff, in 2011.

Simultaneously, a discussion on formulating a policy for the organic agriculture was held nearby in the forums of social participation. It is also important to note that many of the entities that act in these forums, such as Ecovida Network, are part of the ANA as well. This process converged for construction only and was supported by the impulse given during the formulation of the Policy, initially in the MMA and afterwards in the SG/PR. During the formulation of the Planapo, the MDA was also included in the coordination of the process.

One might go as far as to say that this convergence and unity happened, among other factors, because of the criticism of the prevailing agricultural model and by searching alternatives to this model. After the initiation of the policy formulation process, by President Rousseff's decision in 2011, the social movements and the ANA seized the opportunity of Rio+20 to pressure the government at a critical moment, when it was interested in a positive agenda for that occasion, in order to release the policy. The Rio+20 was therefore important to provide agility and arguments to pressure the ministries to take the President's decision forward.

However, it was the fourth March of the Daisies, in 2011 that brought the issue of agroecology to governmental decision-making. From that event on, the formulation process of the Pnapo and the first Planapo was initiated.

Then, in 2011 and 2012, the subject was considered, and discussions about an agroecology and organic production policy gained momentum, due to certain problems that demanded the administration's attention, during that occasion. Among them were the debate about pesticides –with the initiatives taken in the context of the Campaign against pesticides, organized by the civil society– and proposed changes in the Forest Code, which was highlighted in some interviews we conducted. In that moment the subject of a 'green economy' emerged in Brazil, with several economic and political groups positioning themselves on that issue. Another subject that was on the horizon was the Rio+20, which occurred in 2012. On the one hand, that context brought the need for civil society organizations to create convergence, also on an international level, as mentioned earlier. For the Federal Government, on the other hand, it meant an opportunity to show the world effective actions in environmental, health, and social fields.

On defining the formulation stage of the Pnapo Decree, such a stage in the public policy cycle consists of the selection and specification of alternatives considered the most convenient, followed by a declaration that states the decision made, and defining its objectives, as well as legal, administrative, and financial frameworks (Saravia, 2006; Frey, 2000). Nevertheless, in the case of the PNPO Decree, this was not something completely new, since many actions were already taken. Therefore it can be understood as an increment, which –according to Lindblom (2006)– means that the political and decision-making process is interactive and complex, without beginning or end, and with decisions being made gradually.

Resorting to Baptista's and Rezende's (2011) interpretation of public policies formulation, one can understand that public policy stages are far from representing a rational process, in which formulators list the problems to be tackled in order to elaborate ideal propositions for establishing solutions. Those definitions involve the

convergence of certain streams and actions of actors with specific power resources, in addition to opportune time for the proposition.

In Kingdon's analytical model (1995), both the pressure groups and the ideas are considered especially relevant in choosing the alternatives. In our description, we correspondingly stressed the importance of both the actors and the main ideas involved in the debate. This leads to questions, similar to the ones made by Kingdon (1995), who, in developing the Multiple Stream Model, tried to identify reasons that made it possible to reach a point of considering an idea and why, in a given moment, people inside and around the administration dedicate themselves to a specific issue, while neglecting others.

The analysis methodology used in this study, according to Kingdon's model, allowed us to identify the main points highlighted in figure 1:

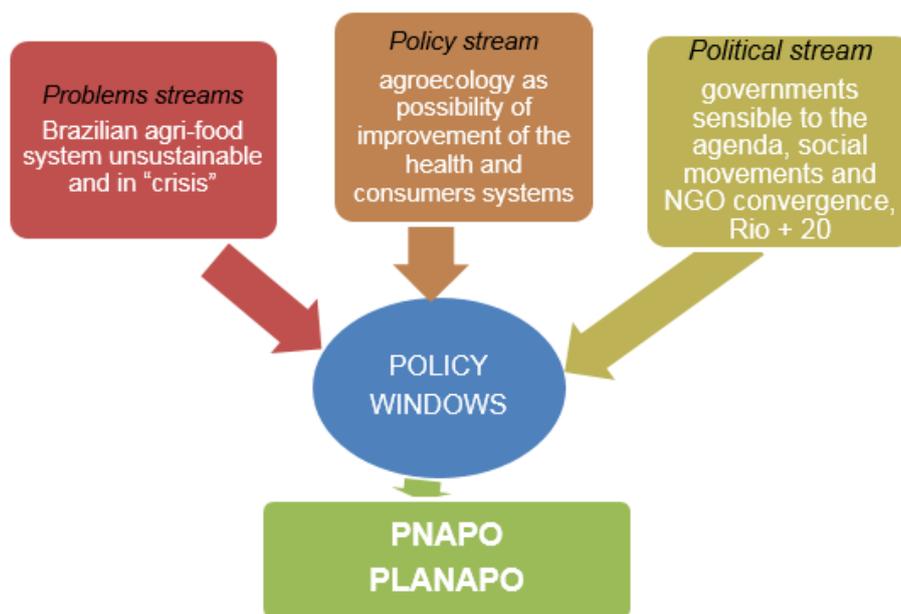


FIGURE 1
THE THREE FLUXES OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (KINGDON'S MODEL)
SOURCE: AUTHORS' ADAPTATION, BASED ON KINGDON (1995)

One can observe that the agroecological agenda was a process that emerged, from the bottom up, and eventually pressured the State. There were experiences and ideas historically developed on the base of society, and public policies in course, that came to strengthen the directives, instruments, objectives, goals, and initiatives of the Pnapo and the Planapo.

Despite their previously mentioned limits, the Pnapo and the Planapo have the great merit of establishing an agenda that is opposed to agribusiness. It shows that there are possibilities to agriculture other than the intensive agriculture inspired by the 'green revolution' patterns. It is a policy of acknowledgment inside a State that always denied it. It can be considered a milestone and a political achievement, in the same way family farming once was. Thus, it puts the agroecological agenda on another level in public policies.

It also has the merit of constituting a political arena that aggregates government and society with a specific focus on an agroecological agenda. It constructs an intersectoriality, involving different ministries and bodies inside the administration in a dialogue based on an agenda that did not exist before.

Conclusions

We sought to understand how agroecology became an object of concern and decision-making for the Brazilian Federal Government, which particular decisions were made then and how exactly –and in what context– the formulation process of the Pnapo and the first Planapo took place.

The National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production (Pnapo, in Portuguese) meant a response to the organic agriculture movement and to the agroecology movement. That unity of action increased the pressure on the government exerted by civil society, and helped to smoothen the intersectoriality of the policies.

After 2003, which saw the establishment the Zero Hunger Program during Lula's first presidential term, the importance of the issue of food and nutrition security, and other topics –such as a preoccupation with nutrition, the fight against hunger and misery, food culture, healthy eating, the reinstallation of Consea, and the institutionality – created those ideals and agendas. All this allowed for the construction of policies and social administration which linked themselves to a discussion about the productive base and gave birth to initiatives such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA, in Portuguese), and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE, in Portuguese) –which already existed--.

The set of policies and regulations established after 2003 constituted important advances in the formulation of a legal apparatus to assure the DHAA (the Human Right to Adequate Food) and the strengthening of family farming and peasant agriculture –even if some challenges to fully achieve those rights still persist in Brazil–. Among those challenges are: the concentration of land; inequalities (ethnic, racial, gender and of income); food and nutrition security of indigenous populations and traditional communities; in addition to new challenges, such as an obesity epidemic and the fact that Brazil is becoming the biggest pesticide market worldwide.

The policy construction went beyond the administration and its institutions, even if, at times, several activities received governmental support. In that case, a social debate got 'into' the government. In a certain way, it is possible to say that the debate that took place in the government was eventually included in the field of the agroecology movement.

It is possible to note that the agroecological agenda was an emerging, grassroots process. The experiences and ideas –historically constructed on the base of society– gave solidity to directives, objectives, goals, and initiatives of the Pnapo and the first Planapo –even if this first Plan was a junction of several existing initiatives, presenting little novelty of action--.

One of the characteristics of agroecology is its disposition to allow the establishment of connections with other agendas, gradually getting several segments of society to adopt this program, and thus introducing it in public policies on many fronts, be it the environmental and technological agenda, public health, education, or research.

The Pnapo and the first Planapo can both be considered milestones and political achievements, in the same way family farming once was. Thus, they put the agroecological and organic production agenda on another level in public policies.

They also have the merit of constituting a political arena that aggregates government and society with a specific focus on an agroecological agenda. They construct an intersectoriality, involving different ministries and bodies inside the administration in a dialogue on an agenda that did not exist before.

There are remaining structural challenges and threats to the agroecological agenda, such as issues related to land and territory; the advance of biotechnology associated with the intensive use of pesticides under the control of major transnational corporations, and challenges of biodiversity protection (distribution of benefits and traditional knowledge).

The dialogue, characterized by disputes and conflicts –but also by joint construction– between civil society and government, created a Policy and a Plan. New challenges arise for the construction of a healthy planet, a future for humanity, with men and women living in peace, with respect for nature and biodiversity, and quality of life.

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Notes

- i The authors translate from the Portuguese.
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