

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE, LAW, AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Master's degree in Human Rights and Multi-level Governance



EVALUATING THE LANDLESS WORKERS' MOVEMENT (MST) AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO AGRIBUSINESS IN ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY IN BRAZIL

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To my people, to my family, to my ancestors. Especially to all the women who came before me, who had their right to freedom taken away in various ways, from the simple act of eating to access to education and the opportunity to see the world. I dedicate my freedoms and opportunities to you, as well as every step of my academic journey. I carry all your stories and struggles within me, and I strive to be the first, but not the only one, to walk on unexplored paths, now open thanks to your resilience.

Quem inventou a fome foram os que comem.

Those who invented hunger were those who eat.

- Carolina Maria de Jesus

ABSTRACT

This master's dissertation will address the persistence of food insecurity in Brazil, a right enshrined in the Federal Constitution, as well as in international legal frameworks. Despite being one of the world's largest agricultural producers, Brazil paradoxically faces high levels of hunger, highlighting the urgent need to evaluate the sustainability and equity of its agricultural system. This research explores the influence of dominant agribusiness interest groups on political decisions and examines the complex factors that perpetuate food insecurity in Brazil.

The central research question is whether the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) can offer more efficient and sustainable solutions to hunger compared to traditional agribusiness. Thus, an analysis will be conducted on how the MST could present a potential alternative to the prevailing Brazilian agricultural model by advocating for land redistribution, family farming, and sustainable agricultural practices, which can address the structural social issues exacerbated by the current system.

Regarding the methodology employed in this research, it will be predominantly qualitative, grounded in Social Movement Theory and supported by an extensive literature review of government documents and MST publications. Additionally, complementary quantitative data will be presented to support the facts discussed throughout the research.

Keywords: Food Insecurity, Brazil, Agribusiness, Landless Workers' Movement (MST), Sustainability.

RESUMO

Esta dissertação de mestrado abordará a questão da persistência da insegurança alimentar no Brasil, um direito na Constituição Federal, bem como por marcos legais internacionais. Apesar do Brasil ser um dos maiores produtores agrícolas do mundo, o país enfrenta paradoxalmente altos níveis de fome, destacando a necessidade urgente de avaliar a sustentabilidade e equidade do seu sistema agrícola. Esta pesquisa explora a influência dos grupos de interesse dominantes no agronegócio sobre as decisões políticas e examina os fatores complexos que perpetuam a insegurança alimentar no Brasil.

A questão central da pesquisa é se o Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) pode oferecer soluções mais eficientes e sustentáveis para a fome em comparação com o agronegócio tradicional. Dessa forma, será elaborada uma análise de como o MST apresentaria potencial alternativo ao modelo agrícola brasileiro prevalente ao defender a redistribuição de terras, a agricultura familiar e práticas agrícolas sustentáveis, que podem abordar as questões sociais estruturais exacerbadas pelo sistema atual.

Em relação a metodologia que será empregada na pesquisa, essa será majoritariamente qualitativa, fundamentada na Teoria dos Movimentos Sociais e apoiada por uma extensa revisão de literatura de documentos governamentais e publicações do MST, além de apresentar dados quantitativos complementares que sustentam os fatos apresentados no decorrer da pesquisa.

Palavras-chave: Insegurança Alimentar, Brasil, Agronegócio, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), Sustentabilidade.

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INTRODUCTION

The present master's dissertation addresses the issue of food insecurity in Brazil. In the country, the guarantee of this human right outlined in Articles 6 and 227 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution, defined by the Organic Law on Food and Nutritional Security, as well as in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international legal instruments to which Brazil is a party, stands as a pressing concern. This issue commands a central position in the nation's social discourse as it persistently claims lives and exacerbates societal inequalities.

Despite being one of the world's largest agricultural producers, Brazil historically faces alarming rates of hunger among its population. This paradox highlights the urgent need to examine the effectiveness and sustainability of the current agricultural system in ensuring equitable food access and food security for the population. By shedding light on this complex dilemma, this dissertation seeks to analyze the role of interest groups that dominate agribusiness in the country and influence political decisions due to their economic significance. Additionally, it aims to unravel the intricate interplay of factors contributing to the persistence of food insecurity in Brazil, exploring potential pathways towards a more just and sustainable future where this human right is respected and guaranteed.

The Brazilian economy and food production are based on an agro-export model that focuses on high commodity production aimed at the external market, often at the expense of food production for domestic consumption. This model has been criticized for failing to meet the nutritional needs of the Brazilian population and is associated with land concentration, environmental degradation, and social exclusion. In this context, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) emerges as an alternative agricultural production proposal based on land

redistribution, family farming, and sustainable practices, which can potentially mitigate the structural social problems caused by the current model in Brazil.

Thus, considering the ongoing and persistent food insecurity in Brazil, the central question of this study arises: can the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) present itself as an alternative that offers more efficient and sustainable ways than agribusiness to address hunger in the country? The hypothesis guiding this research is that the MST, through its constitution as a social movement, its capacity for mobilization, and its action on issues such as advocating for land reform, promoting agroecological practices, and supporting small farmers and family farming, presents a viable alternative to the agro-export model, offering sustainable and effective paths towards greater food security and sovereignty in Brazil.

To explore the viability of this hypothesis, this research adopts a qualitative approach grounded in Social Movement Theory and a comprehensive review of documents and official data, such as from the Brazilian Federal Government and the official MST website. Therefore, the first chapter will constitute a theoretical analysis based on the study of social movements and will include an analysis of the Gramscian perspective on social movements, an overview of Social Movement Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, New Social Movements, Political Mobilization Theory, and Social Movement Organizations. Additionally, there will be an analysis of the debate on whether the MST can be considered a social movement or an organizational force.

After the theoretical and conceptual framework analysis, the second chapter will explore the historical context of the agrarian issue in Brazil. A comprehensive literature review will be conducted, covering the impacts of the colonial legacy, the transition to industrial capitalism and the emergence of the colonato system, the crisis of the agro-export model, and the rise of the industrial bourgeoisie. The research will also analyze the impact of this model

on rural and urban workers in the 1990s, the challenges faced by peasants, and the emergence of the MST in response to these difficulties.

In chapter three, the economic, social, and political dimensions of agribusiness in Brazil will be explored. Specifically, the economic perspective of the current dependent agro-export model, the historical context of hunger in Brazil, and the political influence of agribusiness, represented by the rural caucus, will be examined.

Finally, the case study will focus on hunger during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. The first subchapter will illustrate how the neglect of food security by the dominant rural political body, combined with the prioritization of individualistic economic interests, exacerbated the situation during the health crisis. The second subchapter will present a detailed analysis of food insecurity in Brazil during the pandemic, highlighting data that reveal a health crisis permeated by a social agenda crisis in government policy. The third subchapter will analyze how the MST responded to the hunger crisis during the pandemic, exploring the specific case of the "Solidarity Hands Campaign" as an example of an effective and sustainable initiative proposed by the movement.

In summary, the aim of this work is to contribute to the debate on pathways and proposals for ensuring a sustainable agricultural system in the country and for ensuring that food is treated as a right for all population and not just as a commodity for profit, but rather as a source of life. This research also specifically aims to analyze the effectiveness of social movements, particularly the MST, in building alternative agricultural systems and food treatments that are based on sustainability and equity, offering insights into possible paths to achieve a more robust, permanent, and inclusive food security in the country.

1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework adopted to investigate the Landless Workers Movement's (MST) role in strengthening food security in Brazil, in contrast to the dominant agro-export model. In this chapter, we will delve into the comprehensive analysis of social movements through a well-defined theoretical framework. The chapter begins with a Theoretical Framework, setting the stage for an in-depth exploration of the various theories and approaches that have shaped the understanding of social movements.

We start with an analysis of Antonio Gramsci's ideas on hegemony, civil society, and the role of social movements. Following this, we offer a comprehensive overview of Social Movement Theory and narrow down to the understanding of specific theories such as Resource Mobilization (RM), a fundamental theory that focuses on the importance of resources, organization, and strategy in the success of social movements, and the New Social Movements (NSM), which emphasize identity, culture, and the transition from traditional movements.

Furthermore, the chapter explores Political Mobilization (PM), which examines the contexts, processes, and strategies through which social movements influence political processes and policy changes, and Social Movement Theory: Social Movement Organizations (SMOs), analyzing the organizational structures and dynamics that support social movements.

Finally, the chapter culminates with a critical examination of the MST, analyzing whether it can be considered a Social Movement or Organization, based on the theoretical framework presented and the investigation of the characteristics of the Landless Workers Movement. Through these subchapters, the chapter aims to provide a holistic understanding of the theoretical foundations of social movements, offering insights into their complexities and the various factors that contribute to their emergence and sustainability.

In methodological terms, this research will primarily employ a qualitative approach of bibliographic review, grounded in Social Movement Theory (SMT) as the main theoretical-analytical framework, complemented by a smaller proportion of quantitative methodology. The choice of qualitative methodology is based on its intrinsic capacity to explore the complexities and nuances characterizing social phenomena, including the activities and impacts of social movements such as the MST. This approach enables a comprehensive analysis of the circumstances and structures that have influenced the emergence, consolidation, and actions of the MST up to the present moment. Conversely, quantitative methodology will be employed throughout the research to present and analyze data from databases and official reports, which provide evidence and support trends and comparisons presented qualitatively, offering greater factual grounding and a deeper understanding of the issues under study.

As mentioned, the theoretical framework of the research and the contextualization of the MST's role will be carried out through a comprehensive review of Social Movement Theory literature, encompassing classical and contemporary theoretical perspectives on social movements. Renowned authors such as Gramsci, Touraine, and Tarrow, among others, will be analyzed to conduct a critical analysis that allows for a clear understanding of social movement dynamics, particularly in the context of the MST.

1.1. Gramscian Perspectives on Social Movements

From a Gramscian perspective, the presence of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in the political struggle for the guarantee of social rights provides a fertile analysis of the relations between the State and political and civil society. As highlighted by Gramsci (2000), the spheres of political and civil society are not organically separate but rather intertwined through institutions with an ambivalent structural character. In this context, the Brazilian National Congress emerges as one of these institutions, playing a central role in the country's political dynamics.

Building upon Gramsci's assumption, Magrone (2006) sheds light on the functioning of legislative power as an institution within political society, which is nevertheless influenced by public opinion - largely shaped by the media of civil society. However, this interplay can be distorted by specific interests that do not encompass the entirety of civil society, as exemplified by the so-called *ruralist caucus*. This faction represents a small, but influential segment of the population that aims to assert its hegemony over agricultural and land policies tailored exclusively to its interests focused on profit.

Gramsci further emphasizes that both the State and civil society, as previously mentioned, are integral components of the social superstructure and are deeply influenced by class struggle (2000). This perspective is supported by Liguori (2007, p.29), who underscores that the State serves not only as a tool for controlling the ruling class but also as a battleground for hegemony and a platform for unifying classes. Thus, the potential to foster counter-hegemony through the agency of subordinate classes becomes apparent, exemplifying what we now identify as social movements.

The MST thus emerges as an example of counter-hegemony, where subordinate classes, such as landless workers and small farmers, seek to challenge the prevailing hegemonic domination of large landowners and agribusiness, personified by the ruralist caucus in the National Congress. By demanding comprehensive and fair agrarian reform, as well as land ownership and social transformation, the MST aims to reshape power structures and the unfolding dialectic between the spheres mentioned by Gramsci.

In conclusion, within the framework of class struggle outlined by Gramsci, it can be inferred that the MST embodies the aspirations of subordinate classes striving for a more equitable and fair social order, directly opposing the interests of the ruralist caucus and the dominant classes. Thus, from this theoretical standpoint, the MST emerges as a social movement aligned with Gramsci's ideals, aiming to challenge existing hegemony and advocate

for structural changes in society. However, in contrast, the ruralist caucus cannot be categorized as a Social Movement since it does not contest the prevailing hegemony; rather, it perpetuates it by advocating for its preservation, thereby upholding the status quo and the hegemonic power it represents.

The research will adopt Gramsci's perspective and approach to substantiate the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) 's theoretical considerations and dynamics among the involved actors. However, we will also delve into social movement theories proposed by scholars dating back to the 19th century, which have evolved through various approaches over time. These theories are essential and contribute significantly to contemporary analyses.

1.2. Comprehensive Overview of Social Movement Theory

In the early investigations of social movements, particularly during the era of classical approaches, revolutionary events such as the French Revolution of 1789 and the Paris Commune emerged as significant catalysts in shaping the concept of what constitutes a social movement from a historical standpoint. This was notably influenced by the labor movement, as highlighted by the observations of the German thinker Lorenz von Stein in 1842. These pivotal historical occurrences laid the groundwork for a more profound comprehension of social movements, particularly in the context of the Gramscian notion of counter-hegemonic movements. Here, subordinate classes challenge and contest the prevailing hegemonic power, as exemplified by workers opposing the societal dominance of the industrial bourgeoisie.

After a period dominated by movements of an industrial and revolutionary nature, a divergent school of thought emerged known as *collective behavior*, heavily influenced by the studies of the French sociologist Gustave Le Bon. In his work "Psychologie des Foules" (The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind), published in 1895, Le Bon argued that when people gather in groups, their behavior differs from when they act individually, being influenced by emotions and irrational impulses that emerge within the dynamics of the collective. This

perspective contrasted with the more positive views of social movements prevalent at the time, especially those associated with the labor movement, which considered them legitimate expressions of the struggle for social justice and emancipation.

The notion of the irrationality of crowds found resonance among American scholars, particularly during the period between the 1940s and the late 1960s, in the Chicago School, with figures such as Robert E. Park and Herbert Blumer. Two other important theorists, Anthony Oberschall and Charles Tilly, offer valuable insights into social movements, each emphasizing distinct aspects of this social phenomenon. Oberschall highlights the crucial difference between social movements and collective behaviors; movements are collective efforts that significantly alter people's lives, whereas collective behaviors are episodic and spontaneous actions of a crowd (Gohn, 1997, p.62-63).

On the other hand, Charles Tilly emphasizes political conflict as the core of analyses on social movements. He argues that social movements emerge in response to political and social tensions within a society, acknowledging them as an intrinsic and essential part of the normal functioning of a society, as they reflect struggles for power, resources, and recognition. Emphasizing political conflict as a central element in the analysis of social movements helps contextualize them within a broader framework of social and political dynamics (Chazel, 1995, p.312).

However, according to the French sociologist François Chazel (1995), it did not take long for criticisms to arise regarding approaches related to the study of collective behavior. These criticisms addressed the predominance of micro sociological analysis, the conception of a supposed natural history of movements, the attribution of irrationality to these movements, the interpretation of them as manifestations of crisis, and the almost complete absence of political considerations (Chazel, 1995, p.310-311).

In response to these criticisms, a new approach was developed by American critics such as John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, who laid the foundation for the so-called "Resource Mobilization" (MR) perspective, a term they coined in 1973, originating from the Michigan School. In parallel, also in response to the criticisms, a European approach emerged, exemplified by Alain Touraine, known as New Social Movements (NMS).

1.3. Resource Mobilization Theory (RM)

The Resource Mobilization (RM) approach is theoretically based on rational choice theory, which employs economic categories for the analysis of social issues. In RM, there is an explicit rejection of the "emphasis attributed by classical theory to feelings, discontent, and norm breaks, all considered of personal origin" (Gohn, 1997, p.50). From this perspective, a utilitarian view prevails, emphasizing that participants in social movements act according to their interests, rationally calculating the costs and benefits of their involvement. Therefore, collective actions are considered the result of deliberate and strategic choices by individuals seeking to achieve specific goals through a rational assessment of their opportunities and constraints.

Mancur Olson emerges as one of the foremost theorists within this framework, with his contribution characterized by a challenge to the notion that individuals within a group with shared interests would naturally cooperate to advance those interests. Contrary to the belief that emotional impulses drive individuals to participate in social movements, Olson advocates for a utilitarian perspective. He contends that individuals who stand to benefit from a collective good often lack the incentive to voluntarily contribute to its provision (Gohn, 1997, p.62).

Although the MR approach dominated the academic landscape in the United States for two decades, it faced significant criticism due to its predominant utilitarian theoretical foundation and its limitation in understanding social movements, primarily by almost exclusively identifying them as interest groups.

1.4. The New Social Movements (NSMs)

The New Social Movements (NSMs), mentioned earlier, represent a critical approach that emerged in Europe, featuring prominent authors such as Alain Touraine, Claus Offe, and Alberto Melucci. This perspective innovates by emphasizing the cultural dimension of social movements, focusing on the identity of participants and the values they share.

According to Touraine (1994), a social movement is conceived simultaneously as a social conflict and a cultural project, aiming both to achieve cultural values and to triumph over a social adversary. He describes a social movement as a combination of principles of identity, opposition, and totality, which delineate its societal dynamics. In this case, the character of the MST is not only a movement that fights for agrarian and redistributive issues, but also one that seeks to promote a peasant identity of rural workers and values of solidarity, justice, and autonomy, could be highlighted.

Moreover, this approach dedicates attention to macro sociology for a deeper understanding of the place of social movements in global society, especially in the context of advanced capitalism (Touraine, 1994). In this sense, the MST could be analyzed within the broader panorama of social, economic, and political transformations both, in Brazil and globally, considering its role in resisting the capitalist agro-export model resulting from the dependent model that places it on the margins of the international and national systems. Thus, aligning its efforts towards a more just and egalitarian social order that contradicts advanced capitalism.

1.5. Political Mobilization Theory (PM)

After a critical dialogue between researchers from Resource Mobilization (RM) and New Social Movements (NSM), a new approach emerged called Political Mobilization (PM). This approach integrates elements of previous theories and seeks to analyze and explain the

actions of social movements more comprehensively, highlighting the importance of concepts such as political opportunities, developed by Sydney Tarrow (1998).

One of the main innovations introduced by the PM theory is the emphasis on both the cultural dimension and the political processes involved in the mobilization of social movements. While previous approaches, such as Resource Mobilization (RM), predominantly focused on the internal resources of groups, such as organization, leadership, and power, PM seeks to explain the existence of social movements considering external factors such as political opportunities, social networks, framing, culture, and identity (Schmitz, 2009).

1.6. Social Movement Organizations (SMOs)

From the presented theories, it is evident the variety of perspectives offered to understand social movements. From the initial approaches, which emphasized revolutionary and historical aspects, to the more contemporary ones, which highlight political mobilization and the cultural dimension of these movements. By considering the contributions of different scholars and the diverse emphases attributed to elements such as organization, culture, identity, and political opportunities, it becomes possible to understand broadly and contextually the complexity of social movements and their role in society. In doing so, it is also observed that contributions to social movement theory tend to characterize a movement in two ways: as a collective entity, an organizational unit led by its leaders, or as a set of organizations, a network of organizations.

The aforementioned network of organizations refers to the concept of social movement organizations (SMOs), which was initially proposed by McCarthy & Zald (1987). Snow (2001, p.27) understands social movement organizations as "the set of organizational members engaged in a social movement." In other words, SMOs are the organizational elements that compose and drive a social movement, playing a fundamental role in resource mobilization and coordination of collective actions.

The distinction proposed by Klanderman & Tarrow (1988) between a movement as an organized entity and a movement as a network of organizations has crucial implications for understanding the concept of social movement. This distinction became evident in debates among scholars from Brazil and France, where a divergence arose regarding whether, for example, the MST can be categorized as a social movement. From the French perspective, the conception of a social movement is not limited to representing the demands of a single specific category, such as landless rural workers in this case. On the contrary, it involves the joint action of various actors with multiple interests, united by diverse motivations toward a common goal. This convergence of interests is what they consider conferring legitimacy to the movement (Blatrix, 2006).

Thus, the MST may not neatly fit into this categorization under the Blatrix framework, which includes Social Movement Organizations (SMOs). Nonetheless, it can be argued that even if the MST itself cannot be strictly labeled as a social movement according to this theory, it is undeniably a local branch of a network of organizations, contributing to the landless cause. For instance, it is a member of Via Campesina (International Peasants Movement), thereby participating in a broader social movement comprising various entities united in the pursuit of common objectives.

Conversely, the perspective of Brazilian scholars typically does not incorporate the notion of SMOs. From this vantage point, the assertion that the MST is considered a social movement as an organized entity holds validity. This interpretation aligns with Gohn's (2011) approach, which posits that social movements in Brazil are often analyzed based on their practices of mobilization and resistance rather than their formal organizational structures. Gohn further argues that these movements are seen as expressions of the struggle for rights and social justice, focusing on collective action and the capacity to transform society. Therefore, the MST can be considered a social movement according to this theoretical perspective.

1.7. MST: Social Movement or Organizational Force?

In this context, there is also a debate about whether the MST would not be conceptualized as what is considered an organization. According to the theorist José de Sousa Martins (1997, p.62), the MST was once a social movement, but at the moment, it can be considered an organization because, according to him, the MST is well-structured and has employees. Martins observes that social movements tend to transform into organizations when they achieve their objectives, however, the same occurs when, even with small victories, the cause is not resolved, as the author believes to be the case with the MST.

This perspective suggests a natural evolution of social movements towards institutionalization. However, there is apprehension regarding how this transition impacts the mobilization and advocacy effectiveness of such movements. It appears that as movements institutionalize, they might diminish their capacity for radical action and mass mobilization. Instead, they may prioritize the maintenance of the organization and the pursuit of tangible benefits (Schmitz, 2009.)

Regarding Martins's views on defining the MST, João Pedro Stedile, an economist from Rio Grande do Sul and a national leader of the Landless Workers Movement (MST), shares his perspective in an interview that was documented in the book "Brava Gente" (2012). Stedile explains why, based on Martins's framework, he considers the MST to be an organization.

Bernardo: So, is there no basis for Professor José de Souza Martins' claim, in an interview with *Jornal Sem Terra*, that the MST is the largest peasant party in Latin America?

João Pedro: I think that's an exaggeration. In my opinion, Professor José de Souza Martins is the greatest sociologist of rural issues in Brazil. It seems to me that in the mentioned interview, he seeks to counterpose the difference between a movement and an organization. There, he says that a social movement tends to disappear once its objectives are achieved or its ability to exert pressure is lost. It either turns into a party organization or something else. According to the professor, MST has already ceased to be a movement and has become an organization. It managed to give political stature to a popular struggle. It turned into a "popular agrarian party," in his words, despite not having a proper party program and organization. What are the elements he uses to justify this statement? It's the way we operate. But that's not necessarily a partisan issue.

This discussion brings us back to the previous one about the characteristics of the MST. We want to be organized with popular, union, and other political characteristics. We are not a party organization, nor do we want to be, nor should we be. Another important thing we assimilated, following Professor Martins' advice, is to be open to learning from others. We have never claimed to be the first. We are not reinventing the wheel. Since the early struggles, there has always been this vocation to want to know where others went wrong, and where they got it right. With the aim of learning, we have had several conversations, whether with the remnants of the leaders of the Peasant Leagues, Ultab, Master, or with the CPT.

In this theoretical debate about classifying the Landless Rural Workers Movement as a social movement, the question of organizational form is not determinative when analyzing the characteristics that distinguish a movement from other forms of collective action. Therefore, its internal leadership rules, or its relationship with militants and participants.

A specific type of organization cannot be attributed to a social movement, whether it be an internal organization or action-oriented, etc. Thus, based on the study of the mentioned theories, the evaluation should focus on key indicators such as mobilization capacity, an adversary's presence, and a cause to fight for. Additionally, it is crucial to consider whether the movement remains engaged in the struggle or deviates to everyday issues, aiming only to maintain its structure and defend its achievements (Schmitz, 2009).

Based on this analysis, despite opposing considerations such as those of Stédile and Martins, I conclude that the MST continues to be a social movement. This view is supported by other authors, such as Lazzaretti (2007, p.124-126), who relies on the definition of social movement presented by Scherer-Warren (1984, p.20), which describes it as

transformative group action (praxis) aimed at achieving the same goals (the project), under the more or less conscious guidance of common value principles (ideology), and a more or less defined directive organization (organization and its direction).

I concur with this definition and will apply it in a theoretical analysis of the movement to follow, thereby justifying my position in considering it a social movement.

The MST demonstrates transformative praxis through its collective actions focused on land occupations, and collective mobilization in rallies and protests aimed at demanding changes in the country's land structure in pursuit of Agrarian Reform. These activities reflect the pursuit of common goals, constituting the movement's project, centered on defending the rights of landless rural workers and promoting social justice in rural areas. Additionally, the MST is guided by a leftist ideology with socialist undertones that values principles such as equal access to land, the dignity of rural workers in the countryside, and the fight against social inequalities throughout the country. This ideology shared by movement members guides their actions and mobilizations.

Finally, the MST has a well-defined internal directive organization, with a horizontal hierarchical structure that includes decision-making bodies and leadership responsible for coordinating movement activities at local, regional, and national levels. This organization and its direction are crucial to ensuring the cohesion and effectiveness of MST actions in pursuit of its objectives. Thus, considering the analysis of the proposed aspects - praxis, project, ideology, and organization and its direction - it can be concluded that the MST fits as a social movement according to Scherer-Warren's (1984) definition and, as mentioned earlier, Gramsci's.

Regarding the effectiveness of MST actions, it is essential to refer to the theoretical contributions of Sidney Tarrow (1998) and José de Souza Martins (1997), who analyze the importance of political opportunities as factors shaping the action of social movements. According to the theory of Political Mobilization (MP) proposed by Tarrow (1998), movements are influenced not only by internal mobilization but also by external conditions, such as changes in power structures and political alliances. Thus, the MST, as a Social Movement, which, within the Gramscian logic adopted by this research, positions itself as a counter-hegemonic movement within the state sphere, opposes the representation of agribusiness that impedes advances in its struggle and is the hegemonic power in the National Congress,

materialized by the Ruralist Caucus. However, as predicted in Martins' approach (1997), external political pressures and changes in the state agenda change the way this confrontation occurs within this power structure.

According to Martins (1997), in crucial historical events, there is still an increase in the influence of political opportunities, such as the end of slavery in Brazil and the end of the dictatorship. By analyzing the emergence of the MST, which coincided with a period of political opening after the military dictatorship, it is possible to understand that it was born in an environment conducive to mass popular mobilizations, finding support in non-conventionally allied sectors, such as sectors of the elite and the State, which at the time understood the need for agrarian reform. However, it was in the same context that the MST faced considerable opposition, especially from the Rural Democratic Union (UDR), which represented the interests of large landowners and sought to contain demands for agrarian reform violently.

Moreover, according to Comparato (2001), by analyzing the clashes between the Landless Workers Movement (MST) and the government, it is observed that the success of the MST and its expansion can be attributed to its ability to establish and maintain two interconnected cycles of pressure on the State so that they reinforce each other. The first is manifested through occupation by the landless, ceasing only when the settlement is conquered. Then comes the second type of pressure, exerted by the settlers to obtain access to agrarian reform credits and ensure the viability of production until the settlement achieves sufficient autonomy to be emancipated.

In light of this context, the reasons for the measures adopted by the government to interrupt these pressure cycles become more understandable:

registration of landless families interested in receiving a plot in a land reform settlement; prohibition of expropriations on lands occupied during the subsequent two years after expropriation; early emancipation of settlements or withholding of credits to them, which practically yields the same result;

attempts to co-opt leadership with promises of personal advantages; repression; criminalization of the movement; decentralization of agrarian reform to avoid characterizing the struggle as a confrontation between the federal government and the MST; and finally, encouragement of division and the emergence of rival movements. (Comparato, 2001).

Therefore, I corroborate with what was concluded by the sociologist Heribert Schmitz (2009), who studied the characteristics of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in light of different theories of social movements. Despite moments of favorable political opportunities, the MST stood out for its singular political ability to influence the public agenda and maintain a prominent presence in the debate on agrarian reform. Its social base, composed of the landless, endowed it with a unique driving force, characterized by a willingness to resist repression and persist in its demands (Schmitz, 2009).

Therefore, solely analyzing political opportunities is inadequate for fully comprehending the MST's role in social transformation. The movement has shown considerable agency, utilizing existing political opportunities but primarily relying on resistance and formulating strategies to attain its objectives during periods of limited political openings. Embracing this multidimensional approach is crucial for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the role of social movements in contemporary society.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE BRAZILIAN AGRARIAN ISSUE

In this chapter, we explore the historical trajectory of land concentration in Brazil, which has resulted in profound ramifications for the country's social, economic, and political landscape that persist to this day. We begin with an analysis of the colonial legacy, which laid the groundwork for this concentration. Next, we delve into the transition to industrial capitalism and the emergence of the "colonato" system, investigating how this transition influenced patterns of land distribution and ownership.

Moving forward, we examine the crisis of the agro-export model and the simultaneous emergence of the industrial bourgeoisie. We analyze the tensions between agrarian interests and the expanding industrial sector, as well as the impact of this new context on land distribution dynamics for both rural and urban workers. We highlight the socio-economic disparities resulting from land ownership inequality and its implications for working conditions and urbanization trends.

Finally, we turn our attention to the challenges faced by peasants in the face of land concentration and the emergence of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) as a significant force in advocating for agrarian reform and human rights, including food security, which are affected by the dominant agro-export model. This movement has reshaped the discourse surrounding land rights and food sovereignty in Brazil.

2.1. The Colonial Legacy and Its Impact

The land's concentration in Brazil is a historical and highly relevant challenge, with profound implications for the country's society, economy, and politics. According to the 2017 report from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 1% of rural properties in the country represent approximately 45% of the land in Brazil (IBGE, 2018). This land concentration has its roots in the country's colonial history. Its persistence is related to the

absence of agrarian reform and capital accumulation strategies, where large landowners hold vast expanses of land, often leaving them unproductive for speculation or large-scale production, commonly dedicated to the production of commodities for exportation, such as soy, corn, meat, and sugarcane (IBGE, 2018). The result is an emphasis on monoculture and large-scale production for the international market, a central characteristic of agrobusiness in Brazil (Stedile & Fernandes, 2002).

However, it is crucial to highlight that this production's international orientation undermines the sustainability of the domestic market in the country, generating profound problems for the Brazilian population, such as poor nutrition and hunger. Despite being the third-largest global food producer, as reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its 2021 World Food and Agriculture Report, a study published by the Brazilian Network of Research on Food Sovereignty and Security (Rede Penssan) in 2022, revealed a startling reality. In Brazil, whose population reached 203,062,512 people according to the 2022 Census, about 125.2 million individuals reside in households marked by Food Insecurity (FI), with over 33 million facing severe hunger (acute FI). This unequal access to food and nutrition is particularly pronounced in rural households, where 18.6% of the population faces daily food shortages (Rede Penssan).

When analyzing the present scenario in Brazil, and the country's emergence of land concentration and food insecurity, we trace its roots to the colonial period, the plantation system, and the promulgation of the Land Law of 1850. According to Araújo Silva (2018), the colonial legacy is marked by long-standing exploitation stemming from harmful historical forms of land access, use, and appropriation, which not only devastated the indigenous populations living in the invaded territory but also institutionalized large private properties in the hands of a few citizens.

Perissatto (2008) contends that starting from 1530, the colonization of Brazil was propelled by Portugal's quest for the profitable cultivation of sugarcane, a highly esteemed commodity in the European market during that era. Throughout this period, Portugal established its economic exploitation in Brazil through the implementation of the plantation system, which can be defined as an agricultural production system based on large estates, monoculture, slave labor, and exportation (Pereira Filho, A. J., n.d.).

The plantation system not only yielded exorbitant profits but also served to bolster colonization and ensure territorial dominance. In this regard, Portugal instituted the *sesmarias system* in the colony. Originating from Portugal, this system entailed granting land to *sesmeiros*, allowing them to establish residence and commence production within a five-year timeframe. However, the colonial context led to varying outcomes. Recipients of a *sesmaria* were required to initiate land cultivation within this period, risking forfeiture of possession otherwise (Pereira Filho, A. J.).

Without adaptations, the *sesmarias* often sprawled extensively, with imprecise boundaries and inadequate supervision, contributing to a lack of land ownership regulation and the concentration of landownership in a single individual or family, thereby giving rise to large estates (Perissatto, 2008). These vast estates were dedicated to monoculture, focusing on cultivating a single product across extensive stretches of land (Gorender, 2012, p. 147-149). In Brazil, sugarcane was the primary crop on these estates due to favorable conditions for its growth and high demand in Europe, where it was traded. This underscores another fundamental principle of the plantation system: its orientation towards the external market, primarily geared towards export production.

The sugar, produced abundantly as a result of monocultural and slave labor practices on these estates, commanded a lucrative price in the European market, serving as a significant source of profit for the estate owners. To ensure production capacity met external demands and

maximized profits, the system heavily relied on slave labor. This dependence on enslaved individuals marked yet another cornerstone of the system, highlighting the prevalent use of slaves in the fields. Despite being essentially treated as commodities, these individuals were subjected to various forms of violence as they carried out the necessary tasks for their owners.

Thus, as pointed out by Caio Prado Júnior:

(...) it is not just about large property, which may be associated with parcel exploitation; what occurs instead is the various forms of leasing or land tenure, as is the case, to a greater or lesser extent, in all European countries. This is not what happens in Brazil, but rather large property coupled with large-scale exploitation, which not only is not the same thing, but also brings about consequences of entirely different kinds.¹

In 1820, the abolition of the sesmarias system necessitated the establishment of a new mechanism to regulate land ownership in Brazil. This need culminated in the emergence of the Land Law in 1850. Officially designated as Law No. 601, dated September 18, 1850, the Land Law represents a pivotal moment in Brazil's land and agricultural history. Its primary objective was to standardize the distribution of public lands, a process that had previously been governed by the systems of large rural property concessions and possessions.

The Land Law of 1850 aimed to regulate the distribution of public lands establishing guidelines for land regularization, distinguishing between possession and ownership, and allowing the concession of vacant lands to private individuals (Presidency of the Republic Civil House Subchief for Legal Affairs, 2024). In other words, the law provided a legal basis for transforming land, previously considered a natural resource with no value from a political economy perspective, into a tradable commodity. Consequently, it acquired a price, and the law regulated private land ownership (Stedile, 2012, p.26).

However, this legislation ultimately consolidated the concentration of land in the hands of large landowners. It established stringent and often unattainable criteria for land acquisition,

¹ PRADO JÚNIOR, Caio. Formação do Brasil contemporâneo. Op. cit., p. 117.

requiring proof of productive land use, possession of legal documentation, and, most importantly, substantial financial resources, which only a powerful economic minority had (Presidency of the Republic Civil House Subchief for Legal Affairs, 2024). From the moment the law was implemented, the land was considered a product to be purchased and the direct result was the exclusion of peasants, indigenous people, poor individuals, and former slaves from land access, as the vast majority could not meet the requirements set by the law.

Moreover, the Land Law originated from a common practice in Brazilian large landholdings, known as *grilagem* (land grabbing), which consists of the appropriation of unclaimed lands through forged documentation (MST, 2024). Alongside monoculture and slave labor, these practices shaped the Brazilian agrarian structure up to that point, establishing structural challenges felt in Brazilian society to this day, such as the maintenance of large states, the exportation of monoculture as the main economic activity, and the exploitation of rural workers.

When the Land Law was enacted in 1850, slavery persisted in the country, preventing enslaved individuals from acquiring land due to the economic and social barriers imposed upon them. However, in the same year, the scenario started to change and the Eusébio de Queiroz Law was enacted, prohibiting the trafficking of enslaved individuals within the national territory. According to IBGE data (2000), until the moment the country had already received approximately 4 million people who were forcibly brought from African countries. After 38 years, the Golden Law was enacted, ending slavery in the country (Imperial Law No. 3,353, May 13, 1888). However, former slaves were still unable to obtain land due to the conditions established in the existing legislation, mainly the lack of financial resources.

Thus, according to the Superior Labor Court of Brazil, the abolition of slavery in the country granted only formal freedom to former slaves, as it was not accompanied by the implementation of inclusive public policies, such as agrarian reform, expansion of the job

market for the liberated, and access to education, health, among others (Superior Labor Court, n.d.). This resulted in an inadequate structure for the integration of former slaves into society.

Stedile and Estevam (2012) emphasize that after the Golden Law in 1888, almost two million former slaves left rural areas, farms, and slave quarters, consequently abandoning agricultural work. They migrated to urban areas looking for ways to survive in this new context, aiming for the possibility to 'freely' market their labor. However, they faced the restrictions of a system that denied them complete and effective freedom (2012, p. 26).

The abolition represented an opportunity for the slave to make choices about their destiny and to regain the human dignity and self-respect that had been stripped away. However, this freedom would be constrained by the monopoly of land, compelling them to engage in the service of some landowner and adhere to the underconsumption to which they had always been subjected (Ribeiro, 1995, p. 170).

Moreover, acquiring urban lands in central locations for building homes posed a significant challenge, as they were expensive - especially for individuals who had just gained the right to sell their labor force. Another fact is that also most of these lands were already under the control of capitalists and merchants. In this manner, the same land legislation that hindered former slaves from becoming rural landowners also impeded their urban life.

This context gave rise to slums in urban areas, commonly known as *favelas* (slums), particularly on slopes and less valuable lands, due to the lack of access to urban lands and the absence of adequate housing policies. These slums persist in the country, marked from that time until today by precarious housing conditions exacerbated by deficiencies in infrastructure, basic services, and effective urban planning (Stedile, 2012, p. 26).

Currently, favelas are an integral part of Brazil's demographic urban landscape, with a substantial portion of the population residing in these areas. The numbers and demographic data reflect the extent of the issue. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in 2022, more than 16 million Brazilians lived in favelas, constituting approximately 8% of the country's total population (IBGE, 2022).

It is relevant to highlight that the definition of slums by the IBGE, as mentioned by Costa and Nascimento (2015), is correctly termed an *aglomerado subnormal* (subnormal cluster or informal settlement). According to the Institute, this can be defined as “An irregular occupation of lands owned by others – public or private – for housing purposes in urban areas and, in general, characterized by an irregular urban pattern, lack of essential public services, and location in areas with restrictions on occupation (2015)”.

This definition is similar to that of UN-Habitat for informal settlements, described as

Residential areas where: (1) residents lack secure land tenure or housing, with modalities ranging from illegal occupations to informal renting; (2) neighborhoods generally lack or are isolated from basic services and urban infrastructure, and (3) dwellings may not comply with current planning and construction regulations, often located in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas. In addition, informal settlements can be a form of real estate speculation for all income levels of urban residents, both rich and poor. Favelas are the most deprived and excluded forms of informal settlements, characterized by poverty and large clusters of dilapidated dwellings, often located in more dangerous urban areas. In addition to tenure insecurity, residents lack formal access to basic infrastructure and services, public spaces, green areas, and are constantly exposed to eviction, diseases, and violence. (Habitat III, 2017, p.1)

In summary, slums in Brazil continue to serve as one of the vivid demographic manifestations of the country's social and economic inequalities, stemming from a process of upholding the colonial order and mismanagement concerning the population and land distribution.

According to the prominent Brazilian activist in the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), João Pedro Stedile, this demographic shift, propelled by both the abolition of slavery and constraints in land laws, has had a lasting influence on Brazil's social and economic dynamics, continuing to shape the social and urban landscape of the country to this day (Stedile, 2012, p. 26). When making such statements, Stedile not only refers to Brazilian favelas but also to other demographic consequences in Brazil resulting from the transition from rural to urban environments.

2.2. Transition to Industrial Capitalism and the Emergence of Colonato

Despite a century marked by the abolition of slavery and the consequent demise of the plantation model, as well as the advent of the republican regime - a topic that will be further discussed in the following paragraphs -, the monoculture persisted as the most lucrative economic activity in the nation, specifically the coffee cultivation. However, from this moment, the production of the bean had transformed, emerging even stronger with the rise of the so-called *colonato's monoculture*, which, as analyzed in-depth in the following paragraphs, relied on the division of labor primarily assigned to European immigrants (Ribeiro, 2012, p. 171).

To understand what this period meant in the context of Brazilian agriculture, it's also necessary to grasp the global scenario of the time. According to Darcy Ribeiro (1995), the gradual introduction of European workers to coffee plantations in Brazil was driven by a series of factors that can be understood as *push-pull factors*². From the cited work, it can be concluded that among the main push factors for these workers leaving their European home nations were changes in the agricultural structure in those countries due to the advancement of industrial capitalism in Europe and the consequent lack of employment in factories emerging in cities as opposed to the decline in rural opportunities.

This situation was further influenced by some pull factors, such as the high demand for labor on Brazilian coffee plantations, mainly due to the abolition of slavery, which presented promising job opportunities driven by the increasing global demand. This expectation of improved quality of life was enhanced by the Brazilian government's policies to attract European immigrants, offering incentives such as family passage, guaranteed financial support in the first year, plots of land for subsistence farming, and later, even a fixed annual salary (1995).

² According to the Glossary on Migration from International Migration Law No. 34, compiled by Sironi, A. C. Bauloz, and M. Emmanuel (2019), "push-pull factors" is a model categorizing the drivers of migration into push and pull factors, whereby push factors are those which drive people to leave their country and pull factors are those attracting them into the country of destination.

In this context, as highlighted by Stedile (2012), the Crown successfully enticed over 1.6 million impoverished peasants from Europe to Brazil between 1875 and 1914, promising them a prosperous and high-quality life. According to Darcy Ribeiro (1995), up to 1850, approximately 6 million Africans were trafficked as slaves to Brazil. Upon the abolition of this movement, a nearly equivalent number of Europeans migrated to Brazil until 1950, totaling around 5 million individuals. This historical convergence underscores a significant demographic transition within the country's agricultural labor force.

In Brazil, European immigrants became part of the colonato system, as described by Stedile (2012). In this system, landowners, commonly referred to as 'coronéis' established specific social relations with migrant workers, known as 'colonos'. The latter received a coffee plantation, previously operated by slaves, as well as housing and the right to use part of the property for subsistence agriculture. These improved living conditions were offered to the new rural workers, who sometimes managed to leave the system and become small landowners (Ribeiro, 1995). However, immigrants typically acquired land through long-term lease agreements and, in return, committed to working on the farms and lands of large rural landowners. These work obligations were essential to the agreement and often included agricultural tasks such as planting and harvesting crops (Ribeiro, 1995).

2.3. Crisis of the Agroexport Model and the Rise of the Industrial Bourgeoisie

During the tenure of the Colonato system, farmers increasingly became absent in rural areas, opting to manage their rural properties through administrators while residing in urban centers. Another new characteristic of this oligarchy was the maintenance of its power in the political realm, transferring control of vacant lands to the State while preserving its defense mechanisms as a class (Ribeiro, p.171). The political power of this class has been responsible for profound deformations in Brazilian society up to this day. Their recurrent actions, such as the dispute with the State over the appropriation of national income and discrimination against

blacks, rural communities, and the urban poor, have hindered Brazil's social development. (Ribeiro, p.171).

According to Stedile (2012), it was during the establishment of the colonato system that the Brazilian peasantry emerged, which can be analyzed as the merging of two distinct strands. The first consists of European peasants who migrated in search of better living conditions, while the second comprises the mestizo population, resulting from colonial miscegenation between whites, blacks, and indigenous peoples, who were neither subjected to slavery nor capitalist. This latter group lacked government policies favoring their integration into Brazilian society, unlike the former, which made it more difficult for them to settle on the lands they encountered (p. 29).

Due to the Land Law of 1850, which prevented them from becoming small landowners, this mixed-race population began to migrate to the interior of the country, to areas known as the 'sertão', resulting in the denomination of these people as "sertanejos." They began to inhabit and populate the country's interior, mainly engaging in subsistence-focused agricultural production. Even without private ownership of the land, they occupied it individually or collectively, forming a peasant network that constituted communities in the country's interior (Stedile, 2012, p. 29).

As previously mentioned, the 20th century also witnessed significant political changes in the Latin American country, including the establishment of the republican regime. This regime transition was primarily driven by a combination of factors, such as the abolition of slavery in 1888, which disrupted the economic and social structure heavily reliant on slave labor, particularly within the agrarian elite. Simultaneously, there was growing dissatisfaction with the monarchy and the rise of republican ideals, influenced by European republican movements and the principles of democracy and equality, which gained traction among scholars and military figures, the only social segment among the less privileged classes with

access to education at that time (Stedile, p.29, 2012). Thus, the culmination of both economic and social changes, along with ideological shifts, created a conducive environment that led to the military coup on November 15, 1889, which toppled the monarchy and marked the establishment of the Republic in Brazil (p.29).

Not even half a century later, in 1930, the country underwent a new change in its political structure primarily due to economic factors. The industrial bourgeoisie ascends at this moment, emerging as a class arising but distinct from the rural export oligarchy, and determines a new economic model for the country (Stedile, 2012). While the industrial bourgeoisie represents the interests of urban and industrial entrepreneurs, aiming for economic modernization and primarily industrial development, the rural export oligarchy maintains its position as landowners, dedicated to export-oriented agricultural production. However, the last group no longer holds the political monopoly it once had, as political power shifts into the hands of the industrial bourgeoisie (p.21). Despite this shift in power balance, both classes coexist in a non-exclusive manner, each advocating for their distinct economic and political interests within the national structure.

According to Stedile (2012, p. 31), two reasons stand out for the persistence and coexistence of both classes. Firstly, he points out that the rural oligarchy was the cradle of the Brazilian industrial bourgeoisie, emerging during the period of capital accumulation driven by coffee and sugar exports. Secondly, he highlights Brazil's dependent industrial model, which relied on the importation of machinery and labor. These imports could only be made possible through the continuation of agricultural exports, which generated revenue for their payment, highlighting the logic of dependent capitalism. Stedile emphasizes that, in the context of agrarian issues, this period, recognized by scholars as a phase of a developmental national project, is characterized by the economic and political subordination of agriculture to industry.

2.4. Impact on Rural and Urban Workers

In the context of the capitalist system's dependent industrialization, the model assigned specific and determining roles to the peasants of that time - family farmers or small producers. The stimulus for rural migration, driven by capitalist logic, led the children of peasants to seek jobs in city factories, especially in the Southeast and South of the country, rather than remaining in agriculture or advocating for agrarian reform that would secure land for work. This continuous migration of peasant labor also exerted pressure on wages in the industry, keeping them low, as the demand for jobs was high (Stedile, 2012, p. 31).

Moreover, peasants were tasked with producing food at affordable prices for the city, primarily for the emerging urban working class, controlled by the Brazilian government to ensure affordability. This enabled the maintenance of the working-class force at low wages, driving high profits in Brazilian industrialization. This dynamic establishes a direct relationship between the cost of the *basic food basket*³ for the urban working class and the price of labor, fixed at the minimum wage (Stedile, 2012, p. 32).

According to Traspadini, this overexploitation of labor is the foundation of Latin American economic dependency (2016, p. 77). According to Marini, this foundation is the result of the standard capitalist accumulation format in dependent countries. These countries, disadvantaged by unequal exchange with more developed countries, do not seek balance through regulation between the prices and values of their exported goods, but rather through the ever-increasing exploitation of labor (2011, p. 147).

Thus, during the first half of the 1990s, we observe the establishment of capitalist agriculture, in which the peasant sector increasingly submits to the interests of industrial capital. According to data from IBGE exposed in the table below, from the year 1942, the

³ According to information on the government website, the Basic Food Basket comprises a selection of food items aimed at ensuring the human right to adequate and healthy nutrition (Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Hunger Combat, n.d.).

industry's participation in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) composition became greater than that of agriculture, evidencing the establishment of a new economic base in the country.

Figure 1: Sectoral indices of Real Product, 1930-1947 (1939 = 100)		
Year	Agriculture	Industry
1930	77,8	50,1
1931	72,9	50,7
1932	77,3	51,4
1933	86,6	57,40
1934	92,0	63,8
1935	89,7	71,4
1936	98,2	83,7
1937	98,3	88,2
1938	102,4	91,5
1939	100,0	100,0
1940	98,2	97,3
1941	104,4	103,5
1942	99,8	104,9
1943	107,1	119,1
1944	109,7	131,9
1945	107,3	139,1
1946	116,3	164,8

1947	117,1	170,2
Source: (1) 1901-1920: Haddad, C. (1980) "Economic Growth of Brazil, 1900-76" in Paulo Neuhaus (coord.) Brazilian Economy: A Historical View. Rio de Janeiro, Editora Campus, pp. 13-41. (2) 1920-1947: Haddad, C. (1978). "Growth of Real Product in Brazil 1900-1947", table 1, Pages 7 and 8.		

In addition to economic changes, a notable demographic shift occurs during this period, as the Brazilian population becomes predominantly urban.

In the 1940s, less than one-third (31.3%) of the population lived in cities, while by 2000, it had risen to 81.2%. The urban population, which amounted to 12.8 million inhabitants in 1940, reached 137.9 million in the last Census. However, in absolute numbers, the rural population grew from 28.2 million to 31.8 million inhabitants between the two periods. In the 1940 Census, Brazil had 1,574 municipalities. Over the subsequent 60 years, 3,933 municipalities were created, totaling 5,507. Currently, there are 5,564. The significant increase in the creation of municipalities occurred in those with populations of up to five thousand inhabitants. In 1940, 54.4% of municipalities had populations of up to 20 thousand inhabitants. By 2000, this constituted 73% of the total municipalities (IBGE News Agency, 2007).

However, in 1964, the first cyclical crisis of the dependent industrialization model emerged. At this moment, disputes between social classes worsened, with searches for solutions for both capital accumulation and working-class survival intensifying. These debates arose in the context of the cyclical crisis of the dependent industrialization model and are related to the interpretation of the agrarian issue.

2.5. Peasant Challenges and the Emergence of MST

To understand the exacerbation of social disputes that occurred in 1964, it is essential to analyze the articulation between rural and urban workers, which at the time was gaining strength as a political and social actor in the country. From the mid-1940s, rural workers began to organize more effectively in politically oriented movements, focusing on ensuring their social rights, especially land access. In 1945, the so-called *Ligas Camponesas* (Peasant Leagues) emerged, they were associations of rural workers aiming to continue the struggle for

their rights. Although non-partisan, they had the support of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), and Popular Action (AP).

According to an article from the *Gazeta do Sul* newspaper titled "Master was born 50 years ago in the fight for agrarian reform in RS," this context laid the groundwork for the emergence of movements such as the Movement of Landless Farmers (Master) in the Vale do Rio Pardo on June 24, 1960. The Master movement anticipated proposals and strategies later adopted by the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in the fight for agrarian reform in Rio Grande do Sul. Originating in Encruzilhada do Sul, the Master movement arose in response to a landowner's attempt to reclaim an area of approximately 1,800 hectares in the district of Faxinal, now part of the municipality of Amaral Ferrador, where around 300 families had lived for 40 years.

Subsequently, associations of landless farmers emerged in dozens of municipalities across Rio Grande do Sul. With the decisive support of civil engineer, Brazilian politician, and labor leader Leonel de Moura Brizola, who served as governor of the state between 1959 and 1962, the Master movement gained momentum, culminating in January 1962 with the establishment of numerous landless camps seeking expropriations and settlements. (*Gazeta do Sul*, 2010)

In 1961, the National Council of Peasant Leagues was founded, marking a crucial milestone in bolstering the national coordination of these workers' struggles. Subsequently, with representatives spanning thirteen Brazilian states, the Leagues solidified their presence as a robust organization (*Memórias da Ditadura*, 2015-2017b). By 1963, the movement gained further momentum with the enactment of the Rural Worker Statute, which mandated labor rights such as union organization and vacation entitlements, thereby extending protections to rural laborers as well (*Memorial da Democracia*, 2015-2017b).

According to the virtual museum Memorial da Democracia, during the same year the establishment of the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG) marked a significant milestone. Within the subsequent year, CONTAG earned recognition from the Ministry of Labor and Employment as the inaugural nationwide union entity dedicated to representing rural interests. Nonetheless, in the middle of this period of progress in agrarian discourse and debates surrounding foundational reforms, the 1964 military coup intervened, precipitating a clampdown on all grassroots movements, leading to the dissolution of organizations such as the Peasant Leagues and the Union of Farmers and Agricultural Workers (ULTAB) (Memorial da Democracia, 2015-2017).

The military regime adopted aggressive measures against these movements, characterized by practices such as torture, murders, arrests, and exiles of union leaders. Lyndolpho Silva, the first president of CONTAG, was detained by the regime and later exiled. According to CONTAG (s.d.), the organization played a significant role in advocating for agricultural workers' rights during its 50 years of existence.⁴ "The repression was very harsh against rural workers. About 40% of the unions under intervention were from the Northeast of the country, practically all of them representing rural workers (Memorial da Democracia, 2015-2017)."

In the early months of 1964, agrarian reform emerged as a central theme in the national discourse within Brazil, as underscored by a survey conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (IBOPE), which documented that 72% of Brazilians deemed it imperative (Memorial da Democracia, 2015-2017a). Nonetheless, opposition to this initiative surfaced from landowners and political allies. At this juncture, the realization of agrarian reform necessitated a constitutional amendment mandating compensation in cash for expropriated landowners. President João Goulart, recognizing the financial implications,

⁴ CONTAG. (s.d.). CONTAG 50 anos. Recuperado de <https://ww2.contag.org.br/contag-50-anos>

proposed an alternative approach: remuneration through long-term public bonds. This proposal aligned with practices observed in various other nations, to ease the reform's implementation by mitigating the immediate financial burden. Such a method was envisioned to enhance the government's capacity to manage its financial resources with greater efficacy (Memorial da Democracia, 2015-2017a).

Furthermore, according to IBOPE, 59% of respondents voiced their support for the Basic Reforms proposed by João Goulart, encompassing measures such as the expropriation of lands along highways and railways, as well as the nationalization of foreign refineries (Memorial da Democracia, 2015-2017). However, as is widely known, on April 2nd, this dynamic shifted as the military coup was executed within the National Congress, leading to the formal deposition of João Goulart.

The dictatorship instituted by the coup lasted until 1985 and had the support of various ruralist organizations composed of capitalist owners of large estates, such as the Brazilian Rural Society (SRB). Their main objective was to contain the progress being made by rural workers in their pursuit of land and social rights. Thus, in addition to the brutal attack on the group, resulting in the murder of 1,566 rural workers, according to the document from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), there was also a change in legislation regarding rural workers. In November 1964, the Rural Worker Statute was replaced by the Land Statute, which did not provide for the social rights established in the previous document but was important in providing for the social function of property.

The fact that a law on agrarian reform was one of the first legislative measures of the military government is intriguing. However, according to Nicinha Porto, president of the Brazilian Land Reform Association (Abra), even though legally established, the ambiguity of the content led to a contradictory situation in practice, which ended up promoting the advancement of agricultural development through the colonization of new areas by large

properties, resulting in an outcome contrary to the purpose of agrarian reform. For Porto, this fact proves that the biggest obstacle to agrarian reform lies in the political and social sphere rather than in the legal one (Tatemoto, 2019).

Despite favoring large landholdings and agro-exportation, considering that exploitation and misery in the countryside could pose a serious political problem for the government, in 1970, the military regime presented some social policies in favor of rural workers, such as the Land Distribution Program (Proterra) and the Rural Worker Fund (Funrural). However, these were not able to meet the existing demands, and popular organizations ended up emerging after the most brutal years of the regime and strengthened in a restructuring of union reorganization. The Landless Workers Movement summarizes how the period was for the peasant population:

On one hand - much like the entire Brazilian population - peasants were deprived of rights to expression, assembly, organization, and protest, imposed by the brutality of the National Security Law and Institutional Act No. 5. On the other hand, the dictatorship implemented a more concentrated and exclusive agrarian model, installing a selective agricultural modernization that excluded small-scale agriculture, driving rural exodus, exporting production, intensively using pesticides, and concentrating not only land but also financial subsidies for agriculture (MST, 2024, section "The History of Land Struggle").

Throughout the 21 years of military dictatorship in the country, rural workers encountered numerous injustices, reflecting the priorities of the ruling authorities, while also underscoring the unwavering determination of rural workers in their pursuit of social justice and equality in the nation.

During this period, 1979 proved a pivotal year for this group, witnessing two significant events in the history of peasant struggle and resistance in Brazil: the mobilizations of sugarcane workers in Pernambuco and the occupation of Anoni Farm in Rio Grande do Sul. The sugarcane workers' strike, organized by unions affiliated with CONTAG, primarily sought to secure salary improvements, decent working conditions, and the implementation of a standardized remuneration table for cane cutting. This strike, characterized by the substantial participation

of thousands of workers, emerged as a testament to the resolute determination of laborers to assert their rights.

On the other hand, the occupation of Anoni Farm was a direct challenge to the military regime. Displaced settlers from the lands of the Kaingang indigenous people in Rio Grande do Sul, along with landless individuals, seized control of the unproductive farm. Despite efforts by the military government to intimidate them, including sending troops to evict the occupants, they stood their ground and transformed the farm into one of the earliest and most successful settlements associated with what would later evolve into the Landless Workers Movement (MST).

The sugarcane workers' strike and the occupation of Anoni Farm epitomized the deepening struggle for agrarian reform and social justice in Brazil during this period. Furthermore, these events foreshadowed the emergence of the MST, which has since become a pivotal force in the country, advocating for agrarian reform and championing fundamental rights in rural areas.

In addition to 1979, the year 1981 also proved to be crucial for the development of agrarian issues in Brazil and the MST (Landless Workers' Movement). "The Formation of the MST in Brazil" by Bernardo Mançano Fernandes highlights that a significant catalyst was the creation of the *Encruzilhada Natalino* Camp, located in Rio Grande do Sul, an initiative that received support from various segments of society, including civil society, the Catholic Church, and lawmakers, all in favor of the return to democratic governance. Encruzilhada Natalino quickly became a symbol of popular resistance against the prevailing military dictatorship (Fernandes, 2001, p.55).

However, despite the national and international notoriety achieved by the struggle of the Landless Workers at Encruzilhada Natalino, it did not result in the expected agrarian reforms. The camp demonstrated remarkable resilience among these workers, who faced brutal

repression from federal and state military forces and had to cope with precarious living conditions. The solution to this situation came during the 5th Land Pilgrimage, on February 23, 1982 (p.60).

According to the official MST website, which chronicles the history of the movement, the 5th Land Pilgrimage was an event organized by the Catholic Church to raise awareness about land issues and the rights of rural workers, as well as show solidarity with peasant communities in struggle. It was during this pilgrimage that the Catholic Church acquired an area of 108 hectares in Ronda Alta, allowing the establishment of temporary shelters for the affected families, and culminating in victory after these 208 days of resistance against military oppression in the camp (MST, 2024).

After these events, in 1984, the 1st National Meeting of rural workers fighting for democracy occurred from January 20th to 22nd in Cascavel, Paraná. At this meeting, the Landless Workers Movement was founded, with its main objectives being to fight for land, agrarian reform, and social changes in the country. The event saw the participation of individuals whose right to produce food had been violated and who lacked land rights, including migrants, those affected by dams, sharecroppers, and small farmers, among other groups. Additionally, among the 92 attendees were members of the clergy, advisors, and unionists (Fernandes, 2001, p.79).

The workers who attended the meeting came from various Brazilian states, such as Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Espírito Santo, Bahia, Pará, Goiás, Rondônia, among others. Despite the local differences, the problems faced by these individuals stemmed from the same economic model, characterized by practices of expropriation, the expulsion of workers from their lands, and land concentration, leading to similar consequences such as worker migration in search of land and fighting for resistance (Fernandes, 2001, p.79).

This meeting itself was a victory for the landless fight, whose journey up to the founding of the movement was marked primarily by persistence. Despite facing various political and economic obstacles, the landless workers persevered, and the establishment of the MST symbolized the seriousness and determination in the fight for dignity and rights. In the Final Document of the Meeting, the landless workers expressed their intentions to continue the struggle for land and democracy, affirming:

The situation of oppression and exploitation to which farmers and Landless people are increasingly subjected and their defense struggles lead them to begin to act against the project of the landowning bourgeoisie that wants to appropriate all the land, and instead of just defending themselves, they begin a struggle to reconquer it.

This is the struggle of the Landless Movement in almost all of Brazil, in the countryside and the city: the camps, the occupations, compliance with the Land Statute, and even the struggle for a government elected by workers (Fernandes, 2001, p.82).

During the Meeting, the planning of the 1st MST Congress, which took place the following year, was crucial. It played an essential role in defining the movement as an autonomous organization and firmly establishing its orientation towards land occupation as the primary form of struggle.

In the fight for land, camping signifies determining a place and a transitory moment to transform reality. When landless individuals make the decision to camp, they are challenging the political model that excludes them from being considered citizens. Resistance in the camp is the feat. Persistence is the challenge. To survive, campers depend on their organization, labor, and the support of those advocating for agrarian reform (Fernandes, 2001, p.55).

The workers concluded the Congress with the slogans: "Land for those who work it" and "Occupation is the Only Solution" (MST, 2024). The political clarity and modus operandi of the movement propelled its progressive growth, both in terms of the number of people joining it and the number of occupations carried out.

In the same year as the Congress's debut, the Brazilian political scene was undergoing structural changes that generated an expectation of land reform. The country would have its

first civilian president after 21 years of military rule. Tancredo Neves was indirectly elected in 1985, but he passed away before taking office, making his vice president, José Sarney, the first president of Brazil since the beginning of the military dictatorship in the country, marking the process of democratization and the end of the military regime.

After the restoration of democracy in the country, the agrarian issue, which was a hot topic before the military coup, regained the same strength on the national agenda. Tancredo Neves even created the Ministry of Agrarian Reform and Development, which was later managed by José Sarney. Additionally, the latter presented the first National Agrarian Reform Plan (PNRA), which envisioned the application of the Land Statute and the settlement of 1.4 million families by the end of 1989 (Fernandes, 2001, p.14). However, the Plan did not achieve the desired objectives, according to the official MST website, this fact is due to the interests of large landowners having their best tools of repression or omission within the State (MST, 2024).

In the legislative realm, October 5th, 1988 marked a milestone in Brazilian history with the promulgation of the Citizen Constitution. After more than two decades of military rule, Brazilians gained a Constitution that ensured basic rights and protected them from state abuses. In this Constitution, which is still in effect in the country, there was a crucial legal advancement for the agrarian issue, as from that moment, it was provided in articles 184 and 186 (Brazilian Constitution, 1988, p. 113) that lands that do not fulfill their social function shall be expropriated. Regarding expropriation, article 184 provides:

Art. 184. It is incumbent upon the Union to expropriate, for social interest, for agrarian reform purposes, the rural property that is not fulfilling its social function, through prior and just compensation in agrarian debt bonds, with a clause preserving their real value, redeemable within a period of up to twenty years, from the second year of their issuance, and whose use shall be defined by law (Brazilian Constitution, Article No. 184, 1988, p. 113).

Regarding what is defined as social function, article 186 clarifies:

Art. 186. Social function is fulfilled when rural property simultaneously meets, according to criteria and degrees of requirement established by law, the following requirements:

I - rational and adequate use;

II - appropriate use of available natural resources and preservation of the environment;

III - compliance with provisions regulating labor relations;

IV - exploitation that favors the well-being of owners and workers

(Brazilian Constitution, Article No. 186, 1988, p. 113).

After the promulgation of the Constitution, in 1993, the Agrarian Reform Law (Law No. 8,629/1993) was subsequently approved, aiming to regulate constitutional provisions related to agrarian reform. However, since then, this legislation has been the target of intense criticism from large landowners. In 2023, the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA) filed a lawsuit challenging some aspects of this Law, arguing that the requirements of productivity and social function are unconstitutional when applied simultaneously (Carriconde, 2023).

However, according to Gabriel Carriconde's article in *Brasil de Fato*, the rapporteur Edson Fachin clarified that the only requirement is that there be an explicit provision for how productive property demonstrates compliance with social function. He also emphasized that non-compliance with social function does not result in expropriation but in expropriation, aiming to compensate the owner for the loss of their property. This understanding was followed by the other ten justices of the Court during the trial (2023). This recent judicial action highlights the relevance of legislative determinations implemented during the period following redemocratization, and how these measures still impact the reality of the agrarian issue.

Until the regulation of the Agrarian Law in 1993, expropriations for this purpose did not occur. On the contrary, it was a period of great difficulty for members of the MST, who faced strong repression in the countryside. In 1990, during the 2nd National Congress of the MST, faced with the difficulties encountered in advancing the struggle for agrarian reform, the occupation of land was reaffirmed as the main instrument of action, establishing the motto:

"Occupy, Resist, Produce", thus reinforcing the *modus operandi* of the movement and encouraging production in the settlements (MST, 2024).

During this period of redemocratization, the MST became territorialized in all regions of the country, thus establishing itself as a national movement. Therefore, even with the failure of the PNRA and the constitutional implementation of agrarian reform, the movement has always been advancing, strengthening itself through land acquisition, and adapting to emerging needs.

From 1994, almost a decade after the end of the military dictatorship in the country, the government enters a phase of dismantling policies in favor of Agrarian Reform, such as special credit and technical assistance policies - both instituted during the government of José Sarney (1985-1990). From this moment on, the then president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994-1998), reinstates existing policies and begins to establish punitive interim measures for those occupying land (Fernandes, 2001, p.14-15).

Furthermore, the Land Bank was established, which constitutes a credit policy for land purchases at the expense of expropriations. This dismantling and new policies resulted in an exacerbation of poverty and social vulnerability among settled families (Fernandes, 2001, p.15). According to the official MST website, "With the withdrawal of subsidies and technical assistance, as well as the subordination of agriculture to the international market, the 1990s witnessed the abandonment of family farming by the State" (2024).

In 1995, during the 3rd National Congress of the MST, the Movement had already realized that Agrarian Reform was not limited to benefiting only peasants. It was recognized as a way to improve the quality of life for urban residents as well, contributing to reducing the chaotic growth of cities and, most importantly, ensuring workers' access to healthy and affordable food (MST, 2024).

In addition to the legal aggressions directly impacting the lives of these workers, in the same year, the tragic event known as the Eldorado do Carajás massacre occurred in the homonymous municipality in the state of Pará. This event, perpetrated by 155 members of the Pará Military Police, directly claimed the lives of 21 landless workers and left 56 wounded. The context unfolded when 1,500 landless workers were encamped, demanding the expropriation of the Macaxeira farm (MST, 2024).

This tragic episode marked the popularization of the struggle for Agrarian Reform in Brazil, as one year later, members of the MST, departing from three different points in the country, carried out the National March for Employment, Justice, and Agrarian Reform to Brasília, the capital of the country. Approximately 1,300 landless individuals traversed the national territory on foot to join a crowd of over 100,000 people, in an event that entered history as "The March of the 100,000" (MST, 2024).

According to Francisco Moura, known as Tito, a member of the MST from Pará and the National March Front of the MST, "The significant mobilization of 1997 pressured the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso to formalize Agrarian Reform and implement a set of measures that were consolidated throughout the Lula administration" (Ferreira, 2021). He emphasizes that this date of resistance gave rise to the International Day of Peasant Struggle, celebrated in more than 78 countries, and in Brazil, the National Day of Struggle for Agrarian Reform was instituted.

As we entered the 21st century, despite high expectations surrounding the implementation of agrarian reform, especially with the strengthening of the Movement and the election of the first term of President Lula, whose social agendas were prioritized, reality unfolded differently. Instead of substantial change, what was witnessed was the strengthening of the agro-export model, which, according to the official MST website, fragmented the Brazilian territory "into 'sesmarias' of monocultures, such as soybeans, sugarcane, and

pulpwood, in addition to extensive livestock farming" (MST, 2024). With government support, including in fiscal and financial terms, agribusiness came to dominate with a logic of massive exploitation of land and labor, not prioritizing food production to meet national demand but rather for export. Other characteristics of this model include low wages and the intensive use of pesticides and transgenic seeds, which not only compromises the supply of food domestically but also its quality.

The rise of agribusiness has brought to the forefront a predominant discourse that Agrarian Reform had lost its relevance. However, in the face of this scenario, it becomes clear that agrarian reform has never been more crucial. This is because it highlights the need not only for a redistribution of land in Brazil but also for a change in the way we produce food to meet domestic market demand. At this moment, a dispute emerges between two models of agricultural production: that of small-scale agriculture, focused on production for domestic consumption, and that of agribusiness, focused on monoculture for export.

In the current context, the MST has demonstrated a growing strength each year as a social movement present in 24 states across the five regions of the country, with approximately 450,000 families settled on lands acquired through their struggle and organization, and 70,000 families camped (Cardoso, 2024). It is crucial to emphasize that, according to the Movement itself, land acquisition represents only the first step towards Agrarian Reform and the construction of a Popular Project for Brazil.

Once settled, these families continue to organize themselves cohesively in defense of their rights, including access to essential services such as sanitation, electricity, and cultural activities. Regarding the organizational structure of the MST, the official website highlights:

With this national dimension, settled and camped families organize themselves in a participatory and democratic structure to make decisions within the MST. In settlements and camps, families organize into nuclei that discuss the needs of each area. In these nuclei, coordinators for the settlement or camp are chosen. The same structure is repeated at the regional, state, and national levels. An important aspect is that decision-making bodies are oriented to ensure the

participation of women, always with two coordinators, one man and one woman. And in camp and settlement assemblies, everyone has the right to vote: adults, youth, men, and women.

Likewise, this happens in national instances. The most significant decision-making space of the MST is the National Congresses that occur, on average, every five years. In addition to Congresses, every two years, the MST holds its national meeting, where the decisions made at the Congress are evaluated and updated.

To address specific tasks, families also organize into sectors, which are organized from the local to the national level, according to the needs and demands of each settlement, camp, or state (MST, 2024).

In addition to Meetings and Coordination, families also structure themselves into sectors to carry out specific tasks. In total, the MST structure consists of 14 sectors of operation: mass front, political formation, education, production, communication, projects, gender, human rights, health, finances, international relations, culture, youth, and LGBT landless. These sectors are organized at all levels, from local to national, according to the needs and demands of each settlement, camp, or state (MST, 2024).

In summary, the historical analysis presented in this chapter sheds light on the persistent issue of land concentration in Brazil and its implications across various spheres of the country. From the colonial legacy to the transition to industrial capitalism and the crisis of the agro-export model, we observe an evolution of land ownership patterns consistently inclined towards concentration. Additionally, the emergence of movements such as the MST highlights the profound challenges faced by rural populations in their struggle for land rights and food security.

The MST's advocacy for agrarian reform and human rights, especially in the face of the dominant agro-export model, underscores the urgency of addressing the entrenched inequalities in the Brazilian agricultural system. As we move forward to the next chapter, it becomes evident that the issues of land concentration and agrarian reform are closely intertwined with the broader economic and political landscape.

3. AGRIBUSINESS IN BRAZIL: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

This chapter delves into the complex dynamics of agribusiness in Brazil, shedding light on its role within a dependent economic model that pervades the country and its consequences for sovereignty and political representation. The discussion is organized into three subchapters that systematically examine the topics addressed. Firstly, in Section 3.1, the chapter explores the concept of the Dependent Exporter Model, elucidating its implications for the Brazilian economy and its impact on food security. Subsequently, Section 3.2 analyzes the historical context of hunger in Brazil, mapping its origins and evolution amidst an agricultural sector driven by agribusiness. Finally, Section 3.3 investigates the intrinsic relationship between agribusiness and politics in Brazil, with a special focus on the Ruralist Caucus. Through a detailed analysis, this chapter aims to elucidate the multifaceted interactions between economic interests, political power structures, and social well-being, considering the predominance of the Brazilian agricultural sector.

3.1. Economic Overview: The Dependent Agro-Exporter Model

To fully comprehend the role of the MST in Brazil and its significant contribution to the country's food sovereignty, it is imperative to delve into the current political and economic landscape in which it operates. Claus Offe, a scholar rooted in the neo-Marxist tradition of the Frankfurt School, offers insights into post-World War II social movements and their intricate dynamics within advanced capitalist systems pointing that in any society and historical period, certain themes emerge as dominant and priority issues (1988, p.169).

In Brazil, this dynamic is underscored by the prevalence of a dependentist perspective, where the issues deemed central to national political agendas - be they economic, political, or social - are largely shaped by domestic elites, comprising landowning and business elites,

whose influence dates back to the colonial era. Moreover, Brazil's political and economic trajectory is also significantly influenced by developed nations that wield considerable political and economic sway over the country.

The Theory of Dependency, which scrutinizes the position of the Brazilian economy on the global stage, provides a nuanced perspective on the circumstances that gave rise to elite control in Brazil and the emergence of the MST as a counterforce. Emerging in the 1970s, strands of dependency theory, advocated by figures like former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Chilean sociologist Enzo Faletto in their book "Dependency and Development in Latin America" (1969), conceptualized dependency as an inherent outcome of contemporary capitalism's development process - emphasizing the significance of social and political factors in peripheral industrialization.

However, the Brazilian economist, Celso Furtado, offered an alternative view, positing that underdevelopment stems from historical interactions rather than being an inevitable stage in the progression of developing economies. Furtado traces the roots of this dynamic to the emergence of a powerful European industrial nucleus in the 18th century, whose ascension significantly influenced subsequent global economic dynamics (1961, p. 178).

The economist identifies two distinct phases in the expansion of this European industrial economy. Initially, European industrialization disarticulated pre-capitalist artisanal production by assimilating factors of production, promoting an increase in productivity. Subsequently, this industrial expansion was directed towards territories with territorial and economic characteristics analogous to those of Europe, consolidating the colonization of regions such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. Furtado conceptualizes these new colonies as extensions of the European industrial economy, highlighting the congruence of their economic structures with those of Western Europe (1961, p. 179-180).

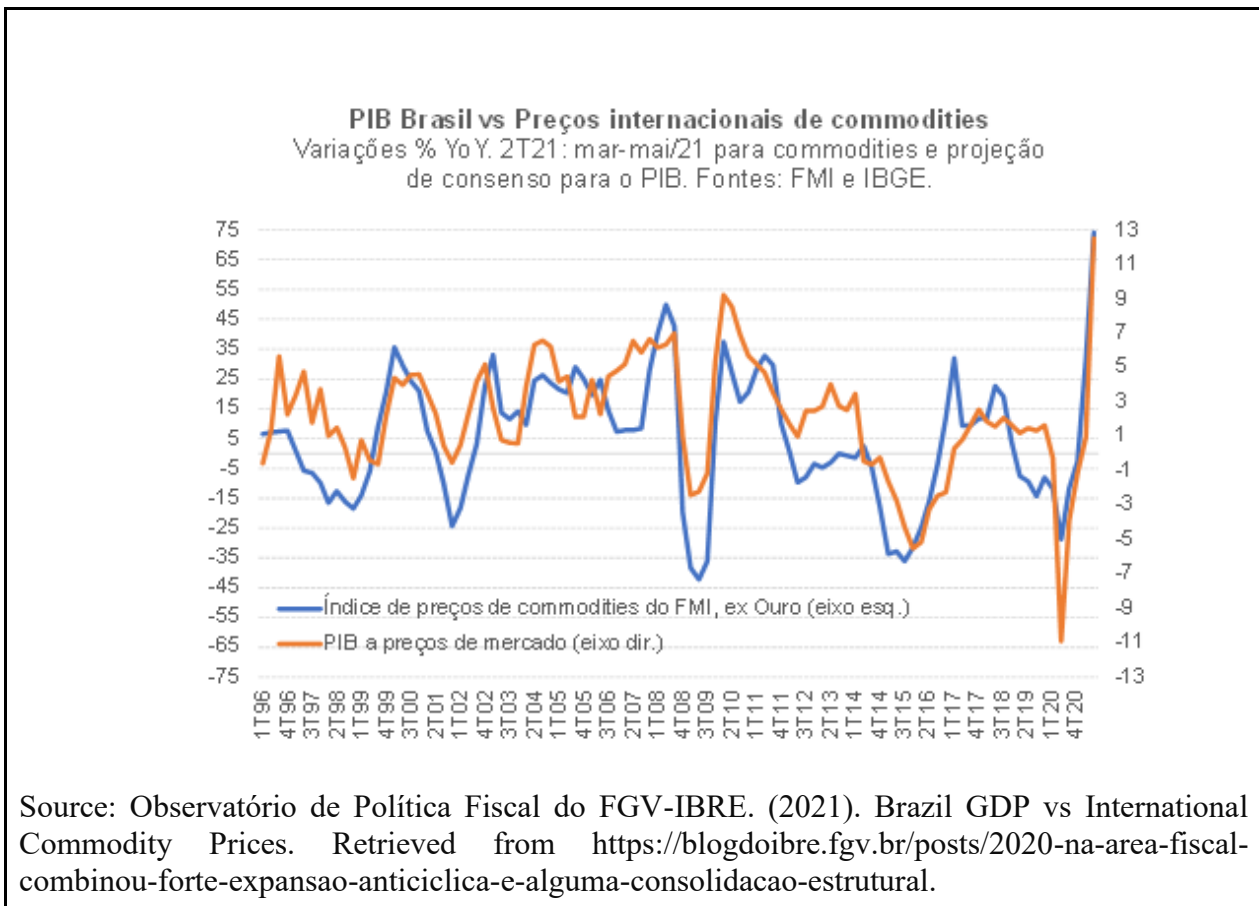
In the third stage, European industrial expansion focused on regions already occupied and with predominantly pre-capitalist economic systems. This prolonged interaction engendered hybrid economic structures, where segments of the economy assumed capitalist traits, while others maintained their pre-existing economic configurations. Furtado proposes that this structural duality is central to understanding the contemporary phenomenon of underdevelopment in these countries (1961, p. 180).

The concept of dependent economy addressed by Furtado becomes clear when the author uses it to describe the Brazilian coffee economy of the time as "primary-dependent," highlighting that the country becomes a "capital exporter in times of depression" (1956, p.24). Thus, it is understood that the predominant agro-export model in countries like Brazil, whose basis is the production and export of primary products, fosters and evidences the financial and economic dependence of the country on international markets that demand these products.

This dependence is frequently manifested in the correlation between commodity prices in the global market and the economic performance of Brazil, as illustrated in the graph below, created by the Fiscal Policy Observatory of FGV-IBRE⁵. The graph utilizes data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), comparing the commodity price index with Brazil's GDP at market prices from 1996 to 2020.

Figure 2: Brazil GDP vs International Commodity Prices

⁵ The graph offers a comparative examination of Brazil's GDP, illustrated by the orange line sourced from IBGE, and International Commodity Prices, portrayed by the blue line provided by the International Monetary Fund (IM). It tracks the percentage variation of both indicators from 1996 to 2020, providing insights into their respective trends and correlations over time. It is evident that there exists a direct relationship between the two, as they both exhibit variations that align with a similar trend.



The analysis of the graph reveals a consistent correlation between fluctuations in commodity prices and corresponding shifts in Brazil's economic performance over time. Specifically, decreases in commodity prices historically coincide with contractions in the nation's economic output, while increases in commodity prices align with periods of growth, underscoring the pivotal role of commodities in driving Brazil's economy, where elevated exports and appreciating commodity prices directly contribute to enhanced wealth accumulation within the nation.

Considering Brazil's economic reliance on external markets, there exists a tendency to prioritize international trade over domestic market imperatives. This inclination often unveils inadequacies in meeting internal requisites, particularly evident in the food sector, where domestic prices frequently surge in tandem with international market fluctuations driven by export dynamics. Consequently, this exacerbates the nation's susceptibility to food insecurity.

In an interview with the *Jornal da Unesp* (2022), the agronomist and economist José Giacomo Baccarin elucidated this phenomenon, underscoring Brazil's prominent role as a major food exporter and its consequential adverse ramifications on domestic affairs.

Baccarin (2022) argues that the challenge of food pricing in Brazil does not stem from a lack of production within the national territory but rather from the high production of monoculture for export, whose prices are based on the international market. He asserts that without state intervention to regulate these prices for domestic sales, producers will align their domestic prices with international rates, adjusted for exchange rate differentials. Consequently, any fluctuations observed in the international market are reflected domestically. Absent such regulatory intervention by the state, businesses lack the incentive to offer lower prices in the domestic market.

Another aggravating factor arises in situations of national currency devaluation, such as the case observed in 2020 during the Coronavirus pandemic, which exacerbates the transmission of external prices to the domestic market. This phenomenon occurs because, with devaluation, exporters receive more Brazilian reais (Brazilian currency) for their sales in dollars, while importers pay more Brazilian reais for their purchases in dollars, directly impacting the domestic consumer.

Additionally, Baccarin (2022) highlights how this inequality exacerbates disparities in food consumption among different social groups. While the wealthiest allocate a smaller portion of their income to food, approximately less than 5%, the poorest may allocate up to 40% of their income to this purpose. In a country with alarming income and wealth disparities like Brazil, this situation becomes even more concerning.

According to the "Inequality Inc." report by Oxfam, the data underscores the alarming concentration of wealth in Brazil, where the wealthiest 1% controls a staggering 60% of the nation's financial assets. Between 2020 and the report's release on January 14, 2024, four of

Brazil's five wealthiest individuals saw their fortunes surge by 51%, while 129 million Brazilians descended below the poverty line. Furthermore, a striking illustration of this exacerbated inequality is that the wealthiest individual in the country possesses wealth equivalent to that of the bottom half of the population, comprising 107 million people. These Oxfam data underscore deeply rooted social and economic inequalities within the Brazilian economic structure (2024).

Furthermore, the economic elite of agribusiness holds significant political power and tends to prioritize commercial interests over social issues, contributing to the persistence of food insecurity in Brazil. This prioritization may lead to a lack of investment in public policies that effectively address the underlying causes of food insecurity, resulting in a continuous cycle of scarcity and inequality in food distribution.

3.2. Social Impact: Historical Context of Hunger in Brazil

Before the establishment of formal concepts such as Food Security and Food Sovereignty, Brazil was already grappling with the issue of hunger, which was a recurring theme in various popular literary works in the early twentieth century, including "Os Sertões" (1902) by Euclides da Cunha, "O Quinze" (1930) by Rachel de Queiroz, and "O Tempo e o Vento" (1949) by Érico Veríssimo.

In 1946, Josué de Castro, a physician and geographer from Pernambuco, published a groundbreaking work in Brazilian literature titled "Geography of Hunger." This book is of utmost importance because, in writing it, Castro asserted that hunger is not a natural problem, but is a result of human actions, choices, and the economic management they provide to their countries. Frei Beto, one of the founders of the Zero Hunger Program in Brazil, in an interview with Pernambuco journalist Vandek Santiago, author of the book "Josué de Castro: The Silenced Genius," stated:

Josué's works had the merit of breaking the taboo surrounding the issue of hunger. They proved that it is not a consequence of the climate of the Northeast

and demystified the idea that hunger is God's punishment. He, Josué, was the first to show hunger as a political issue (Castro, 2021).

In this important book, the author not only investigates the origins and effects of hunger in Brazil but also introduces an innovative map depicting the distribution of hunger throughout the Brazilian territory by states and regions. Castro highlights the interdependence between food scarcity and socio-economic challenges within the political structure of the nation tracing the original roots of this structural problem in Brazil back to the early colonization period, asserting that:

Hunger in Brazil is primarily a consequence of its historical past, with its human groups constantly in conflict and seldom in harmony with the natural environment. This struggle is sometimes provoked by the aggression of the environment itself, which openly initiated hostilities, but more often due to the incompetence of the colonizing element, indifferent to anything that did not directly and immediately benefit its plans for mercantile adventure. This adventure unfolded in successive cycles of destructive economy, or at least destabilizing the nation's economic health: from the exploitation of Brazilwood, to sugarcane, the hunting of indigenous peoples, mining, nomadic agriculture, coffee, rubber extraction, and finally, artificial industrialization based on the fiction of customs barriers and inflation... All of which was sharply criticized as the "get rich quick" mentality by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda... Ultimately, this situation of economic and social maladjustment was a result of the state's political ineptitude in serving as a balancing power between private interests and the collective interest.

Initially, due to its fragility and potential weakness in the face of the strength and independence of landowners, who acted as overlords in their closed-off domains... More recently, in a contrasting exaggeration, in the excessive centralization of power... The consequence of this absurd centralization and the Republic's policy of neglect was the near abandonment of rural areas and the surge of urbanization... which, finding no well-rooted rural civilization in the country, alarmingly exacerbated our food deficiency. (Geography of Hunger, 1946, page 293.)

Thus, it becomes evident that the prevalence of private interests, coupled with the ineffectiveness of political institutions in promoting balance, has been a recurring factor in the genesis of hunger. According to Castro, despite advantageous climatic conditions and the abundance of natural resources for food production, such as fertile lands, Brazil still faces challenges related to food scarcity and inadequate dietary habits (1946). This is mainly

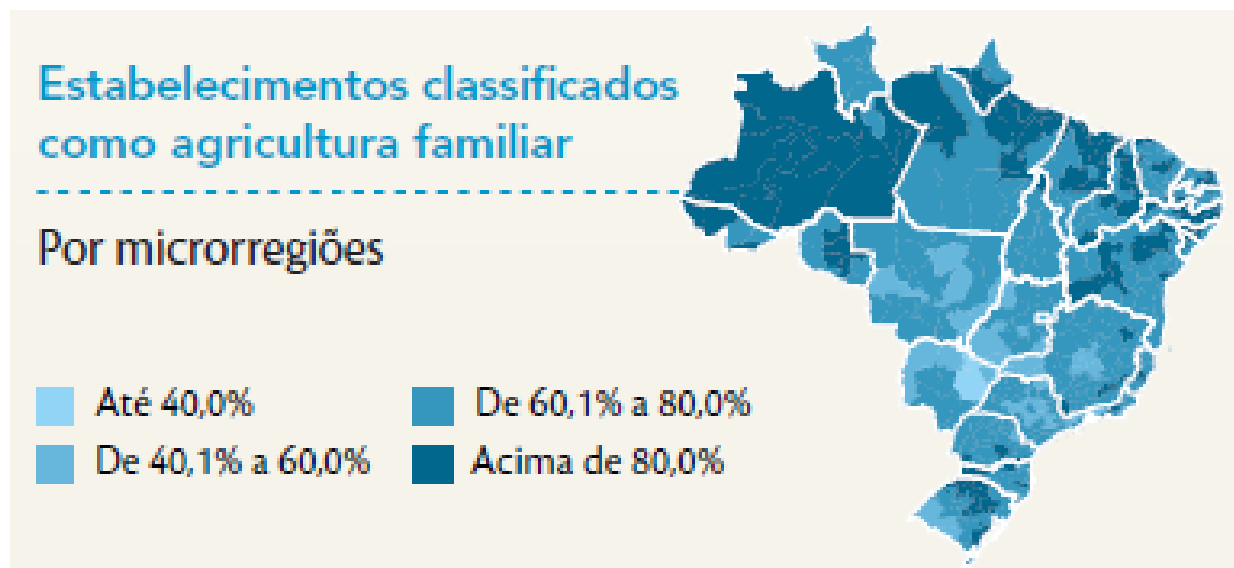
attributed to the country's socio-economic structure, which historically favored the exploitation of natural resources for the profit of the elites in power, at the expense of ensuring food security for the entire population. This dynamic persists to this day, highlighting the need for a more equitable and sustainable approach to addressing hunger in Brazil.

The predominance of agribusiness over family farming in Brazil results in the expansion of its production and productivity, often accompanied by excessive use of pesticides and monocultures, concurrently with the devaluation of family farming, whose characteristics are opposite, marked by production in small plots of land with greater productive variety (IBGE, 2017). This tendency to relegate family farming to a secondary role results in increased food vulnerability for certain populations, especially those dependent on local production and small farmers for their subsistence.

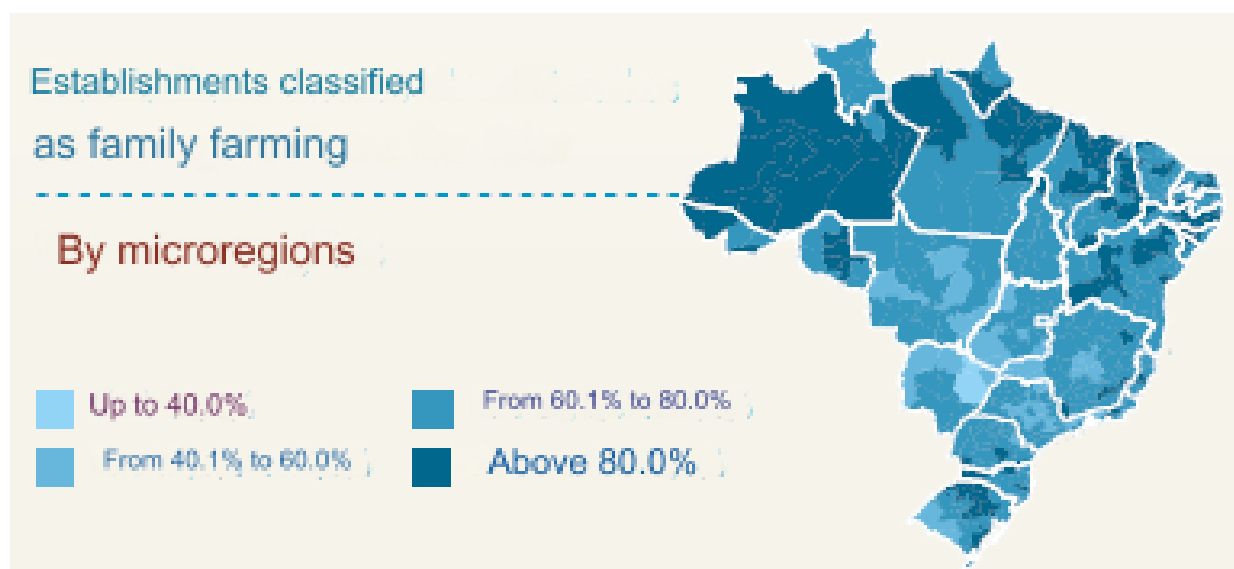
In the Brazilian context, Law No. 11.326, of July 24, 2006, establishes the legal foundations aimed at Family Farming and Rural Family Enterprises. This legislation defines the concepts, principles, and instruments necessary for the formulation of public policies aimed at this specific sector of the agricultural economy. According to this law, family farming is characterized by the activities of rural producers who operate on lands with an area of less than four fiscal modules, predominantly using family labor and deriving most of their income from the production of the rural establishment in question (2006).

According to the IBGE map presented below, whose values are based on the 2017 Agricultural Census, 77% of the country's agricultural establishments are classified as family farming, totaling 3.9 million establishments. These numbers highlight the socio-economic relevance of this agricultural segment in food production, income generation, and the maintenance of food security in various regions of Brazil.

Figure 3: Establishments classified as family farming - by microregions



Translated version:



Translation: Google Translator

Source: Censo IBGE 2017

The map employs darker shades to represent areas with higher concentrations of family farming establishments (IBGE, 2017). Therefore, the darker the tone of the region on the map, the greater the proportion of agricultural establishments classified as family farming in that

specific area. This visual representation allows us to understand that the Northern region of the country is where family farming is most predominant.

It is estimated that approximately 25 million people, occupying about 25% of the national territory, fall into this category. Recently, the definition of family farmers in Brazil has been expanded to include indigenous peoples, traditional communities, quilombolas, gypsies, descendants of the African matrix, rubber tappers, among others, standing out for their cultural and socio-environmental importance (Empraba, n.d.) As pointed out by Bezerra (2013) and Leite (2017), this expansion of the definition acknowledges the importance of traditional knowledge and the harmonious relationship with the environment that characterize these groups, contributing to the cultural diversity and socio-environmental sustainability of Brazil.

Moreover, according to the IBGE Census, family farming accounts for over 70% of the food consumed in Brazil, standing out for its diversified production, which includes corn, cassava, beans, rice, among others (2017). This variety is crucial for ensuring the availability of staple foods and promoting a healthy diet for the country's population. Additionally, data from the Special Secretariat for Family Agriculture and Agrarian Development (SEAD) and the Government of Brazil released in July 2018 indicate that, if we were to rely exclusively on family farming production, Brazil would rank eighth in the world in food production, with an estimated revenue of US\$ 55.2 billion (2018).

The significant contribution of family farming to food production underscores its crucial role in global food security, as recognized by international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Reports like the "State of Family Farming in the World" (2019) emphasize that this sector shoulders a substantial portion of food production responsibilities, thereby advancing food sovereignty for communities worldwide. Despite the undeniable importance of family farming, political prioritization in

Brazil has leaned towards agribusiness, often overshadowing the needs and contributions of family farming.

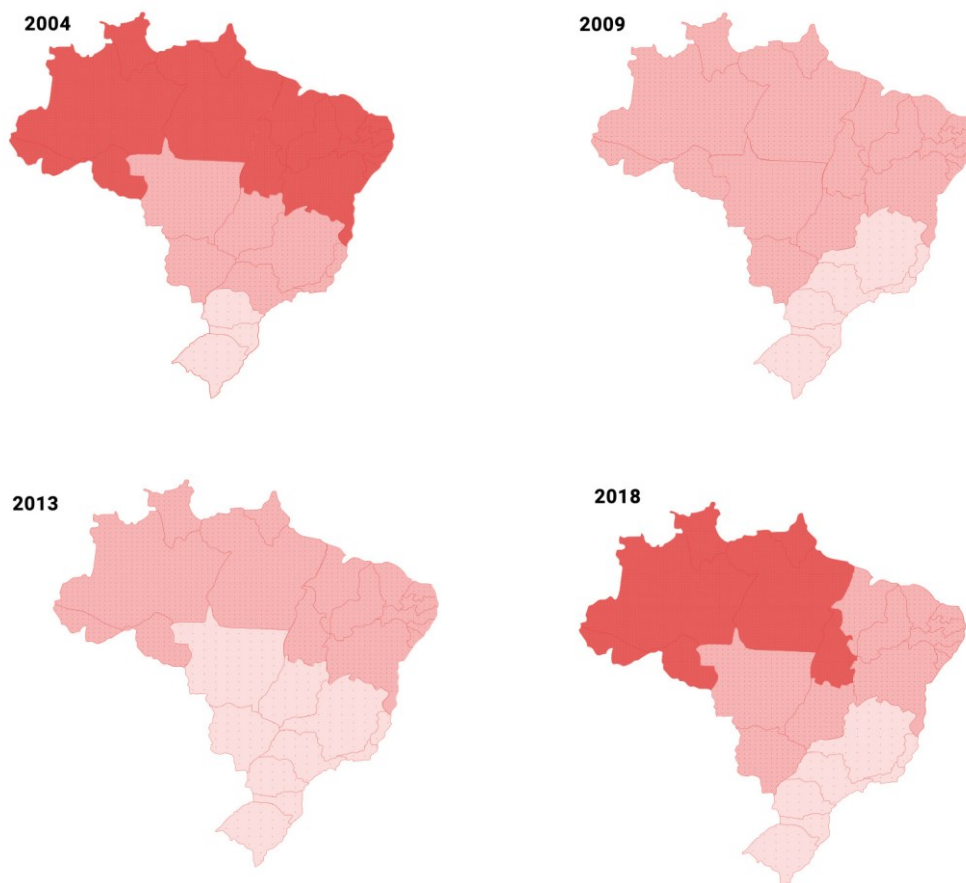
Although agribusiness has substantially contributed to the country's economic growth, its expansion has not necessarily translated into improvements in the population's food security and nutrition. A study conducted by De Paula and Braga (2018), published in the *Journal of Rural Economics and Sociology*, delves into the impact of agribusiness on Brazil's food security landscape. Their findings reveal that the focus on export-oriented production often redirects significant resources and cultivable land away from crops intended for domestic consumption, including those cultivated by family farmers. This diversion exacerbates food insecurity in specific regions across the nation.

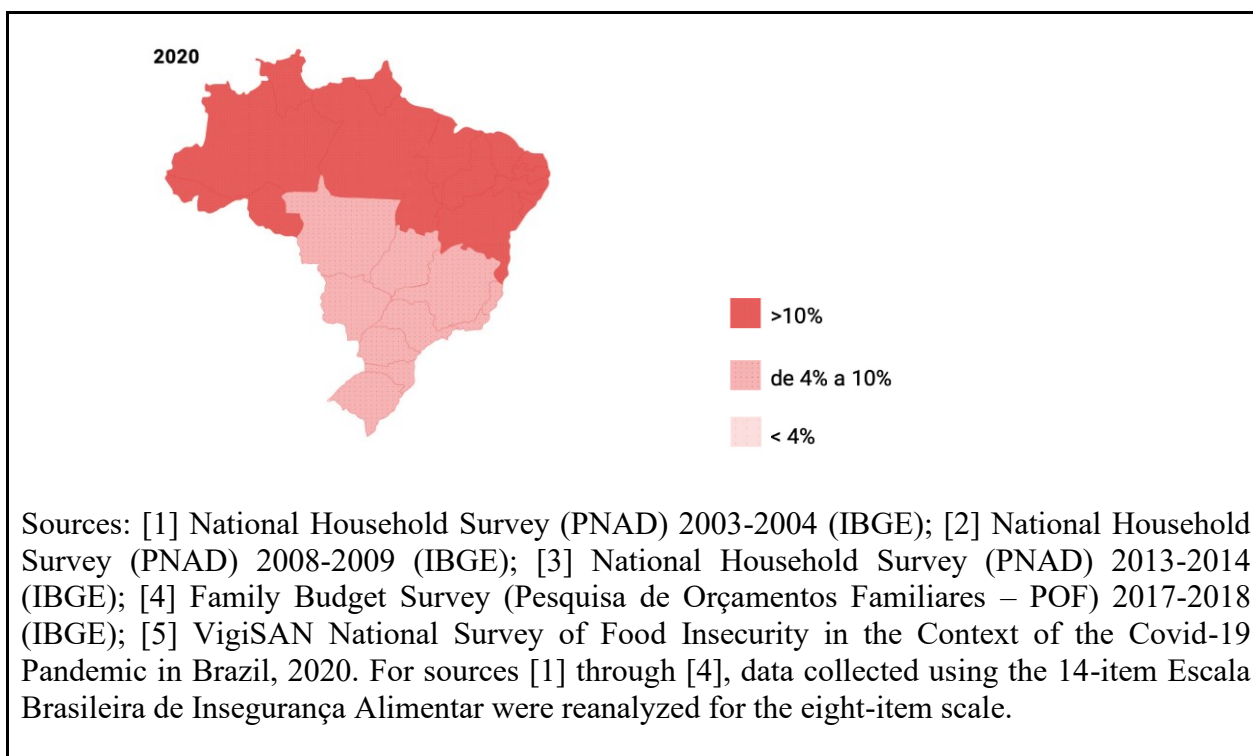
The competition between family farming and agribusiness for land, coupled with the lack of adequate public policies and governmental oversight, not only hinders the efforts of small rural producers but also poses a threat to the food security of entire communities reliant on the land for their sustenance. A concrete example of this phenomenon is provided by research conducted by the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA) and the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), which reveal that the expansion of agribusiness in the Cerrado region of Brazil has resulted in the deforestation of ecologically significant areas and the displacement of traditional family farming communities. These communities face formidable challenges in preserving their traditional agricultural methods and ensuring their food security in the face of increasing pressures and threats from agribusiness.

The relationship between the expansion of agribusiness and the increase in food insecurity in regions dependent on family farming is a growing concern. The advancement of the hunger in Brazil has been more pronounced in these areas, where competition for land and natural resources has directly impacted the ability of rural communities to produce food and ensure their subsistence. In the following maps, taken from the report "National Research on

Food Insecurity in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Brazil" by the Rede Penssan (2021), there is a noticeable correlation between the regions identified in Figure 3, based on IBGE Census data (2017), indicating areas with greater dependence on family farming, and those with higher incidence of population suffering from severe food insecurity, as revealed by the Rede Penssan.

Figure 4: Evolution of hunger in Brazil: percentage of the population affected by severe food insecurity from 2004 to 2020 – macro-regions.





Analyzing and comparing the maps enables the identification of significant variations in the percentage of the population affected by severe food insecurity over time. There is a period of reduction in these indices between 2009 and 2013, followed by an increase and return to high levels in 2018 and 2022. These fluctuations show changes in the country's socioeconomic conditions throughout these years.

For a comprehensive comprehension of phenomena related to food security, it is essential to elucidate fundamental concepts in this context. Below is a table presenting the primary levels of Food and Nutritional Security (FNS), providing a conceptual basis for a detailed analysis of these matters. The concept of Food and Nutritional Security (FNS) itself is already well-defined, formalized during the II National Conference on Food and Nutritional Security in 2004, and subsequently enshrined in legislation by Article 3 of Law No. 11,326/2006 (Brazil, 2006). According to the aforementioned law, FNS denotes the entitlement of all individuals to consistent and nutritious access to food, ensuring that this availability does

not compromise other essential needs, respecting cultural diversity, and being environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable (2006).

Figure 5: Level of Food and Nutritional Security (FNS).	
Food Security	Food security refers to the regular and consistent access to high-quality food in sufficient quantities without compromising access to other essential needs within a household.
Mild Food Insecurity (FI)	Mild food insecurity entails concern or uncertainty regarding future access to food, as well as inadequate food quality resulting from strategies aimed at maintaining food quantity.
Moderate Food Insecurity (FI)	Moderate food insecurity involves a quantitative reduction in food intake and/or disruptions in eating patterns due to food scarcity.
Severe Food Insecurity (FI)	Severe food insecurity is characterized by experiencing hunger, such as feeling hungry and being unable to eat due to lack of financial resources to purchase food, or only being able to afford one meal per day, or going an entire day without eating.
Source: Rede PENSSAN. (2022). Insegurança Alimentar e Covid-19 no Brasil - Suplemento 1 Insegurança Alimentar nos estados. Recuperado de https://olheparaafome.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/OLHEEstados-Diagramac%CC%A7a%CC%83o-V4-R01-1-14-09-2022.pdf	

Considering these concepts and the maps presented in Figure 4, it is possible to understand more thoroughly what occurred during this time. In 2004, the challenging of food security and *endemic hunger*⁶ in Brazil was severe, with only 34.9% of Brazilian households in a situation of Food Insecurity (FI), a number that decreased to 30.2% in 2009 and to 22.6% in 2013 (IBGE, 2004; IBGE, 2009; IBGE, 2013). These changes began to be felt mainly after

⁶ Endemic hunger is a concept defined by Josué de Castro which means the everyday, non-crisis hunger caused by social structure, a result of our social inequality (Castro, 1946)

the election of the president Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, popularly known as Lula, whose tackling of hunger and poverty in the country was seen as a top priority in his government agenda.

One of the main initiatives to address it during Lula's mandate was the establishment of the Zero Hunger Program (ZHP), which aimed to promote social inclusion, combat hunger, eradicate poverty, and reduce social inequalities (BRASIL, 2003; IBASE, 2008). The ZHP consolidated various income transfer programs for the low-income population, culminating in the creation of the Bolsa Família Program, a conditional cash transfer initiative for families in poverty and extreme poverty situations. In addition to providing immediate relief from poverty, Bolsa Família aimed to combat hunger and promote food and nutritional security (BRASIL, 2005).

In 2009, according to a National Household Sample Survey (PNAD)⁷, a reduction in levels of FI across the country was indicated, reaching 30.2%, as previously mentioned (IBGE, 2009). In addition to income, other factors such as education level, race, sanitary conditions, and number of rooms influenced this number (BRASIL, 2010). In 2013, Brazil continued to make progress in reducing hunger and poverty, with programs such as the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) helping to strengthen food security in vulnerable communities.

According to the results of the 2013 PNAD, the situation improved significantly, with 77.4% of households experiencing food security. Mild FI affected 14.8% of households, while Moderate FI was present in 4.6% of homes. Severe FI, in turn, affected 3.2% of households (IBGE, 2013).

Despite overall progress, rural areas and more remote regions experienced slower progress compared to urban areas. According to the IBGE News Agency, while 20.5% of urban

⁷ PNAD is the survey conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) aimed at collecting information on the socioeconomic characteristics of the Brazilian population.

households reported FI (with 6.8% considered moderate or severe), in rural areas, this proportion was 35.3% (with 13.9% considered moderate or severe). The population experiencing moderate or severe FI represented 7.4% of the urban population, compared to 15.8% of the rural population (IBGE News Agency, 2014).

However, as evidenced by the map and supported by statistical data, the improvement in the situation was substantial, garnering international recognition. Brazil's removal from the Hunger Map in 2014 served as a symbolic acknowledgment of the nation's concerted efforts in combating hunger and undernourishment. The Hunger Map, an initiative spearheaded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), serves as a global monitoring tool for assessing the prevalence of hunger and undernourishment.

In 2018, Brazil witnessed a worrying reversal in the trend of reducing hunger and poverty, partly due to economic and political crises afflicting the country at the time. According to the Rede Penssan survey: "There were 10.3 million people in severe food insecurity in 2018, rising to 19.1 million in 2020. Therefore, in this period, about nine million more Brazilians began to experience hunger in their daily lives" (Brasil de Fato, 2021).

In 2020, the situation worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to a notable rise in severe FI across the nation. In addition to the endemic hunger outlined by Castro at the outset of this subsection, another phenomenon emerges, what the author terms *epidemic hunger*. This form of hunger is characterized by acute and temporary crises of food insecurity, occurring in emergency scenarios and resulting in sudden disruptions in food supply and restricted access to food (Castro, 1946). Historian Adriana Salay elaborates on this distinction in an interview with Greenpeace.

Endemic hunger is the everyday, non-crisis hunger caused by social structure, a result of our social inequality. Epidemic hunger, a famine epidemic, in a crisis context, puts a much larger portion of the population in a hunger situation. This is what we are experiencing today in Brazil: a famine epidemic. But our hunger is not caused by the pandemic, it was exacerbated by it (Greenpeace, 2021).

According to data from the “2nd National Survey on Food Insecurity in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Brazil”, released by the Rede Penssan, epidemic hunger during the pandemic period resulted in an increase of 14 million Brazilians in situations of severe food insecurity in 2022 compared to 2020, the year the pandemic began. Furthermore, the report highlights that with the current numbers, Brazil has regressed 15 years in just five, returning to face hunger as a structural problem. The research reveals that approximately 112 million Brazilians experienced some degree of food insecurity in 2022, reflecting the severity of the situation nationwide (Rede Penssan, 2022).

According to the Rede Penssan, in 2022, approximately 9% of the Brazilian population faced severe FI, which equates to about 33.1 million people lacking adequate access to food. These numbers represent a regression to levels close to those of 2004, indicating a serious crisis in combating hunger in the country. Thus, it is evident that Brazil faces an urgent challenge in dealing with this food crisis and ensuring the human right to adequate food for all its citizens.

In the context of the food crisis in Brazil, the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) plays a significant role in the struggle for land access and in promoting family farming as an alternative to agribusiness, advocating for comprehensive agrarian reform aimed at distributing land to small farmers and promoting sustainable and socially just food production. According to Estevão Alves, a professor in the Department of Economics at the Federal University of Paraná, the MST seeks to challenge the domination of large landowners and agribusiness, which often prioritize large-scale production at the expense of food security for the population (Alves, 2018).

This dichotomy between the two agricultural models reflects the different paradigms present in the debate on food security and rural development in Brazil. In the next chapter, the role of the Rural Caucus, which represents the interests of agribusiness in the National

Congress, will be explored, along with how its policies impact the issues of hunger and food security in the country.

3.3. Political Influence: Agribusiness in Politics and the Role of the Ruralist Caucus

Since the period known as the Old Republic (1889-1930), Brazil has experienced episodes of political control by rural oligarchies. During this time, the so-called *coronelismo* prevailed, which, according to José de Souza Martins (1981, p.46), was characterized by the significant influence of landowners, who were either the political leaders themselves or part of the electoral agent, over the votes of the electorate, promoting the well-known *voto de cabresto*⁸.

The influence of the Rural Democratic Union (UDR) in Brazilian politics remains evident, albeit undergoing transformations over time. Emerging in the 1980s, the UDR comprised large landowners representing the agrarian elite, aiming to consolidate rural interests. Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira describes the UDR's formation as a means to unite rural sectors, despite disparities in various issues such as credit access, technological adoption, and land acquisition (2001). The primary objective was to wield collective power and influence policymaking, particularly opposing Agrarian Reform and socioterritorial movements in rural areas. Furthermore, Oliveira highlights the UDR's role in promoting the interests of large landowners, including the election of constituent congressmen during the drafting of the 1988 Constitution, aimed at safeguarding their properties (2001, p. 192).

In the following decade, due to intense land concentration and the increasing power of landowners, movements advocating for Agrarian Reform intensified, as was the case with the aforementioned MST. In a counter move, in 1995, the Parliamentary Front for Agriculture (FPA) was created, the result of a formal coalition of lawmakers advocating for agribusiness

⁸ In the Electoral Glossary of Brazil, available on the Portal of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), it is clarified that the term "voter under control" refers to someone who does not vote according to their own conscience or political preference, but strictly follows the guidance and instructions provided by an "election agent" or local political leader. (TSE, 2021).

interests, and in 2002 the Parliamentary Front for Support of Agriculture was established, which from 2008 onwards was renamed again as the Parliamentary Front for Agriculture (FPA), popularly known today to occupied the majority of the *bancada ruralista*, in english as the ruralist caucus. According to the official FPA website, the Front aims to

To promote the expansion of public policies for the development of the national agribusiness. Among the current priorities are the modernization of labor, land, and tax legislation, as well as the regulation of indigenous lands and quilombola areas, in order to ensure the necessary legal certainty for the sector's competitiveness.

In the article "A Força da Bancada do Boi: a Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária na Definição de Políticas Fundiárias" authored by Monyele Camargo Graciano, Joelson Gonçalves de Carvalho, Ricardo Serra Borsatto, and Leandro de Lima Santos, the role of parliamentary fronts in the context of the National Congress is addressed. According to the study, although political parties are recognized as the main mechanisms of representation within the Brazilian political system, characterized as a presidential federative republic, a full understanding of the legislative political system requires analysis of other relevant actors in this scenario, such as parliamentary fronts.

Until 2005, parliamentary fronts, known as cross-party caucuses, were viewed as informal, until Act No. 69 of the Chamber of Deputies' Board of Directors established regulations for their constitution and operation. One of the criteria for the registration of a parliamentary front is the adherence of at least one-third of the federal legislative body's parliamentarians (Chamber of Deputies, 2005).

Melo, Leonardo, and Nardoque (2022) discuss the agrarian issue and the recent actions of the Ruralist Caucus in the Federal Government, explaining that the political power of large landowners is officially represented by the FPA and the ruralist caucus, which includes members of the FPA and other parliamentarians who, although not formally affiliated, endorse conservative agendas and promote the interests of large landowners. They use the legislative

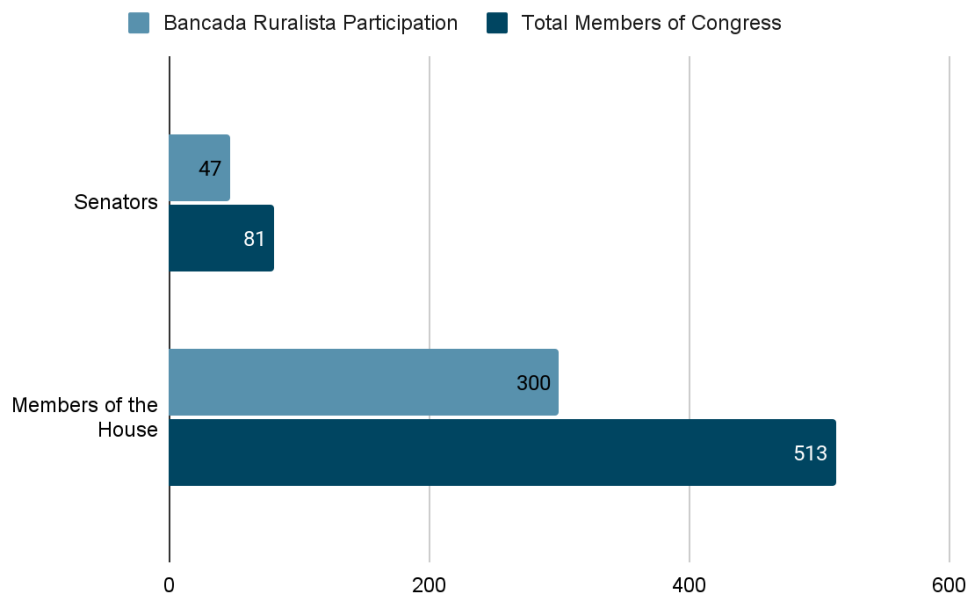
institutional framework established by the Federal Constitution to promote the interests of a rural elite and major corporations in the food sector.

According to Gussi (2009), although it is common for interest groups to seek to influence state policies in pursuit of common objectives, the entry of these groups into politics in an institutional manner, as is the case with parliamentary fronts, can generate conflicts of interest and compromise representative democracy. In the specific case of the FPA, by representing the most capitalized sectors of society, its actions may deviate from the constitutional principles of equality.

This occurs when the FPA utilizes economic, legal, and political resources to promote the corporate interests of agrarian dominant classes at the expense of more equitable and democratic representation. This lack of representativeness primarily affects the rural lower classes in Brazil, such as family farmers, agrarian reform settlers, quilombolas, riverside dwellers, and indigenous peoples. The result is the neglect of social agendas that encompass them and the perpetuation of social inequalities.

Currently, the influence of the Parliamentary Front for Agriculture in the National Congress is notable, with representation of 347 members in the current legislature, as demonstrated in the graph below, comprising 300 deputies and 47 senators (FPA, 2023). Playing a crucial role in maintaining power and defending the interests of agribusiness elites within the Legislative Branch, members of the ruralist caucus work to promote public policies that stimulate the development of agribusiness in its various aspects.

Figure 6: Bancada Ruralista in Congress (57th legislature: 2023-2027)



Source: FPA. (2023). Todos os membros. Retrieved from <https://fpagropecuaria.org.br/todos-os-membros/>

As highlighted by Luis Castilho in his article "O agro é lobby: a bancada ruralista no congresso", published in *Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil*, agribusiness lobbying in Brazil is institutionally established and operational in Congress through the Parliamentary Front for Agriculture. The FPA holds weekly meetings, coordinated by lobbyists, to draft the so-called "weekly menu," comprising sector-specific topics to be debated in plenary sessions or thematic committees, such as agriculture, environment, or budget (Castilho, 2018).

According to information provided by Castilho, these meetings and the operational structure of the caucus, including a permanent team based in a mansion in the Lago Sul area of Brasília, are funded by the private sector through the Think Tank Instituto Pensar Agro (IPA), supported by industry entities like the Brazilian Soybean Association (Aprosoja) and the Brazilian Corn Producers Association (Abramilho) (Castilho, 2018).

Through this mode of operation, the ruralist caucus has consolidated significant political influence, actively participating in significant political events, such as the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the support of President Michel Temer in 2017. In the first episode, in 2016, in the Chamber of Deputies, 182 (50%) of the 367 votes in favor of impeachment came from the FPA. The proportion of pro-impeachment votes in relation to the total number of FPA deputies was 83% (Castilho, 2018).

In August of the following year, 2017, during the first vote on the admission of the process against Temer, 134 (51%) of the 263 votes against admission, thus in favor of preserving the president from corruption charges, were cast by FPA members. Only 18 deputies from this Parliamentary Front, among those who participated in both votes, voted against Dilma's impeachment and in favor of investigations against Temer (Castilho, 2018).

In summary, the role played by the Parliamentary Front for Agriculture (FPA) in Brazilian politics is undeniably significant. The prominent influence of the Ruralist Caucus in the National Congress reflects a political agenda that prioritizes the capitalized agricultural sectors of society, using the state as a tool to exert what Antonio Gramsci, an Italian political theorist, describes as "petty politics." This dynamic underscores the importance of understanding the intersection between economic interests, political power, and legislative decision-making at all levels, including social (Gramsci, 2000)

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of the structural relationship between agribusiness, politics, and socioeconomic dynamics in Brazil. By examining the Dependent Exporter Model and its consequences for the country's economy and food security, valuable insights have been gained into the challenges and complexities faced by the agricultural sector. Additionally, the historical examination of hunger in Brazil has brought to light the deep-rooted economic inequalities prevalent in the country, amidst an

agricultural landscape dominated by agribusiness, and the consequent impact on sustaining social welfare.

Moreover, the analysis of the symbiotic relationship between agribusiness and politics, especially through the Ruralist Caucus, has illuminated the extent to which economic interests shape political decisions, and consequently, social, and basic rights policies, focusing on the differing agenda priorities of those in power and the needs of the people. Ultimately, this chapter underscores the urgent need for holistic approaches that prioritize social welfare, equitable distribution of resources, and sustainable agricultural practices to address the entrenched issues within the Brazilian agricultural sector, such as hunger.

4. CASE STUDY: HUNGER DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL

This chapter investigates the dynamics of food insecurity in Brazil during the Covid-19 pandemic, which began in 2020. The initial focus will be on the political actions of the ruling class, represented by agribusiness and symbolized by the rural caucus, in the face of the food crisis exacerbated by the pandemic. The first subsection will analyze how this class contributed to the dismantling of public policies that had been addressing food insecurity in the country for decades. This subsection will also include an empirical analysis detailing the hunger situation in Brazil during the pandemic, demonstrating how it significantly worsened due to the dismantling of policies since 2016.

Subsequently, the second subsection will analyze the role of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in proposing a counter-hegemonic model with viable alternatives to the current agrarian system and strategies to address the food challenges faced by the Brazilian population. An example of this is the "Solidarity Hands Campaign," which emerged during the pandemic to address the worsening hunger situation in the country and has since become a public policy recognized internationally as an effective measure to combat hunger.

4.1. The Neglect of Food Security by the Dominant Political Body

As seen in previous chapters, in Brazil, agribusiness is prioritized over family farming, highlighting a dynamic where food is treated as a commodity primarily aimed at profit rather than a social right. Due to this dynamic, hunger has been a persistent reality in the country, and legal proposals to address it have been presented, such as Constitutional Amendment Proposal (PEC) 47/2003, which in 2010 ensured that the human right to food was included in the constitution as a social right and a duty of the state (National Congress of Brazil, 2003). Since then, a series of actions to combat hunger have been implemented, such as the Zero Hunger Program, which has proven to be one of the most successful.

However, since 2016, there has been an increasing dismantling of these actions and public policies, which have either been abolished or relegated to a purely symbolic role. This dismantling occurs due to political maneuvering and lobbying by those in power in the political sphere, represented by the rural caucus that dominates the National Congress, as discussed in the previous chapter. Among the numerous instances of dismantling, we can highlight the abolition of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) on May 12, 2016, a significant milestone in the context of agrarian policies and the fight against hunger in Brazil (Presidency of the Republic, 2016). This measure represented a setback for policies aimed at family and peasant agriculture, which have historically played a crucial role in food production and sustainable rural development. Similarly, the dissolution of the National Council for Food and Nutritional Security (Consea) occurred on January 1, 2019, a Council that played a fundamental role in the articulation between the state and civil society, ensuring democratic participation and the collective construction of strategies to combat hunger and malnutrition (Presidency of the Republic, 2019).

Additionally, in the article "Food as Commodity and Hunger in Brazil", Denise Elias (2021) highlights other actions dismantling these public policies, such as the progressive reduction of resources for essential programs like the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), and the Cisterns Program. These programs, whose effectiveness and reach were affected by these budget cuts, have historically played crucial roles in promoting family farming, ensuring access to healthy food, and guaranteeing water for human consumption and agricultural production in semi-arid regions.

Another regressive action was the sale of part of the warehouses of the National Supply Company (Conab), which plays a strategic role in managing public food stocks, regulating the agricultural market, and promoting food security. According to Elias (2021), its sale represented a weakening of the state's ability to ensure price stability and access to basic

foodstuffs for the population, compromising its essential functions and increasing the vulnerability of the poorest in the face of market fluctuations.

These measures, enacted under a liberal government that prioritized agribusiness and regarded food primarily as a source of profit rather than a means of sustenance, have been widely criticized for their detrimental impact on food security. The predominance of actions favoring agribusiness, coupled with the dismantling of policies aimed at addressing hunger and poverty, has exacerbated social and territorial inequalities in access to food. This trend has been particularly pronounced in regions heavily influenced by the interests of the ruralist caucus, which advocates for policies that prioritize large-scale agricultural production over the needs of smallholder farmers and marginalized communities (Branford & Rocha, 2019). Consequently, food and nutritional insecurity has escalated in numerous regions of the country, disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations, particularly those in the North and Northwest. This phenomenon will be further elucidated in subsequent sections of this chapter (Teixeira, 2020).

The scenario resulting from these years of dismantling public policies has proven to be socially devastating. The National Household Budget Survey (POF) 2017-2018 (IBGE, 2019) analyzed indicators related to the nutritional assessment of household acquisition and actual food consumption in Brazil, revealing a concerning situation during this period. According to the collected data, it was found that 36.7% of households in the country experienced some level of food insecurity (FI) during this period, classified as mild in 24% of cases, moderate in 8.1%, and severe in 4.6%. These results indicated that a total of 84.9 million people in Brazil were experiencing some degree of food insecurity, with 10.3 million facing situations considered severe FI (IBGE, 2019).

4.2. Food Insecurity in Brazil Amidst the Pandemic

The already concerning scenario of food insecurity in Brazil was drastically intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020. This global context of the health crisis had a devastating impact on the country, especially because it occurred during a period when the Brazilian government was led by a group that disregarded widely recognized scientific principles. In this context, the Second National Survey on Food Insecurity in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Brazil (II VIGISAN) was conducted by the Brazilian Network for Research in Food and Nutritional Security (Rede Pensann), providing a detailed snapshot of the current situation at the time.

The main objective of II VIGISAN was to actively monitor Food Security (FS) and levels of Food Insecurity (FI) across the country during the health crisis. The survey is conducted as a representative inquiry of the Brazilian population, covering both rural and urban areas of the country's five macro-regions and all 27 Federative Units, including 12,745 households, with face-to-face interviews conducted with one adult in each residence (Rede Pensann, 2022).

Data collection was conducted between November 2021 and April 2022, using a questionnaire that included the Brazilian Scale of Food Insecurity (EBIA) in its eight-question version. This methodology allowed for a comprehensive and representative assessment of the situation of food and nutritional security in Brazil, providing valuable data to understand the actual scenario experienced in Brazilian households and to support policies and actions aimed at promoting access to adequate food (Rede Pensann, 2022).

According to data from II VIGISAN, by the end of 2020, the first year of the pandemic, 55.2% of Brazilian households were already facing some level of Food Insecurity (FI). This reality not only reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 health crisis but also underscores the deep socioeconomic deterioration and structural inequalities in Brazilian society, which existed before the pandemic and were exacerbated by it. This situation persisted in 2021, with high

levels of unemployment, labor precariousness, loss of social rights, and declining purchasing power, while COVID-19 continued to claim lives at an alarming rate (Rede Pensann, 2022).

This scenario deepened the conditions that resulted in alarming levels of FI, exposing the vulnerability of a growing segment of the population, including segments of the middle class that were previously more socially protected. Furthermore, even during this crisis period, the progressive dismantling of public policies and the weakening of social protection institutions, both in the food area and in other conditions necessary for a dignified and healthy life, continued to occur and contributed to the worsening of this situation.

The dismantling of public policies directly or indirectly related to Food and Nutritional Security (FNS) became more evident when, in 2021, at the height of the pandemic, the government abolished the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the Bolsa Família Program (PBF), two successful social programs that guaranteed food security to its beneficiaries, replacing them with the Alimenta Brasil and Auxílio Brasil programs, respectively. These substitute programs proved to be weak in their designs and objectives, as well as limited in their population coverage, as it is estimated that only half of the 100 million people previously served by the PBF, and the Emergency Aid continued to have access to the Auxílio Brasil (Rede Pensann, 2022).

According to II VIGISAN data, during the pandemic, Emergency Aid was directed to households in situations of social vulnerability, i.e., with per capita family income below 1/4 of the minimum wage, which also faced a higher risk of Food Insecurity (FI). This population, eligible for Emergency Aid, was the most impacted by the negative effects of the pandemic. However, according to the Survey, hunger was still present in 21.5% of households of families who applied for and received benefits from this last aid (2022).

As explicitly stated in the graph below, households that applied for Emergency Aid but did not receive it had a higher prevalence of hunger, represented by severe FI (63%), compared

to those who applied for and received it (47.5%). Additionally, many low-income households were not included in this public policy and faced even more severe conditions. This suggests that the program did not reach all families in food deprivation or experiencing hunger.

Another factor to consider is that the existence of low-income individuals who did not apply for Emergency Aid may indicate extreme marginalization for households in moderate or severe FI situations, affecting even access to this public policy. However, for households in this income bracket that were in FI or mild FI, it may suggest the use of other mechanisms for protection against food insecurity, such as social support and assistance from non-governmental organizations.

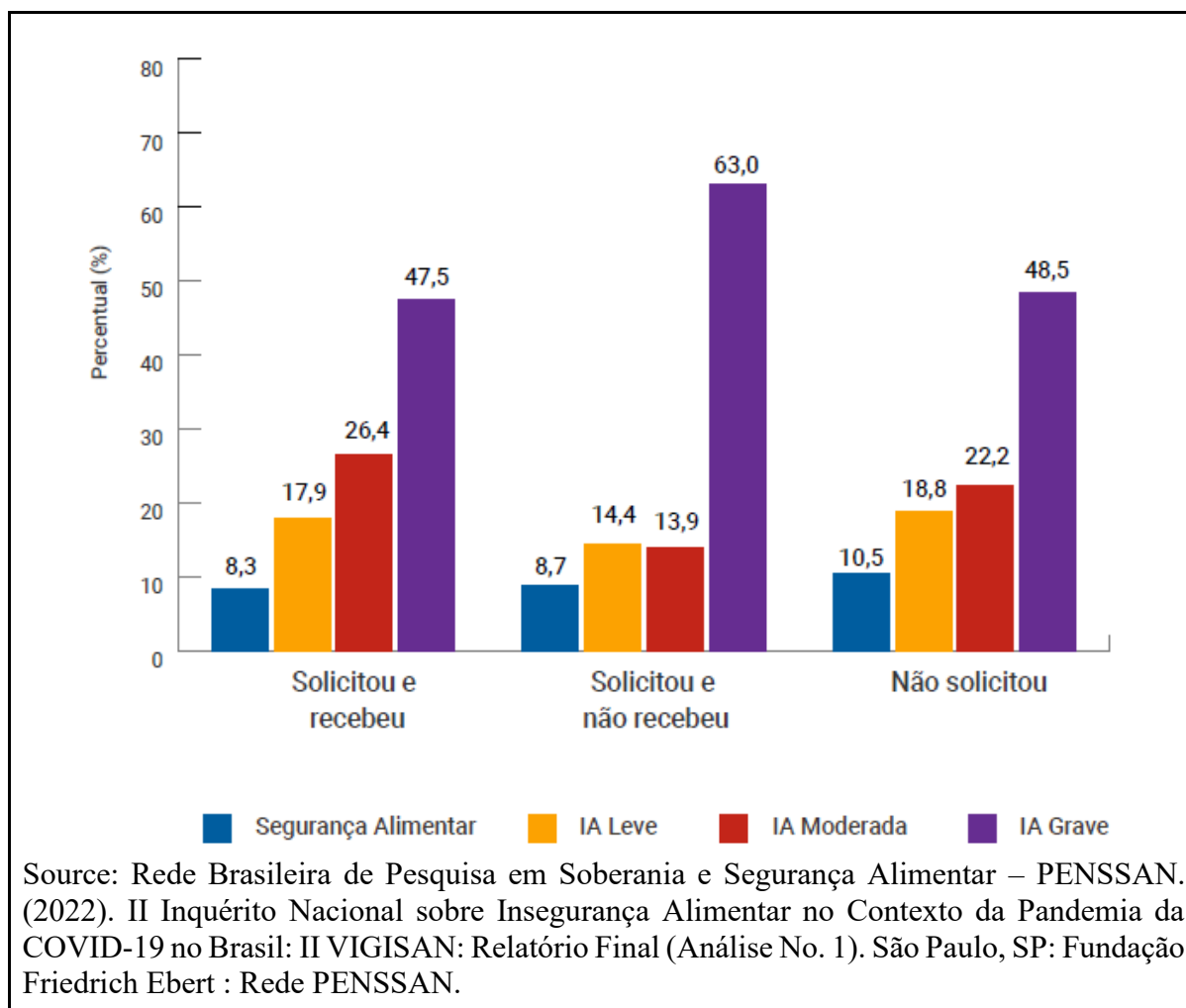
Figure 7: Relationship (in%) between requesting and receiving emergency aid and Food Security and Food Insecurity (FI) levels in households with per capita income of up to 1/4 of the minimum wage, Brazil. II VIGISAN - SA/IA and Covid-19, Brazil, 2021/2022.⁹

⁹ Translation of the Graph:

Legend: Food Security (blue, Light FI (yellow), Moderate FI (red), and Severe FI (purple)

X-Axis: Categories: Requested and received, Requested and did not receive, Did not request

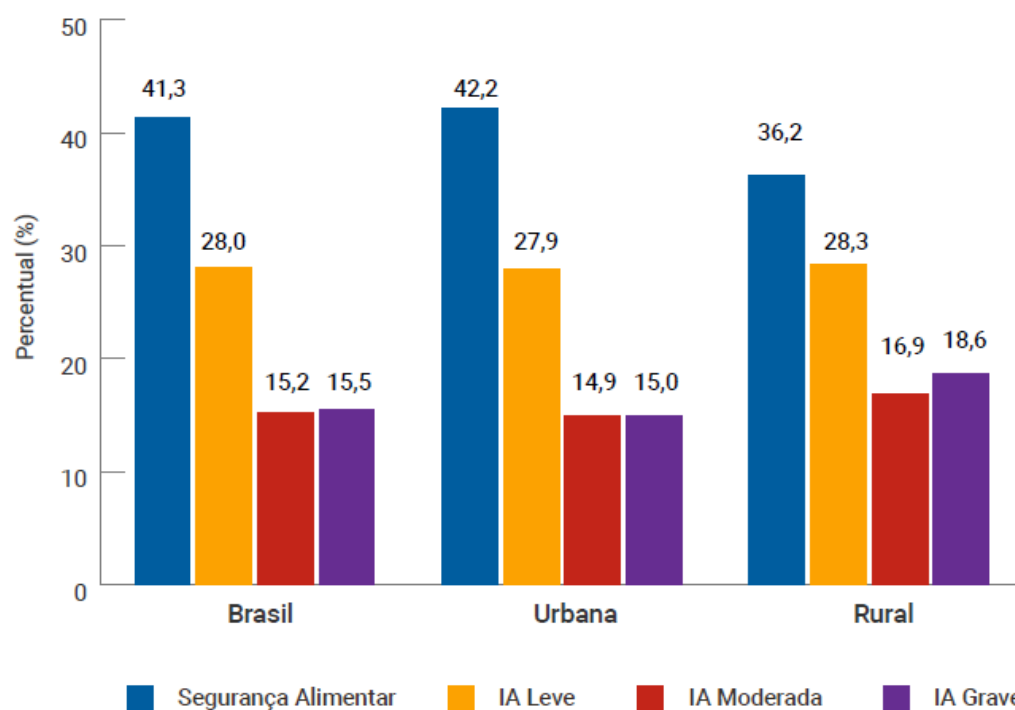
Y-Axis Label: Percentage (%)



When analyzing the results of II VIGISAN, it is noted that during the period between late 2021 and early 2022, a significant percentage of Brazilian households faced challenges related to food security. As observed in the graph below, approximately 40% of households had full access to food, characterizing it as a situation of Food Security (FS). However, in about 28.0% of homes, there were experiences of Food Insecurity (FI) at mild levels, and in 30.7% of households, there was already an insufficient amount of food to meet the residents' needs, indicating FI at moderate or severe levels.

Furthermore, as the graph below illustrates, it is important to highlight that the food situation of residents in rural areas of the country was even more concerning compared to those in urban areas. In these rural regions, more than 60% of households faced Food Insecurity, with severe FI affecting 18.6% of homes, while in the urban context, this percentage was 15%.

Figure 8: Percentage distribution of Food Security and levels of Food Insecurity (FI) in Brazil and in the location of households (urban and rural). II VIGISAN - SA/IA and Covid-19, Brazil, 2021/2022.¹⁰



Source: Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar – PENSSAN. (2022). II Inquérito Nacional sobre Insegurança Alimentar no Contexto da Pandemia da COVID-19 no Brasil: II VIGISAN: Relatório Final (Análise No. 1). São Paulo, SP: Fundação Friedrich Ebert : Rede PENSSAN.

Despite the clear evidence that the highest percentage of people experiencing severe hunger is in rural areas of the country, the number of Brazilians facing this condition in urban areas, where population density is higher, is significantly higher, revealing a reality that permeates different scenarios and contexts in Brazil. As illustrated in the graph below, which shows the number of Brazilians per thousand inhabitants in situations of Food Security and

¹⁰ Translation of the Graph:

Legend: Food Safety (blue), Light FI (yellow), Moderate FI (red), and Severe FI (purple)

Y-Axis Label: Percentage (%)

X-Axis: Categories: Brazil, Urban, and Rural

Food Insecurity, over 27 million urban residents faced severe food insecurity between 2021 and 2022.

Figure 9: Food Security (FS) and levels of Food Insecurity (FI)

Brasil e localização dos domicílios	Domicílios (%)				Moradores (por mil habitantes)			
	SA	IA Leve	IA Moderada	IA Grave	SA	IA Leve	IA Moderada	IA Grave
	2021/2022				2021/2022			
Brasil	41,3	28,0	15,2	15,5	88.160	59.667	32.387	33.103
Urbano	42,2	27,9	14,9	15,0	77.158	51.031	27.212	27.405
Rural	36,2	28,3	16,9	18,6	11.032	8.635	5.165	5.681

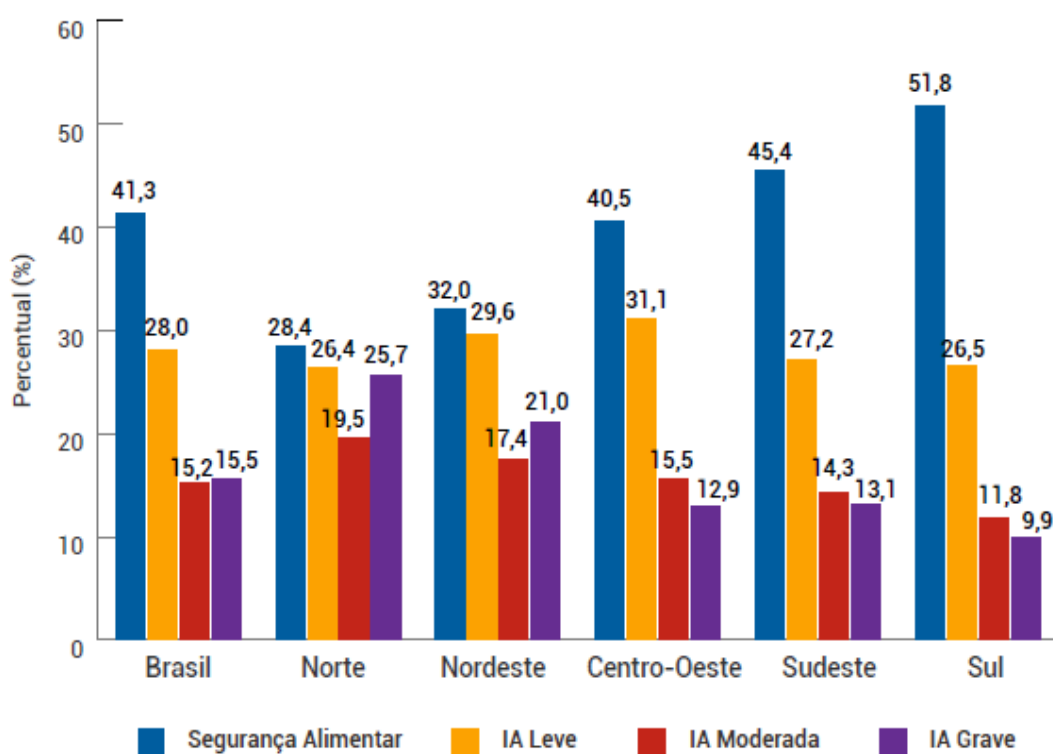
Location of Homes in Brazil	Households (%)				Residents (per thousand inhabitants)			
	FS	FI Light	FI Moderate	FI Severe	FS	FI Light	FI Moderate	FI Severe
	2021/2022				2021/2022			
Brazil	41.3	28.0	15.2	15.5	88,160	59,667	32,387	33,103
Urban	42.2	27.9	14.9	15.0	77,158	51,031	27,212	27,405
Rural	36.2	28.3	16.9	18.6	11,032	8,635	5,165	5,681

Source: Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar – PENSSAN. (2022). II Inquérito Nacional sobre Insegurança Alimentar no Contexto da Pandemia da COVID-19 no Brasil: II VIGISAN: Relatório Final (Análise No. 1). São Paulo, SP: Fundação Friedrich Ebert : Rede PENSSAN.

In addition to analyzing the total number of people experiencing these circumstances in the country, it is relevant to consider the geographical component of the situation. The graph below illustrates that while the Southeast and South regions have a prevalence of Food Security

(FS) above the national average, with 45.4% and 52% of their households in this situation, respectively, the North and Northeast regions demonstrate low access to food security. In these regions, the levels of moderate and, especially, severe food insecurity (severe FI) are significantly higher than those observed in other parts of the country.

Figure 10: Percentage distribution of Food Security and levels of Food Insecurity (FI) in the country. Brazil and macro-regions. II VIGISAN - FS/FI and Covid-19, Brazil, 2021/2022.¹¹



Source: Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar – PENSSAN. (2022). II Inquérito Nacional sobre Insegurança Alimentar no Contexto da Pandemia da COVID-19 no Brasil: II VIGISAN: Relatório Final (Análise No. 1). São Paulo, SP: Fundação Friedrich Ebert : Rede PENSSAN.

Establishing a connection between the high prevalence of FI in the North and Northeast regions of the country and the data highlighted in Figure 3 of this research, which reveal the

¹¹ Translation of the Graph:

Legend: Food Safety (blue), Light FI (yellow), Moderate FI (red), and Severe FI (purple)

Y-Axis Label: Percentage (%)

X-Axis: Categories: Brazil, North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast, and South

predominance of family farming in the most affected regions, makes the correlation between these factors evident. Family farming plays a vital role in these areas, providing food for local consumption, supplying regional markets, and contributing significantly to the local economy. Additionally, the financial capacity gained through agricultural production allows access to a wider variety of foods, enhancing food security in rural communities.

Corroborating the aforementioned facts, data from II VIGISAN reveal that the most alarming levels of FI were found in rural households of family farmers and rural producers. During the health crisis, these difficulties were exacerbated by production losses and obstacles in the commercialization of their products.

Figure 11: Effects of the pandemic on family farmers/rural producers and Food Security/Food Insecurity, Brazil. II VIGISAN - FS/FI and Covid-19, Brazil, 2021/2022¹²

Efeitos da pandemia (n=430)	Segurança Alimentar (SA) e níveis de Insegurança Alimentar (IA)			
	SA (%)	IA Leve (%)	IA Moderada (%)	IA Grave (%)
Perda de produção	22,9	33,6	17,9	25,6
Redução nos preços	42,9	32,7	10,1	14,3
Nada mudou	47,8	22,0	16,0	14,2

Source: Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar – PENSSAN. (2022). II Inquérito Nacional sobre Insegurança Alimentar no Contexto da Pandemia da COVID-19 no Brasil: II VIGISAN: Relatório Final (Análise No. 1). São Paulo, SP: Fundação Friedrich Ebert: Rede PENSSAN.

¹² Translation to English:

Pandemic Effects (n=430)	Food Security (FS) and Food Insecurity (FI) level			
	SA	Light FI(%)	Moderate FI(%)	Severe FI (%)
Loss of production	22,9	33,6	17,9	25,6
Reduction in prices	42,9	32,7	10,1	14,3
Nothing changed	47,8	22,0	16,0	14,2

As seen in the table above, severe FI was recorded in 25.6% of these households. The rapid rise in food prices, which impacted Brazilian consumers, was not accompanied by the same appreciation in food production among producers, especially those in family farming. This resulted in a decrease in the prices of family agricultural products, contributing to a significant increase in FI rates in these families (Rede Pensann, 2022).

In overall conclusion, the Survey pointed out that the data on Food Security and levels of Food Insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic reflects not only the direct consequences of the health crisis but also the choices of economic and social policies adopted by governments during this period, which, as assessed, exacerbated the situation. To clarify the influence of agribusiness here, we can emphasize that since the beginning of the dismantling of these policies, those in power with a majority in the National Congress were the rural caucus and the candidates supported by it, acting mainly in the regions that were more affected by FI.

The figure below presents estimates of Food Security/Food Insecurity based on national surveys conducted from 2004 to 2018 (PNADs and POF 2018), as well as data from I VIGISAN and II VIGISAN, which cover the period of the pandemic, using the eight-question version of the EBIA.

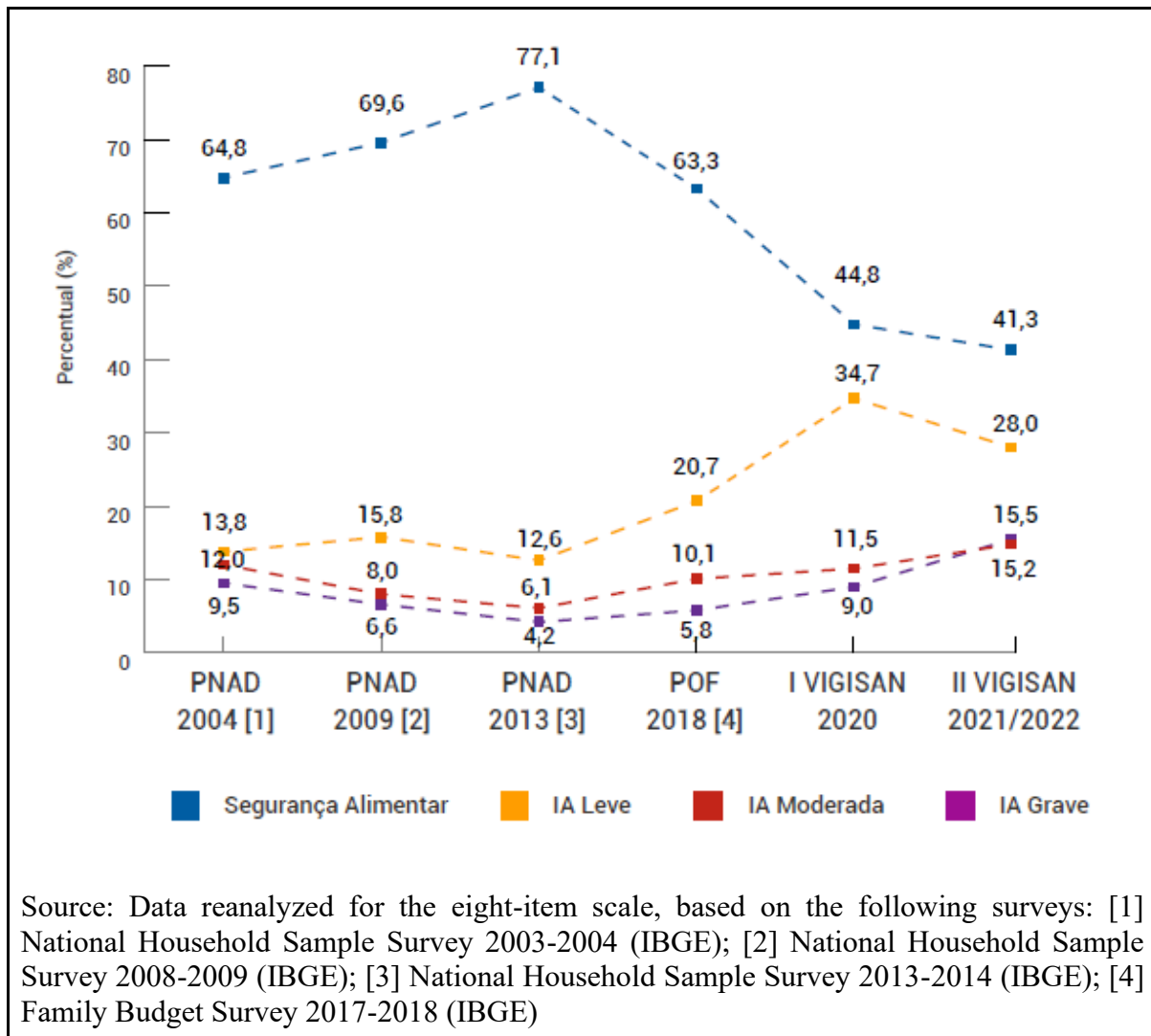
Figure 12: Trend of Food Security and levels of Food Insecurity (FI) in Brazil, 2004 to 2022. II VIGISAN - FS/FI and Covid-19, Brazil, 2021/22¹³

¹³ Translation of the Graph:

Legend: Food Safety (blue), Light FI (yellow), Moderate FI (red), and Severe FI (purple)

Y-Axis Label: Percentage (%)

X-Axis: Categories: National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) 2004, PNAD 2009, PNAD 2014, National Household Sample Survey (POF), I VIGISAN, and II VIGISAN



Upon analyzing the graph, a significant deterioration of the Food Insecurity scenario is noticed, especially with families transitioning from a situation of mild Food Insecurity to Moderate levels and subsequently to Severe. Particularly noteworthy is the increase in Severe FI between 2020 and 2022, indicating the severe impact of the pandemic, resulting in a rise from 9% to 15.5% of the percentage of people in this situation. The increase in this number represents 14 million new Brazilians who have fallen into a situation of hunger, resulting in 33.1 million people in 2022.

4.3. MST's Response to Hunger During the Pandemic

Given the failure to meet social demands and the inability to maintain food security in the country through traditional systems and models based on agribusiness prioritization and an

agro-export model, we revisit the first chapter of this research. This chapter highlights the importance of recognizing the role of civil society organizations and social movements, such as the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), which emerge as counter-hegemonic alternatives. In the MST case, advocating for food sovereignty, agrarian reform, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices as pillars for building a more just and equitable food system in Brazil, ensuring food security as a guaranteed right for all.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the MST has prioritized combating hunger, using the motto "Cultivating Solidarity Without Land." According to a report from Brasil de Fato, actions against hunger during this period initially focused on families experiencing homelessness, as stated by Paulo Mansan, a member of the MST's national coordination. Actions for to address the cause began to be discussed as soon as the first week after the implementation of circulation restrictions due to the pandemic (Brasil de Fato, 2023).

During the lockdown period in Pernambuco, at the Armazém Campo do Recife, an initiative called "Marmita Solidária", in English "Solidarity Meal", was initiated. Mansan emphasizes that this action, carried out by the MST and other organizations, was one of the most important demonstrations of solidarity and action directed towards Food Security during the pandemic in Brazil, as it ensured food for those who were most vulnerable at that time. Mansan describes the success of the action by stating that "in less than 48 hours, we went from producing 50 meals to two thousand meals per day, which we maintained for a year and a half, daily" (Brasil de Fato, 2023).

The mobilization of the Solidarity Meals was successful and quickly evolved into a broader project, the "Campanha Mãos Solidárias", in English "Hands of Solidarity Campaign," which began to encompass not only the distribution of ready-to-eat meals in the form of packed lunches but also the implementation of a series of other measures to address emerging needs during the pandemic (Rede Brasil Atual, 2024). Among the measures included the

establishment of solidarity kitchens to prepare meals on a large scale, the creation of food banks to store and distribute donations, the cultivation of organic community gardens to ensure access to fresh and healthy food, as well as other initiatives such as living pharmacies (Rede Brasil Atual, 2024). Even after the most critical period of the pandemic, the Campaign's efforts continued, focusing on strengthening grassroots organizations to address the persistent challenges of hunger and food insecurity.

According to an article on the MST website, during the peak of the global health crisis, not only were food donations made, but care and guidance were also offered to the most vulnerable population on how to protect themselves against the coronavirus. Over 50,000 protective masks were distributed during these awareness programs, and thanks to community mobilization, over 7,000 tons of food were donated, 10,000 food baskets were distributed, and about 2 million solidarity meals were provided. Additionally, during the years 2020 and 2021, the initiative began to provide legal assistance and promote document regularization efforts aimed at expanding access to the emergency benefit "Auxílio Brasil" (Alcântara, 2022).

In addition to providing emergency assistance to address the issue of hunger and legal-political assistance to access rights, the initiative also focused on the economic empowerment of these individuals. According to the official website of the Hands of Solidarity Campaign, workshops were organized to provide training and opportunities for income generation. Among these were bicycle repair workshops, soap production workshops, and sound system assembly workshops. Additionally, in partnership with the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) of Pernambuco and other social movements, around 80 women, including seamstresses and activists from the World March of Women (MMM) and the Movement of Workers for Rights (MTD), were mobilized to form a network for sewing cloth masks (Hands of Solidarity Campaign, 2023).

The masks produced by these women were distributed to volunteers at family health units, other organizations, and the population residing in the city of Recife. The initiative's objective was clear: to increase the protection of the most vulnerable population during a period of intense health crisis while promoting the economic empowerment of autonomous seamstress women (Hands of Solidarity Campaign, 2023).

In addition to this partnership, Hands of Solidarity and Fiocruz Pernambuco also jointly established a training program for Popular Health and Communication Agents, which now has over 1,500 graduates. These agents are trained to disseminate health knowledge and promote preventive practices within their communities, playing a crucial role in coordinating and mobilizing communities for the development of sustainable territories (Hands of Solidarity Campaign, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, Hands of Solidarity is not an initiative of a single organization but a network of organizations. Although it originated within the MST, it includes various organizations such as the Popular Brazil Front, the Popular Youth Uprising, the National Network of Popular Doctors, La Via Campesina, and Armazém do Campo, among others. Based on this, I return to the methodological concepts presented in the first chapter of this work and conclude that I maintain my understanding of the MST as a social movement, based on the definitions by Klanderman & Tarrow (1988) of a movement as an organized entity. However, I also recognize the dynamic nature of social movements, which can sometimes function as a network of organizations (Klanderman & Tarrow, 1988).

I consider the MST as a Social Movement in itself, but I also understand that it is part of La Via Campesina, which is another Social Movement representing its objectives at the international level. Thus, looking at the spectrum that starts from the La Via Campesina, we could state that the MST is part of the organizations that make up a Social Movement (SMOs), as per McCarthy & Zald (1987).

I In the case of the Hands of Solidarity Campaign, it can be considered a movement in its own right, with organizations like the MST and La Via Campesina comprising its structure. This example helps both substantiate and refine my methodological choice of considering the MST a social movement. It demonstrates that a social movement can function as both an independent entity and as part of a larger movement simultaneously. This highlights the multifaceted and interconnected nature of social movements, reinforcing my understanding that the MST can act autonomously while also collaborating within a broader network of movements, thereby strengthening its impact and reach through these dynamic partnerships.

The effectiveness of mobilizing social movements for such a relevant cause was proven with the recognition from the FAO, which in October 2023 awarded the “Pacto Contra a Fome”, in English “Pact Against Hunger” prize to the MST for the Hands of Solidarity initiative and the effectiveness of the food donation campaign created during the pandemic in Pernambuco (Rede Brasil Atual, 2023). The award, organized in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), recognizes initiatives of socio-environmental transformation that work towards combating hunger and contribute to reducing inequalities in Brazil (Pact Against Hunger, n.d.). The prize was delivered to Paulo Mansan, one of the founders of the Campaign and a member of the MST's national coordination, alongside Fabíola Amaro, an MST member and project coordinator.

After the pandemic, the campaign's activities continued, structuring popular organizations to combat hunger and food insecurity. In 2023, the initiative of the Hands of Solidarity Kitchens became public policy with the creation of the National Plan for Solidarity Kitchens, integrated into the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) in July (Rede Brasil Atual, 2023). On March 5, 2024, the current president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, signed

Decree No. 11,937/2024, which officially established the Solidarity Kitchen Program, previously instituted by Law 14,628 in 2023 (Presidency of the Republic, 2024). Mansan states:

We received with great joy that the Solidarity Kitchens have become law, thanks to the initiative of federal deputy Guilherme Boulos. In this process, we exchanged a lot, also helping with the MTST kitchens here in Pernambuco. They have two [in Pernambuco], so everyone helps each other. It's a great effort of solidarity, and the PAA law will now enhance that (Brasil de Fato, 2023).

The regulation of the Solidarity Kitchen Program sets guidelines to guide initiatives nationwide, defining support modalities, participation criteria, and principles anchored in food and nutritional security. The program management will be carried out through partnerships between the Ministry of Development and Social Assistance and managing entities, which will operate in shared management with the Solidarity Kitchens. These kitchens will have the autonomy to contribute to the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the program, ensuring transparency and community engagement (Conab, 2024).

The resources allocated to the Solidarity Kitchens will be used to support meal provision, provide fresh and minimally processed foods acquired through the PAA, and support the training of collaborators. These kitchens, which emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting the free distribution of meals to ensure the human right to adequate food and community integration in a Brazilian state, are now a legal and national institutional tool in the fight against food and nutritional insecurity in the country. Up to the decree, more than 2,770 solidarity kitchens have been mapped across Brazil (Conab, 2024). Regarding the Program, Lilian Rahal, National Secretary for Food and Nutritional Security of the MDS, stated:

Through the community's combined efforts, Solidarity Kitchens plays a fundamental, voluntary role in the goal of providing food to those most in need. In addition to relying on donations from partners or individuals, these initiatives can now also count on the support of the Federal Government, which, through this Program, embraces actions across the country (Presidency of the Republic, 2024).

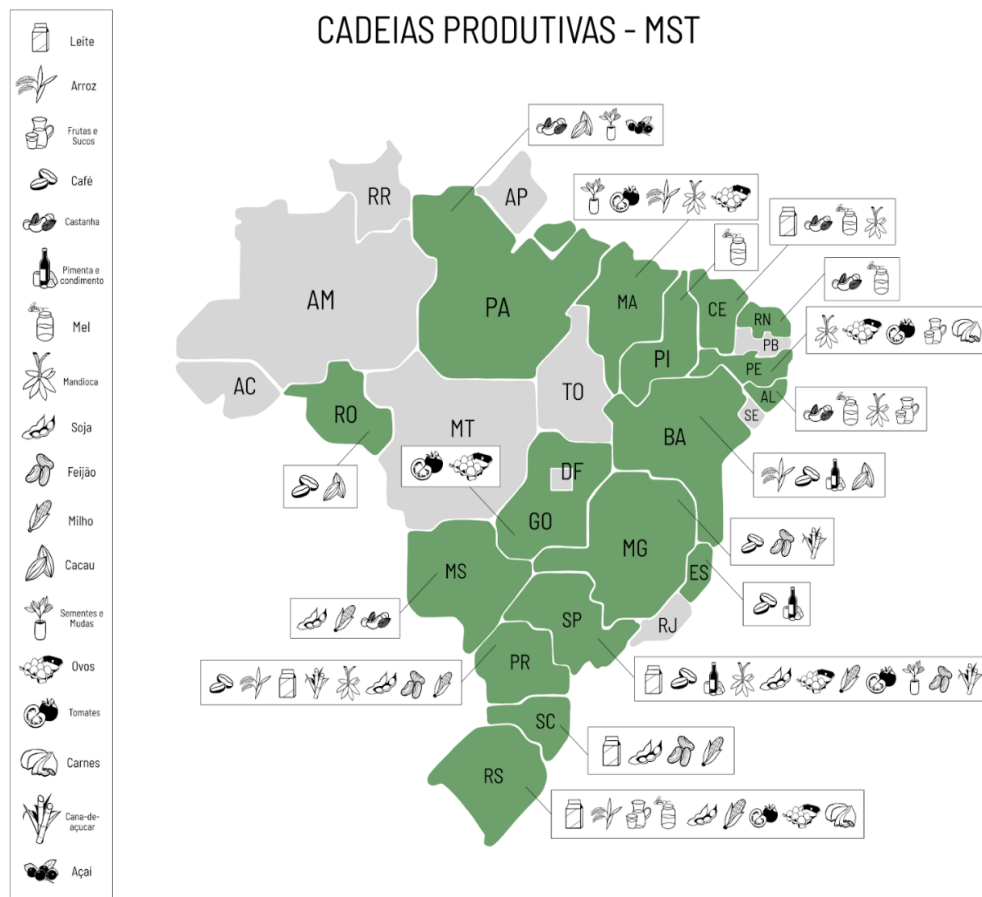
Rahal also emphasized that simply providing food is not enough to eradicate hunger; it is crucial to ensure access to and consumption of adequate and healthy food, aiming not only to alleviate hunger but also to reduce diseases associated with poor nutrition (Presidency of the Republic, 2024). In this sense, the MST highlights agroecology as a viable alternative to agribusiness production. According to Alexandre Conceição, a member of the MST's national leadership, the country must change its approach to food production, abandoning the emphasis on the "poisoned production of agribusiness commodities" and making room for agroecology (Moncau, 2023). He argues that "the solution to ending hunger in the country lies in agrarian reform: expropriation of large estates, production of healthy food, and strengthening of family farming" (Moncau, 2023).

This view is shared by Greenpeace, as highlighted by Mariana Campos, a spokesperson for Greenpeace Brazil. According to her, "The agroecological path is the only possible one! With agroecology, Brazil can feed its entire population without the use of pesticides, as well as position itself as a leader in climate action and food and nutritional security" (Santa Cruz, 2024). As mentioned by Conceição, MST's production is based on agroecology, both in the Solidarity Hands Campaign and in the practice of the over 50,000 settled Landless Families who cultivate sustainably (Moncau, 2023).

It is important to emphasize that the primary goal of the work carried out by settled families is to ensure food sovereignty, that is, the production of healthy and accessible food for the Brazilian population. Currently, the MST has a network of 185 cooperatives and 190 associations, encompassing 120 small and medium-sized agro-industries. In MST settlements, production chains are diversified and vary according to the region of the country, covering essential foods such as rice, milk, meat, coffee, cocoa, seeds, cassava, sugarcane, and grains, as demonstrated in the map below, supplying not only local and regional markets but also consumer cooperatives, local markets, and, above all, school feeding programs and other public

institutions, such as nursing homes, prisons, and barracks (MST, 2024). It is worth noting that the MST is recognized as the main producer of organic rice in Brazil, as reported by BBC News Brazil in 2017 (Lemos, 2022).

Figure 13: Production Chains - MST¹⁴



Fonte: MST

Source: MST. (2024.). Nossa Produção. <https://mst.org.br/nossa-producao/#:~:text=As%20cadeias%20produtivas%20mais%20consolidadas,%2Dde%2Da%C3%A7%C3%BAcar%20e%20gr%C3%A3os.>

Considering the relevance of MST's actions in combating hunger, especially during the pandemic with the Hands of Solidarity Campaign, it is necessary to recognize the success of

¹⁴ Translation of the Map: Legend: Milk, Rice, Fruits and Juice, Coffee, Nuts, Pepper and Condiment, Honey, Cassava, Soy, Bean, Corn, Cocoa, Seeds and Seedlings, Eggs, Tomatoes, Meat, Sugarcane, Açaí

this initiative and how it became national legislation from the perspective of Political Mobilization theory with the re-election of a government with a strong social bias in 2022. However, until then, its work as a Social Movement in addressing the issue was crucial in the face of the government's ineffectiveness at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, with President Jair Bolsonaro in power. This government's priority was not and has never been to address social demands for the entire population, but rather economic demands that predominantly favored the elite it represented. This elite was part of the Brazilian political body that was also responsible for addressing the issue as a priority on the political agenda, effectively and comprehensively, and failed to do so.

Thus, the theory of Political Mobilization, developed by authors such as Sidney Tarrow, emphasizes the importance of political opportunities, social networks, and cultural framing strategies for understanding the dynamics of social movements (Tarrow, 1998). The reelection of President Lula for a third term starting in 2022, with a history of effective hunger-fighting policies during his previous terms, represents a favorable context for the institutionalization of initiatives like "Hands of Solidarity." This connection between the grassroots mobilization of the MST and government support highlights how political opportunities can be leveraged to achieve substantial policy changes, underscoring the interaction between social movements and state actors in shaping public policies.

The central goal of this new Lula government is to remove Brazil from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Hunger Map, and, to achieve this goal, the government signed the decree instituting the "Brasil Sem Fome", in English "Brazil Without Hunger" Plan, encompassing 80 actions and programs from the 24 ministries represented in the newly reactivated Interministerial Chamber for Food and Nutritional Security (Caisan), representing a robust commitment to food security (Presidency of the Republic, 2023). The plan aims to eliminate the country's presence on the Hunger Map by 2030 and gradually reduce

overall poverty rates, as well as reduce to less than 5% the number of households in situations of severe food insecurity each year.

Not only this beneficial scenario is positive for the political opportunity, but the Political Mobilization theory also highlights the importance of social networks and the construction of collective identities. In the case of MST, the network of cooperatives and associations plays a crucial role, as these organizations not only facilitate the production and distribution of food but also mobilize popular, and mainly local, support and influence political discourse. Building a collective identity centered on agrarian reform and agroecological production strengthens the internal cohesion of the movement and expands its political impact (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996).

Additionally, framing strategies are essential for understanding how MST and other social organizations manage to direct public and political attention to their causes. The MST narrative, which emphasizes the production of healthy food and agrarian reform as solutions to hunger and food insecurity, resonates with broader societal concerns and facilitates the acceptance of its proposals by the government and the general population (Snow & Benford, 1988).

According to Schmitz's analysis (2009), the combination of favorable political opportunities, well-established social networks, and effective framing strategies allows social movements like MST to transcend their origins and influence policy formulation. In the case of "Solidarity Hands," the integration of these dimensions enabled the transition from an emergency response during the pandemic to a structured public policy capable of addressing hunger comprehensively and sustainably.

In addition to the creation of the law, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) expects that a strengthened Executive committed to the cause can drive the re-creation of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), the transformation of the National Institute for Colonization

and Agrarian Reform (Incra) into an institution dedicated to land expropriation, and the strengthening of the National Supply Company (Conab) with a larger budget (Moncau, 2023).

According to the leadership of the Peasant Women's Movement (MMC), Michela Calaça, it is possible and necessary to integrate, defend, and pressure the government collectively. MST's goal remains the same: to fight for land, agrarian reform, and social transformation (Moncau, 2023). Although land occupation continues to be a central element in this struggle, MST recognizes the importance of institutional disputes. Thus, the movement maintains its autonomy from the government while seeking to ensure that the government fulfills its mission to eliminate hunger in the country.

This approach highlights the interdependence between social mobilization and institutional structures, emphasizing how MST combines direct actions and political participation to advance its goals. Political Mobilization theory, as outlined by authors like Sidney Tarrow (1998), provides an adequate theoretical framework for understanding these dynamics, considering the importance of political opportunities, social networks, and cultural framing strategies in the effectiveness of social movements.

4.4. Partial Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented a detailed analysis of the dynamics of food insecurity in Brazil, which has experienced a weakening of public policies since 2016, a situation exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020. The focus was initially directed toward the political actions of the ruling class, represented by agribusiness, and it was concluded that this class contributed to the aforementioned dismantling of public policies that had been addressing food insecurity in the country for decades.

Secondly, it was examined how the COVID-19 pandemic drastically intensified the already concerning scenario of food insecurity in Brazil. Data from II VIGISAN revealed that by the end of 2020, 55.2% of Brazilian households faced some level of food insecurity,

reflecting both the impacts of the health crisis and the socioeconomic deterioration and structural inequalities in the country.

Finally, an analysis was made of the role of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in proposing a counter-hegemonic model with effective and sustainable alternatives to address the food challenges of the Brazilian population. A highlighted case study was the "Solidarity Hands Campaign," which emerged during the pandemic to address the growing hunger situation in the country and has since become an internationally recognized public policy as an effective measure to combat hunger.

The transition of these initiatives into a consolidated public policy, such as the Solidarity Kitchens Program instituted by the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, underscores the importance of political opportunities and social networks in mobilizing social movements. The recognition of the MST by the UN with the "Pact Against Hunger" award highlights the effectiveness of food donation campaigns and the socio-environmental transformations promoted during the pandemic.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the persistence of food insecurity in Brazil and the influence of the current agricultural model on this issue, emphasizing and analyzing the effectiveness of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) as a possible alternative to address it. The historical literature review revealed a colonial legacy at the roots of the current agricultural model, highlighting the urgency of its revision towards a system that prioritizes the demands of the Brazilian people rather than maintaining an imperialist logic that only benefits the capitalist elites who own land.

During the research, a scenario of immense social inequality in the country was observed, highlighted by the data from the Oxfam report "Inequality Inc.". I am reiterating these data in this conclusion because understanding the deeply unequal structure of Brazilian society is necessary to comprehend the implications of this research fully. As seen, according to the mentioned report, in Brazil, while the wealthiest allocate less than 5% of their income to food purchases, the poorest can allocate up to 40% of their income for this purpose. Additionally, Oxfam points out that the richest 1% in the country controls 60% of the nation's financial assets, and between 2020 and the release of the report in January 2024, four of the five wealthiest Brazilians saw their fortunes increase by 51%, while 129 million Brazilians fell below the poverty line during the health crisis experienced in the period. Finally, another data illustrating this brutal inequality is that the wealthiest individual in the country possesses wealth equivalent to the bottom half of the population, consisting of 107 million people (Oxfam, 2024).

In this context of deep injustice and socioeconomic inequality, the prioritization of food as a source of profit for a few, at the expense of equitable access to food for a large part of the population, becomes concerning. The Brazilian agricultural model, focused on commodity production and export, has proven unable to sustainably guarantee access to food for a large

part of the Brazilian population. Despite Brazil being one of the world's largest agricultural producers, alarming rates of hunger and food insecurity persist, especially among vulnerable populations in regions where family farming predominates, but which are also targets of exploitation for large-scale production, such as in the North, Northeast, and Midwest of the country. This disparity between the abundance of agricultural resources and the scarcity of food for a considerable portion of the population exposes the failures of the current agroexport model in meeting the nutritional and social needs of the country.

In this context, the analysis of the role played by the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) emerges as a promising alternative. The MST presents solid alternatives to the current agro-export model through its advocacy for land redistribution, promotion of family farming, and adoption of agroecological practices. The specific analysis of the MST during the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced its effectiveness and relevance as a transformative agent. The MST's ability to act as a social movement, carrying out transformative actions towards common goals, guided by principles of shared values and a defined organization, highlights its importance in ensuring food security and sovereignty in the country (Scherer-Warren, 1984, p.20).

Furthermore, the MST's "Solidarity Hands Campaign," recognized by the UN as an effective initiative in combating hunger and transformed into a public policy supported by the federal government, demonstrates the potential of social movements to address issues that are inhumanely neglected by the State. The MST has proven to be a resilient and resilient movement in the face of historical and contemporary challenges, demonstrating the strength of social movements and efficiency in social organization and mobilization in the demand for rights.

Therefore, in conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance and necessity of public policies based on social themes that prioritize the well-being of the people over the profit of a few, that value family farming, promote agroecology, and guarantee equitable access to land

and agricultural resources, prioritizing the human rights of Brazilians. The continuity of programs implemented by the current government, such as the law that institutionalized the "Solidarity Hands Campaign," is proposed, as well as the implementation of new initiatives to support sustainable production and distribution of local foods.

The theoretical framework utilized in this study played a fundamental role in analyzing the various aspects related to food security and the role of social movements, such as the Landless Workers' Movement (MST). By incorporating Social Movement Theory, Political Mobilization Theory, and other relevant theoretical perspectives like Gramsci's, we were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding this topic.

One of the main benefits of this theoretical framework was its ability to contextualize the actions of social movements within broader sociopolitical landscapes. By exploring concepts such as hegemony, counter-hegemony, and political opportunities, we could conduct a refined analysis of how social movements operate within power structures and advocate for societal changes, acting as essential agents in representing and advocating for crucial social issues. This contextual understanding was essential for evaluating the effectiveness of MST initiatives, such as the "Hands of Solidarity Campaign", in combating food insecurity in Brazil.

Furthermore, through this theoretical framework, it was possible to conduct a critical analysis of classifying the MST as a social movement instead of an organizational force - by considering its mobilization capacity, ideological alignment, and organizational structure, we could examine more deeply the multifaceted nature of the MST and its role in Brazilian society. However, we also acknowledge the limitations of the theories discussed, as while they offer valuable insights, they may not fully capture the complexities of social movements operating in diverse sociocultural contexts, for example, while maintaining my understanding of the MST as a social movement while an organization entity, I also consider that they can sometimes

function as a network of organizations, explicitly showing a dynamic nature of these (Klanderman & Tarrow, 1988).

Additionally, I highlight the effectiveness of using qualitative methodologies in conjunction with the exploration of quantitative data, contributing to a more comprehensive and robust analysis of results that confirm alignment or question statements. Thus, it is recommended that future research also integrate quantitative analyses with qualitative analyses to provide a fuller understanding of the MST's impact on food security and broader socioeconomic indicators.

In summary, while the theoretical framework was effective in guiding this study and generating relevant findings, it is essential to approach its application with a critical eye, recognizing both its strengths and limitations. By doing so, researchers can continue to refine and adapt the theoretical framework to address evolving challenges and deepen our understanding of the transformative potential of social movements in combating food insecurity and promoting social justice.

In conclusion, this study not only seeks to pinpoint the shortcomings of the Brazilian agricultural system and its governing institutions but also strives to propose tangible and viable solutions to advance the protection of human rights for the population by emphasizing the importance of empowering social movements. By acknowledging the fundamental human right to access adequate food and food sovereignty, and by advocating for social equity, this research endeavors to underscore the words of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,

Those who will solve the problem of hunger in Brazil are not those who are hungry, but we are, who eat. We are the ones who have the obligation, as a government and as civil society, to extend a hand to those who have not had the same luck in life as we have had (Presidência da República [BR], 2003).

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