



The contribution of sustainable food consumption in local territorial development

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, several countries have been talking about the paths of the market, the economy, natural resources and how the world population will feed itself. In the same way that globalization dictated the way of access, consumption and production in a verticalized and global way, there is an urgency to modify and or even rescue a sustainable production and consumption from the strengthening of local culture. Given this context, this work aims to identify possible contributions of the analytical and conceptual contribution on sustainable food consumption and the agri-food system to the discussion in the local approach. The structure of the work is organized in four sections, the 1st section brings the debate of the concept of food production and its process within rurality. The 2nd section discusses sustainable consumption and its role in territorial development. In the 3rd section, commercialization is analyzed and discussed, and finally, in the last section, possible contributions to local territorial development are discussed. In recent decades, the world population has been undergoing nutritional, epidemiological, demographic and technological transitions, which contributes to the change in behavior and access to information. The choices for minimally processed and in natura foods, such as health promotion and disease prevention, guided by the Food Guide of the Brazilian Population (*Guia Alimentar da População Brasileira*, 2014), makes people be guided to prepare and consume food produced in their regions, strengthening local culture and development.

RESUMO

Nos últimos anos, vários países vêm dialogando sobre os caminhos do mercado, da economia, de recursos naturais e de como a população mundial irá se alimentar. Da mesma forma com que foi ditada, pela globalização, a maneira do acesso, do consumo e da produção de forma verticalizada e global, existe uma urgência em se modificar e ou até mesmo resgatar uma produção e um consumo sustentável a partir do fortalecimento da cultura local. Diante deste contexto, este trabalho tem o objetivo de identificar possíveis contribuições do aporte analítico e conceitual sobre consumo alimentar sustentável e sistemas agroalimentares para a discussão na abordagem local. A estrutura do trabalho está organizada em quatro seções, a primeira seção traz o debate do conceito de produção de alimentos e seu processo dentro da ruralidade. Na segunda seção debate-se sobre o consumo sustentável e sua função no desenvolvimento territorial. Na terceira seção analisa-se e discute-se a comercialização e, por fim, na última seção se discutem possíveis contribuições para o desenvolvimento territorial local. Nas últimas décadas a população mundial vem passando por transições nutricionais, epidemiológica, demográfica e tecnológica, o que contribui para a mudança de comportamento e de acesso às informações. As escolhas por alimentos minimamente processados e *in natura*, como promoção da saúde e prevenção de doenças, orientadas pelo Guia Alimentar da População Brasileira (2014), faz com que as pessoas sejam guiadas a preparar e consumir alimentos produzidos em suas regiões, fortalecendo a cultura e o desenvolvimento local.

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Introduction

In recent years, several countries have been talking about the paths of the market, the economy, natural resources and how the world population will feed itself. In the same way that globalization dictated the way of access, consumption and production in a verticalized and global way, there is an urgency to modify and or even rescue a sustainable production and consumption from the strengthening of local culture.

The food and nutrition system is a set of operations and processes involved in the transformation of raw materials into food and the transformation of nutrients into health outcomes, all functioning as a system within biophysical and sociocultural contexts (SOBAL et al., 1998).

The Food and Nutrition Education Reference Framework (*Marco de Referência de Educação Alimentar e Nutricional*) brings the concept of the agri-food system as the process that covers from access to land, water and the means of production, the forms of processing, supply, marketing and distribution, the choice, preparation and consumption of food, including individual and collective food practices, to the generation and disposal of waste, constituting, thus, as something complex and involving several stages (BRASIL, 2012, p. 25).

Understanding this system contributes to the process of discussing the role of the consumer in all the operations of this cycle. After all, the consumer, with all its influence of cultural and biological necessity, can act in the contribution or not of territorial development, since this same consumer is vulnerable to the process of cultural hybridization, constantly suffering influences from global cultures.

Tricher and Schneider (2014) show that the final decades of the twentieth century saw the formation of an agri-food system that achieved its internationalization and today influences the production, distribution and consumption of food, reaching the stage of dictating food diets for broad strata of the urban population. This influence also contributes to the effects of the nutritional transition, the increase in excess weight and the epidemiological transition with the growth of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (*Doenças Crônicas Não Transmissíveis* - DCNT).

With the Covid-19 pandemic there was a search for foods that could contribute to immunization and/or prevention of sequelae of the disease, which was intensified with the presence of preexisting pathologies, such as DCNT diabetes, obesity, cancer and hypertension. Even in the face of the impact on the production chains of ultra-processed foods, the demand for in natura or minimally processed foods has increased.

The agri-food system is understood as the process that ranges from access to land, water and the means of production, the forms of processing, supply, marketing and distribution, the choice, preparation and consumption of food, including individual and

collective food practices, to the generation and disposal of waste, thus constituting something complex and involving several stages (BRAZIL, 2012).

Collective practices are shown as a movement of resistance to the influences of globalized behaviors. The need for the fast and the practical aims to stimulate the choices of industrialized products, which in this way, strengthens the production of commodities, distancing the consumer from local fairs, weakening local development and stimulating health promotion and disease prevention.

In view of the above, the present work aimed to identify possible contributions of analytical and conceptual input on the role of consumers and their choices in local territorial development. Thus, in the first part of this work, sustainable consumption is discussed from the perspective and orientation of the Food Guide of the Brazilian Population (*Guia Alimentar da População Brasileira*, 2014), in the second part, commercialization as citizen participation in socioeconomic issues and, finally, the relationship of these points with local territorial development.

The path and discussion about sustainable consumption

The latest studies show the transition and discussion within alternative and/or sustainable agri-food systems. Wilkinson (2022) discusses the agri-food system sensitive to movements around demand that extends, in this case, to retail, whose economic power stems from the special relationship that is established by capturing and at the same time promoting consumer trends. These processes, which make the market competitive, result in a great demand for products and services. In this way, the contemporary consumer becomes even more discerning, with demands of modernity, quality and industrialization.

The Food Guide of the Brazilian Population (BRAZIL, 2014, p. 21), deals with how access to reliable information about the characteristics and determinants of adequate and healthy eating contributes to individuals, families and communities to expand their autonomy to make food choices and to demand compliance with the human right to adequate and healthy food.

This guide is used as a tool by several health professionals, as well as being available to the entire population, which can contribute and/or influence healthy food choices. The guide also cites “[...] traditional eating patterns, developed and transmitted over generations, as essential sources of knowledge for the formulation of recommendations aimed at promoting adequate and healthy eating” (BRAZIL, 2014, p. 21).

Tricher and Schneider (2014) show that the consumer has an important role in the movement of an organization, feeding the process in favor of the institutionalization of a new agri-food model, which can generate sovereignty, food security and development.

The Food Guide as well as the Reference Framework for Food and Nutrition Education for Public Policies are instruments and documents in the fight against food insecurity, which strengthen policies aimed at Family Agriculture and stimulate guidelines on food consumption within the context of sustainability.

Local marketing and proximity to the consumer

Within the agri-food system, the commercialization stage goes through great influences, which materialize in great challenges of this decade, namely: technology, marketing and social appeal. Such challenges comprise the global and the local, the individual and the collective.

The engagement of consumers with the State in the fulfillment of the duties and obligations of both for sustainable development would characterize the power of consumption focused on its political character. It concerns the participation of citizens in the spheres of political decision-making and their commitment to environmental causes (TRICHER; SCHNEIDER, 2020).

The citizen consumer has been emerging from this political and market decision-making process, from the moment he starts to make sustainable choices, rethinking his more active participation for his quality of life, for the common good of the community and for the protection of the environment.

In this context, the process of re-approximation of production to consumption, implying the recognition of the rupture and disconnection in the food chain, supports the idea of agricultural survival and the restoration of confidence in food production by the consumer, through localized food chains and based on new conceptions and constructions of quality (GOODMAN, 2003).

The Covid-19 pandemic may have contributed to the rapprochement of those who produce and those who consume, strengthening the bonds that, for many years, with the large supermarket chains, were lost.

The understanding that food is immersed in the synergy between productive, commercial and financial activities and structures located in all stages of food transformation of consumer production provides the overcoming of approaches based on a sectoral view of socioeconomic structures (PAULA; BEZERRA; PAULA, 2022).

The globalization of the economy has contributed to accelerate the decline of rural areas, generally identified as more fragile and with greater difficulty to face the challenges imposed by the new economic gear. The result has been a rapid process of sociodemographic transformation centered, among other factors, on the reduction of traditional agricultural activities, the entry of farmers into the productive circuit, the rural exodus and the consequent aging of the population (MARTINEZ; PIRES, 2002. p. 100).

Even in the face of this decline in rural areas, cited by the authors, and which is perceived in the confrontation with an increasingly demanding market, the rural, in particular, family agriculture has been presenting resistance with regard to more sustainable productions.

Eating patterns are changing rapidly in the vast majority of countries and, in particular, in those economically emerging. The main changes involve the replacement of in natura or minimally processed foods of vegetable origin (rice, beans, cassava, potatoes, legumes and greens) and culinary preparations based on these foods by industrialized products ready for consumption. These transformations, observed with great intensity in Brazil, determine, among other consequences, the imbalance in the supply of nutrients and the excessive intake of calories (BRAZIL, 2014, p. 18).

Local territorial development

Wilkinson (2008) brings the notions of innovation that value tacit knowledge and the dynamic complementarities of interpersonal relationships and proximity, as well as the promotion of “local innovation systems” or “local productive arrangements” that move in the same direction.

If family farming again becomes small in production in the face of the transformations in the big chains, this same smallness is increasingly seen as its strategic advantage to the extent that it’s associated with tradition, nature, craftsmanship, the local - a set of values now prized by the market (WILKINSON, 2008).

Local agri-food systems encompass concepts that are closely related to local rural development, sustainability, institutional markets, local production arrangements, quality and organic production, economic impacts on local communities and changes in consumption patterns (SOUZA; FORNAZIER; DELGROSSI, 2020).

Thus, it’s about consumption being involved in new dynamics and policies, which refer to valuations of the place, the quality of food and the relationship of the urban environment with the rural environment (TRICHER; SCHNEIDER, 2014).

Organizations and social movements lead, especially indigenous peoples and traditional populations, reflections on the strengthening of the place, the traditional culture that adds value, the stimulation of practices.

At the heart of these discussions, we emphasize the centrality of the food issue to development. Food, which was considered only a common act of the private sphere to satisfy biological needs, becomes a social problem that affects health, but also defines socioeconomic and environmental standards (TRICHER; SCHNEIDER, 2014).

This effort comes in the sense of better understanding this which is at the same time everyday, but also complex act of feeding, as determinant and determined by society and as central in the directions that are intended for development (TRICHER; SCHNEIDER, 2014).

Final Considerations

The reflections presented in this work show how the consumer becomes the center of the process for a new organization of this system that lives within this globalized and technological core. Agri-food systems undergo several socio-economic, socio-environmental and cultural transformations, which contributes to the direct influence of the consumer on food choices, which can gradually influence local development. The consumption of the population, today, has been presenting a direct contribution in the production, commercialization and local and cultural development. Access, scarcity, quality, are debates within the perspective of change, of transformation. More studies need to be carried out within this theme that places the final consumer as an active actor in the local development process.

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