

UNFOLDING MATTERS IN PUBLIC FOOD PROCUREMENT: CONTEXTUALIZING LESSONS AND STEPS FORWARD IN SCHOOL FOOD POLICY REFORM.

Camilo Lozano, Sergio Schneider, Luana Swensson, Siobhan Kelly

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to identify the core dimensions of and the challenges to innovative school food reforms. Aiming to frame the discussion, the article examines three school feeding strategies: the World Food Programme's Purchase for Progress (P4P) programme, the Brazilian School Feeding Program, and the European Public Food Procurement system. The first part conceptually defines what is meant by innovative forms of school food procurement, especially regarding its underlying values. It shows that school food reforms go beyond improving access to food, enhancing educational outputs and supporting economic development goals. School feeding holds a transformative potential, insofar as institutional purchases become organized and develop in line with the goals of sustainable development, well-being and social justice. In the second part, we present contemporary examples of good school feeding practices, whose elements might, or might not, be pertinent in particular cases. There are two main lessons emerging from our research. First, policy reform and governmental will are not enough, if the institutional and legal frameworks for operationalizing new school feeding programs are not adjusted to local conditions. Second, we argue that procurement policies or city food strategies can open spaces of manoeuvre within fiscal, material and governance constraints, although the role of social actors is essential and constructive for the success of nesting policy innovations.

Key words: public food procurement policy; school food; family farming; smallholder farmers

REPENSANDO AS COMPRAS PÚBLICAS DE ALIMENTOS: CONTEXTUALIZANDO LIÇÕES E AVANÇOS NAS REFORMAS DAS POLÍTICAS DE ALIMENTAÇÃO ESCOLAR.

RESUMO

Este artigo busca identificar as dimensões centrais e os desafios que os programas alimentação escolar estão enfrentando para inovar. Para dimensionar a discussão, o artigo analisa três experiências e seus respectivos contextos que são o sistema de compras do Programa Mundial de Alimentos para o Progresso (P4P), o programa de alimentação escolar do Brasil e sistemas de compras públicas de alimentos na Europa. A primeira parte do trabalho apresenta as características conceituais do que se entende por reformas inovadoras na aquisição pública de alimentos para as escolas, especialmente em relação aos seus princípios subjacentes. Indica-se que as reformas nos sistemas de alimentação escolar vão além de ampliar o acesso aos alimentos, ou melhorar os resultados no desempenho educacional bem como apoiar o alcance de metas de desenvolvimento econômico. Na verdade, a alimentação escolar torna-se uma chave da transformação dos sistemas alimentares escolares à medida que as compras institucionais passam a se organizar e desenvolver de forma integrada aos objetivos da sustentabilidade, bem-estar e justiça social. O artigo também apresenta exemplos contemporâneos sobre os elementos que podem ou não ser pertinentes em contextos particulares. Duas lições principais podem ser tomadas a partir de nossa pesquisa. Em primeiro lugar, a reforma das políticas públicas de alimentação escolar e o apoio dos governos não são suficientes se as instituições e leis necessárias para a operacionalização dos programas não forem adaptadas às condições locais. Em segundo lugar, demonstramos que as compras públicas ou as estratégias alimentares urbanas podem abrir espaços de manobra para superar restrições fiscais, materiais e de governança, embora o papel dos atores sociais seja essencial e construtivo.

Palavras-chave: políticas públicas de aquisição de alimentos; alimentação escolar; agricultura familiar; pequenos agricultores

MSc in Rural Development and PhD candidate at Wageningen University the Netherlands.e-mail: lozano.camilo@hotmail.com Tel 0031653343198. Troestraweg 49, 6702AG, Wageningen, NL.

Sociólogo, Mestre e Doutor em Sociologia. Professor do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Desenvolvimento Rural e do Departamento de Sociologia da UFRGS. Endereço eletrônico: schneide@ufrgs.br

PhD and Research Analyst. FAO Rome Italy. Endereço eletrônico: Luana.Swensson@fao.org

Agro-economist and FAO officer. E-mail: Siobhan.Kelly@fao.org

INTRODUCTION

Major food systems contradictions (undernutrition, malconsumption, social injustice and environmental degradation) can be addressed by the power of the public plate (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008; Smith et al., 2016). In this regard, school feeding programmes (SFPs) have emerged forcefully onto the food policy agenda in the last decade. Unlike in the past, SFPs are seen today as a major policy instrument able to tackle, at the same time, food access and food availability challenges (Sonnino et al., 2014). Moreover, they hold the potential for: improving public health nutrition outcomes; ensuring the right to food; enhancing students' performance, enrolment and attendance rates; tackling gender imbalances; and bridging rural development to food access programmes (Panel, 2015). In this context, Ashe and Sonnino (2012) contend that school food systems "...are poised to address both modes of the food security crises [hunger and obesity]; integrate systemic, structural and environmental with behavioural approaches, and comprise far-reaching, system-wide efforts that influence the wider functioning of the food system".

Research on SFPs highlights the challenges to bringing about more sustainable forms of public procurement. The approaches to the implementation of SFPs differ according to the country's economic development strategy, goals and orientation of food (security) policy, overall public health nutritional status, food balance, sources of funding, political culture and governance architecture. These differences are also reproduced in intervention frameworks in different contexts. 'Creative food procurement', a European narrative, refers to conform to multilevel public procurement rules while taking into account economic, social, and environmental values when providing food to school children. Institutional markets, a framework found in Brazil, refer to the creation of rules to enable the participation of family farmers in public tendering. Thus, it aims to promote sustainable rural development, since it suggests the creation of a fair market for regional and lo-

cal food products. The United Nations agencies advance the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) framework aiming to reduce rural poverty while tackling under-nutrition and hunger through SFPs. The HGSF programmes are intended to be sustainable, meaning that they should be nationally and locally owned. Thus, sustainability is defined as the transition from an externally funded and implemented programme to a programme designed and implemented through national policies and strategies, and necessarily involving local community and producers.

So far, however, the three aforementioned frameworks have been separately debated and not much has been written about their substantial differences and resemblances. This paper aims to contribute to advance this debate focusing on the World Food Programme's Purchase for Progress (P4P) programme, and other initiatives in Brazil and in Europe. These three cases are representative of low, middle and high income contexts. Despite this difference, as we will discuss in the paper, the analyses of SFPs reform generally feature three core components: re-localization, smallholder farming participation, and public health nutrition. Based on an in-depth analysis of key literature, case studies, and policy documents, this paper provides important insights into the potential of SFPs in the field of sustainable interventions.

1. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF SFP REFORM.

In the past, school feeding was more concerned with nutrition, education, and social protection. Today, a growing body of research shows the capacity of SFPs to steer and (re)configure food systems. SFPs are seen as both a space for transitioning to more inclusive, equitable, ecological regenerative, healthier food systems (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008) and a place for the exercise of food democracy, food security and food rights (Triches and Schneider, 2010). In this view, SFP holds the potential to link local farming systems, family farmers' economies and region-

al foodscapes to school meals. The intellectual archaeology of this narrative is arguably built upon three significant fields in the critical agri-food scholarship.

The first core value informing school food reforms emerges from debates on food system (re)localization projects. Mainly constructed in opposition to large and industrialized supply chains, this view is based on the idea that shorter food chains re-produce multiple synergies across multiple elements and activities of the food system. There are many examples, but, in short, the merits of re-localization strategies are held in terms of: social and nutritional quality of food, attributes of relations between producers and consumers, responsiveness of local food systems to global pressures, civic involvement and social interaction, re-allocation of economic gains into local economies, and geographical distance from the place of production to places of consumption (Sonnino, 2010). A celebration of the local that goes together with major criticism. Opponents of the ‘farm to school’ design, who branded it as the ‘local trap’, claim that instead of infusing other values into the food chain, the formalization of public contracts reproduces cost minimization strategies, logic of competition and the dismantling of welfare state responsibilities through dominant neo-liberal structures (Allen and Guthman, 2006).

Another body of literature reinforces the perils of equating local foods with healthier and sustainable diets. For instance, Edwards-Jones (2010) claims that in the UK local food is not always superior to non-local products in terms of impact on climate change and on the health of consumers. Cross et al. (2009), comparing health status of farm workers in UK, Spain, Kenya and Uganda, conclude that transitioning from global- to local-based food systems can have unintended consequences in low income countries, especially in relation to labour rights compliance of global vis-a-vis local food chains.

In response to the criticism, scholars call for a more pragmatic locus regarding localizing foods served at public canteens (Goodman et al., 2011). The notions of cosmopolitan and

defensive localism are advanced in an attempt to synthesise this debate (see, Morgan, 2010). By conceptualizing space as relational, cosmopolitan strategies depict the ‘local’ as recursive, inclusive, and open to negotiation. Thus, localizing public food procurement is not simply a matter of choosing between global or industrialized foods and local or artisanal foods. It is rather about integrating social, environmental, and economic targets into public purchasing culture. In contrast, in defensive strategies, local is self-referential, elitist, politically closed and defines localization as a goal rather than a process. This distinction opens up the possibility for school feeding programmes to undergo incremental and bottom-up changes – no matter how entrenched they may be in the functioning of contemporary forms of capitalism and its supporting neo-liberal values (Sonnino, 2010).

The second major influence on traditional SFPs thinking has been the relation between food security and the development of markets for smallholders – a phenomenon broadly called HGSF by multilateral organizations, or institutional markets in Brazil. Powerful normative arguments and figures support this observation (e.g., Gelli et al., 2012). On one hand, concessional food aid undermines or bypasses national agricultures (Friedmann, 2005). Thus, by strengthening national food markets a country’s food capacity can be substantially broadened (Schneider et al., 2016). On the other hand, widening the access to institutional markets can generate income, which in turn contributes to protect the social reproduction of family farmers. As these latter supply about 70% of the world food staples, family farming is, therefore, the pillar of world food availability. In short, access to institutional markets creates both rural livelihood prospects and stable food supply. However, in crafting economic incentives for smallholder farmers, major obstacles emerge, especially when facing routinized practices of institutional procurement (table 1).

TABLE 1. MAIN BARRIERS TO SMALLHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL FOOD MEALS

BARRIER	DETAIL
Policy regime	Public procurement does not prioritize sustainable purchases nor smallholders' foods
Legal issues	Country general procurement law limits entry to institutional markets to few participants
Tendering process	The framing of public bids and contracts does not match to the logic and organizational capacities of smallholder farmers
Support to smallholder farming	In many low and middle income countries, there is no institutional and policy architecture dedicated to smallholder farming
Food standards	Food safety compliance prevents the participation of family farmers
Level, nature and governance of funding	The commitment of either international donors or national governments to school food reform is not reflected in the allocation of funds. Donor paternalism or concessional food aid embitters relationships and prevents the design of comprehensive programmes. Poor harmonization of local tendering with international funding culture.
Procurement manager perception	Cost perceptions, poor knowledge of local agriculture, lack of leadership, organizational inertia, and regulatory confusion
Appropriate cooking facilities and staff	Smallholder and family farmers' staple foods require culinary processes. And, in many cases, there is a lack of built infrastructure and human capital to support this activity.
Scale	Supplying food to large school food districts requires heavy logistical infrastructure and quantity/quality management skills

Source: the authors

Another question worth asking is about what farming systems and social relations are (re)produced by institutional markets. At an analytical level, this observation is grounded on the value chain approach adopted by many governments and international agencies. An attitude that aims to link school food to farmers by taking smallholders generally as rational actors who make decisions based solely on economic interest. Besides disregarding socio-cultural practices, this assumption underestimates the key role of other values and multiple negotiations among the supply chain actors. This is to say that most of the times, the design of SFPs is disconnected from the 'local rules of the game' (Sumberg and Sabates-Wheeler, 2011). Hence, outcomes are likely to differ from those envisaged at other scales.

The third core value within the school food reform debate emphasizes that bimodal forms of food insecurity go beyond nutrition transition (FAO, 2012). It revises the relationship between people's deteriorating nutritional status, agricultural regimes and sus-

tainability. From this perspective, the coexistence of obesity and hunger, in many aspects, relates to a mono-functional character of the intensive food regime. It is mono-functional because it focuses on making available more calories, whereas nutritional and environmental aspects, access to food and social justice are given less significance. Consequently, there is a call for considering public health outcomes in the design of food policies – as Lang (2010) writes, it is necessary to take into account “all diet-related ill-health, not just hunger”.

Some authors suggest that the three core values and key messages of SFPs can be integrated into a single frame of action. Morgan and Sonnino (2010), for instance, suggest that SFPs must be considered from a whole-school approach “that embeds the healthy eating message into a wider educational package that stresses the positive links between food, fitness, health, and both physical and mental well-being”. Alternatively, Wiskerke (2009) proposes to embed school reform into an alternative food geography. From this perspective, SFP reform implicates *connecting* public and private actors, *embedding* public sector into the regional economy, and *intertwining* school food with quality of life, health, social inclusion, regional economy education and environment.

Much of the aforementioned literature takes SFPs to be an emergent or transitional food system that is reproduced – or protected – through the performance of a greener, welfare state. By emphasising that sustainable development is about injecting environmental and social justice perspectives into economic policies (Lang and Barling, 2013), the state is viewed as a legitimate institution, able to regulate, facilitate cultural change, and counterbalance free movement of global capital (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008). More importantly, it has more resources than any other producer, processor, distributor, retailer, or consumer in the food chain. Hence, it is argued that public purchasing decisions can achieve the government function of providing public goods and services at large scale, while enhancing

ecological, social, and economic outcomes at many levels. An aim further encapsulated in what Giddings et al. (2002) label “three pillars”, Lehtonen (2004), “three spheres”, Henriques and Richardson (2013), “triple bottom line”, and Morgan and Sonnino (2008), the three fundamental and normative principles of sustainable development: economy, environment, and society.

In picking our way through these conceptual debates, we are broadly sympathetic to the view that people in different contexts, spaces and time have different priorities, needs, interests and answers. The process of re-scaling the food system, re-valuing the role of smallholder farmers, nurturing school menus, challenging intensive foodscapes, and re-imagining SFPs’ change is based on social relations. However, context specific processes delineate procurement trajectories that can be analysed in terms of political, environmental, and social forces leading to the implementation of SFPs across geo-histories. In the next section, we will explore to what extent and how the discussions on sustainable school food procurement and its features – re-localization, smallholder farming participation, and public health nutrition – have composed the design and implementation of SFPs in different contexts.

2. WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME’S PURCHASE FOR PROGRESS (P4P)

In countries characterized by widespread food and nutrition insecurity, SFPs’ values are associated with social policies (like safety nets), education and child development. Indeed, SFPs link the promises of breaking intergenerational poverty with reduction of undernourishment, promotion of school attendance and better learning outcomes. Nevertheless, countries in utmost need for SFP are the least covered, and eighty three percent of funds for these programs come from international development organizations (WFP, 2013). Accordingly, sustainability within UN system is sharply defined in terms of the tran-

sition from dependence on donors, to national funding. A dependency historically materialized in food ‘donations’ or food purchased from big traders, using donors’ resources. One promising policy to break this arrangement is HGSF or food purchase from poor smallholder farmers. In this regard, in 2002, the United Nations Hunger Task Force (UNHTF) proposed the HGSF as a win-win initiative for reducing food insecurity. One year later, UNHTF and the African Union New Partnership (NEPAD) referred to HGSF as ‘An African solution for an African problem’. The program regards particularly to public procurement as a prime tool for the reduction of rural poverty. However, in the following years, only five out of twelve African nations involved in the initiative adopted HGSF guidelines.

One major barrier to the adoption of HGSF has been WFP’s general procurement scheme. It gives little room for flexibility in contract negotiations, choosing suppliers, food safety and quality standards, as well as payments schemes. Paralleling this situation, recurrent fiscal constraints favour economies of scale to the detriment of atomized purchases from smallholders. Facing this multi-layered policy challenge, WFP launched a five years’ pilot programme aiming to increase smallholder’s access to markets, agricultural productivity (especially staple foods) and post-harvest handling skills.

The implementation of P4P in 20 pilot countries rested on three pillars: (i) demand – by testing innovative ways of buying food, using adapted contractual mechanisms and promoting marketing opportunities for smallholder farmers; (ii) supply – by investing in capacity building with the support of different partners; (iii) learning and sharing – by gathering lessons on effective approaches to link smallholder farmers to markets and sharing such lessons with governments and other stakeholders to support market development efforts (WFP, 2012). From September 2008 to December 2013, P4P bought food worth over US\$148 million, which was used primarily for school meals, though also for other WFP operations.

2.1. P4P PROCUREMENT MODALITIES AND CRITERIA

The P4P pilot provided WFP with the opportunity to adapt its procurement policies and procedures. Under WFP's standard procurement procedures for competitive tendering, the organization buys large quantities of food, mainly from well-established traders and processors. These traditional procedures follow WFP general procurement policy based on cost-efficiency, timeliness, transparency and appropriateness to beneficiaries' needs. While WFP conventional procurement practices select suppliers able to provide substantial quantities of graded commodities in a timely and reliable manner, its procurement policy also states that, when conditions are equal, priority shall be given to purchasing from developing countries. Thus, the implementation of P4P can be seen as a continuation of food procurement from developing countries suppliers. Nevertheless, it intends to achieve higher social benefits through buying food from smallholder farmers (Fig 1).

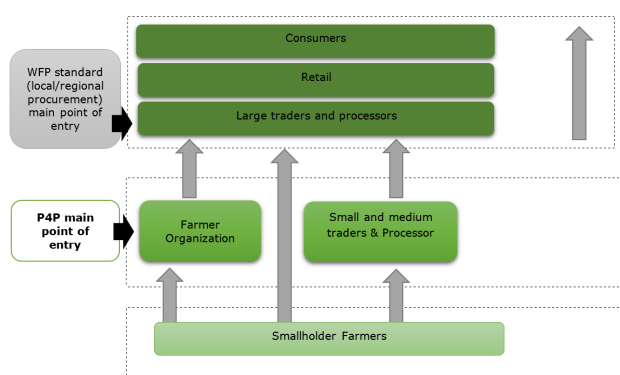


Fig 1. P4P Intervention Target (adapted from WFP, 2012)

WFP adapted its traditional procurement procedures and instruments to the capacities and characteristics of smallholder suppliers (Table 2). The most relevant mechanisms for changing procedures cover three areas: contracting procedures, payments, and logistics. New modalities of contracting mechanisms including direct contract, soft tenders, and forward contracts were also introduced and tested. The type and success of the contracting mechanisms differ from country to country de-

pending on the commodity, capacity of farmer organizations and local market structures.

TABLE 2. COMPARISON BETWEEN WFP STANDARDS (NATIONAL/REGIONAL) AND P4P PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES

PARAMETER	REGULAR LOCAL/REGIONAL WFP PROCUREMENT	WFP PROCUREMENT THROUGH P4P
Suppliers	Pre-qualified suppliers (mostly larger traders) with legal standing, financial capacity, delivery capacity and good performance record	Pre-qualified farmer organizations and small and medium traders
Contracting mechanisms	Competitive tenders	Direct contracts Soft tenders Forward contracts Warehouse receipt system
Price	Determined by authorized contracting mechanisms but not to exceed import parity	Determined by authorized contracting mechanisms but not to exceed import parity
Quantities	Preference for relatively large quantities	It will consider much smaller quantities to accommodate suppliers' capacity
Performance bond	5-10 %	None
Quality	WFP Standards	WFP Standards
Bagging	Bagged in 50 kg bags and marked with WFP logo	Flexible to accommodate capacity of supplier (WFP may subside marked bags and/or waive marking)
Delivery terms	Delivery duty unpaid (DDU) to specified WFP warehouse on specified date	Flexible (WFP may collect the commodity, modify delivery to the nearest warehouse, allow extended delivery times etc.)
Payment	30- 60 days	≤ 14 days

Source: Adapted from WFP, 2012

These mechanisms were introduced on the premise that the support received from P4P for collective marketing and quality improvement would allow farmers' organizations to gradually acquire the capabilities needed to supply to WFP. Equally relevant is the fact that P4P aims to identify barriers and challenges to local procurement within the scope of international development, of donors and recipients formal agreements, and of implementation of HGSE. In other words, P4P was also a laboratory for the WFP to associate its purchasing power and procurement practices with policy and market structures in the global South. In the following, we present

the challenges and lessons learnt in the fields of policy formulation and implementation.

2.2. P4P MAIN BARRIERS TO AND LESSONS IN BUYING FOOD FROM SMALL-HOLDERS.¹

The design and implementation of an institutional procurement initiative requires a holistic approach. Enough food supply and institutional will are key elements. However, it is necessary to develop, address, and coordinate various elements regarding policy development, legal frameworks, and demand and supply issues.

2.2.1. Demand side: Developing procurement mechanisms that respond to smallholders' capacity

Payment time lags, transport and logistics, and particularly a complex procurement procedure were identified as the main operational barriers for smallholders to participate in P4P. As a response, WFP succeeded in developing and testing a series of tools for improvements like shorter payment time, flexible and customized transport and logistics systems. It customized the administrative procedures and harmonized different contractual mechanisms to meet smallholders' capacity. In other words, the demand side also changes when food procurement targets smallholder farmers.

Concurrently, at national level, the main challenge is to adapt WFP procedures to public procurement regulation. Those legislations generally impose a bidding process that, similarly to the WFP standard bidding, hinders the participation of local and smallholder producers. In simple words, smallholders cannot compete with larger producers and traders under the same conditions. This stands especially when competitive bidding combines centralized governance architectures (FAO,

2013). The challenge is how to shape public procurement legislation to accommodate new procurement procedures capable of simultaneously taking into account the capacities and characteristic of smallholder suppliers (and, in this sense, being 'smallholder friendly') and maintaining the core principles that protect the interests of the public buyer.

2.2.2. Supply side: dealing with smallholders' constraints

WFP organizational and financial capacity can be tailored for the formation of local markets based on: procedures designed for smallholders; enhancement of smallholders' technical knowledge (post-harvest handling, logistics and value addition through reduction of costs and of food losses and improvement of quality control and standards); and development of marketing skills (associations' management and governance, negotiation and advocacy, etc.). Capacity building in all these areas was provided through partnerships with private and public actors, producing particularly good results in countries where national programmes already existed and into which P4P could tap, demonstrating the importance of a favourable policy-enabling environment (see, Kelly and Mbizule, 2014). The key legal issues intrinsically related to enabling institutional procurement from smallholder farmers are: (i) regulation of public procurement; (ii) food safety and sanitary legislation; (iii) legal structure and regulation of smallholder producers' organizations (iv) development of operational definitions of smallholders at national level (v) adequate legislation and frameworks for smallholder credits and extension services. Other legislations such as contract law, rules on land tenure, organic production, and tax legislation are also relevant for creating enabling environments.

¹The analysis of P4P experience is based on FAO's work and case studies developed by the Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division (AGS). The case studies on seven P4P pilot countries are available at <http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/ivc/institutional-procurement/en/>

Finally, and despite P4P's investments in building capacities among smallholders or institutional buyers intention to harmonize procurement rules, there is still much research to conduct, especially in regard to the multiplicity of actors and knowledges participating in the provision of food in countries where issues of market formation and distribution remain a challenge. Often, traders and well-established economic relations of the locale appear to be better suited to the needs and production capacities of small producers than those advanced in HGSP. This is to say that bypassing traditional food traders and long-standing market practices should be assessed in the concreted and not taken for granted as negative at the time of the design of localized forms of SFPs.

3. LINKING FAMILY FARMERS TO SCHOOL MEALS: SOME LESSONS FROM BRAZIL

In line with HGSP principles, in Brazil, sustainability aligns social and nutritional values i.e., it means ensuring family farmers' access to institutional markets, while enhancing the nutritional status of students. However, contrary to what is generalized in HGSP, Brazil built up a supportive legal environment to enable family farmers and procurement managers to construct regional and local institutional markets. There is, moreover, another relevant difference. Food security is a social right that emphasizes the role of the State in respecting, protecting, promoting and providing access to sustainable (adequate) food. The Law N° 11.947, issued in 2009, empowers sub-national units to use public procurement to further family farming economy, by means of a policy that explicitly links sustainable rural development to food re-localization.

The social construction of the school feeding law, which operationalizes the right to food in the schools, has been widely studied in Brazil (e.g., Triches, 2015; Vicente-Almazan et al., 2016). In short, the main forces behind the formulation of this law are: the country

re-democratization, family farmers' struggles to find fair markets, the political advocacy of their organizations, participation of food and nutrition security community in policy design, and the political will to reform the overall food security situation. The implementation of this law and its social benefits are further studied in other articles in this special issue. However, it is important to recall the coexistence of undernourishment and over-nourishment among children and young people in Brazil – a new bi-modality of the food insecurity equation that affects social groups historically subject to limited access to adequate foods (Sidaner et al., 2012). Hence, a 'double burden of malnutrition' creates the more recent ground for intervention through SFPs, so that to enhance food access and promote consumption of fresh and semi-processed foods.

In a sense, the question of school food procurement in Brazil is no longer about changes in metagovernance structures – although there is still much to reform. The public procurement question in Brazil, we argue, is about how to capture at multiple levels and scales the sustainable values promoted by SFPs – i.e., fair markets for family farmers, local, regional and organic foods, public health nutrition, and food democracy. Our research shows that, at the state levels, two interrelated dimensions can reinforce the role of institutional markets: fostering intra-ministerial collaboration and adapting decentralized public food procurement to upstream and downstream needs.

3.1 FOSTERING INTRA-MINISTERIAL COLLABORATION AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Different ministries, food agencies, and regulatory schemes take part in achieving the goals of SFP reform. Common to all these is their multi-faceted nature. Some are in charge of building physical infrastructure, providing extension services and credit, while others, for instance, regulate food safety, provide nutritional advice, manage education, and regulate SFP procurement processes. This, in turn,

calls for an also multi-faceted legal, policy and institutional environment. Thus, for instance, the administrative and regulatory structure of SFP, managed by the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE), can benefit from analyses and indicators produced by the national food security system or from food based nutritional guidelines. In this sense, there is much to be accomplished if the goal is to advance complementary core messages. The low level of policy harmonization between the 2014 Brazilian food-based dietary guidelines (issued by the Ministry of Health) and the nutritional recommendations of FNDE can be seen as a symptom of policy framework disconnection. Whereas the general dietary guidelines of 2014 give a robust though simple cultural recommendation that minds the environment, SFP reform frames nutrition in technical terms attentive to rural developments. Both could potentially create synergies across different food systems if the environmental, cultural and social goals converged to a clear point of reference. Another challenge, from the state perspective, is that of fostering regional and municipal interdepartmental coordination. Although the agricultural extension agencies (EMATER) and procurement managers often cooperate, this cooperation is rather based on personal relations (Balem, 2015). The regional and municipal food and nutritional security councils can facilitate the institutionalization of SFPs innovations.

3.2 ADAPTING DECENTRALIZED PUBLIC FOOD PROCUREMENT TO UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM NEEDS.

In general, decentralised public food procurement systems are considered more effective for reducing waste, avoiding large-scale fraud, improving responses to consumers' needs, and connecting rural development to city needs. A decentralised SFP means that there are more opportunities for the municipalities to foster local-city linkages that suit family farmers and schools, with spill-over benefits for the community (Triches and Schneider, 2010). In addition, it is at de-

centralised local levels that dietary preferences of students can be fine-tuned for seasonality, cultural and nutritional values. However, decentralisation requires city or municipal investments (Fernandes et al., 2016), but in many small municipalities investments in school food infrastructure are rather limited. Thus, federal or state investments in such SFPs can enhance the programme outcomes.

Furthermore, procurement managers' priorities can be a source of competing interests and claims. This reflection comes specifically into play regarding federal and local levels. The conflicting values of the school feeding and the general procurement law 8.666 – *value for money* – diminish the potential of school food reform (Froehlich and Schneider, 2013). This is the case, for instance, where municipalities set prices based on wholesale or supermarkets prices, reproducing the logic of economies of scale, rather than the family farming economy. Another example of competing interests over school meals is the dissension between state and municipal led SFPs. By large, municipal managed food systems represent a more systematic answer to the challenges of the school food reform. But, the integration of state schools into the municipal educational system requires long-term perspective, political will and clear lines of responsibility.

Despite these challenges, a detailed analysis of the driving forces that induce school food reform in cities shows the key role of dieticians as effective enablers at the political, administrative, and commercialization levels. This includes mobilizing internal resources to harmonize conflicting procurement values, empowering the formation and working of the school feeding councils, and negotiating food qualities. Moreover, they are key actors in envisioning and materializing new forms of provision routines. This observation suggests that there are key actors connecting federal interest on SFP with municipal school food strategies, who are major drivers for SFPs reform. For example, although in Garibaldi, RS, local, organic, and family farming based food

procurement began with changes in national legislation, the previous existence of a farmers' cooperative can be accounted for its rapid adoption. Thus, family farmers' participation is not ensured by only changing procurement laws or adapting municipal contracting culture. On the contrary, their supply capacity and ability to maintain commercial relations with the state are of equal importance when constructing a strong provision framework over time and space.

These few instances of the major challenges facing school food reform in Brazil suggest the need for further research². Additional inquiries might include the size of the school food district, polycentric governing structure in large cities, the volume and quality of food required, public health nutritional needs, institutional procurement capacities and particular foodscapes.

4. GREENING THE REALM: THE CASE OF SCHOOL FOOD REFORM IN EUROPEAN CITIES.

In welfare oriented societies, the public sector represents a significant part of the procurement. In the European Economic area, it accounts for about 16% of GDP. Only in the UK, for instance, public sector agencies serve around 3.5 million meals per week-day, or €2.36 billion a year, and half of this amount goes to buy food for schools (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008). Differently from both HGSF and the Brazilian case, in the EU, the central values attached to the school food reform stem from environmental and food quality concerns. Indeed, environmental priorities are put forward to greening public procurement. This is to say that the imperative to reduce GHG emissions, and to protect natural resources or landscapes is thought to be achieved by means of buying more organ-

ic, seasonal, local and fresh foods. Likewise, school food procurement managers aim to foster healthier eating habits by intervening in the kind of food being provided.

In general, however, European agri-food institutions are nested in a particular view of green consumerism, green choice or green economic growth – a weak form of '*ecological modernization*' (Horlings and Marsden, 2011). This is often referred to in policy documents as resource efficient and low carbon economy. A policy orientation reinforcing neo-liberal market philosophy, which tends to outsource social food services such as school canteens, enforces procedures aiming 'fair' competition (non-discrimination principles) and contract award criteria based on the lowest price. Indeed, while large catering companies dominate the institutional market, their adherence to sustainable and public health values remains controversial (Wiskerke, 2009)

From a food policy perspective, scholars point that SFPs design and implementation are part of a complex process of interactions, in which regulatory regimes are re-interpreted. In other words, the capacity to engage with values beyond the 'green culture' lies in the city level. Indeed, EU procurement rules apply to all countries, but national food cultures and the general role attributed to the public sector help to explain existing differences between public purchasing practices and the sustainable values in SFP (Sonnino, 2009). Thus, it is argued that cities are the place where local SFP initiatives aiming to promote sustainability collide with the food system's contradictions and the particular implementation strategies. As a result, school food reform takes different forms, especially concerning interactive processes of localization and political forces.

The most cited example of these interactions is the case of Rome. This city adopted an incremental approach to School Food reform, as shown in Table 3. It included organ-

² The socio-economic and socio-spatial dynamics of school food reform in Brazil is part of a sub-research theme of a Marie Curie Initial Training Network funded by the European Commission. Information about the PUREFOOD network can be found at <http://purefoodnetwork.eu/>. The final research report of the Brazilian cases is expected to be released in 2016 in a PhD thesis of the first author of this article.

ic products (environmentally friendly products), Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) products (territoriality and traceability), fair trade bananas and chocolate bars (social sustainability), improvement of kitchens and eating environments (food culture), education projects (food literacy) and waste reduction and re-use (CO2 reduction). This approach has redefined quality of the service and created synergies across the three pillars of sustainability (Sonnino, 2009; Barling et al., 2013). As to the compliance with procurement rules, there is an award criterion that does not challenge the EU non-discrimination principles in particular, or cost reduction strategies at more general level (see table 3).

TABLE 3. AN EXAMPLE OF AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH TO SCHOOL FOOD REFORM

Stage	Food quality requirements overtime
Phase 1: 2002 - 2004	Prerequisites for contract allocation for catering companies were based on: inclusion of fresh organic fruit and vegetables during the first year of contract; organic legumes, bread, baked products, pasta, rice, eggs, and canned tomatoes during the second year; only vegetables with a short harvesting season (peas, green beans, and spinach) could be supplied frozen. Contracts were awarded on a 100-point award system in which the price proposed accounted for 51 points, also counting organization of the service (30 pts), food education (15 pts), additional organic & PDO/PGI products (4 pts)
Phase 2: 2004 - 2006	Outline of more specific requirements, including: seasonality or summer and winter menu design; variety or no meal to be served more than once every five weeks; territoriality or certification of meat products, bread baked and packaged within six hours and consumed no longer than 12 hours after packaging; harmonization of programme with dietary guidelines of the Italian Institute of Nutrition
Phase 3: 2007- 2012	Additional criteria comprised: social inclusion or design of ethnic menus; and environmental sustainability or the use of low-impact detergents, bio-degradable plates, recycling plans; and food miles
Phase 4: 2013- 2018	Further principles included: More local products (within 150 kms); fresh fish instead of frozen, sourcing products from social co-operatives, reduction of energy consumption, and re-use of leftovers from school canteens

Source: adapted from (Sonnino 2009, Barling, Andersson et al. 2013)

A recent three years' project, 'Foodlinks³', took the Rome observations further and studied the potential of SFP to engage in sustainable transitions in five EU cities (Smith et al., 2016). As in the Brazilian case, politi-

cal will translates into adequate provision of resources, procurement managers' compromise and motivations, networking among key stakeholders, and appropriate infrastructure. Likewise P4P, there is a complicated and multi-layered system of procurement rules and cultures, which can (or cannot) be subject to reinterpretation for fostering changes. At the same time, diversity rather than regularity characterizes the efforts to procure food based on values beyond its nutritional content. These new values associated with school food include from civil society participation to coping with health inequalities, from reducing water pollution to culinary innovation. In this context, it is concluded that policy innovations stemming either from environmental, legal or public health concerns can have positive impacts on any other of these pillars (Smith et al., 2016).

A further factor behind the endurance of school food reform is political continuance. Indeed, challenging the lowest cost culture requires support from the municipal government. Within this context, mobilizing public health nutrition seems to be more effective than environmental or localization arguments (Moragues et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the biggest challenge to scaling out school food reform is put by the strict regulation based on the best value' or 'the economically most advantageous tender'. Moreover, as in the case of P4P, fiscal constraints in public administration make this challenge especially hard to overcome.

5. WORKING WITHIN THE FRINGES OF CHANGE, EMERGING ISSUES IN SCHOOL FOOD PROCUREMENT.

We showed some valuable experiments interweaving public food procurement with genuine food security or sustainable food systems. They emerged across different geo-his-

³ The Foodlinks project (<http://www.foodlinkscommunity.net/foodlinks-home.html>) aimed to develop and experiment with new ways of linking research to policy-making in the field of sustainable food consumption-production. Concerning school feeding, it studied five EU cities where creative procurement has been successfully implemented. The full research report can be found at: (http://www.foodlinkscommunity.net/fileadmin/documents_organicresearch/foodlinks/publications/Foodlinks_report_low.pdf)

torical contexts and scales. Some have moved forward, while others dissolved. The persistence of initiatives is related to a dispersed set of food policies and practices, in a pragmatic but meaningful way. In this sense, small scale menu planning deals with well-circumscribed challenges, while procurement policies at larger scales open spaces for action. None of the two processes occurs without the struggles of civil society, family farmers and municipal actors over the conditions defining what constitutes 'adequate' school meals. In other words, reforming SFP is a political process, in which power relations might either hinder or enhance the option for more sustainable initiatives.

In all three cases, civil society organisations played a fundamental role in instigating school food reforms. They exposed the contradictions of the industrialized food systems and generated demands within the state or supra-state spheres. In Europe, for instance, the worsening of population's health (especially regarding obesity issues) and environmental issues (such as pollution and food waste) led social actors to develop efforts and demands to create city food policies and establish food councils. By the same token, organized civil society in Brazil influences policy making at higher levels as a result of long periods of poor food access. Therefore, the construction of food security as a matter of social rights puts forward various initiatives aiming to link supply and demand. Similarly, civil society participation in the United Nation system moved forward the conventionalized food aid framework towards initiatives such P4P.

Regarding sustainability, civil society, state and food producers alike consider localization an important route to it, though being not the only one. Such route, however is outlined in different ways. P4P aims to reduce smallholders' poverty – and aspires to multiply its effects throughout local agriculture. Indeed, boosting supply, which is considered one of the challenges to food security, is inherently linked to fighting poverty. Yet supranational organizations frame sustainability in

terms of a country's self-sufficiency in financing school food. In the case of Brazil, the nature of institutional markets answers to 'family farming' demands, while improving decentralization and meals quality amid a nutrition transition panorama. In addition, school food reform in Brazil aims to rise incomes in poor rural settings. However, localizing and fostering family farmers' participation in the school food system does not mean that reducing poverty among local producers is a priority, since pupils remain as the primary target of policy design. In this case, additional social policies have substantially contributed to poverty reduction in the rural, particularly rural retirement schemes, minimum wage policies, universal health and education, and direct cash transfers. In other words, SFP in Brazil is part of a national food security strategy. On the other hand, rural poverty is absent from the European debate, and environmental claims are raised for favouring local food consumption and production.

In framing SFP as a tool for fostering new relations of production-consumption, the state plays a key role. For instance, in Brazil, the state created new commercial channels for family farmers and a new set of qualities for consumers and procurement managers. This is a clear indication that the role of the State goes beyond financing and inspection. It actively participates in the creation of alternative food economies by incorporating new social, economic and nutritional values into the procurement culture of cities. Furthermore, smallholder participation in institutional markets have opened new channels and pathways for exchange of knowledge, which in turn generate processes of innovation and learning. These experiences could be important for both gaining access to other markets and generating commitment towards more sustainable forms of producing and consuming food. Alternatively, in Europe, linking supply and demand goes beyond matters of covering the basic needs of producers and consumers. The green state often indicates a shift in priorities towards less industrialized food systems. Cit-

ies design urban food strategies – such as SFP – to foster new spatial and economic relations, like investing in local-regional or fair food economies. However, in our account, the notion of ‘green state’ can be misleading in medium and low income countries. This is because greening priorities can mask low levels of social protection against marked inequalities.

While in P4P capacity building is addressed to the supply, in Europe, foodscapes are reshaped on the demand side by building adequate kitchens and eating environments, promoting education and training for catering staff, and moving towards a whole-school approach. It can be argued that both approaches can learn from each other. P4P can invest in school kitchen infrastructure and capacity building for WFP procurement officers; and city food strategies might consider to take up extension services aiming to provide healthier food options to people.

Finally, it can be said that SFP reform varies according to the context and the institutional framework in which it is embedded. The institutional structure that organizes SFP governance follows different legal procedures, according to the state’s characteristics and the public procurement organizational structure. Another important aspect refers to policy objectives sought within the three SFP approaches. While in Brazil there is an attempt to strengthen local economies, especially small farming, the P4P model aims to strengthen agri-food production in general, not necessarily a place-based development. Finally, European programs are characterized by favouring the provision of distinct food products, aimed at creating spaces for the emergence of consumer-producer relations that embrace more sustainable routines.

OLD AND NEW CHALLENGES: SOME FINAL COMMENTS.

The issues discussed in this paper lead us to ask about progresses made and challenges to institutional school food procurement. In concluding, we could refer to Maxwell

and Slater’s (2003) work on food policy persistence and novelty. The old school of food policy design aimed to address undernutrition and hunger. In doing so, it tackled problems related to children’s school performance, assistance and nutritional status. Despite some advances, research interrogates SFP’s limits, especially in relation to prevalence of stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiency disorders (Bhutta et al., 2013; Panel, 2015). On the supply side, old challenges were framed in terms of low food production and delivery capacity at national level, which in turn became a justification to buy foods from anywhere, produced outside the vicinity of cities and schools. In fact, private and large catering companies monopolize SFP around the world. Finally, a third feature of SFP is related to the kind of food offered. Even today, school meals are not daily cooked and made from fresh foods. This contributes to make industrialized products an usual component of children’s food habits, to the detriment of regional food cultures.

In the last two decades, however, there have been significant advances in understanding the potential of school meals. The demand for food is now seen as a potential market for local farmers and food entrepreneurs. In addition, the amount of financial resources that school feeding programs can inject into the local economies is considerable. These facts are of prime importance when one takes into account that a significant proportion of the world poor population lives in rural areas. Hence, SFPs have come to be perceived as drivers for local development, especially in poor countries and regions.

Another key aspect shown in this article is that there are legal instruments and governance mechanisms that make possible the inclusion and participation of small farmers in these markets. Moreover, what seems to be more promising is that locally designed school food markets are not a point of arrival but a passage. School food provisioning can create learning processes and build skills, which can allow smallholder producers to have access to

other markets. In this sense, it is worth bringing back the recommendations of the Global Panel (2015). The report considers essential to integrate food policies and public health nutrition actions with initiatives that integrate agricultural and rural development.

Finally, there is not an ideal model to be followed in the pathways of SFP reform. The cases presented here can be seen as examples of good practices. Specific contexts, geo-histories and social situation will demand diverse institutional and organizational responses. Moreover, the interaction of smallholders or family farmers with procurement managers creates moments when procurement values are reshaped in ways that slightly, but sometimes significantly, alter the entrenched and routinized forms of institutional food procurement.

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