

A person is shown from the chest up, holding a large, circular metal lid or tray. The person is wearing a dark, long-sleeved shirt. The background is an industrial setting with a diamond-plate metal surface and some machinery. The entire image is tinted with a strong red color. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**ATLAS
OF FOOD SYSTEMS
OF THE SOUTHERN
CONE**



ATLAS

PANDEMIC / PUBLIC POLICIES / HUNGER / POVERTY / WOMEN / CHILDREN

OF FOOD SYSTEMS

AGRIBUSINESS / CORPORATIONS / AGROCHEMICALS / CLIMATE CHANGE

OF THE SOUTHERN

PEASANT MOVEMENTS / AGROECOLOGY / FAIR TRADE / SEEDS

CONE

ARGENTINA / BRAZIL / CHILE / PARAGUAY / URUGUAY


FUNDACIÓN
ROSA
LUXEMBURGO

2022



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PRESENTATION

We are living in times of anguish, of successive crises that are increasingly global and more intense, that affect us across broad spectrum of social life. We also live in a time of denial, in which existing alternatives are systematically hidden from us. The emergence of hunger on a colossal scale in the beginning of the 21st century is symptomatic of that paralyzing duality.

In the year that the health crisis triggered by COVID-19 devastated the world, 118 million people started to live in acute hunger. If it were a country, that contingent of hungry people would be the 12th most populous in the world, with more people than Egypt, Germany, or the United Kingdom. Those numbers, presented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in a report released in 2021, provide an overview of the immense calamity in which we live.

This situation has only worsened with the effects of the war in Europe. Global food prices reached historical highs in March-April, 2022, affecting even more countries and populations that are facing enormous difficulties due to rising food costs. This third global food price crisis in the last 15 years was unleashed now because of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, but it has been fueled by the persistent underlying defects and fragilities on which our food systems are based, such as dependency on imports and excessive speculation with raw materials.

We produced the *Atlas of Southern Cone Food Systems* in this scenario: a context of the intensification of crises triggered by an agricultural model that is incapable of adequately feeding the population. It is a system built by global megacorporations, based on the financial market and the increasingly intense use of new technologies, in order to extract more profits from each operation, without worrying about the social and environmental costs.

Given the impossibility of developing sovereign agrarian economies in the Southern Cone, the consequences of the systemic injustice that compromises the right to food of the most marginal communities are felt with increasing force. This is what we demonstrate throughout Part I of the *Atlas*, when we present the reasons for which a region like the Southern Cone, widely stocked with natural resources, with vast agricultural lands, is unable to provide food of sufficient quality and quantity for its populations. As if that were not enough, those countries still have to absorb the social and environmental costs of a productive system that destroys nature, contaminates rivers, and expels people from the countryside, violating Indigenous peoples.

But this *Atlas* also attempts to present eventual possible solutions to the situation we are facing. Over the years, grassroots and peasants organizations in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay have built practices

of solidarity and resistance and social experiences that point to other forms of organization of social life. During the pandemic, solidarity practices for supplying food emerged and were strengthened with the creation of networks to deliver healthy food at a fair price to the entire population. New forms of resistance against the corporate capture of food supply and nutrition were generated through networks, *allas populares*, community kitchens and gardens, more sovereign commercialization systems, and, above all, the firm decision to not speculate with food prices. But these experiences of food distribution had already existed for many years in each one of the countries, led by cooperatives and peasant organizations, and articulated with urban organizations. The pandemic rendered visible something that the concentration of an oligopolist industry has long attempted to keep hidden: that it is the peasant and grassroots systems of production that feed the people, proposing alternatives for a sovereign food system.

From the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, in a collaboration between the Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo offices, we proposed looking at the five southern-most countries of the Americas to analyze and present an x-ray of food systems in the region. This analysis enables us to understand the logic and a model composed of concentrated mega corporations that, from the seed to the dinner table, control global food production and distribution in the whole world. They are the ones who define what we eat and at what price.

In taking on this challenge, we had the support of an editorial committee connected to grassroots and peasant movements and NGOs from the five countries. This space gave rise not only to the priorities that we highlight in the diagnostic in Part I of the *Atlas*, but also that which would be necessary to emphasize in Part II and the experiences of solidarity. It was a rich and dynamic process that we hope is only the beginning of a process of sharing experiences and alternatives in everyday life from the five countries.

We seek to open up debates about a system that, over recent decades, has transformed food into ultra-processed commodities, with an irreversible impact on our bodies and our territories. It has also had an irreversible impact on our ability to eat. Because this is the heart of the matter: it is a handful of mega corporations that control one of the world's most important resources: food.

However, what we attempted to show is that this is not the only way of producing food. In the *Atlas*, we also present diverse strategies for production and distribution of food driven by grassroots and popular movements through a model based on food sovereignty and agroecology. These production systems do seek, above all, to produce healthy, sovereign food at a fair

price, from the seed to the dinner table. And this whole model is traversed by solidarity. During the pandemic, there were initiatives across the whole region that articulated political processes and self-organization to get food to those who most needed it. But they also deployed a broader horizon: recovering historical processes of struggle – common meals, community kitchens –, they created more comprehensive experiences that seek to strengthen food sovereignty and raise awareness about who truly feeds us.

It would be impossible to discuss in this material the hundreds of experiences in grassroots movements in the region that dispute the hegemony of the food system through more just forms of the production and commercialization of food. What we narrate here are paradigmatic experiences that help us to understand the strategies that grassroots movements have been implementing for decades, since *food sovereignty* as a political project requires the construction of forms of economic and political organization other than the current global agri-food system.

Finally, we want to present organizations' proposals and agendas that contribute to public policies and initiatives they have led to guarantee the right to food and food sovereignty. Above all, we hope that this material circulates among grassroots movements, in neighborhood soup kitchens, in agroecology schools and community kitchens, in seed libraries and gardens, in peasant cooperatives and stores. And in all spaces in which a group debates and reflects on a agri-food model that produces hunger, that eating – and eating well – is, more than anything, a basic human right, and that the only path through which this right can be guaranteed to the people as a whole is through food sovereignty.

Acknowledgments

This book that we are presenting to you was collectively conceived and written by activists, academics, photographers, and journalists. Peasant and urban organizations actively contributed so that today we have this tool for visibilizing the centrality of the peasantry in guaranteeing the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty in the region.

This work would not have been possible without the tireless support of our colleagues at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. We would especially like

to thank Addressa Debossan, Christiane Gomes, Daniel Santini, Florencia Puente, Elisángela Soldatelli, Verena Glass, Tatiana Valerhoski, Ana María Vázquez Duplat and Virginia Parodi. We would also like to thank the leadership in the Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo offices for their trust and political commitment to this project.

We would also like to thank the following for their contributions: José Raimundo Sousa Ribeiro Júnior (chapter 1), Maria Emilia Pacheco (chapters 1, 7 and 13), Fernando Frank (chapters 2 and 3), Alejandro Vallini (chapter 6), Analía Zamorano (chapter 6), Damián Verzeñassi (chapter 6), Elina Figueroa (chapter 6), Gabriel Keppl (chapter 6), Lucía Enriquez (chapter 6), Gloria Sanmartino (chapter 6), Facundo Fernández (chapter 6), Matheus Assunção (chapter 10), Eduardo Belleli (chapter 8), Darío Aranda (chapters 8 and 9), Cotepo-UTT (chapters 8 and 9), Diego Montón (chapter 12), Graciela Ottmann (chapter 12), Javier Couretot (chapter 12), Igor Ojeda (chapter 13), Ronaldo Matos (chapter 14), Dafne Mello (translation), Antonio Latucca (chapter 12), Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, Grupo Interdisciplinario de Investigación Acción sobre Desigualdades en el medio Rural de la Universidad de la República de Uruguay: Adriana Machado, Agustín Juncal, Alicia Migliaro, Joaquín Cardeillac, Inés Ferreira, Julieta Krapovickas and Lorena Rodríguez.

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Lastly, this *Atlas* would not be possible without the grassroots organizations that demonstrated ceaseless solidarity and commitment to feeding the people during the pandemic. And continue doing so. To them we all owe our thanks.

Jorge Pereira Filho and Patricia Lizarraga

A hand is shown holding a circular, flat object, possibly a lid or a tray, positioned above a large, dark, cylindrical container. The entire scene is bathed in a deep blue light, creating a monochromatic effect. The background is slightly out of focus, showing some indistinct shapes. The overall mood is technical and focused.

PART 1
DIAGNOSTIC

OUR BREAD THAT IS MISSING EVERY DAY

The year that the pandemic ravaged the world, **118 million** people started experiencing acute hunger. If it were a country, that contingent of hungry people would be the 12th most populous in the world, with more people than Egypt, Germany, or the United Kingdom. Those numbers, presented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in a report released in 2021, provide an overview of the immense calamity in which we live. This situation has only worsened with the effects of the war in Europe.

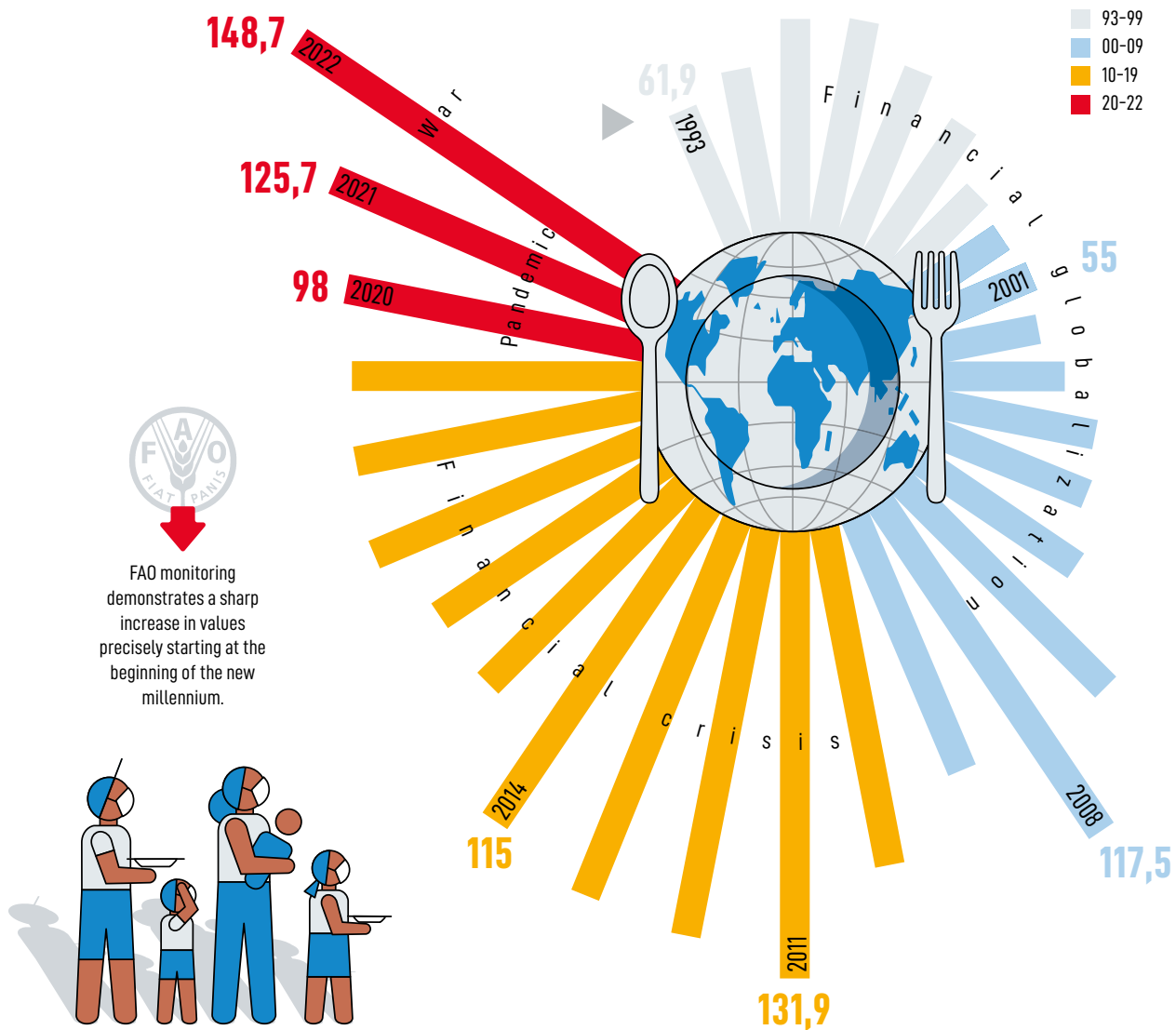
However, it would be a mistake to consider that the origins of the problem are exclusively related to these conjunctural crises. We can affirm this because the estimated total quantity of people with hunger in the world is much higher: **811 million**. It would be the third most populous country in the world. In the year that COVID spread across the world, the number of hungry people increased by 17%.

In this map of the global food crisis, the Southern Cone deserves its own chapter. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay hold 5.2% of the world's hungry people, yet they account for a smaller portion (3.64%)

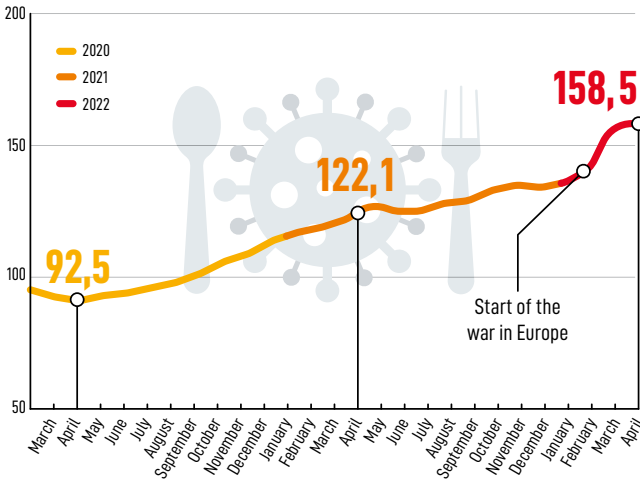
THE INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES IS A GLOBAL TREND

In the last 30 years, there has been a persistent increase in food prices and it was aggravated even more with the appearance of COVID-19.

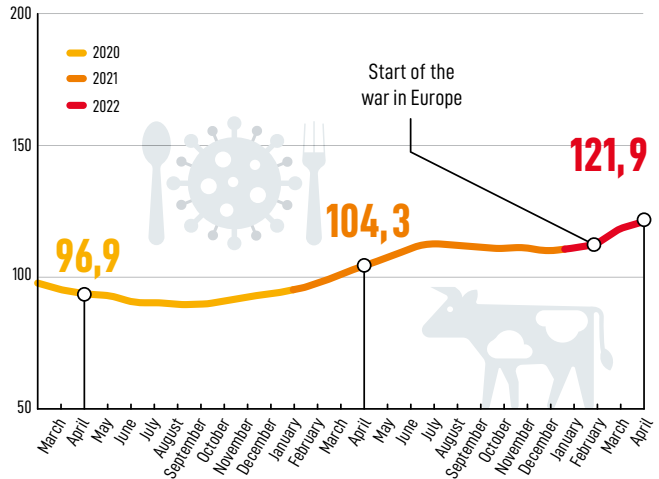
Historical index of the variation in global food prices



Variation in Global Food Prices since the Pandemic



Global Variation in Meat Prices Since the Pandemic

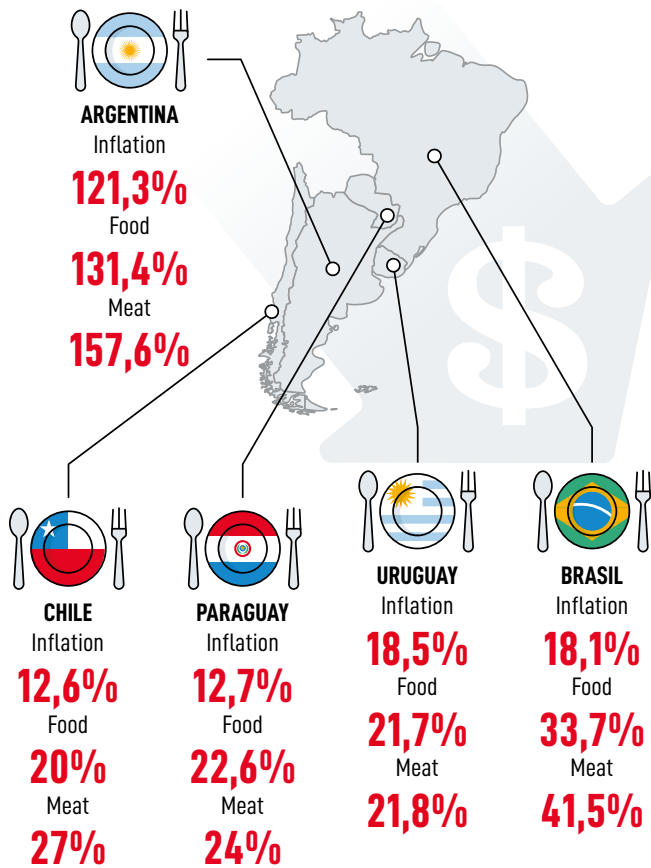


Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2021).

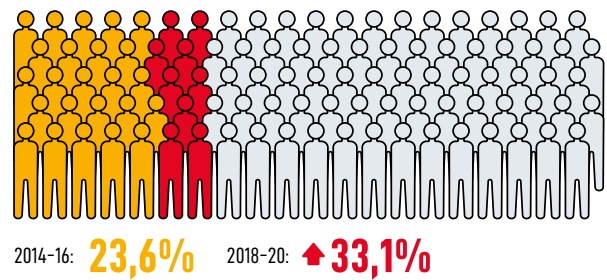
IN THE SOUTHERN CONE EATING WELL HAS BECOME A LUXURY

Food costs in our countries are rising faster than the rate of inflation.

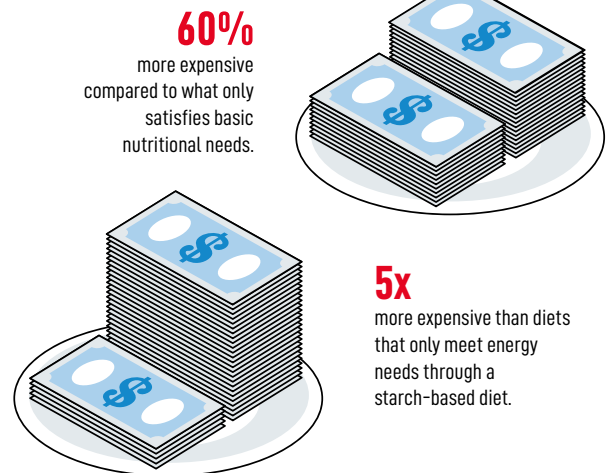
Variation in food prices compared to inflation (March 2020-2022)



% People Living with Food Insecurity in Latin America



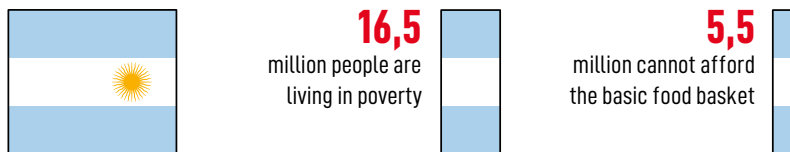
A Healthy Diet is



Source: INDEC/IPC (Argentina), IBGE/IPCA (Brasil), INE (Chile), BCP (Paraguay) e INE (Uruguay) e Informe SOFI (2021).

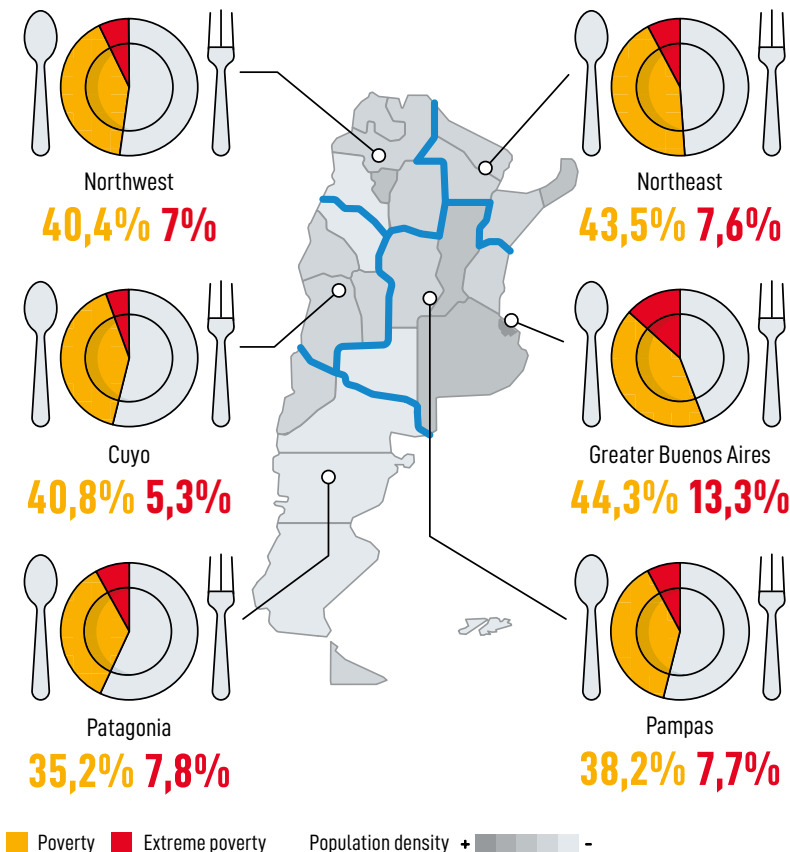
ARGENTINA: RISING NUMBERS

With an estimated population of 45,800,000 people



NATIONAL MAP OF INEQUALITY

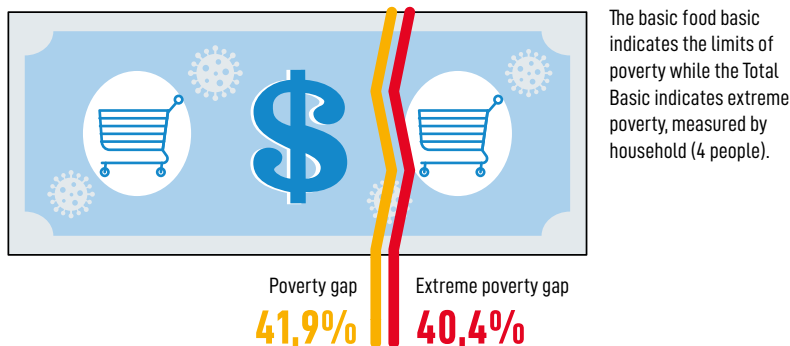
% of people living in poverty and extreme poverty by region.



Source: Encuesta Permanente de Hogares, INDEC (2020).

NOT ENOUGH MONEY

The Gap between the Basic Food Basic and the Total Basic Basket.



Source: Encuesta Permanente de Hogares (Segundo semestre de 2020).

of the global population. And the situation is only getting worse: the number of people with severe food insecurity in the region grew 68% if we compare the two-year periods 2014-2016 and 2018-2020.

The inability to provide people with adequate food does not have to do with a lack of the production of wealth. The five countries included have very high or very high human development indexes and generate close to 2.3% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to the World Bank (2019).

Nor is nature an insurmountable adversary for food production. In reality, taken as a whole, the geographic characteristics of the region are so favourable that, if they were a country, they would be the world's primary soybean producer, the third largest corn producer, and would have the largest amount of cattle production in the world.

Production continues growing, but it is not destined for the households of those who most need food, but rather for the external market. Thus, when there is no food on the people's table, the money pours out for agribusiness, which breaks profit records year after year. In that equation, politics plays a central role, because it privileges a model that generates wealth for the few and produces hunger for many, millions. This is not even to mention the number of people who are forced to make do with poor quality food so as to not swell that contingent.

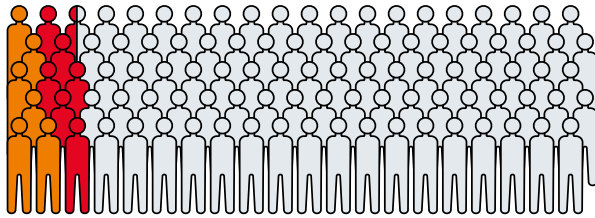
Lacking adequate public policies to guarantee the right to healthy food, the economic crisis and inflation caused the food crisis to intensify in the Southern Cone. Historical structural conditions transformed this scenario into an even more dramatic one. While each country experiences these moments of crisis in a specific way, due to their own social, historical, and political contexts, there is one common phenomenon: the increase in food prices, which rose much more than inflation.

The most representative example is that of Argentina, in which the general increase in food prices was 121.3% between March 2020 and March 2022 - the highest rate in the Southern Cone, with significant difference between the region's other countries. In all the countries, the index was greater than that of inflation, which is saying a lot if we consider that this period also recorded the highest inflation rates in recent years.

SCARCITY SPREADS...

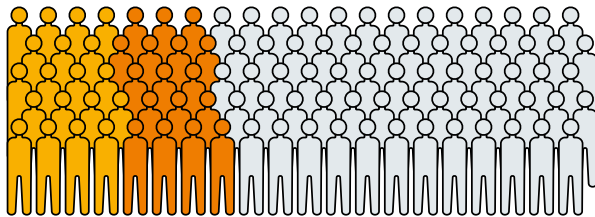
% of the population with some type of food insecurity.

Severe food insecurity



2014-16:
5,8%
2018-20:
↑ 12,6%

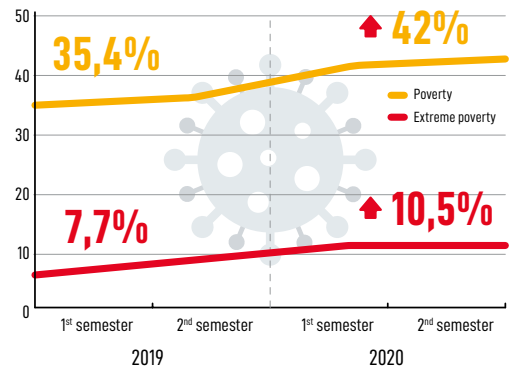
Moderate or severe food insecurity



2014-16:
19,2%
2018-20:
↑ 35,8%

...ALONG WITH DEFICIENCIES

% of the population impoverished in the pandemic.



Note: The definition of the levels of poverty and extreme poverty has to do with the value of the basic food basket and wages.

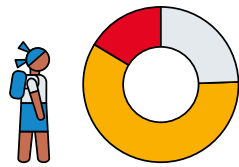
Source: Informes SOFI (2020 y 2021), Encuesta Permanente de Hogares (Segundo semestre de 2020).

POVERTY HAS AN AGE AND GENDER

% of economic insecurity of the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

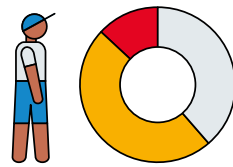
People according to age

From 0-14 years old



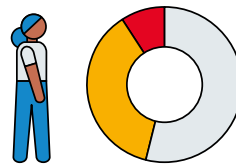
57,7% **15,7%**

From 15 to 29 years old



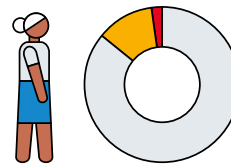
49,2% **12,5%**

From 30 to 64 years old



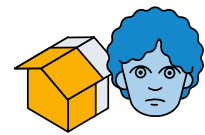
37,2% **9%**

Over 65 years old



11,9% **1%**

Poverty in households headed by women



67,5%

Source: Encuesta Permanente de Hogares (Segundo semestre de 2020). UNICEF Argentina (2020).

In this escalation, the most affected – as always – are the poorest, because they allocate the bulk of their income toward buying food. And when the budget is not enough, the first choice they make is to give up the most expensive products, to thus guarantee the basic. With the increase in prices, anyone living in a precarious situation who manages to escape hunger is condemned to consuming the cheapest food, which usually means ultra-processed products, causing them to abandon a balanced diet. And when that is not even possible, the solution is to turn to donations.

Hunger: Definitions and Scale

Although those who suffer hunger have no doubts about it, the debate about how to “measure it”, or what its causes are, is not as simple and is imbued with political disputes. In the past, even up to the 19th century, the most widespread idea was that hunger was caused because of insufficient production that could not keep up with the rhythm of global population

growth. This interpretation acquired different layers over time and, after World War II, was consolidated with the proposal of a “solution”: adopting a high-productivity agro-industrial model and the use of technology would suffice to eradicate hunger.

In practice, this theory was not proven true. With technological innovations, production grew, agribusiness developed into an economic sector that generates considerable wealth – for the few –, but hunger continues to be a growing social calamity. Additionally, the quality of what is produced under this model is rarely even discussed.

Hunger is linked to *political issues*, that is, how society organizes itself to ensure its reproduction. 76 years ago, the Brazilian geographer and doctor, Josué de Castro, defended an idea which continues being true today: the causes of hunger are more linked to the economic structure and social organization than to insufficient food production or a population that grows too much.

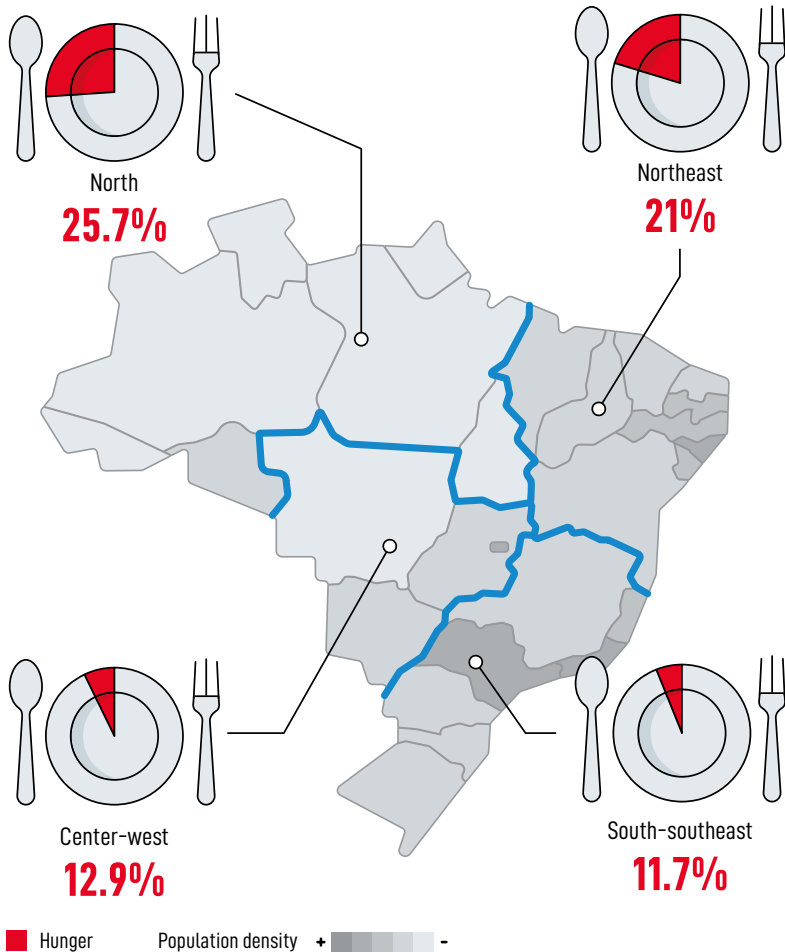
BRAZIL: A CONTINENT OF POVERTY

With an estimated population of 213,317,000 people



NATIONAL MAP OF HUNGER

% of the population with severe food insecurity by region.

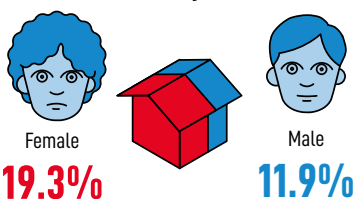


Source: Rede Penssan (2021).

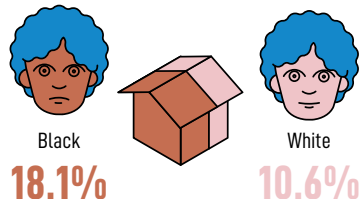
HUNGER HAS A GENDER AND RACE

% of food insecurity in the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Households according to the gender of the head of the family



Households according to skin colour



Source: Rede Penssan (2021).

People go hungry primarily because of governmental decisions and economic policies that do not prioritize the right to healthy and adequate food. In this sense, the Southern Cone serves as an example of what not to do: a region that could provide significant healthy food, but that, in reality, uses its agricultural potential to generate wealth for the few.

But, how can hunger be “measured”? Since the 1960s, the FAO has worked with the Prevalence of Malnutrition indicator. In short, this tool takes into account energy consumption and the energetic needs of the population of each country during a twelve month period, and thus defines the proportion of individuals whose calorie intake is below the minimum requirements during the year.

There are a series of problems with this indicator. Perhaps the biggest is that, besides not considering the food’s quality, it only takes into account the longest episodes of hunger, characteristic of acute crises. It ends up ignoring more gradual or less intense series of food deprivation. Another method for measuring hunger came from the United States in the 1980s and was relatively simple and cheap, as well as being socially recognized. After listening to women who were facing a food crisis that was not captured by the traditional indicators during Ronald Reagan’s neoliberal government, researchers designed a questionnaire to identify different experiences that would indicate the presence and intensity of situations of hunger in a household. Thus they created a Hunger Scale. This thermometer not only made it possible to identify conditions of food deprivation, but also the concern, anxiety, and fear caused by the prospect that there would not be food: a drama that can only be recounted by those who have really felt it.

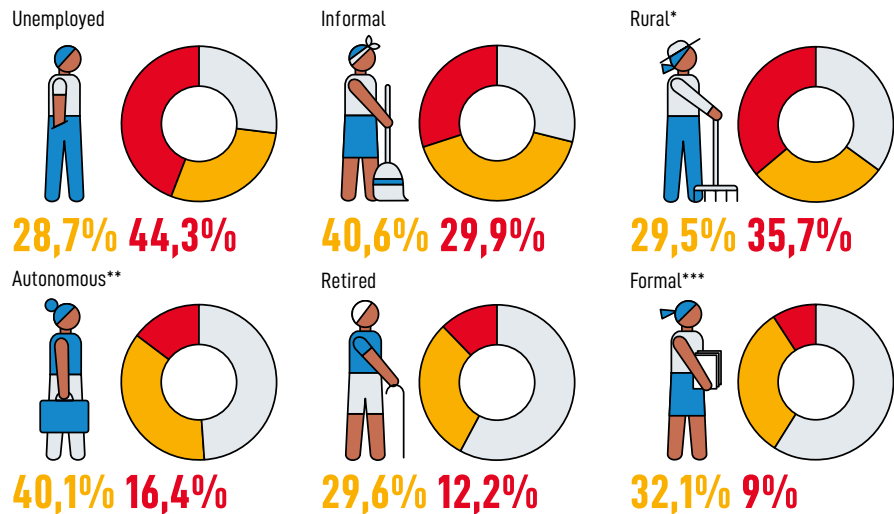
This innovation served as a counterpoint to the FAO’s indicator, that could not account for the dimension that hunger truly reaches in the world. Several countries started to develop their own tools. In the case of the Southern Cone, only Brazil has a tool of this type: the Brazilian Scale of Food Insecurity (EBIA), elaborated by researchers at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), that, since 2004, has been part of the National Household Survey (PNAD), carried out by the Brazilian Geographic and Statistics Institute (IBGE).

WITHOUT LABOUR RIGHTS YOU SUFFER MORE

% of the working population suffering hunger.

*Family farmer, small producer
 ** Self-employed, entrepreneur, professional, business owner.
 *** Legally formalized workers, public employees

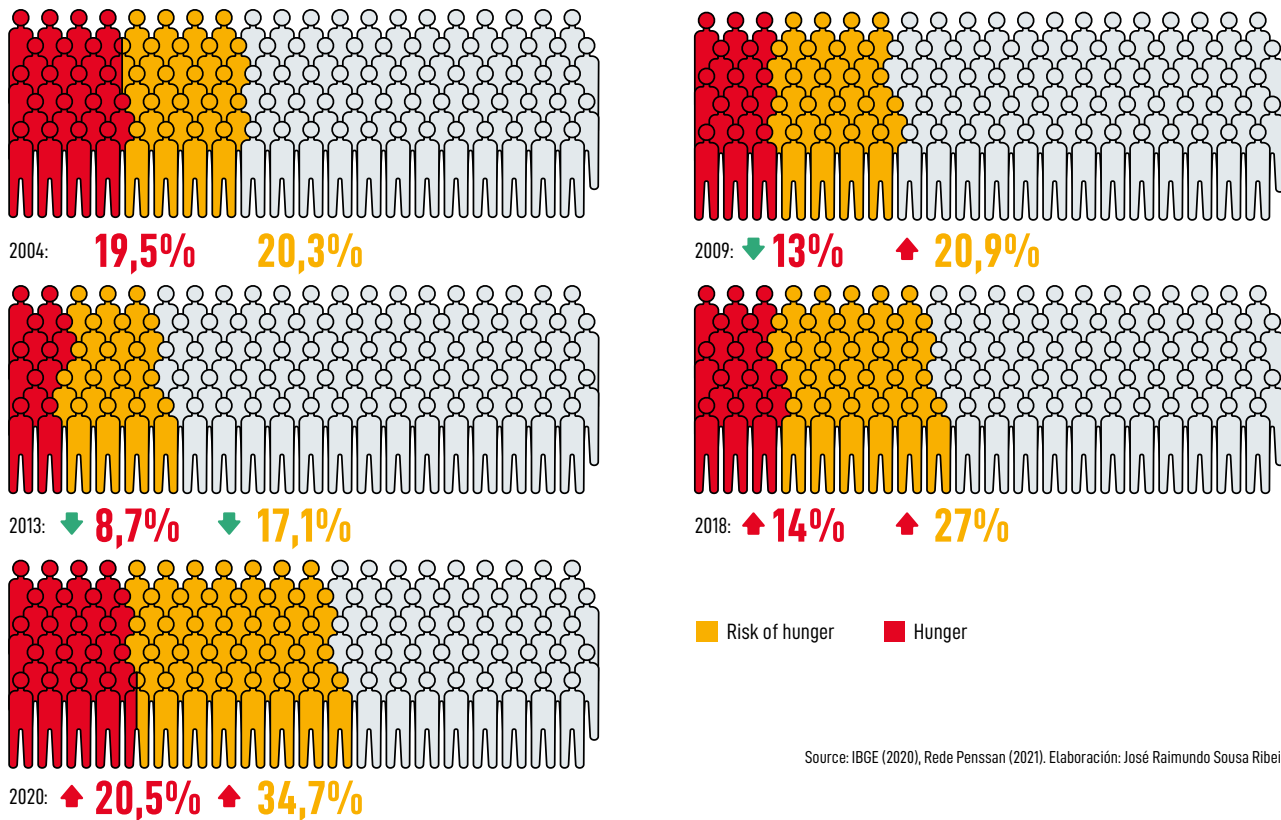
■ Risk of hunger ■ Hunger



Source: Rede Penssan (2021).
 Elaboración: José Raimundo Sousa Ribeiro Júnior

SETBACKS IN FOOD SECURITY

% of the population living in hunger or risk of hunger.



Source: IBGE (2020), Rede Penssan (2021). Elaboración: José Raimundo Sousa Ribeiro Júnior

The summary of the story is that, if the numbers at the beginning of this text seem terrifying, the reality of hunger in the world is much more serious: the thermometer used by the FAO to measure the problem, in one way or another, attenuates the complex cases of food deprivation that exist in reality.

In **Argentina**, a country with an enormous amount of available arable land with very high productivity, the number of people without enough to eat has doubled in recent years. This demonstrates that nourishment does not

only depend on the availability of food, but rather is related to a country's structure of rights to guarantee its access, as well as that would legitimize that every person be able to eat.

During 2020, twelve million people could not access the total basic basket and three million people in extreme poverty could not access the basic food basket. The numbers of people in poverty and with food insecurity have been growing steadily for decades. The current crisis has caused

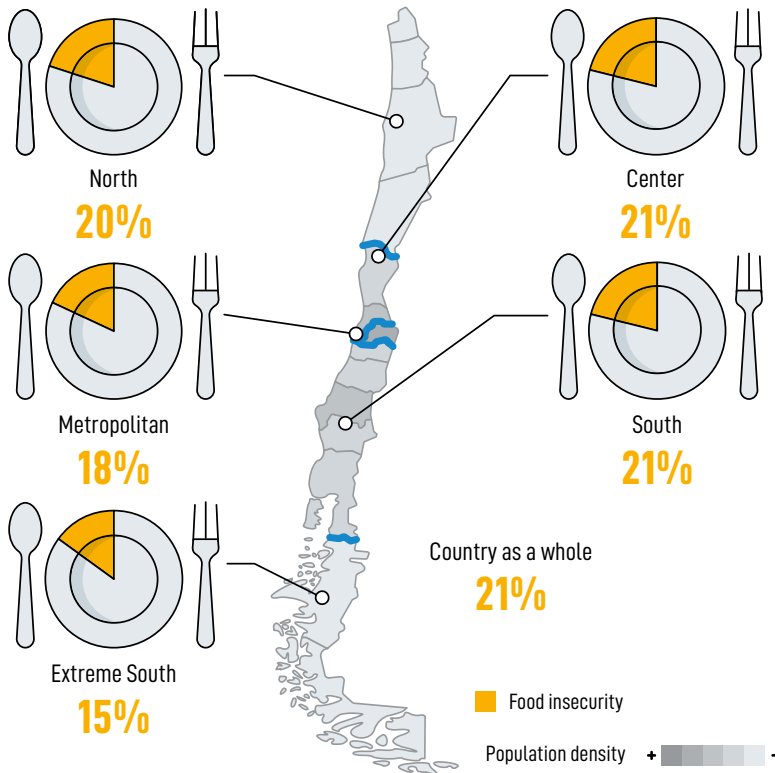
CHILE: FOOD INSECURITY ON THE RISE

With an estimated population of 19,400,000 people



NATIONAL MAP OF HUNGER

% of the population with severe food insecurity by region.



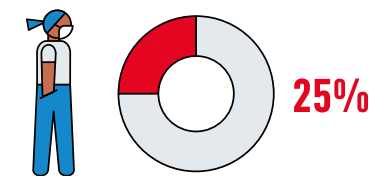
Source: Impactos socioeconómicos de la pandemia en los hogares de Chile (2020).

HUNGER HAS AN EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND GENDER

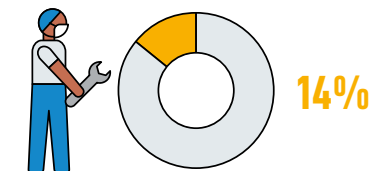
% of food insecurity during the pandemic.

People according to their employment status

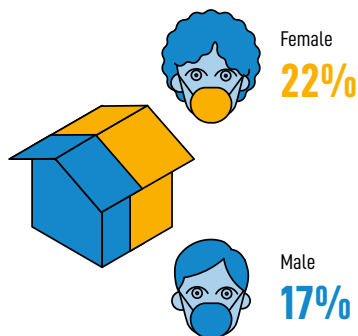
Unemployed or suspended employment



Employed



Households according to the gender of the head of family



Source: Impactos socioeconómicos de la pandemia en los hogares de Chile (2020).

food insecurity to go from moderate to serious, affecting 35.8% of the population in the FAO's latest report, the same for poverty.

To understand hunger and malnutrition, we must look at the historic crisis of food prices in the country. Historically, the markets have been shown to be particularly unstable, both the labour market – where incomes come from – as well as the food market, whose prices have shown an average annual inflation rate of 105% over the last 100 years. Between 2020 and 2022, the inflation of food prices was 131.4%, almost 10 points higher than the general inflation rate. And, during the same period, the price of meat rose 157.6%. In a country with constant inflation in the price of food, as well as a constantly falling incomes, along with successive waves of unemployment, “normality” – at least in statistical terms – means irregularity in food acquisition and preparation, thus breaking the idea of “stability” of eating patterns.

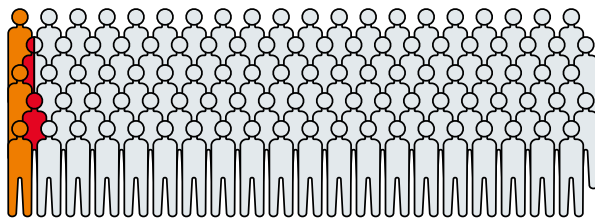
Food prices increase and the logic of this increase has nothing to do with expected variables such as seasonal scarcity of fresh products, but rather has to do with a highly concentrated and speculative market, and internal and external political economic variables, completely unknown and uncontrollable by those who have to figure out how to get food on their tables everyday. Another important fact to keep in mind is that the majority of these impoverished households are headed by women.

Poverty is more likely to affect children and adolescents living in households headed by women, primarily single-parents, which marks a first inequity in terms of gender. In female-headed households, the poverty level reached 67.5% at the end of 2020. For the most part, it is the women themselves who have to create strategies for consumption in the midst of the instability of offer, price inflation, and income loss, which entails a constant burden of anguish and stress. As the capacity to acquire food deteriorates – even when the State, in some aspects, takes responsibility for this issue through certain programs – the more precarious their diet becomes. Despite, in some cases, being materially covered through assistance programs, this situation generates a loss of autonomy in terms of choosing what to eat and the possibility of imagining different strategies for the future.

SCARCITY SPREADS...

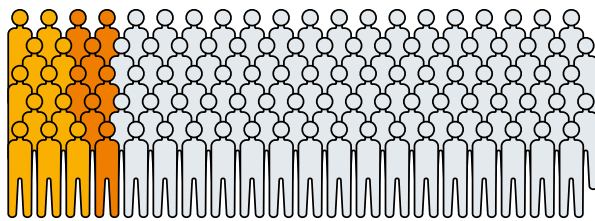
% of the population with some type of food insecurity.

Severe food insecurity



2014-16: **2,9%** 2018-20: **↑ 4,3%**

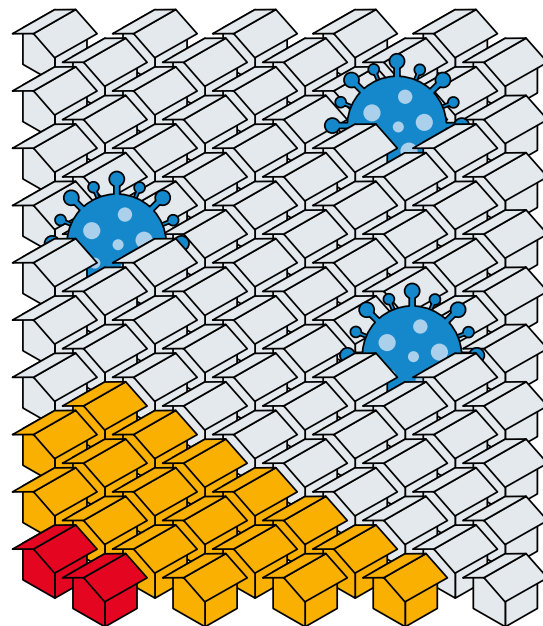
Moderate or severe food insecurity



2014-16: **10,8%** 2018-20: **↑ 17,9%**

...TO HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

% of food insecurity during the pandemic.



Severe
2%
Moderate
17%

Source: Informes SOFI (2020 y 2021), Impactos socioeconómicos de la pandemia en los hogares de Chile (2020).

In **Brazil**, the absolute incapacity of Jair Bolsonaro's government to respond to the health crisis has deepened a historic social and food crisis. The country began 2022 with the highest number of deaths caused by the pandemic in the region and with more than half its population living with some degree of food insecurity. One out of every five people goes hungry in Brazil. This represents 9% of the population, and if it were a city, it would be the largest in the country, ahead of, for example, the megalopolis of Sao Paulo with 12.3 million inhabitants.

The pandemic and the effects of the war reveal the dimensions of a structural problem even for those most in denial. It has been more than proven that Brazil is experiencing an accelerated process of setbacks in the struggle against hunger. And the legion of people who depend on donations and solidarity in order to survive, crowding in queues in the country's large cities, demonstrated the social failure in the struggle against a scourge that, for a few short years of the 21st century, seemed to be heading toward a significant reduction.

Denied as a structural problem, especially during authoritarian governments – such as the military regime (1964-1985) –, there was a sharp decrease in hunger in Brazil between 2004 and 2013. Several factors contributed to this phenomenon, especially the food security policies of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff's governments, income transfers, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth during this period. The change of the economic scenario and the parliamentary coup in 2016 were accompanied by the dismantling of social policies and regulatory frameworks that promoted food security.

The year that COVID appeared in the Brazilian territory saw the greatest drop in GDP of the last 25 years, with a 4.1% decline. The slight recovery in 2021 did not reverse a horrific scenario: in December of that year, only 44.8 million people had formal employment. Another 116 million were divided among different levels of precarity: unemployed, hopeless job seekers, under-employed, self-employed, or jobless workers in the private sector.

Brazil is the most unequal country in Latin America, with one of the highest rates of land concentration: according to the United Nations, Brazil second in world ranking of countries with the highest concentration of income, only behind Qatar. The 1% of wealthiest Brazilians have more than twice the income of the poorest 40%, according to the IBGE.

Per capita household income plummeted 4.1% in 2020, and fell 0.94% the following year. At the same time, the price of food has skyrocketed, especially for the most basic items that make up the Brazilian diet. For example, during that period, cassava increased 81%; a kilogram of rice, 46%; black bean, 41%; milk, 19%. As a result, around 20% of households in which one person has lost their job, now find themselves in a situation of severe food insecurity. But this does not end here, as demonstrated by Red Penssan's research, there is a clear division in terms of class, race, and gender: hunger is more prevalent in households headed by women, with black or brown skin, and a precarious employment relation.

In this scenario, the pandemic's impact on **Chile's** socioeconomic situation has deepened the territorial inequalities and gaps that have existed historically. Per capita GDP fell 11% during 2020, which is added to the 8% drop of the year before. This has had major repercussions in terms of

PARAGUAY: NO MONEY AND NO FOOD

With an estimated population of 7,350,000 people



NATIONAL MAP OF INEQUALITY

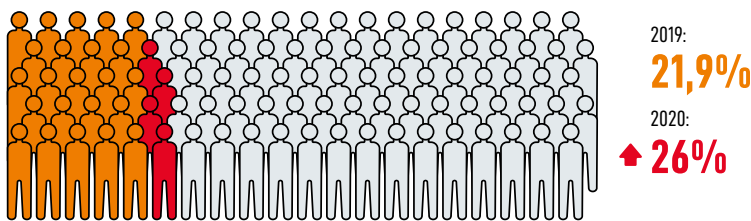
% of economic vulnerability in the countryside and the city.



Source: CDIA (2020).

POVERTY GROWS...

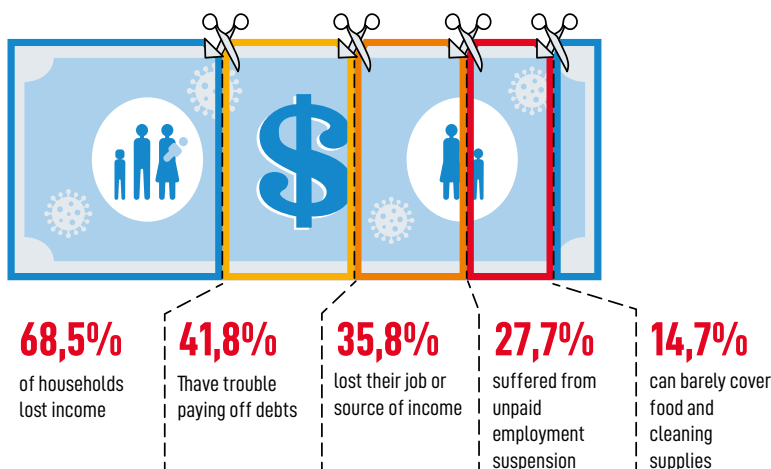
% of the population with severe food insecurity*.



* People whose per capita income is below the price of the basic consumer basket, which includes food and basic services

... AND THE MONEY IS NOT ENOUGH

% of households with income losses and the reasons.



Source: Encuesta Permanente de Hogares Continua (EPHC, 2020).

income and poverty, while the effects are not the same for everyone, nor for all regions of the country.

The pandemic had a transversal effect and has affected all households regardless of income level, throughout the country. The economic crisis hit diverse sectors of the economy that stopped or strongly reduced their operations and activities, affecting formal and informal workers, women and men, the more or less skilled. However, the data also shows the existence of a distributional effect. This interacts with existing inequalities, making certain types of households particularly vulnerable to the effects of the crisis and, therefore, to its medium-term consequences during the recovery stage. The unemployment rate in Chile, at the beginning of the pandemic, in the trimester running from May to July, was 13%, the highest rate since 2010. In February 2021, it was 10.2% and even higher for women. The most affected sectors were fishing and agriculture, in which employment decreased 22%, primarily affecting rural sectors. As to be expected, this has had a direct effect on the food supply and food security.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security is largely explained by the destruction of employment that limited households' capacity to generate incomes and has exacerbated territorial inequalities and gaps. The SOFI report registered an increase in food insecurity during the pandemic in relation to previous years. For example, a clear increase can be seen between the 2020 and 2021 reports regarding the prevalence of severe and moderate food insecurity. In concrete numbers, this means that severe food insecurity rose from 3.8 to 4.3% and moderate to severe food insecurity went from 15.6% to 17.9%.

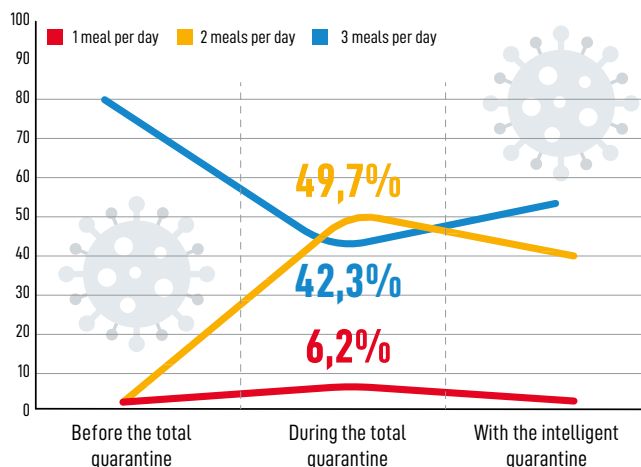
It is important to look at these statistics on food insecurity in territorial terms, taking into account the diverse realities they imply. As an example, another study carried out in 2020 in two very rural regions of the country, shows that - both severe and moderate - food insecurity has a greater impact on inhabitants of rural areas than urban areas. This adds to the previous vulnerabilities of higher poverty rates, lower incomes, and less access to basic services, as well as the greater impact on households led by women.

Eating does not necessarily mean eating well. The data also points to problems of malnutrition left by the pandemic. This is reflected both in the increase of prob-

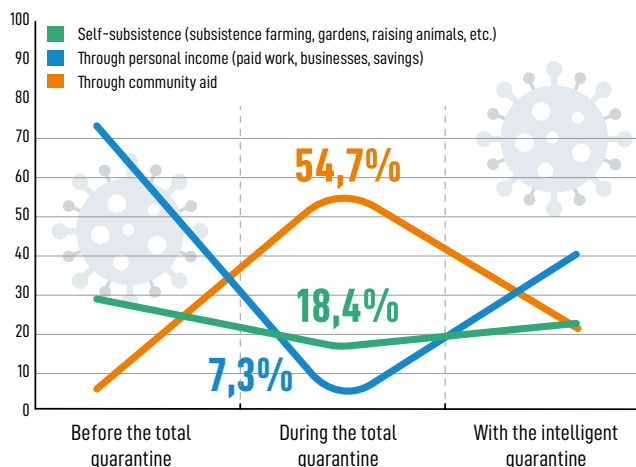
FOOD DECREASES, SUBSISTENCE INCREASES

% of meal frequency per household over the course of the pandemic.

Daily meals during the pandemic per household



New family subsistence tactics



Source: CDIA (2020), Encuesta Permanente de Hogares Continua (EPHC, 2020).

lems of obesity, as households consume more processed foods, as well as increasing malnutrition, as households abandon, meat, fish, fruits, and vegetables. The loss of income, along with the increase in food prices, to which we can add disruptions at sales points, are the other sign of the coin of the erosion of purchasing power. The previously mentioned study reveals that households' strategies to compensate for lost income primarily seek to reduce the consumption of healthy foods (fish and vegetables). The data is stunning, nearly half of households (47%) have reduced their consumption of meat and/or fish, and 40% of fresh fruits and vegetables. At the same time, the consumption of ultra-processed and packaged products increased by 28%.

The pandemic also impoverished the population of **Paraguay**. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that the country stands out negatively in the Southern Cone as the country that is most dependent on food imports in proportion to domestic consumption. Half of the fresh produce in the traditional basic basket comes from other countries, especially its neighbours Brazil and Argentina. Some examples of that are the following foods that have a very high import rate, as in the case of potatoes (117%), onions (88%), and garlic (82%). Additionally, smuggling is a very common practice in local food commerce. Official data on this regard is not very reliable, but social organizations and researchers seek alternatives to measure this illegal behaviour. In one example, the study published by Base Investigaciones Sociales (Base-is) in 2021, estimates that at least 15% of tomatoes, 35% of carrots, and 56% of the peppers consumed by Paraguayans enter the country illegally. This has several different consequences, from the pressure on farmers to sell their products at unfeasible prices, to the absence of public control of the food system.

It is clear that this whole scenario makes food sovereignty a concept that is far removed from everyday reality in Paraguay. The country perhaps presents the most clear situation of the contradictions of the prevailing model in the region. Only 6% of its agricultural surface is available for national food production, while 94% is devoted to crops for export. The pandemic has only intensified this inequality, as it caused soybean production to advance toward small properties.

The truth is, there is no up-to-date data on food consumption in the country, as the last survey on food nutrition was carried out in the 1960s. Nor is there a system of social protection capable of satisfying the food needs of those who cannot access it, with the exception of children. Poverty and hunger are directly related to the issue of inequalities (access to land, housing, health care, education, etc.).

The recent increase in food prices, accompanied by the impoverishment of the population, aggravated food insecurity. According to the first measurement of food insecurity by the INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas) and the FAO, presented on May 19, 2022: 24.63% of households in Paraguay were affected by food insecurity, that is hunger, in 2021. Taking into account data from the Encuesta Permanente de Hogares Continua, there were 1,935,412 households in 2021, and of that number, some 476,691 have food deficits. 5.31% (5 out of every 100 households) suffers from severe food insecurity (102,770 households). That is, in those households, one of its members went at least one day without eating. The economic crisis has had a major impact on the mass of workers, especially urban workers, whose informality rate currently reaches 70%. The result has been a significant increase in the number of people who depend on solidarity in order to access a minimum diet.

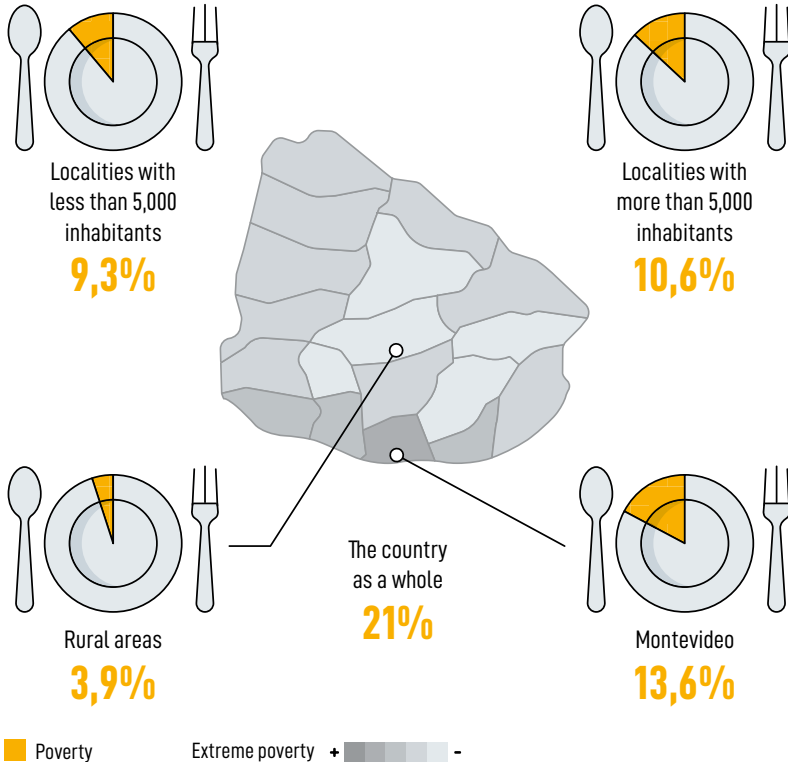
URUGUAY: NUMBERS THAT DON'T ADD UP

With an estimated population of 3,400,000 people



NATIONAL MAP OF INEQUALITY

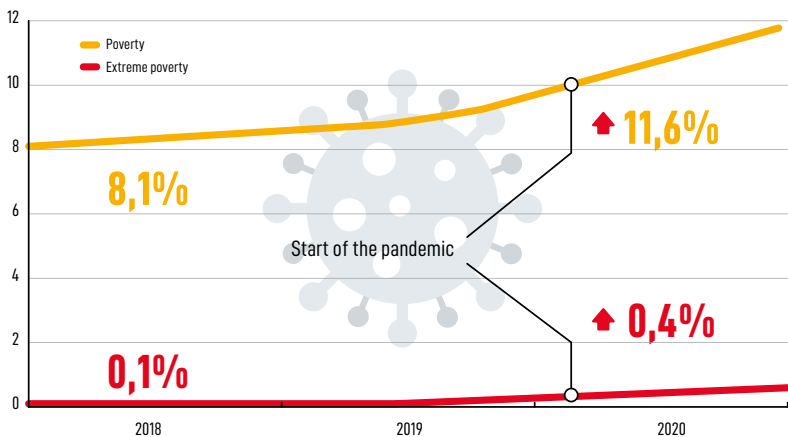
% of the population living in poverty by zone.



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), Encuesta Continua de Hogares (ECH, 2020).

GROWING NEEDS

% of the population impoverished during the pandemic.



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), Encuesta Continua de Hogares (ECH).

As proof of this, we can cite the data collected in the study "Mil voces: amplificando las voces de los referentes en las comunidades", carried out by the Coordinadora por los Derechos de la Infancia y la Adolescencia (CDIA) in collaboration with twenty-six organizations. Specifically, at the height of the restrictive measures imposed due to the health crisis, for example, the percentage of families that eat three meals a day decreased from 80% to 42.3%. And it does not end there, no less than 54% of families said that they can only access food thanks to the help of the community and its *ollas populares* [community meals].

In **Uruguay**, COVID and the war brought to the public agenda the fact that, while certain sectors – measured by income – seem to have resolved the issue of food access, there are fragile sectors at the territorial level, which, faced with any type of crisis – such as the pandemic – would inevitably fall into a situation of food insecurity.

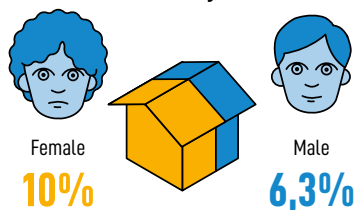
Since the announcement of the health emergency in March 2020, the *ollas populares* multiplied in addition to the food aid measures taken by the government. In numerical terms, this can be seen in the following concrete data. In Uruguay – a country with a population of 3,461,734 people – over the course of that year, more than 100,000 people fell below the poverty line. Solidarity networks were immediately activated and it is estimated that 8,000,000 meals, in 700 *ollas populares*, were offered by social organizations and neighbours.

Peoples' age is an important variable to take into account for this type of analysis of poverty. Poverty largely affects the youngest people. In particular, the highest poverty rates are recorded for those under six years of age and children from six to twelve years of age, regardless of the region of the country. For its part, the last Survey on Nutrition, Child Development, and Health (ENDIS) in 2018 indicates that of children aged 0-4 years old, 27.4% lived in households with mild food insecurity, 11.6% with moderate food insecurity, and 4.9% with severe food insecurity (self-perception of a limited or uncertain capacity to access nutritionally adequate, safe, and socially acceptable food). The ENDIS also showed that 15% of children were overweight and 7.2% suffered from delayed growth.

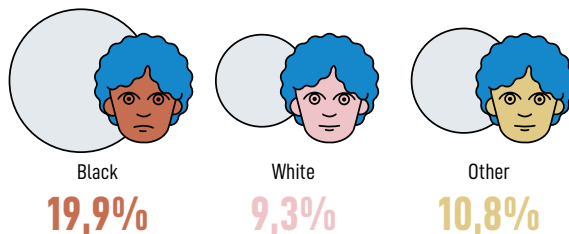
POVERTY HAS A GENDER, RACE AND AGE

% economic insecurity of the most vulnerable sectors.

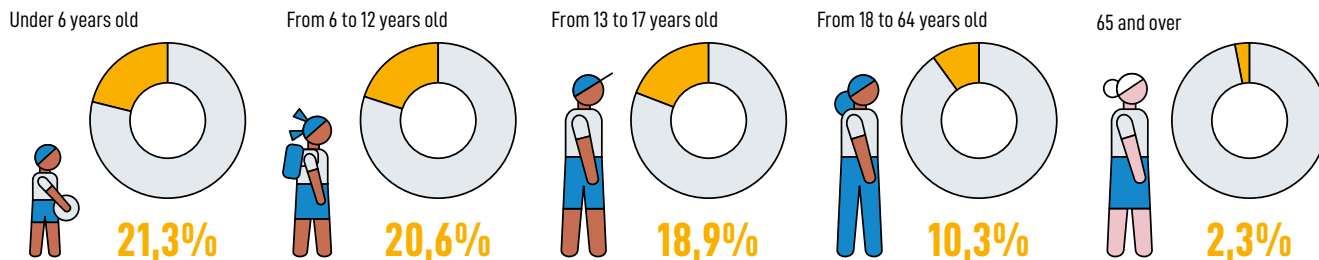
Households depending on the gender of the head of the family



People according to skin colour



People according to age

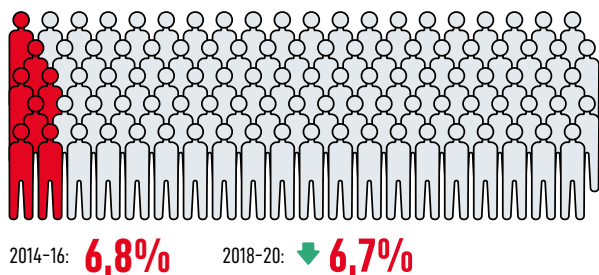


Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), Encuesta Continua de Hogares (ECH, 2020).

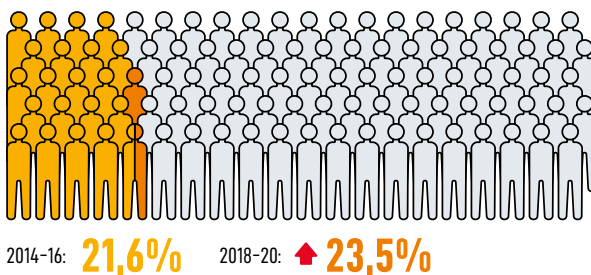
SCARCITY SPREADS

% of the population with some type of food insecurity.

Severe food insecurity

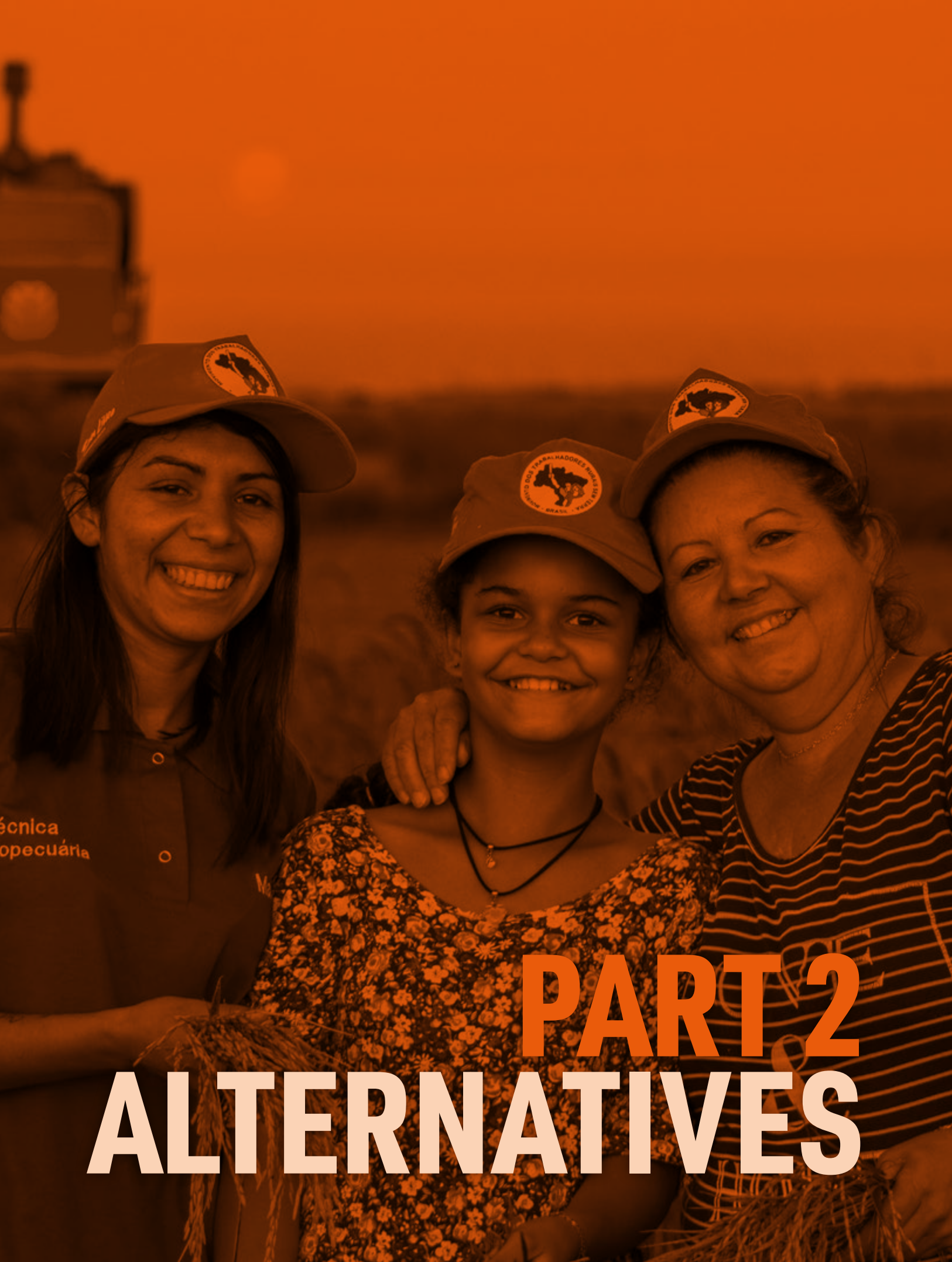


Moderate or severe food insecurity



Note: This year's report, which takes data from 2020, that is, the impact of the pandemic, shows that 6.7% of the population suffers from severe food insecurity and 23.5% from moderate or severe food insecurity. Source: Informes SOFI (2020).

In reality, throughout the region, the origins of hunger and malnutrition lie in economic inequality and the lack of access to basic rights, derived from the continuity of the colonial/neocolonial structure that is seen in land distribution, infrastructure design, and the prioritization of an export-based economic model.



écnica
pecuária

PART 2

ALTERNATIVES

DEFENDING TERRITORY

If hunger is not the result of a natural process, but rather the result of the agribusiness model, changing that reality means constructing another productive model for the countryside and another relationship between cities and the countryside. In that alternative configuration, it is guaranteeing access to common goods – particularly land, water, and seeds – for family peasant-Indigenous farming is essential. Otherwise, food sovereignty is impossible.

The story of the largest amount of organic rice production in Latin America is also the story of the struggle for land. Today, close to 300 families – mostly near the capital of Porto Alegre – are involved in a productive process that guarantees healthy foods and respect for the environment. They live on settlements created from struggles in the state of Rio Grande do Sul since 1990, when they won the right to have land to cultivate. Organized by the Landless Workers Movement (MST), in the 2000s, they started producing organic rice, despite an unfavourable context, without government support or access to credit. Little by little, they developed a process organized in cooperatives that distribute food to schools, markets, and supermarkets throughout the country. The story of organic rice is one of the most successful among the more than 160 cooperatives connected to the MST, which also produce coffee, fruits, vegetables, milk, and grapes. They are, in practice, an example of the viability of grassroots agrarian reform, the main banner of the movement to transform the Brazilian countryside and that already organizes more than 450 families in settlements.

In short, the proposal updates the traditional agrarian reform program whose slogan would be “Land belongs to those who work it”. Today the challenge lies in disputing the agribusiness model and agroecology is key in this dispute. The program of grassroots agrarian reform defends access to land through settlements of landless families, preferably close to large cities, guaranteeing recognition of their territories for Indigenous peoples and *quilombola* communities. That would be a first and fundamental step for the more than 80,000 families that live in camps in Brazil today. And there is land available. Large property owners owe the state more than 200,000 million reales in taxes. If the government were to receive the land in exchange for those debts, it would obtain six million hectares, room for 214,827 families to live and work. But the agrarian reform program goes beyond access to land and proposes a new technological matrix based on agroecology, with respect for biodiversity and commitment to producing healthy food in accordance with the needs of the population.

However, the dominant classes in the Southern Cone have made land redistribution into a taboo issue. Chile is the only country that underwent a process of agrarian reform. It took place during Eduardo Frei Montal-

va’s administration (1964-1970), when Law 16,640 set the limit of land ownership at 80 hectares of basic irrigation, more than which would be considered a *latifundio* and could be expropriated by the state. There was also a clear push for land reform under Salvador Allende’s presidency (1970-1973). Allende’s agrarian reform was the deepest without a revolution or war to drive it, and it ultimately redistributed up to 40 percent of cultivated land. The discussion about agrarian reform was banned from political debate up until a few years ago. It was (and are) peasant organizations that have been responsible for reviving it, first timidly and more forcefully in recent years, and it was even debated in the Constituent Convention (2021-2022).

Paraguay is an emblematic case because three articles of the 1992 National Constitution address agrarian reform and there are also related laws on the books, such as the Agrarian Statute and that which creates the Institute of Rural Development and the Land. It is clear that in Paraguay there has not been the political will to implement agrarian reform and this is largely due to the hegemony of the agribusiness sector.

One very particular element in Paraguay are the “ill-gotten lands”, millions of hectares usurped by businessmen, politicians, and military officials during Alfredo Stroessner’s dictatorship (1954-1989). For years, peasant and human rights organizations have pushed for a Special Law for the Recovery of Ill-Gotten Land. They propose that, based on an in-depth technical study and with fair criteria focused on repairing the damage caused by Stroessner’s dictatorship, that the large farms be inspected. They estimate that this would enable the recuperation of ten million hectares that could be used for agrarian reform.

The San Juan community is also located in Paraguay, in the Francisco Caballero Álvarez district, known as Puente Kyha, in the department of Canindeyú (some 500 kilometres from Asunción and 30 kilometres from the Brazilian border). It is an emblematic struggle of the Paraguayan peasantry that entails more than twenty years of resistance, which includes occupying land, suffering violent evictions and repression led by soybean business leaders, and – after considerable organization, recuperating land parcels for peasant families. One unique aspect is that the Puente Kyha district was created in 1987, at the beginning of the expansion of the agricultural frontier. It is a border territory, with a major presence of Brazilian agribusiness leaders, and cultural domination that can be seen in language and the media. It has a very high percentage of Brazilian producers, a product of the wave of colonization of fertile lands in the area, in the framework of the “green (soy) revolution” supported by the Paraguayan state.

The struggle of the San Juan community in Puento Kyha began in 1993. Some 800 families connected to the Asociación Regional Campesina de Canindeyú (Regional Peasant Association of Canindeyú), which was a member of the Federación Nacional Campesina (National Peasant Federation, FNC) sought parcels in the framework of the Agrarian Reform Law. Thus, they started the occupation and procedures before the Rural Welfare Institute (IBR) for the expropriation of a 20,000 piece of land. In 1995, they managed to get the government to declare the property subject to expropriation. Within a few weeks, they suffered fierce repression and eviction. The long process included the expropriation of lands later sale to peasants. When everything seemed to be on track, the state's absent stood out strongly, with the lack of basic services or soft loans, the agribusiness sector started to pressure peasants and, in many cases, rented them land to plant soybeans. In this way, agribusiness took over even more hectares that should have been in peasant hands. In 2009, the peasants who remained in the territory, along with the FNC, started the process of recovering the colony. The process included more repression, arrests, and a Judicial Power at the service of agribusiness. Even so, the organized peasant families started recuperating more and more hectares.

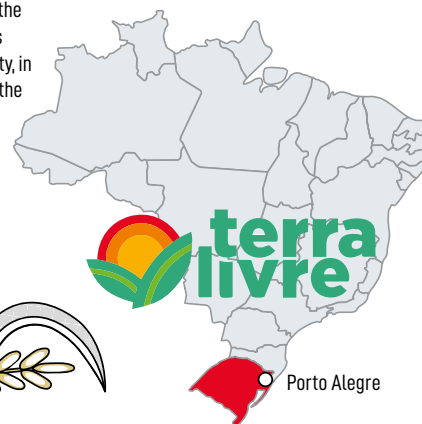
The experience of San Juan demonstrates a great reflexive capacity: to carry out this process of territorial struggle again, understanding that certain practices must be transformed, recognizing that lands were lost due to a lack of organization. In this aspect, based on collective responsibility, they are placed as subjects of their own destiny: that is where the community's autonomy lies. In Brazil, different territorial groups, recognized by legislation as Traditional Peoples and Communities, are also strengthening the struggle in defense of their territories. That led to the emergence, in 2011, of the first regional political articulation of these groups in the state of Maranhão, the Network of Traditional Peoples and Communities of Maranhão.

In Uruguay, after the civilian-military dictatorship (1973-1984), the Frente Amplio began redirecting its perspective toward policies of access to land for family production and rural workers through the National Institute of Colonization (INC). The proposals of the National

THE ORGANIC RICE OF BRAZIL'S MST

A successful experience of the viability of agrarian reform and organic production.

Due to the economic crisis, the harm caused by the abusive use of agrottoxins, the increase in illness among workers, and in search of food sovereignty, in 1999, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) of the state of Rio Grande do Sul started producing "Terra Livre" rice, a clear **alternative model** for the countryside.



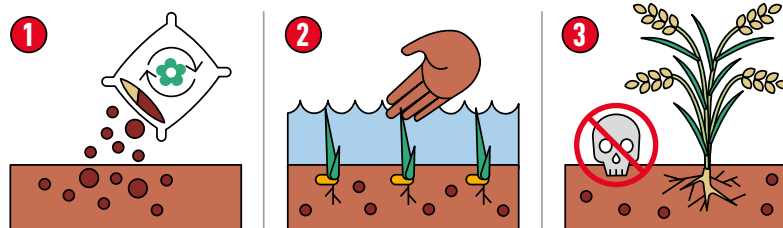
296 families

produce the food in a system of cooperation and exchange of experiences in

14 settlements

of agrarian reform in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre.

Techniques for Growing without Agrottoxins



1. The soil is treated with the incorporation of organic matter, such as animal manure and palm rice, the use of limestone, rock dust, and natural phosphate. The biofertilizers, natural repellents, and other inputs used are all permitted by legislation.
2. The seeds go into the, previously flooded ground, already in a process of germination. This allows for very efficient control of weeds through the use of water.
3. Months later, a rice free of agrottoxins is ready to be harvested.

Healthy rice for the people

3,200 Hectares

generate the largest amount of organic production in all of Latin American, a total of

15,000 tons

that are mostly destined to two public programs, the **Food Acquisition Program** and the **National School Food Program**.

Solidarity sales in

40 markets

in the metropolitan area of the city of Porto Alegre

34 shops

of the Agrarian Reform in Brazil network for the commercialization of product, distributed in 13 states, with sales in physical spaces and by delivery.

Fair trade exports



Orders of Terra Livre organic rice also reach other countries, such as the United States, Portugal, Holland, Germany, Spain, and Venezuela.

Agroecological Activism

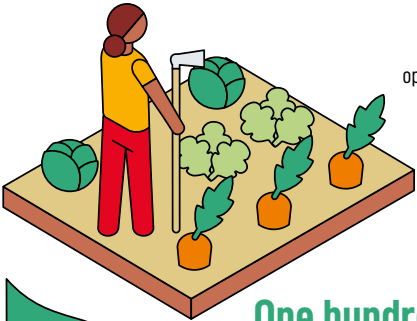


Besides commercialization, the network broadens its action through the campaign **"Eating is a political act"**, organizing musical concerts, book launches, and debates.

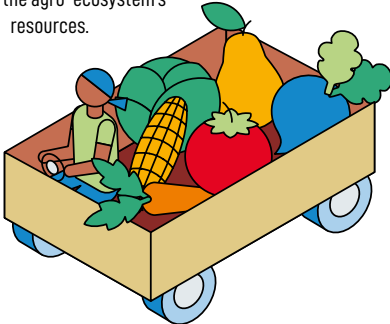
Source: MST.

THE UTT'S AGROECOLOGICAL COLONIES FOR URBAN PROVISIONING IN ARGENTINA


Lands for community benefit that generate networks of proximity for a more efficient, economical, and sustainable distribution.




Each colony generates 1.5 hectares of collective crops that optimize the agro-ecosystem's resources.



One hundred percent agroecological production that mitigates the climate change emergency.



Dozens of nodes of commercialization that reduce the products' cost.

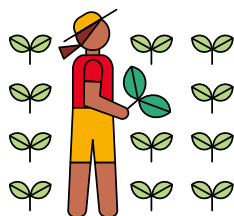


Framed in practices of Agricultural Colonies and in processes of an agroecological transition, the UTT develops collective infrastructure that allows for self-managing their own circuits of commercialization.



Biofactories

where they produce their own inputs for agroecological production.



Greenhouses

run by the community, lowering costs and liberating themselves from commercial providers.



National network

of commercialization to take food where the people need it.



350

Nodes for the distribution of agroecological productions to households in the whole Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and its metropolitan region.



14

Premises that are part of Network of Sovereign Shops, to which are added agroecological butcher shops and wholesale and retail markets.



86

cooperatives across the country that also guarantee the commercialization of more than

250

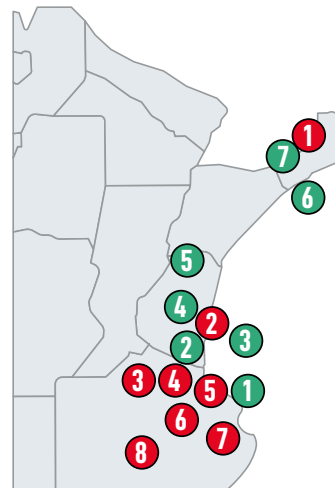
dry and dairy products.

As well as

- Open markets warehouses in the horticultural belt.
- Sales to the State.
- Shops, agroecological butcher shop, wholesale and retail markets as fixed sales points
- Creation of the Argentina Agro-Food Table

An expanding project

After many years of **social protest**, mobilization and multiple efforts between different levels of the State, the organization won the right to different spaces in which they have created various Colonies within the province of Buenos Aires, as well as in localities in other regions of the country.



● Colonies ● Mesopotamic Corridor

1. Agroecological Colony of Independent Producers of Puerto Piray, Misiones
2. Agroecological Colony of Gualaguaychú Las Piedras, Entre Ríos
3. Agroecological Colony of Mercedes, Buenos Aires
4. Agroecological Colony 20 de de abril-Darío Santillán de Jáuregui, Luján, Buenos Aires
5. Agroecological Colony 28 de noviembre de San Vicente, Buenos Aires
6. Comprehensive Agroecological Colony for Urban Supply of Máximo Paz, Buenos Aires
7. Comprehensive Agroecological Colony for Urban Supply of Castelli, Buenos Aires
8. Comprehensive Agroecological Colony for Urban Supply of Tapalqué, Buenos Aires

Mesopotamic Corridor

Seeks to build a strategic logic at the national level that articulates the needs of provinces in order to lower food costs, distribute healthy food, empower the production of cooperatives, small and medium-sized enterprises, and family farming.

1. **Buenos Aires:** Agro-ecological markets and cooperatives
2. **Gualaguaychú:** Sale to the municipality. Carlos Arenas Farming Colony
3. **Concepción del Uruguay:** UTT Shop
4. **Concordia:** Comunidad de vida Juan XXIII
5. **San José Feliciano:** Sale to the municipality
6. **Oberá:** Yerbas de la Selva Titrayú. Yerba-growing cooperatives Grapia milenaria and Tamandúá
7. **Eldorado:** Independent Producers of Piray

Source: Unión de Trabajadores de la Tierra (2021).

Commission for Rural Development (a representative organization of family production at the national level) are positioned along this same line. The period between 2005 and 2020 was historical in regards to the state's buying and delivery of land to families and collectives for production by families and rural workers. The current dispute from political parties, movements, and organizations is around defending the National Institute of Colonization and for policies for access to land for the popular sectors in the countryside and production by families and rural workers. For its part, the proposal of agrarian reform comes more from specific organizations, such as the Unión de Trabajadores Azucareros de Artigas (Union of Sugarcane Workers of Artigas, UTAA), the Movimiento por la Tierra (Movement for the Land) and the Red de Semillas Criollas y Nativas (Creole and Native Seeds Network), among others.

With the advance of extractivist mega-projects across the territory, a profound expansion of struggles in defence of territory is taking place. Land goes beyond merely productive aspects and incorporates the cultural dimension, through which, defence and demands expand to the territory: the land issue starts to be inscribed within the problematic of peasant and Indigenous territories. Thus, Indigenous peoples and peasants start to declare their right to land as well as to territory. It is a matter of defending the modes of inhabiting, the forms of life of Indigenous peoples and peasant communities, land is the space that gives sustenance to life, along with water and seeds, and is the condition of possibility for a dignified life project.

Throughout the history of Argentina, there are diverse examples of struggles and triumphs to guarantee the right to land. In Misiones, in northeastern Argentina, provincial law no. 4093, "Settlement and Colonization Plan" was passed in 2004. That law orders the expropriation of a set of properties in the northeast of the province (the departments of Guaraní, San Pedro and General Belgrano). This law arose as the result of a mobilization of small family-based producers and rural workers against logging companies over access to natural resources (land, water, the mountain). A total of 41,000 hectares have been expropriated as a result of the struggle of organizations that worked collectively around the social problematic of land. Eighteen years later, the government of the province still has not completed the expropriations and delivered the measurements to each producer.

In recent years, the emergence of a new agrarian social subject is as surprising as its form of social protest is novel. The organizations that bring them together Unión de Trabajadores de la Tierra (Land Workers' Union, UTT) and the Movimiento de Trabajadores Excluidos-Rama Rural (Movement of Excluded Workers-Rural Branch, MTE Rural), to cite the most numerous – were founded and have developed territorially since 2010. However, their massive eruption during Mauricio Macri's government constitutes a point of particular significance at the grassroots level. It is

also novel how these organizations repositioned the struggle for land in Argentina on the political agenda based on the proposal and implementation of *Agroecological Colonies for Urban Provisioning*. The Colonies are a UTT project to gain access to public lands and establish colonies on them where farming families – who up until then were tenants in the horticulture belt around La Plata – can relocate to live and produce. After several years of social protest, mobilization, and multiple efforts before different levels of the state, the organization forced the state to cede different spaces where it has already created several Colonies, both in the province of Buenos Aires, as well as in localities in the interior of the country.

Struggles for Water

From being considered a human right to being listed on the New York Stock Exchange: these are the extremes that are presented upon thinking about water, a vital resource for food production and, above all, for life itself. One of the causes for this is related to extractivism, whether mining, petroleum, logging, or agribusiness. Similarly, water scarcity, often planned by governments, is directly related to the depopulation of the countryside.

The case of Chile is the emblematic example of privatized water. However, the process that began with the popular revolt seeks to change a market that dates back to Pinochet's government, when there was a state policy to depopulate the countryside, to make peasant life nonviable, and, thus, lead a transfer of land from peasants to industrial agricultural activity for export. One of the first measures taken by the military dictatorship was to separate land ownership from access to water. Many peasant families were forced to sell their "water rights" and, even if they had land, they could no longer produce. The next step was to sell their land. Much of this is currently being debated, driven by social organizations in the Constituent Convention. Their demands for the new National Constitution include the deprivatization of water, to recover it as a common good and to establish it as a human right.

There is a long tradition of struggles for water in Uruguay. Perhaps the most well-known event is the plebiscite on October 31, 2004, when 64 percent of Uruguayans voted in favor of a constitutional amendment that granted the State the exclusive responsibility of managing water. Article 47 of the National Constitution specifies: "Water is an essential natural resource for life. Access to potable water and access to sanitation are fundamental human rights." In 2018, major mobilizations took place in the face of the modification of the Irrigation Law proposed by the government. The signatures necessary to take the proposal to a referendum were not obtained and the modifications are still in effect.

On the other hand, the Network of Articulation in the Brazilian Semi-arid Region (ASA), has led the "One million rural cisterns program" (P1MC). It is the widest ranging plan in Latin America in respect to access to water and

CISTERNS IN THE SEMIARID REGION OF BRAZIL

A civil society initiative that obtained support from public policies, mainly during the PT governments (2003–2016).

At the beginning of this century, a broad mobilization of social organizations, rural unions, popular movements, Church sectors, among others, created an articulation to **change the paradigm of social policies** in the Semi-arid Region of Brazil and to oppose the "drought industry" that imposes large works that attack the environment and are plagued with corruption. This experience with cisterns was recognized by the UN as one of the six most important in the fight against desertification, providing auspicious numbers:

5 million

people (68% women) benefited in 1,157 cities.

1.1 million

family units.

200,000

units destined to the cultivation of food and care of animals and technology exchanges among farmers.

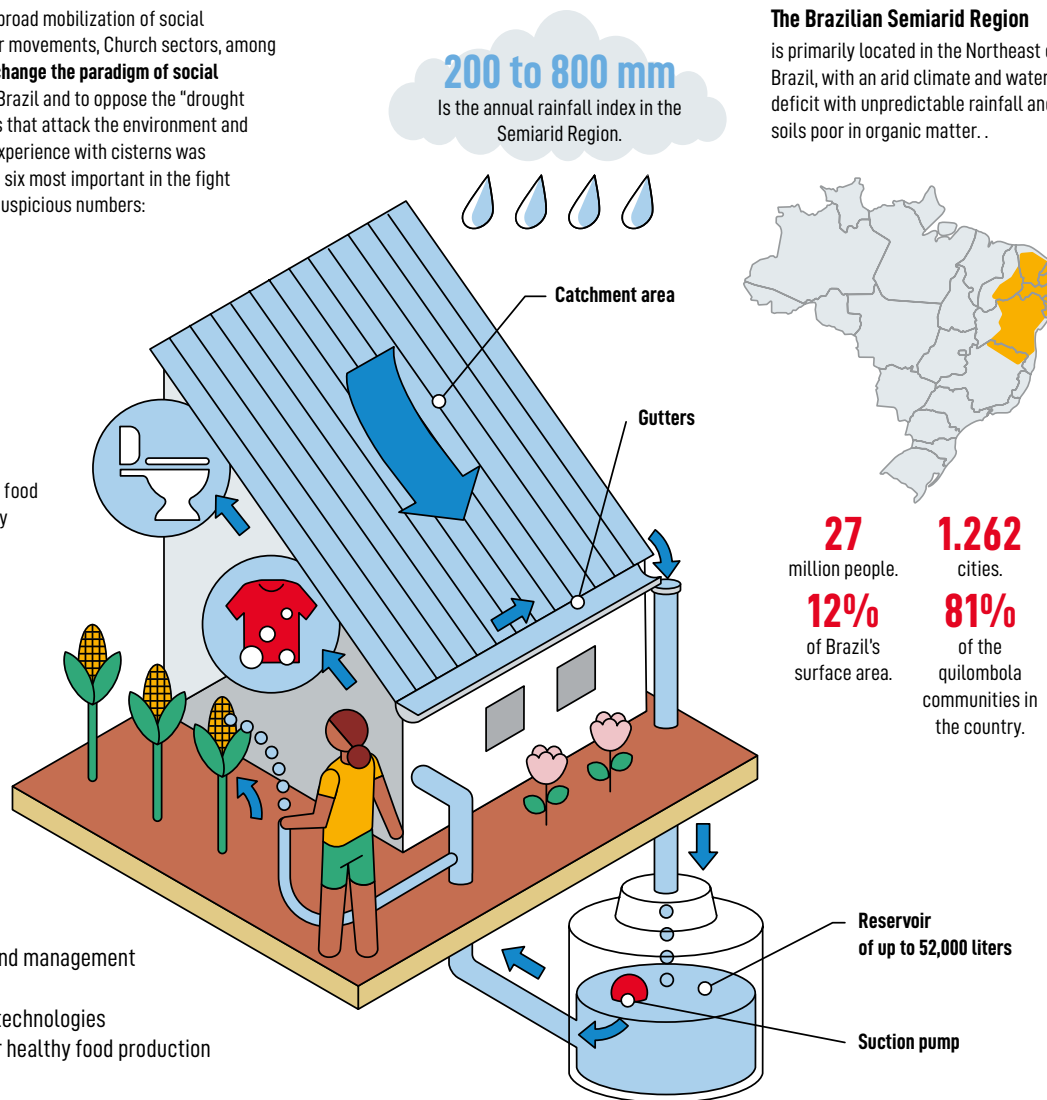
6,471

units constructed in schools.

Benefits of the democratization of water access

- Dignified provision for the rural population
- Autonomy for farmers
- Participatory construction and management of water resources
- Simple and low-cost social technologies
- Articulation with policies for healthy food production and public purchases

Source: ASA (Articulação no Semiárido Brasileiro).



with community participation by families. Started in the early 21st century in the semi-arid region of Brazil (the northeast of the country, which extends over eleven states and encompasses one million square kilometres) consists in storing rain water in cisterns of up to 16,000 litres built with precast cement plates. They are built close to housing (in contrast with the – long suffered – practice of having to walk long distances to obtain water).

The cistern, which is constructed by the community itself, has a cylindrical form, is covered and partially buried. It functions by collecting rain water through house's roof, which drains the water through gutters. It is simple technology, adapted to the semi-arid region and easy to replicate. But the Program is not only about a work of water access, at its heart, it is about the decentralization and democratization of water.

Before the P1MC, the "solutions" for rural families without water took place through policies implemented from the top down, imposed by governments and without the participation of the local community – which is fundamental in the P1MC – and with large dam projects, often built on private land. "The cisterns store a volume of water for each family's use, they are built in a communitarian way for the management of their own water," the ASA explains. It is a matter of changing the logic of the implementation of public policies.

As important as water is the way of building the cisterns, which prioritizes the training and involvement of families and the community, under the paradigm of water as a human right and the cistern as a family achievement. Social and community participation is planned for all stages of the program's execution. Before building the cistern, trainings are carried out

that address the management of water resources, care of the cistern, and the particularities of the region that they inhabit. The entire methodology is participatory and reflexive. In 2014, they had already surpassed the number of one million cisterns.

In Argentina, more than 450,000 families that live in isolated rural areas do not have access to the basic right of water, as recounted by Eduardo Belelli, from the Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena (National Indigenous Peasant Movement, MNCI), in the report "Agua en el sur del mundo". Argentina is an immense and scarcely populated country, in which 94 percent of the population lives in concentrated cities, and 70 percent in only four provinces. At the same time, 75 percent of the territory is semiarid or arid. The dispute over water in the country is over territory and for resources for works. Despite this panorama, recently in 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture implemented a specific aid policy for access to water with the participation of peasant organizations.

Sharing experiences among peasants has been key, particularly when families from Argentina travelled to northeast Brazil and learned about the "One million cisterns program". Trainings took place with peasants from three provinces (Cordoba, Mendoza, and Santiago del Estero). In 2015, the first community cistern was built, measuring 52,000 liters, in the peasant territory of the San Roque area (Cruz del Eje, Cordoba). Additionally, eleven teams were created in five provinces. Plate tanks allow for storing up to 16,000 liters to face droughts in rural and peri-urban areas, they are economical, and self-built. Based off of the impulse of organizations, the ProHuerta program (of the Ministry of Social Development and the National Institute of Agricultural Technology) created a component specific to the issue of water. Over the course of only one year, 2019, they managed to initiate the community self-construction of 2,300 cisterns in nine provinces.

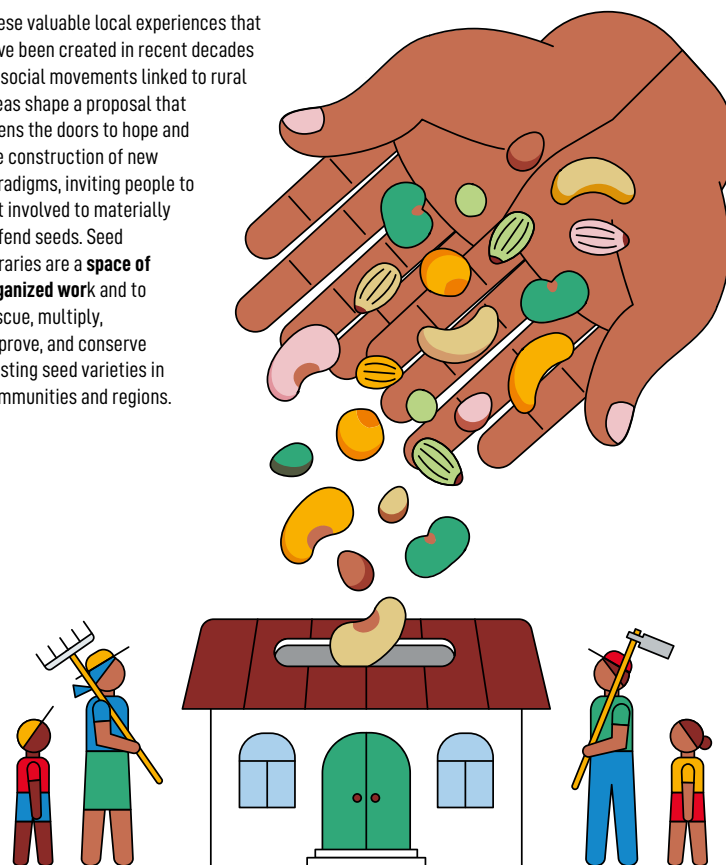
Sovereign Seeds

For years, social organizations and communities around the world have been carrying out collective experiences for protecting seeds and valuing knowledges associated with biodiversity: local networks and markets

SEED LIBRARIES

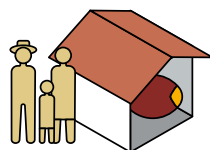
A crucial practice for building food sovereignty.

These valuable local experiences that have been created in recent decades by social movements linked to rural areas shape a proposal that opens the doors to hope and the construction of new paradigms, inviting people to get involved to materially defend seeds. Seed libraries are a **space of organized work** and to rescue, multiply, improve, and conserve existing seed varieties in communities and regions.



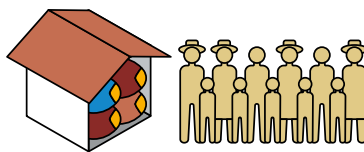
Scales of Seed Libraries

Family



- A unit of peasant production composed of Creole **seed guardians** that maintain a space for storing seeds for their own use or to exchange in regional markets

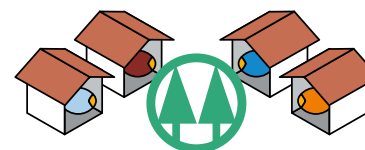
Communities



- With a **collective management** model, the community seed library has a specific structure to protect Creole seed varieties.

- With this practice they contribute to the conservation of seeds as well as to their **distribution to peasant families** that need them when it is time to plant or for exchanges among groups in the community and regions.

Territorial



- Networks made up of local seed guardians and **community seed libraries** have a greater reach, include more members, and allow for the participation of several communities, or even municipalities.

- They have a larger physical structure, with equipment for drying, cleaning, and improving seeds and spaces to preserve greater quantities. A **collective management** model, usually in the form of a cooperative.

- Their objective is not only to store seeds for their members or for exchange. They also seek to sell seeds to other peasant organizations and public policies for the sale and distribution of seeds.

- They thus enable **processes of autonomy** in respect to the production and availability of seeds, which is essential for the construction of food sovereignty.

Source: La Revolución de una semilla. Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo (2021).

in which Creole and native seeds circulate; seed libraries, houses, banks, and shelters, cooperatives, guardians. The majority of these spaces and practices are not governed by commercial transactions or by money. Family or community-based actions, mainly at the local scale, demonstrate that caring for seeds is part of a set of cooperative actions that guarantee access to diversity, food sovereignty, and the conservation of agro-biodiversity. In recent years, initiatives to produce agroecological seeds have grown at a larger scale, to guarantee peasant movements' productive and agroecological projects.

The experience of the Movement of Small Farmers (MPA) in Brazil is emblematic in this regard. The organization developed and implemented the Creole Seed Processing Units (UBS) in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. Since their implementation, hundreds of thousands of families have received seeds produced by the MPA in these units. They have also developed exclusive cultivation areas for seed production, in which they produce seeds for local and regional distribution, usually developed through collective systems, which has contributed to allowing peasant families to recover access and control over the varieties of basic seeds of corn, rice, and beans.

Seed libraries are spaces of autonomy and protection, and also, at the same time, a political action in defense of biodiversity, fulfilling an important social role at the regional and local level, through the creation of community and democratic participation. The organization is a reference in the region for developing these spaces at different scales, and its methodology has also been shared and replicated in other countries.

The organization of peasant women in Conamuri, Paraguay, started with a small group in the 1990s, and today is made up of women from more than 200 rural communities in Paraguay. The seed library, *Semilla Róga* in Guaraní, is found a process of territorial resistance to the agro-export production model. Its objective is to protect and preserve native and Creole seeds. They have also carried out a data collection process about native and Creole seeds in the community. Through this process, they rescued more than 60 species. These species are reproduced in the community through seed exchanges.

In the district of Chépica, in the O'Higgins region of Chile, in November 2015, Anamuri founded an Agroecology Institute seeking to maintain the country's food heritage through the preservation and multiplication of native seeds with techniques passed down from generation to generation. The space brings together education, training, and protection, with peasant women participating in the *Sembradoras de Esperanza* school where they learn conservation and agroecology methods and, at the same time, the school preserves seeds to protect and reproduce them. They have reached a stock of 250 species.

In every corner of Argentina, in rural and urban areas, we can find seed guardians, seed libraries, and larger-scale cooperatives. The Minka Semillera (Cedepo-Maela) was founded thirty years ago in Florencio Varela. Today it has more than 80 varieties of Creole seeds, protected in a seed library in which they are collectively multiplied. The Minka places value on the productive knowledges of the area in order to reproduce and preserve seeds with high quality standards.

Seed exchanges are usually take place in another one of the methods that movements use for protecting seeds: *Seed exchange markets*. The markets, which exist in every country, at the national, provincial, regional, or local level, are spaces that take place at a favourable moment in the year for the exchange of seeds for the next planting cycle. In Misiones, in the triple border area, peasants and social organizations founded the Semillero Movement twenty-five years ago. There is a network with around fifteen seed libraries, family storage units, and seed production cooperatives for sale at the large-scale, while at least once a year, they come together in the Provincial Exchange Market.

The seed exchange networks are certainly fundamental for the conservation of seeds and agro-biodiversity and collective action is the practice that guarantees free access to seeds. In Uruguay, the National Native and Creole Seed Network is made up of more than 250 family farms, involving more than 350 producers distributed throughout fourteen departments. Its main objective is to rescue and revalue Creole and traditional varieties to increase the availability of seeds for family production – whether for subsistence or for supplying local markets – in the framework of strengthening food sovereignty. Every two years a National Creole Seed Gathering and Festival is held, which is when an assembly is carried out to establish the Network's political agenda. On the alternate years, Regional Gatherings are held to exchange seeds and address issues of interest.

Achieving processes of autonomy in respect to seed production and availability is essential for the construction of food sovereignty. BioNatura, the seed network that was built as one of the strategic instruments that the MST organized for carrying out the actions of its Seed Campaign at the beginning of the new century and for promoting agroecology has, with time, become a reference point for the whole continent for the production of agroecological seeds. In this sense, Bionatur's experience proposes a different approach for thinking about actions in defence of seeds: the challenge of production at the medium and large scale to supply native and Creole seeds, as well as to sustain social organizations' productive projects. This is essential because seeds are the element of the food production chain that is most threatened by the agribusiness model and because that is where farmers lose autonomy. From the moment that they manage to produce their own seeds, they have the possibility of planning a sovereign future.

BUENOS

MA



COBBLES



FOOD IS POLITICAL

A food project organized by the power of handful of transnational agri-food corporations or a food project organized by the power of communities, peasant and farming families, and conscious consumers fully exercising their right to food, are clearly two different perspectives that lead to very different results.

We already know that the agribusiness model is not committed to food security. But how would an alternative food project work? We can see examples in all corners of the world. In the region, peasant organizations and grassroots movements are leading diverse experiences that – for several decades – are building *food sovereignty* and, at the same time, demonstrating that a *popular and solidarity economy* is possible. In turn, these experiences are unavoidable references at the global level in the debate over sustainable agri-food systems.

The practice of different organizations in our countries shows us that *“another economy is already happening”* – as they say in Brazil –, that food sovereignty exists and is being built daily. And the majority of these experiences are being constructed under the paradigm of agroecology.

Three decades ago, when the GMO model started to advance in South America, the term “agroecology” was almost unheard of. Today, in 2022, it is a banner of struggle and, above all, a way of producing that encompasses thousands of hectares in all the countries of the region, with a diversity of forms and challenges, but as a concrete way of growing healthy food for the people.

The UST-MNCI-ST in Mendoza has created comprehensive productive systems that allow for predictability in the whole production circuit. That is the case of the tomato. From seeds to the retail and marketing process, they have managed to plan the agroecological production of tomatoes, adding value, and obtaining a product that enters the commercialization circuit in the frame of food sovereignty in the movement’s shops and outside of the province.

For Via Campesina, agroecology is the heritage of rural and ancestral people, placed at the service of humanity; it is a way of being, of living and producing, with biological and social foundations, a close relationship to nature, with a gender focus, with high levels of diversification, recycling of productions and inputs, with significant autonomy and local and regional provisioning of healthy foods. Agroecology is a technological approach that is subordinated to profound political objectives and, therefore, the practice of agroecology must be collective, through solidarity, adjusted to concrete material and political conditions. Agroecology contributes to the economic and

political construction of food sovereignty. Peasants, family farmers, small-scale fishers, and Indigenous peoples – among others – are the main protagonists in agroecology.

The “Popular Technical Consultation” (CoTePo) is the name of an unprecedented space in Argentina for training peasants in the production of bio-inputs for agroecology, founded by the Unión de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras de la Tierra (Land Workers’ Union, UTT). There they talk about and produce the popular “bocashi” (an organic fertilizer that is made by mixing soil, cow, chicken, or goat dung, ashes and water, among other ingredients) and “purín”, made with onion, which is used as a natural repellent. The UTT’s “biofactories” started producing in twenty litre tanks. They have grown and currently produce thousands of litres per week, including for farmers who are not part of the UTT. The CoTePo demonstrated that, through the use of bio-inputs for agroecology, they could maintain productivity levels similar to that of conventional agriculture, but with 80 percent less expenditures on inputs. On the other hand, they obtain completely innocuous food with greater nutritional content, with prices that are the same as or lower than those of conventional businesses. They also promoted the recuperation and improvement of seeds as a part of a strategy to obtain autonomy in relation to dollarized inputs, in an anti-inflationary sense, guaranteeing fair and accessible prices for the distribution and commercialization of healthy food. CoTePo developed a “peasant to peasant” methodology and has shaped a very active network of references that, besides producing agroecologically in their own farms, are also facilitators-promoters.

The development of collective infrastructure that allows for self-managing their own input supply circuits, agroecological production, and later distribution-commercialization has been essential for scaling up agroecological production. In Brazil, the case of organic rice and the MST’s field stores is emblematic. Another important experience is that of the Small Farmers Movement (MPA), that organizes the Territorial Cooperation Centres in which training, cooperation, and production activities, as well as the creation of new agroecological technologies, are carried out. They are spaces that enable another type of sociability among peasants. Knowledges also travel to more distant production units through the peasant technology package, which includes a set of knowledges, practices, and alternatives for the agroecological transition. In this dynamic, it is fundamental to provide incentives for the logic of cooperation between families with the aim of strengthening Peasant Production

Systems, a proposal for constructing spaces that are increasing diverse in terms of the food offer and increasingly less dependent on external inputs. The horizon is to prioritize the relationship between the family unit, the community, and the territory, through autonomy, establishing new parameters for the city-countryside relation.

In Paraguay, the Ecological Yerba Mate La Comuna Ñande Ka'a Teete, is an achievement of peasant families of the Ñu Pyahu Settlement, who have wagered on small-scale, craft industrialization to improve the peasant economy. The process began in the locality of Tava'i (Caazapá department) with twenty-two families in 2005. Four years later, seeking to advance in implementing agroecological productive proposals for food sovereignty, producers were encouraged to germinate seeds, reproduce seedlings, and also expand the planting of yerba mate to other communities and settlements. They were able to have 12,000 seedlings. In 2014, they held the first market with artisanally produced yerba, reaching 300 kilos to begin building and conquering alternative markets. In 2015, they harvested 8,000 kilos of fresh leaves, thus producing 3,000 kilos of processed yerba mate. In 2020, the crop reached 54,000 kilos of fresh leaves, 20,000 kilos of agroecologically processed yerba mate. With their agroecological yerba, they were also part of the food kits distributed to families in the municipality of Tava'i to alleviate the crisis.

These experiences demonstrate that building food sovereignty is not only possible, but is already underway through the capacity for popular organization and self-management of territories and communities. Agroecological production increases its scale and volume based on cooperative, solidarity, and self-managed organization of increasingly complex processes, which require material investments and collective capacities for planning and managing, putting an economy into operation whose decisions are not governed by the search to maximize profit and the reproduction of capital, but rather an economy – for and by – workers.

Faced with the structural restrictions suffered by peasant communities, Indigenous peoples, and family farmers in our region, in respect to access to land (expulsion or eviction), to other natural goods such as water and seeds, and to resources for investments and their own means of production, resilient strategies, such as collective access and the developing capacities of self-management and collective management of the common, are fundamental.

Is another market possible?

The moment of commercialization is often presented as a "Sword of Damocles" that arrives to judge the chances of survival of popular economy experiences. It is as if an invisible mantra were saying to us

that we can organize and produce differently as much as we want, but in the last instance it will be *the market* who will determine whether or not this is viable and if it has social value or meaning. This imperative discourse of "passing the market test" is frequently even reproduced within grassroots organizations themselves.

However, the logics that govern the functioning of the conventional capitalist market, as well as the experiences that have managed to create alternative markets, ruled by other principles for the commercialization of their production – in local markets, peasant markets, agroecological markets, etc. – demonstrate the need to question that supremacy of the market criteria. And they express a key dimension of the political power of food sovereignty: *politicizing food*.

Going beyond the North-South logics that are often reproduced in experiences of so-called "fair trade", the food sovereignty approach shows the need to question and problematize how everyone is fed, regardless of each individual's purchasing power, and to reveal the unequal power relations that govern the food system and especially the commercialization of food in contemporary capitalism.

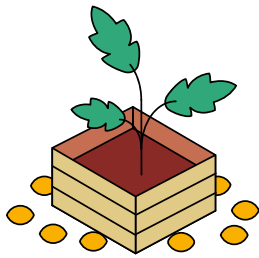
Different experiences of peasant movements and grassroots organizations demonstrate that it is possible to construct alternative markets, governed by other principles, which operate as a "by-pass" – as J.D. Van der Ploeg calls them – and that enable producers and consumers to skip the nodes of concentration that characterize "food empires".

In Argentina, the Movimiento Campesino de Córdoba (Campesino Movement of Córdoba, MCC) (MNCI-ST) operates a chain of shops called "Monte Adentro", in which more than 100 peasant families from the north of that province, supply the consumption of city residents with their products. The MCC is made up of six territorial organizations that are located in the west, northeast, and north of the province. It was founded twenty-one years ago with the aim of fighting in defence of peasant life. With commercialization as one of its main axes, they managed to open "Monte Adentro" shops in the city of Córdoba and Villa Dolores, and a few years later, in 2021, in the locality of Deán Funes. "Monte Adentro" is, on the one hand, the experience of commercialization and the shops, but it is also a collective brand of the MCC's products. The shops are a tool to make visible the work that the MCC is doing in the territory. They mainly sell peasant products of communities from the province and of the MNCI Somos Tierra at the national level. They are also articulated and sell products from the city's green belt, cooperatives, organized people, and popular economy enterprises and organizations.

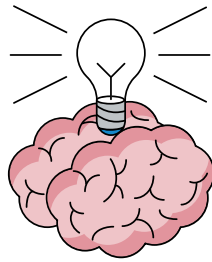
The rural branch of the Movimiento de Trabajadores Excluidos (Excluded Workers' Movement, MTE-Rural) is made up of cooperatives, organizations, and associations of peasants, small producers, and Indigenous commu-

TOMATO PRODUCTION: FROM SEED TO STORE

A productive experience of the National Indigenous Peasant Movement – Somos Tierra of the Province of Mendoza, Argentina.



- Using their own seeds for the production of agroecological tomato seedlings produced in the organization's greenhouse.



- Planning production based on projections for the year. Scaling cultivation according to needs in the factory.



- Processing whole and crushed tomatoes in different sized containers in the "Manos del Pueblo" factories.



- Commercialization in local supply networks and the UST's "Almacén Campesino" in the city of Mendoza.

Source: Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena – Somos Tierra.

nities throughout the country that are organizing to improve the quality of life and work of those who produce food. The organization brings together association forms through cooperatives as a way of visibilizing and also formalizing the work of family agriculture. It has a presence in twenty provinces and organizes 25,000 families in the rural environment. In terms of commercialization, they develop three main lines: a line of wholesale sales to the state and institutions, in which they participate in bids to municipalities and are providers for the Comprar program run by the Ministry of Development. They have another line of community social work, in which they sell to organizations that work in the territory, such as Frente Popular Darío Santillán, Barrios de Pie, la Dignidad, who distribute the food in soup kitchens and food boxes (as concrete ways to connect with and strengthen organizations and have direct impacts). In 2016, they started *Pueblo a Pueblo* as an MTE commercialization project. It seeks to create a direct bridge between the food-producing part of the people and the working people in urban centres, to eliminate the speculative intermediation that generates enormous increases in food prices and does not fairly recognize the work of the producing families.

One of the most effective policies for ensuring the development of peasant production systems is public purchasing, a resource used by many governments at the national, regional, and local level. Besides being an important way of supporting peasant agriculture, it allows for providing healthy foods to schools, hospitals, soup kitchens, and other public establishments. However, this process must be transparent and include the active participation of peasants and citizen control – for example, through participatory budgeting. Additionally, it is necessary to guarantee access to decentralized commercialization channels.

One example that we could examine is that of the county of San Martín, in the metropolitan region of Buenos Aires, which currently acquires 40 percent of the food that supplies its soup kitchens and the merchandise

bags that the municipality hands out from the peasant popular economy. In addition to applying a regular volume and quality for sale to state services, public authorities must invest in storage and transportation following sanitation norms, which are often the most difficult elements for small producers without resources to access.

Therefore, in Brazil, the MPA, in collaboration with other organizations, promotes the creation of commercialization support networks, through the association of cooperatives, also promoting the development of consumer alliances to lower the final price of food. One of the most successful experiences occurs in Rio de Janeiro, with the *"cesta camponesas"* (peasant boxes). During the pandemic, more than 15,000 units were commercialized in thirty neighbourhoods of Brazil's second largest city. The boxes are part of the Popular Food Supply System (SAAP) that proposes other social, economic, and cultural relations between peasant families, urban producers, and consumers. The Raíces de Brasil stores are central for this articulation, as spaces for healthy food, culture, and politics. Today Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Teresina, and Aracaju already have spaces where they carry out markets.

In its diverse formats, denomination and frequency, the market is the most widespread model of commercialization for family agriculture. It tends to be a space for selling extra fresh or industrialized products, but that generates a major impact on the economies of the producers and a socioeconomic and cultural impact on the localities in which they are carried out. The Red de Ferias Francas de Misiones (Network of Open Air Markets of Misiones) currently has 90 markets and fairs, in around 55 municipalities of the province. The first market began in 1995, under the impulse of the Movimiento Agrario de Misiones (Agrarian Movement of Misiones, MAM), replicated the experiences of markets in southern Brazil. Years later, the model of the open air market became a public policy, with a Directorate within the Ministry of Family Agriculture of the Province.

In this direct link between producers and consumers, as well as in experiences of solidarity intermediation in which other organizations or cooperative groups are the nexus that carries out the commercialization between producers and consumers, a non-commodified relationship is constituted, a link that transcends the product in itself, and in which knowledge, culture, identities circulate and awareness and values are generated. In short, food is politicized.

In Chile, according to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, there are approximately 1,150 open air markets, which are managed by more than 110,000 tenants, generating around 350,000 direct jobs. The markets are a key channel for bringing consumers closer to the production of small-scale agriculture on the national level. In fact, it is very complicated for small farmers – the majority in the country, although they are especially vulnerable to agroindustry – to sell through produce through other commercial channels, such as supermarkets, and even more so for export.

These experiences of direct and/or self-managed commercialization also enable an important improvement in compensation for labour at the same time as they improve the price of foods for consumers, creating much more equitable forms of distributing the value produced among the actors who make up this chain.

In Uruguay, the Popular Subsistence Market is organized through territorially-based groups: cooperatives, unions, neighbourhood groups, to collectively buy from cooperatives, worker-managed factories, and family-farm products. It enables access to less expensive and better quality products that are not part of the speculative logic of supermarkets. It reaches nearly 600 families in 47 neighbourhoods in Montevideo, Canelones, and San José, with a list of 300 products, 247 of which are from self-managed enterprises.

The novelty of the emergence of these popular and peasant economies in our countries also lies in their capacity to build symbolic bridges and shared proposals of transformation with sectors of the urban population. They have done so by raising the debate in large cities over how food is produced and how the vegetables, milk, and meat that we eat reaches our kitchen table, by analyzing and acting politically in the face of the new sensibility of urban sectors toward food sovereignty and the climate emergency. Food sovereignty as a possibility for transforming the agri-food system requires alliances, agreements, and encounters among grassroots actors – despite their structural differences – to be able to challenge and dispute the hegemony of agribusiness.

