

Conference Sub-theme: Healthy and resilient populations, just and equitable food systems • Environmental: Food and nutrition security

Title: Perceptions of Women from a rural community in Northeast Brazil on the impact of the Programs Bolsa Família, Cisterns, and PRONAF in their food practices – a qualitative study.

Author: Mariana Lopes Simões, Master's student at the Institute of Tropical Medicine and International Health at Charité Universitatmedizin Berlin, Germany (finishing in July 2023).

Background: Brazilian Zero Hunger strategy included the cash-transfer program Bolsa Família, the credit to strengthen family farming PRONAF, and providing cisterns. Understanding the effects of this strategy in rural areas and pondering gender is crucial as women play an essential role in family's dietary decisions and agriculture. This study explored perceptions of women from a rural community in Northeast Brazil regarding the impact of the three programs mentioned on their food practices.

Methods: A qualitative study was conducted in a rural setting with severe drought. Seventeen women, 18 to 87 years old, were selected through convenience sampling and interviewed in-depth. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: The interviewees manage crops, family meals, and domestic work. Subsistence farming keeps predominant, with surplus of production mainly being donated. Participants perceive more diversity of food consumed and attribute it to income growth and better access to the cities where markets are located. Cisterns eradicated water collection work previously under their responsibility and with the extra time, they keep gardens and small animals. Regular meat consumption was noticed as the main gain in their diet, currently composed of rice, beans, meat, and vegetables, with rice and pasta replacing corn and manioca. A growth in the ingestion of ultra-processed food was mentioned. With no garbage collection in the region, domestic waste is burned. The youngest participants demonstrated awareness regarding this practice's health and environmental effects. 05 women used PRONAF, and 04 had little influence on how to invest the money.

Conclusion: Interviewees have more access to and diversity of food. Their diet is still composed of no or minimally processed food, but an increase in the consumption of ultra-processed food was observed. Their power of decision is restricted to the domestic sphere, with little participation in using PRONAF. The economic progress was not followed by nutritional and environmental programs. Further studies on the emerging food environment can support the development of such programs.