

Brazil's Zero Hunger Czar Takes Stock and Sees a Long Way to Go

Contributed by Juliana Andrade
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Brazil is succeeding in winning the war against hunger and malnutrition. This evaluation was made on Tuesday, October 11, by the Brazilian Minister of Social Development and Hunger Alleviation, Patrus Ananias, in a stocktaking of the Zero Hunger program.

"The results of the Zero Hunger program are very positive on balance. I say this, knowing that we still have a long way to go before we can affirm that all Brazilian men and women have, besides the human right to a diet of quality, quantity, and regularity, other fundamental rights pertinent to citizenship, but we are advancing," Ananias said, stressing that the results attained are the fruit of a partnership between federal, state, and municipal governments and civil society.

The Minister recalled that the Zero Hunger program encompasses a group of emergency and structural measures aimed at eliminating hunger and ensuring everyone the right to eat.

According to Ananias, the Zero Hunger program should receive US\$ 12 billion in 2006. The amount of resources allocated to the program this year is US\$ 5.3 billion. "Zero Hunger is a strategic priority for the Brazilian government," he declared.

According to the Minister, the Family Grant program, the Zero Hunger program's major instrument of income transfer, is already operating in all Brazilian municipalities.

"It is surely the biggest social program in our country's history and already benefits around 8 million families."

The goal is to reach 8.7 million families by the end of the year and cover the entire population that lives below the poverty line, that is 11.2 million families, by the end of 2006.

Ananias also underscored the results of the National Family Farming Program (Pronaf), coordinated by the Ministry of Agrarian Development. According to the Minister, the program has been allotted US\$ 4 billion for the coming harvest.

"The Pronaf is linked to our food acquisition program, also known as the direct purchase of produce from family farming, which creates employment and income in the countryside. We are buying produce from these small farmers and, at the other end, ensuring the right to eat to needy individuals, families, and communities," he said.

According to the Minister, other measures, such as the Program for the Eradication of Child Labor (Peti), are also being incorporated into the Zero Hunger program.

"We are consolidating a massive network of social protection and promotion in the country," he affirmed.

World Food Week

More than 60 events will be taking place throughout Brazil between October 16 and 22, as part of celebrations of World Food Week. One of the most important highlights of the week will be intense discussions at various levels of government and society on the issues of hunger, nutrition and food security in Brazil.

Other discussion topics are: school lunch programs, family farming and the latest developments in nutrition, family health and combating hunger.

Also to be dealt with are: the use of cassava as a source of nutrition, whole grain foods and medicinal plants, the advantages of breastfeeding, health in old age, how to avoid wasting food and the eating habits in the Kalunga quilombo (a village of descendants of slaves).

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