

Opinion

Food insecurity in America Latina and Caribbean: reflections in a pandemic context

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According to the Food and Agriculture Organization [1], it's possible to conceptualize food security from four dimensions: physical availability of food, economic and physical access to food, food utilization and stability of the other three dimensions over time. A situation of food security is found in these four dimensions are fulfilled simultaneously.

In Brazil, e.g., Belik, [2] suggested food security as a concept with three aspects: quantity, quality and regularity of food access. This is a seminal idea, in that Country, to develop projects about the human right to adequate and healthy food. Other linked terms are food sovereignty (or autonomy) and food sustainability. The first treats production to cover demand, adding food as part of people's culture; the second treats production as integrated into the environment.

Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced and projected continuous growth in their agricultural production, particularly, foods. OECD-FAO [3] predicts that the region will expand agricultural and fish production by 14% until 2030. This estimate reveals a conflict with data about the prevalence of food insecurity. FAOSTAT [4] shows that insecurity of food increased, examining data for 2019, 2020 and 2021. The prevalence of severe food insecurity in the total population (percent) was 9.9% in 2019, arriving at 14.2% in 2021. If the reference is the prevalence of moderate food insecurity in the total population (percent), in 2019 the estimate was 31.7%, while it was 40.6% in 2021. The soma was 41.8% of the population in food insecurity, in the first year, while it reached 44.8% in 2021.

One of the main reasons for the performance of the region was its gross domestic product (GDP) in the selected years. In 2020, the product of Latin America and the Caribbean decreased by 6.8%. In 2021, the GDP can have increased by 5.2% (preliminary data) [5], not enough to compensate for the increased poverty verified during the pandemic time.

The scenery of Latin America and the Caribbean expansion of production and trade versus the prevalence of food insecurity exposes the insufficiency of physical availability of food and economic and physical access to food, at least, for

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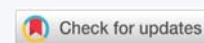
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the region. It shows that the recuperation of per capita income could be insufficient to solve the problem. But, only part of the solution. As the region is very heterogeneous, besides thinking about the growth of GDP, the challenge is to promote public programs to enable the access to food production, considering collaboration among countries. The alternative to remedy the problem exclusively by the markets will keep part of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean without enough food to enter in a condition of food security.

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