



The contribution of local agrifood systems in food policies of cities

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Abstract – In the current relocation process of food systems, cities are experimenting new local food procurement policies. These experiences are quite different with the previous initiatives of support of agriculture that was conceived and reasoned from a rural area in order to reveal specificities to ensure better integration in the markets and contributed to the development and recognition of what is called the agriculture of terroir or geographical indications. The approach of Local Agri-Food Systems (LAS) is in this perspective and brings, since the late 90s, original contributions to the analysis of rural development by providing a central place to resources, territory and local food cultures [Muchnik et al (2008)]. Public procurement projects networks and programs for school canteens cities refocus the debate on the need to take account of the logic of small businesses and their possible cooperation within a territory and interacting with urban developers of these programs. The paper discuss here on the capacity and the relevance of the LAS approach to meet the food safety requirements and to support local procurement policies of cities and especially school canteens.

Keywords – food procurement, cities, local agrifood system.

INTRODUCTION

In the current relocation process of food systems, cities are experimenting new local food procurement policies. These experiences are quite different with the previous initiatives of support of agriculture that was conceived and reasoned from a rural area in order to reveal specificities to ensure better integration in the markets and contributed to the development and recognition of what is called the agriculture of terroir or geographical indications. The approach of Localized Food and Agriculture System (SYAL) is in line with this perspective and brings, since the late 90s, original contributions to the analysis of rural development by providing a central place to resources, territory and local food cultures (Muchnik et al, 2008) The originality of the work on SYAL was thus to propose a method of analysis with attention to the enhancement of regional specificities, declined in several dimensions: specificity of men, their histories and institutions, specific ecosystems and landscapes; specificity of the products and related qualification process; specificity of consumers and their food crops that can be used as food resources development (Muchnik et al, 2008). On the other hand, recent public procurement projects networks and programs for school canteens refocus the debate on the need to take account of the logic of small businesses and their possible cooperation within a territory and interacting with urban developers and polices makers. Is the SYAL approach a proposal to examine and to strengthen food policies of cities ? The paper discuss here on the capacity and the relevance

of the SYAL approach to meet the food safety requirements and to support local procurement policies of cities and especially school canteens. The paper discuss here on the capacity and the relevance of the SYAL approach to meet the food safety requirements and to support local procurement policies of cities and especially school canteens. We first present the policies and programs specificities and limitations. We will then discuss possible contributions of SYAL approach to the analysis of these new agricultural and rural dynamics in those territories where the city becomes a key player.

METHODS

This paper is based on the analysis of nine communications, which were presented and discussed during the sixth edition International of the Conference on Local Agri-food Systems' in Florianopolis - Brazil (2013). The conference aimed at evaluating how to face the new challenges related to in the global context. In particular profound changes in the current global context demand a new reflection on the role of the LAFS (as well as other approaches) in local development strategies. The issue of food security holds a privileged place in the international organisms' agenda, making room for discussions on the role of family agriculture. Forms of public action are also renewed before these new challenges, and the State or local institutions (collectivities) become increasingly important interlocutors in the promotion of agrifood development strategies in partnership with the private sector and civil society. The selected communications deal with the recent brazilian "Zero Hunger Program", reflecting on its implementation at the municipal level.

RESULTS

New policies and actions for food and Nutrition Security in Brazil

The Zero Hunger Project is the result of one year of work involving experts and representatives of NGOs, research institutes, local organizations and social movements dealing with food security-related issues from all over Brazil who were brought together by the Citizenship Institute to draw up a proposal for a Food and Nutrition Security Policy. This project was based on the local experiences and innovations tested by some cities, municipalities or States. Two of the main initiatives taken for this purpose were the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), a mechanism for public procurement of food produced by family farmers and the National School Meal Program (Pnae), another mechanism to serve meals to students at school. Both of them establish links between the supply of food produced under family farming schemes and demand for food for public programs and facilities. By law 30% of food for public school meals should come from the family farm sector. Some 45.6 million school children are attended by this program which has extended its

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reach to include secondary schooling and other public canteens (Wilkinson et al, 2015).

The selected communications at the 6th SYAL congress, relate the positive effects and the difficulties that small cities or municipalities are facing when they want to implement such program. Our communication discuss this difficulties and try to reflect if the SYAL approach can help to better improve the implementation of this type of policies.

The selected communications show that the 2 public programs could be seen as an important leverage to explore new markets (eg the Sao jaoquim cooperativa) or invest in new agricultural production (conversion to organic production diversification). It also represents an opportunities for small families farmers to convert their production system to more sustainable production (tobacco conversion to agroecology). Communications also reveals learning process and integration of family farmers in new spaces of dialogue and territorial mediation. Some limits are pointed out. The volume cap limits the insertion of a greater number of family farmers. And thus limits the effects of these programs at the local level and sometimes create competition between producers organisation to have access to the programs. On other hand, communications expose important administrative and legal barriers (Public Procurement Code) and confirm the current management model is still a model for conventional products without thinking how to manage the seasonality or the freshness of the products? In the same line, there is an important lack of infrastructures of school restaurants in managing and transforming the supply of fresh products (vegetables, salads, fruits). The last element pointed out by the authors is an important lack of producer's organisations, logistical problems as well as the ignorance of family farmers by public actors (not visible, poorly organized).

Local Agrifood System : main characteristics?

Since 1996, the concept of SYAL is the result of a progressive construction of researchers, scholars and activists interested in studying and understanding the spatial concentration of small and medium-sized food enterprises in Latin America and Africa. The challenge for this group is building an explanatory model of collective efficiency of networks of actors and agrifood enterprises (the role of the territorial anchorage in the economic development). The analysis of the literature done since the end of 90's decades shows three categories of studies. The first focuses on the effect of spatial concentrations of agrifood enterprises. The results and contributions are quite close from clusters, industrial districts literature (Italian districts - Becattini). In this perspective, the concept of Local Agrifood Systems (SYAL), was defined as "production and service organizations (units of agricultural production, agrifood enterprises, markets and stores, restaurants, services, etc.) that are linked by their characteristics and by their relationship to a specific territory" (Muchnik 1996, as cited by Muchnik and de Sainte Marie 2010, p. 13). The second category and

the most important analyses different qualification process for local products: territorially based products, origin based products (GI). The third group is reflecting on work integrating the SYAL concept into the broader environmental and social challenges faced by rural communities (contribution for territorial development). Those studies also highlight how SYAL can be diverse and get different meaning (a concrete object, an approach and an institutional tool, which can be used into development programs). In sum, the approach in terms of Local Agrifood system is originally an analytical frame for processes of local resources and territorial anchorage construction and renewal. Regarding the literature confirms the relevance of territorial scale and help the identification of the actors and the interactions between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (territorial governance). Empirical and theoretical evidences provide a response to the current challenges and going beyond traditional oppositions (local products / productions in international markets; organic / conventional agriculture; Short supply chains / long supply chain). In this perspective the SYAL approach a proposal to examine and to strengthen food policies of cities ?

DISCUSSION CONCLUSION

The Brazilian experience is a good example of a decentralized food policies. This brief overview of the contributions is sufficient to demonstrate the profound shift by a revitalization of commodity production and traditional foodstuffs. At least, What farming models for family farms? Should we promote commodities / or differentiated products with high added value for this kind of agriculture? Who are the key players and what are their room for manoeuvre? the central state, cities. The SYAL seems to represent a promising approach insofar it could help local organisation and municipalities to characterize the specific modes of organization and relationships between supply and demand, thinking family farms and typical products. On the other hand, we think that food policies and the role of cities for sustainable food in the renewal of relations between urban and rural themes open paths and research fronts around SYAL.

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