The 5th World Shiology Forum—Poverty, Food Security and Health Promotion Policies in Brazil

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Abstract: This article traces the historical evolution of food and nutrition security in Western contexts over the past eight decades, analyzing key thematic shifts from "hidden hunger" to the multidimensional framework of modern food security. It examines critical contemporary issues and argues that addressing these challenges requires systemic transformation of food environments, with public policy and technological innovation playing pivotal roles in fostering sustainable and healthy diet.
Food and nutrition security have emerged as enduring global priorities, shaped by historical, economic, and environmental dynamics. This paper provides an analysis of the evolving discourse on food security in Western contexts since the 1940s, highlighting paradigm shifts in conceptualization and policy responses. It further investigates contemporary systemic food challenges. The aim is to synthesize key insights into the structural determinants of modern food insecurity and propose avenues for systemic reform.

Keywords: Brazil, Food system, food security

1.A short rescue of 80 Years of Debates on Food in Western World

Back in the 40s, the big idea introduced by Josué de Castro, a brilliant Brazilian who became the first president of FAO, was the concept of "hidden hunger". For him, hunger wasn't just about low weight or high on a chart; it was also about missing micronutrients, which could point to malnutrition even if someone looked normal.

In the 50s, the focus shifted to a new Malthusian view. With economic growth and urbanization, fewer people were working the land, and more people needed feeding in the cities. That raised concerns about food supply. By the 60s, the proposed solution was land reform in Brazil. That's when the push for agrarian reform as public policy really begun. During the 70s, the spotlight moved from food supply to distribution□distribution efficiency. Feeding cities meant improving logistics and modernizing supply chains, and that was the primary goal for a developing society.

Then came the 80s. Economic crises

hit hard, inflation skyrocketed, and food prices went through the roof. In Brazil and across Latin American countries, we saw hyperinflation of over 1000 percent a year. Suddenly, the cost of living became the hot topic in food discussions. The 90s brought a wave of new liberal reforms. Government and international finance organizations started deregulating food markets, privatizing supply infrastructure, and dismantling public policies. As we entered the 2000s, global commitments like the Millennium Development Goals made fighting hunger the top priority. Goal 1 was to cut hunger indicators in half by 2015, but the goal wasn't met. So in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals raised the bar, setting the target of eradicating hunger by 2030.

More recently, the conversation has broadened. Now we talk about food security in terms of obesity, healthy diets, food monotony, environmental impact, and more.

2.Contemporary Challenges in Global Food Systems

This historical evolution brings us to the issue of the "triple monotony" in our food system. First, agricultural monotony: out of over 400 edible plant species, our diets rely heavily on just six—soy, corn, sugarcane, rice, potatoes, and wheat. Second, in animal production, we mostly consume a few improved breeds raised intensively: cattle, pigs, poultry, and fish. And third, dietary monotony: people around the world are eating more and more of the same stuff.

Ultra-processed foods dominate diets in China, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. As we can see and based on statistical data, food production is up and yields are improving, but we are still concentrating on just few crops. Rice, corn, soy, and wheat make up 90 percent of global grain production and cover 700 million hectares. This is bad news for the environment.

The concept of "food environment" addresses these issues and has four pillars: production, costs and prices, rules and regulations, and the social and cultural context. Changing the food environment means changing the entire system, and public policies play a fundamental role. They can shape choices and prices, influencing how people buy food and eat.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) data shows three levels of diet: a sufficient diet, an adequate diet, and a healthy diet—which is diverse and rich in fresh foods. Globally, the healthy diet costs four times more than a sufficient one, and 60 percent more than an adequate one. In Africa, 70 percent of people cannot afford a healthy diet. It's a difficult situation. Oddly enough, the income elasticity of healthy foods is lower than for ultra-processed foods. When people earn more, they are more likely to buy junk food than fresh produce. This

shift towards unhealthy eating is driving global obesity. As undernutrition drops, obesity rises. Worldwide Sixteen percent of adults are obese—not just overweight. In Brazil, undernutrition is below 2.5 percent, but obesity has hit a staggering 26 percent, higher than China and the global average. You see that shopping habits and access to fresh food play a role. With rapid urbanization, traditional food markets are disappearing. Authorities worry about food contamination in street markets, so most people shop at supermarkets where ultra-processed foods are cheaper and more appealing. Also, urban folks eat out more, and restaurant and fast-food meals are not always the healthiest.

Mass production created a mass market. Huge volumes of standardized food bring economies of scale. In a market, with tight margins, speed, and efficiency matter—but that leads to dietary monotony.

Luckily, new tech like digital platforms and communication tools is helping break that mold. Producers and sellers can offer better quality foods tailored to local cultures and social groups. With flexible production systems, we can imagine a healthy and more inclusive future.

3.Conclusion

To conclude, here are the key messages. First, access to food is the most important factor in a world where we already produce enough. That means physical access—markets nearby—and economic access—affordable prices. Second, technology lets us build short supply chains, reconnecting people with their food. We need to reinforce the idea that food is not just a commodity. Third, digital platforms can help improve diets, but we need investment in quality certification, public regulation, regional strategies, and broad nutrition education programs.