



Food and Nutrition Security, Sustainable Agricultural Production, and Trade

ISSUES NOTE

BRICS 2025

1. Background Information

With 30% of the world's agricultural land, 30% of capture fisheries, 70% of aquaculture production, and approximately 50% of the world's population, BRICS countries play a critical role in global food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture. Several BRICS countries are world leaders in exporting numerous agricultural products, including barley, corn, rice, soybeans, yellow peas, and wheat. Additionally, BRICS countries are home to over half of the world's 550 million family farms, which collectively produce 80% of the global food supply by value. By acting collectively or coordinating their actions, BRICS countries are uniquely positioned to address many of the most significant agricultural challenges of our time.

It has been widely recognized that achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030 appears increasingly unlikely at the current pace, even though the world produces enough food to feed the entire population. Numerous factors exacerbate this situation, including conflicts, inequalities, global population growth, the risk of emerging pandemics, unilateral coercive measures, and trade protectionism. The frequency of extreme weather events and natural disasters continues to rise, while measures to reverse environmental degradation caused by unsustainable agricultural and fishing practices are progressing too slowly to mitigate or prevent the effects of climate change. Moreover, food prices often render food inaccessible to the poorest and negatively impact the living conditions of the middle class.

Food price volatility remains one of the most significant challenges to global food security and disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. In the Kazan Declaration, BRICS leaders have emphasized the importance of resilient supply chains, unhindered agricultural trade, and robust domestic production to ensure food security and sustain livelihoods. This is especially crucial for low-income farmers, resource-poor farmers, and net food-importing developing countries. The declaration also highlights the need to support smallholder farmers, recognizing them as essential components of national agricultural systems.

The Joint Declaration of the 14th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Agriculture reaffirmed BRICS' commitment to advancing sustainable farming practices and innovative technologies, including high-tech solutions. This commitment includes collaborative research and joint projects to foster sustainable growth and productivity in agriculture, livestock, and aquatic systems. These efforts are designed to address the specific needs of women, children, youth, Indigenous Peoples, smallholders, family farmers, local communities, and persons with disabilities, among others.

Aquatic systems are increasingly recognized as vital to food and nutrition security. Since 2011, the Joint Declarations of BRICS Agriculture Ministers have consistently underscored their importance in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in the Global South. Additionally, the

13th BRICS Agriculture Ministers Declaration emphasized cooperation to ensure a fair, equitable, and sustainable transition to a low-carbon economy resilient to climate change while fostering sustainable agricultural production to enhance food and nutritional security.

To continue advancing on central themes, pursuing concrete solutions, and following the conclusion of the Action Plan 2021-2024 for Agricultural Cooperation of BRICS countries, the Agriculture Working Group (AWG) must now develop its 2025-2028 Action Plan. This new plan must be ambitious and balance food and agricultural needs in harmony with nature.

BRICS countries have solid experience developing effective policies and programs to address agrifood challenges. They can provide valuable contributions to the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty while benefiting from enhanced cooperation and services provided by the Alliance.

BRICS must continue addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities, leveraging collective strength to advance equitable, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural solutions for global food security amidst the challenges posed by climate change, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and other environmental pressures.

2. Priorities

2.1. Food and Nutrition Security

2.1.1. Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty

Hunger is on the rise, and the cost of healthy diets is increasing globally, subjecting billions of people to preventable suffering and disease. However, these phenomena are unevenly distributed, with higher incidences concentrated or more intensely registered in the Global South. For example, between 2015 and 2023, moderate and severe food insecurity rose from approximately 21.5% to almost 30% worldwide. In contrast, North America and Europe saw a decline from 9% to 8.7% in the same period, despite an upward trend starting in 2019. These disparities highlight that much of the Global South — and smaller parts of the Global North — remains vulnerable to hunger.

Launched under the Brazilian presidency of the G20 and with most BRICS countries as members, the **Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty** is structured around three pillars: financing, knowledge, and national implementation of effective public policies by member countries. A key part of the Alliance's mission is to strengthen policies supporting family farming and rural development. In this context, the BRICS AWG can contribute to the Alliance in two key ways:

- By enriching the Alliance's Policy Basket, both publishing successful national experiences of its members regarding policy instruments already included in the basket and submitting additional policy instruments;
- By suggesting implementation priorities for effective policies to combat hunger and rural poverty among BRICS members. This includes mobilizing the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) as a catalyst for collective financing and engaging state and non-state institutions to provide technical and knowledge assistance.

In both ways, the AWG may establish priority policies for concerted action against hunger and poverty in areas such as: i) food reserves; ii) sustainable agricultural production, with an emphasis on soil conservation and recovery; iii) bio-inputs, biofuels, and bioenergy; and iv) sustainable aquaculture and fisheries.

2.1.2. Dialogue on Public Policies to Strengthen Family Farming

The BRICS AWG serves as a strategic platform to foster the exchange of experiences on policies to strengthen family farming and rural development. Incorporating these exchanges into the BRICS 2025-2028 Action Plan will facilitate knowledge-sharing and establish networks among focal points within the Agriculture Ministries of BRICS countries, ensuring an ongoing dialogue on family farming policies. This initiative could be undertaken in collaboration with the FAO's Family Farming Engagement Unit as part of the activities under the UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDF 2019-2028).

Building on the Johannesburg XV BRICS Summit Declaration of 2023, which emphasized the role of public stockholding for food security in developing and least developed countries, the AWG will explore strategies to enhance non-excessive national food stock policies to cope with price fluctuation and spikes. Additionally, the AWG will examine the potential for a BRICS-coordinated food stock strategy to strengthen collective resilience to food speculation.

2.1.3. Dialogue on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Management

The BRICS AWG provides an opportunity to promote the exchange of experiences among member countries in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management, including support for artisanal and small-scale fishermen and fish farmers. The aim is to foster international cooperation in favor of artisanal and small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, spotlighting initiatives that ensure the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of these activities.

Sustainable fishing and aquaculture practices in local and global value chains have been on the BRICS Agriculture Ministers' agenda since 2010. Implementing proposals aligned with the Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action within the BRICS framework complements commitments outlined in the 2024 Kazan Declaration.

2.1.4. Promoting Women's Participation in the Agricultural Sector

Gender equality is a cornerstone of sustainable development and hunger reduction since women and children are among the most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. The BRICS countries should lead by example in promoting women's inclusion in the agricultural sector, which is critical for economic development and peace.

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is one of the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. The UN has designated 2026 as the International Year of Rural Women. This resolution, approved by consensus, aims to highlight the crucial role of rural women worldwide, and their contributions to food security, nutrition, and poverty eradication. It is important to emphasize that women and children in rural, forest, and aquatic areas remain notably marginalized. Public authorities must promote progress to eliminate inequality and discrimination.

This agenda may include:

- Incentives for small-scale agro-industries and the central role of cooperatives and associations as effective forms of social organization;
- Support for alternative economies, valuing rural and fishing women while addressing their rights and care policies;
- Capacity-building initiatives in education, technical assistance, and rural and fisheries extension services to strengthen global productive inclusion;
- Encouraging innovation, emphasizing emerging technologies and the engagement of rural and fishing youth in this process;
- Income stabilization mechanisms for family farmers and artisanal fishers, including direct and indirect job creation;

- Bridging agroecology and multitrophic aquaculture practices, presenting sustainable alternatives to current production models to ensure healthy and sustainable food systems.

2.2. Sustainability, Innovation, and Agricultural Financing

2.2.1. Cooperation in Sustainable Agriculture, Aquaculture, Fisheries, and Innovation

Sustainable agriculture, aquaculture, and fisheries are central themes in the international arena, especially for BRICS countries, due to their role in improving food security, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and promoting sustainable economic development in the Global South. BRICS countries face challenges such as soil degradation, water resource scarcity, and vulnerability to extreme weather events, while also demonstrating potential to expand sustainable agricultural practices by leveraging innovative technologies and promoting international cooperation. These countries face common challenges related to food and nutrition security, climate change, and economic inequality, while also holding significant opportunities to develop sustainable agricultural policies that balance environmental, social, and economic pillars.

Brazil intends to prioritize sustainable agricultural production and food security, reaffirming commitments highlighted in previous joint declarations by the Ministers of Agriculture, such as strengthening technical cooperation, promoting sustainable agricultural trade, and implementing climate-resilient production practices. Priorities will include promoting low-carbon agricultural practices, sustainable intensification of agriculture, sustainable aquaculture and fisheries, recovering degraded areas, using bio-inputs, and developing bioenergy. Emphasis will also be placed on sustainable watershed management, biodiversity preservation, and strengthening soil health to ensure resilient and balanced production systems.

In this regard, Brazil's BRICS chairship in 2025 will seek to reinforce an integrated approach to sustainable agriculture through interministerial coordination, the development of joint research and innovation projects, and the establishment of technical cooperation platforms. This approach will align with the three Rio Conventions, promoting cooperative discussions in multilateral forums, such as the FAO and the WTO, to ensure that sustainable agriculture is addressed in a balanced and integrated manner within global agendas, with an emphasis on mitigation of emissions, climate adaptation, and the preservation of natural resources.

Based on this framework, Brazil aims to consolidate a strategic vision for sustainable agriculture and aquaculture centered on equity, food security, and inclusive development. Priorities include the recovery of degraded areas, strengthening soil health, adopting low-carbon agricultural practices, and modernizing agricultural techniques through sustainable mechanization.

2.2.2. Cooperation and Investments in Mechanization and Technological Advancements for Small-Scale Agriculture

Mechanization and technological innovation in small-scale agriculture represent a strategic opportunity for BRICS countries. They have the potential to increase productivity and income for millions of small-scale farmers and accelerate the agroecological transition.

Attracting investments to establish joint ventures between companies from BRICS member countries could enable local production of machinery adapted to specific regional conditions alongside technology transfer. The NDB could bolster this initiative. The BRICS AWG could establish a platform for exchange, fostering synergies between industrial sectors and small-scale agriculture and aquaculture within the bloc.

2.2.3. Financing Projects for Soil Conservation and Restoration of Degraded Areas

Soils are crucial for sustainable agriculture, supporting food security, water regulation, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. Healthy soils provide nutrients and water retention, and support biological processes essential for crops and ecosystems. However, the soil is a finite resource, and, according to the FAO, it can take up to 1,000 years to form just a few centimeters, highlighting the need for conservation and restoration efforts.

Soil degradation, driven by unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation, urbanization, and climate change, affects approximately 33% of the planet's land. This phenomenon undermines agricultural productivity, exacerbates food insecurity, and contributes to the loss of ecosystem services. Restoring degraded soils enhances crop yields and strengthens resilience to climate change by improving water retention and reducing the risk of erosion and desertification.

As a non-renewable natural resource, it is crucial to adopt practices that promote soil conservation, restoration, and sustainable use. These practices can also contribute to the recovery of degraded areas. With the support of targeted financing initiatives, these practices can be expanded and optimized.

2.2.4. Financing Projects to Strengthen Aquatic Food Systems

Through cooperation and access to financing, BRICS countries can expand their aquatic food systems, strengthening the resilience and sustainability of the entire value chain while enhancing human, social, cultural, and economic aspects, improving biosecurity, and minimizing environmental impacts.

Resources could be allocated in projects to renew and modernize artisanal and small-scale fishing fleets and equipment; improve fish and seafood feed supply chains; generate biomass, solar, and wind electricity in remote areas; increase cold storage and refrigerated transport capacity; and develop certification and monitoring systems.

The BRICS AWG could establish a platform to raise funds for enhancing sustainable aquatic food systems and fostering synergies between BRICS countries' industry and fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The NDB could bolster such initiatives.

2.3. International Agricultural Trade

2.3.1. Establishment of a BRICS Food Import Financing Mechanism

Inspired by the 2022 FAO's proposal to create a Food Import Financing Facility (FIFF), the AWG will discuss the establishment of a food import financing mechanism that intends to be an emergency financial relief tool primarily aimed at low- and lower-middle-income countries affected by surges in food and key input prices, such as fertilizers and energy. The NDB may be the appropriate framework to implement, while adhering to multilateral trade rules, avoiding market distortions, or inflationary impacts on food prices. Additionally, it could promote international agricultural trade, particularly among countries of the Global South, without replicating the market distortions caused by other food security policies.

2.3.2. Follow up on the discussions to facilitate and boost intra-BRICS trade of grains

The AWG will follow up on the discussions to facilitate transactions between grain buyers and producers or exporters from member countries, ensuring transparent and secure payments. Initiated by the Russia's 2024 Chairship, these discussions explore the possibility of establishing a unified trade and settlement infrastructure within the BRICS framework, potentially involving the participation of companies across member states. BRICS nations collectively represent the largest producers and consumers of grains globally, and BRICS agricultural products are vital for global food security and economic stability. Together, BRICS countries' share of global exports and imports (in USD) is, respectively: a) barley: 20% and 55%; b) chickpeas: 26% and 20%; c) grains, pulses, oilseeds: 39% and 38%; d) lentils: 12% and 36%; e) maize: 33% and 25%; f)

rapeseed: 4% and 28%; g) rice: 37% and 18%; h) soybeans: 58% and 65%; i) sunflower seed: 36% and 17%; j) peas 24% and 33%; and k) wheat: 26% and 19%.

2.3.3. Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Trade and Multilateralism

Strengthening multilateral negotiations is essential to secure a predictable agricultural trade environment based on technical standards that advance global food security. Trade-related unilateral measures, including those disguised as environmental or climate concerns, must be avoided as they mask arbitrary discrimination or unjustified trade restrictions.

2.3.4. Implementation of the Principles on Agricultural Trade Facilitation

The increasing dynamism of agricultural trade within BRICS countries requires improved document management to support these flows. Current digital technologies can deliver the speed and safety needed to fully implement electronic sanitary or phytosanitary certification systems for agricultural products. Electronic certification reduces costs and bureaucracy and enhances the reliability of certification procedures for internationally traded agricultural goods. In this regard, the AWG will advance discussions on implementing the Principles on Agricultural Trade Facilitation, signed in July 2024 during Russia's BRICS chairship.



COOPERATING FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD