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^{*}The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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Firstly, I would like to thank the event organizers for this invitation and for the opportunity to participate in this high-level debate on policies for supporting rural women. In my presentation, I will comment on some of the ongoing experiences in Brazil. The aim here is to point out not only achievements that have been made but also some challenges that continue to be on the agenda from a standpoint of promoting autonomy for rural women.

It is well known that Brazil is a country of large territorial expanse. It is also a significant agricultural producer and participates in the international market as an exporter of several products. Production conditions in rural Brazil are, however, very disparate.

On the one hand, we have intensive agricultural regions where monoculture in large properties predominate and use cutting-edge technologies with high production rates; but we also have economically depressed regions with shortcomi

participation. The majority of women do not have decision-making power regarding the aspects of production nor related to the marketing of products from the family unit. This is true even though they contribute as labor force with crops and for raising animals and above all, with activities for maintaining the family. Women farmers also suffer from a lack of civil and professional documents, without which they can get neither social nor retirement benefits. Within families, they are permanently overloaded by the accumulation of domestic chores and agricultural duties; besides this, many times they take part in additional activities to earn money, as salaried workers on other properties or they dedicate themselves to the transformation of agricultural products and to artisan crafts.

For all of these reasons, women's access to policies that support farming is made very difficult. Although the Brazilian juridical system fully recognizes equality between men and women and condemns any discrimination based on sex, within families, communities and within many institutions, a patriarchal view persists which considers the man as the head of the household. This view is reinforced by sexist institutional practices that many times are supported by legal norms and regulations, allegedly neutral, but in practice, negligent in relation to gender. This contributes to maintaining a culture of exclusion in regards to women.

Since 2003, the Brazilian federal government has b

These groups were formed about 10 years ago. They are an initiative taken by the women themselves, with support from unions, church sectors and non-governmental organizations. More recently, they have also garnered the support of some state policies. They are relatively small groups (with about 20 members), but, over time, they grew in size and in territorial reach. They were created with the goal of seeking out alternatives for producing food for the families and also for generating income for their members. Over time, the concern of the women in relation to the quality of food as well as the sustainability of production caused them to opt for producing ecologically, cultivating a greater variety of products in the same area, without using agro-toxins. They were pioneers in ecological production in their regions.

Women in these groups have confronted many difficulties in consolidating themselves as autonomous rural producers. Firstly, this is because the husbands did not agree that they have an separate activity which was not under the husbands' own coordination. Secondly, the women had to convince the settlement associations to cede an area of land for them to plant collectively. It must be noted that the women did not have the right to vote in association assemblies since only the lot owners could be members – in this case, the husbands. Only in 2003 was a federal norm created (Directive 981, INCRA) thah(created 16abiblis .0747 Tw 1)9(en 0.0e3abiblis thesn(IaNi. T

Hunger Program (*Programa Fome Zero*). Through this Program, the government buys food directly from family farmers (men and women) and from their organizations. The food purchased is directly donated to social institutions (hospitals, social assistance agencies, schools). Their goals are, firstly, to encourage producing foods through family farming by permitting that food be commercialized for use in institutions. Secondly, there is the goal of providing access to food in quantity, quality and regularity by populations vulnerable to food and nutritional insecurity as well as to aid in the creation of food stocks. This is at work all over the country and reaches around 100 thousand farmers annually.

The Food Acquisition Program has been positively evaluated by state agents and by the public served (producers and organizations that received foods). This is due to the following factors: it contributes to diversifying food production in family units and to improving income and family farming consumption; it helps in structuring (planning and management) the family production units and those organizations associated with them, thus serving as a stimulus to participate in new markets; it improves food in vulnerable sectors of the population as well as promoting the strengthening of networks of solidarity through interrelation related to food security policies; and it promotes local development, given that, in terms of its conception and method of execution, provides not only for the involvement of various segments of society but also for circulating financial resources within that municipality or region.

One of the Program's features that made it appealing to women is the fact that it allows for marketing products traditionally linked to the feminine sphere. Moreover, they are products cultivated in areas near their homes or in areas not used for commercial cultivation and would normally be utilized only for purposes of personal consumption. Some of these products, such as poultry, eggs, fruits and vegetables were already being sold by the women, but on a smaller scale. There are even some cases in which the Program created (or recreated) methods of distribution for traditional products that were no longer being produced due to the homogenization of modern food. This is the case for several kinds of tubers and roots that have been substituted by the potato ($Solanum\ tuberosum$). The Program has absorbed more than 300 different products on a national level with many regional variations. Delivery of the products may be in small quantities and with a frequency negotiated between the producers and the receiving organizations. This Program also opens up an important prospect for the sale of processed products that allows for value aggregating of family farming products. This also serves for a group of products derived from gathering that are also under the responsibility of women.

However, the formal participation of women farmers as suppliers is still very small (less than 30% of the contracts). There are several factors that contribute to this situation, the most important being: the difficulties confronted by women in order to be recognized by public agents as well as within their families as responsible for commercializing their own products; a lack of personal documentation; and the limitations of women's production organizations. It may be said that although women benefit from the Program, many times their participation is "anonymous" and subordinate. Even though the products are directly under their responsibility, the contracts are a majority of the time, made in the husband's name. This means that one more time, husbands may have control over the income received.

To what extent do these experiences help us think of policies for overcoming poverty and at the same time improving the food security of families as well as empowering rural women? There

are still historic demands from rural women that need to be remedied. They are issues like access to resources for production, changes in the sexual division of labor and social value of women. In terms of the policies that are already in place, it is necessary to create mechanisms that explicitly guarantee equal access among men and women to the opportunities and benefits generated from such policies. One of the main problems conf

Rural women's movements have been giving visibility to these questions on the one hand, valuing the concrete experiences of women in the home, in communities, in search of strengthening them as the subjects of these experiences; and even putting forth the value of healthy food as well as questions related to health and the environment as part of a more general political debate on agro-food systems. It is necessary that these movements be recognized as legitimate interlocutors of the State when developing and monitoring public policies thereby respecting the right of women to present their own proposals for society. This translates into the valorization of women as political subjects.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I now look forward to your questions and comments.