



**Legal-political aspects of sustainable agricultural practices within  
Mercosur for food security and fulfillment with Sustainable  
Development Goal 2 (SDG 2)**

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#### ABSTRACT

In order to accomplish the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, this article aims to clarify how food security and sustainable agriculture are handled within Mercosur. It specifically aims to ascertain whether food security is handled in Mercosur's institutional objectives, to examine whether sustainable agriculture is addressed in Mercosur's institutional objectives, and to determine what consequences there may be for the goals of the economic bloc. Additionally, the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goal 2 and food security in Mercosur will be severely examined. A literature study is utilized as a tool to attain the objectives, since there is a need to identify and understand how the subject is handled with by the economic bloc and how it converges with the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as what sustainable farming practices would be. The study is significant because of the global economic situation, which tends to increase socioeconomic imbalances, as well as the necessity for international mechanisms that ensure long-term food security. As a result, it was determined that food security is only briefly addressed within Mercosur and that sustainable agricultural methods are crucial for the economic bloc to accomplish both its own and SDG 2 goals. This finding should serve as a catalyst for greater agricultural sustainability.

**KEYWORDS:** Sustainability; agriculture; Sustainable Development Goals.

#### INTRODUCTION

Established by the Treaty of Asunción on March 26th, 1991, the Southern Common Market, known as Mercosur in Spanish, presently endeavors to develop a unified market encompassing the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Republic of Paraguay, the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The principal aim of this economic bloc is to foster the unimpeded circulation of goods, merchandise, and services among its constituent nations through the implementation of market mechanisms.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has addressed global food security, defining it as the condition “when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2010, p. 08).

While economic blocs primarily aim to facilitate the free trade of goods and services, these institutional frameworks can also serve as instruments for coordinating policies shared among all participating states. Consequently, matters related to food security can be deliberated and regulated within these blocs, complementing national legislation and FAO guidelines.

Mercosur is distinctive in this discourse, standing out among various economic blocs. Comprising significant contributors to global agricultural production, particularly in countries like Argentina and Brazil, where the agricultural sector holds substantial economic importance, Mercosur is a pertinent institutional context for discussions on food security across its diverse dimensions. Despite the large agricultural producers among its developing member nations, Mercosur grapples with pervasive challenges related to social inequality, exemplified by issues like poverty and hunger.

Furthermore, the global environmental picture has a significant impact, mandating a concentrated effort toward sustainable agriculture techniques. Because the agricultural sector is so important to Mercosur member countries, it is critical to pay attention to this need. The imperatives inherent in food security encourage agricultural producers to aim toward sustainability, whether openly or implicitly. As a result, the debate on sustainable agriculture may be addressed and controlled within the framework of Mercosur in a way similar to that of food security.

Hence, this study is grounded in the objectives outlined by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically in SDG 2, which seeks to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. This necessity stems from the worldwide dilemma, as illustrated by 2014 statistics revealing 795 million people experiencing chronic malnutrition despite recent advances in combatting hunger. The goal is to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by providing everyone with access to nutritious food.

Therefore, the question arises: does Mercosur, functioning as an economic bloc, and its constituent member countries, as State Parties, manifest any overt normative commitment to addressing issues related to food security and promoting sustainable agriculture?

As research hypotheses, we posited that: i) there is a shared regulatory framework within Mercosur about food security and sustainable agriculture, thereby enhancing the institutionalization of these themes and facilitating progress towards SDG 2; ii) there is an absence of explicit regulations within Mercosur regarding food security and sustainable agriculture, potentially leading to the deinstitutionalization of these themes; iii) the States Parties have internal norms conducive to reinforcing food security and sustainable agriculture, thereby contributing to the fulfillment of SDG 2; iv) there is a lack of internal norms, resulting in the attenuation of efforts toward food security and sustainable agriculture and, consequently, the non-realization of SDG 2.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This study aims to elucidate the treatment of food security and sustainable agriculture within the framework of Mercosur and explore avenues for their realization to align with the goals outlined in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. The specific objectives include examining whether food security is addressed within Mercosur's institutional goals, scrutinizing the treatment of sustainable agriculture in Mercosur's institutional goals, and discerning potential implications for the economic bloc's objectives. Additionally, the study aims to critically analyze food security in Mercosur vis-à-vis SDG 2 of the 2030 Agenda.

## **METHODS**

In terms of methodology, a non-systematic bibliographic and documentary review is employed, coupled with the hypothetical-deductive method. The structure of this article encompasses three sections. Firstly, it delves into examining food security within Mercosur's goals, tracing the evolution of the discourse on this subject within the entities constituting the bloc. The second section focuses on the treatment of environmental protection to promote sustainable agriculture within Mercosur's goals. Lastly, the third section critically analyzes how Mercosur's approach to food security influences the realization of SDG 2 outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

## **RESULTS**

### **The approach taken by Mercosur in addressing food security goals**

Established on March 26th, 1991, through the Treaty of Asunción, Mercosur consists of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela as States Parties. By functioning as an economic bloc, its primary objective is the collaborative development of the participating nations.

Key objectives within Mercosur include facilitating free movement encompassing goods, services, productive factors, and people. Additionally, it seeks the elimination of customs duties and non-tariff restrictions on goods movement, adoption of a Common External Tariff (TEC), implementation of a standard commercial policy, and the coordinated management of macroeconomic policies (covering areas such as agriculture, foreign trade, communication, exchange, and fiscal matters) to establish equitable conditions of competition among the States Parties. Lastly, there is a commitment to align internal legislation with the regulations of the economic bloc.

According to Roberto Grassi Neto (2013, p. 116) and Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 02), the discourse surrounding food security is a relatively recent addition to Mercosur and its Parliament (Parlasul). These scholars posit that such deliberations commenced in 2008, coinciding with the creation of permanent commissions. Consequently, the evolution of food security within Mercosur is intricately linked to broader global developments.

Hence, the incorporation of the food security discourse into Mercosur can be traced back to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, commonly referred to as Eco-92, convened in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 02-03) highlights that during this event, both national and international organizations played a significant role in initiating discussions on this theme within Mercosur.

Consequently, in the XIV Meeting of the Common Market Group four years later, as emphasized by Roberto Grassi Neto (2013, p. 116), the members of civil society who were part of the Specialized Environment Meeting (Reunião Especializada de Meio Ambiente - REMA) were engaged in the consideration and endorsement of fundamental guidelines concerning environmental policy for adoption within the bloc. However, these measures proved ineffectual, as the meeting focused on deliberations about the Common External Tariff (Tarifa Externa Comum - TEC) and determinations of products to be excluded from the list of exceptions.

Additionally, in 1995, the national consumer protection organizations of the States Parties established the Mercosur Consumers Association (Associação de Consumidores do Mercosul). Concurrently, advocates for initiatives combating hunger started to diverge ideologically on food security and sovereignty.

Notably, discussions on food security within Mercosur have been scant, characterized by fragility and ineffectiveness. In this context, Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 3) underscores that "the Common Market is inevitably fulfilling the objective for which it was created: to be a free trade zone and, therefore, does not allocate significant attention to social issues. Its primary focus is the construction of the market."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *o Mercado Comum vai cumprindo inapelavelmente o objetivo a que foi criado: ser uma zona livre de comércio e, por isso, não divide sua atenção com questões sociais. Sua centralidade é a construção do mercado* (VIGNA, 2008, p. 3). [The translations are under our responsibility]

Similarly, Elisabete Maniglia (2009, p.138) concludes that the theme of food security needs to be more critical within Mercosur. She argues that, during the formation of the economic bloc, the prevailing discourse focused on the integration of these countries and their global engagements through market mechanisms, specifically economic liberalization. In contrast, the European Union had already prioritized food security and agriculture issues.

Simultaneous to progressing beyond the integration phase of the States Parties in Mercosur, there is a broadening of the discourse within each State Party regarding the conceptualization and extent of the terms "food security" and "food sovereignty." Moreover, beyond the purview of Mercosur, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will heighten its discussions on food security. The culmination of the World Food Summit is incorporated in this process, marked by the issuance of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action.

Luiz Eduardo Waldemarin Wanderley (2002, online) asserts that Mercosur faces pressure from social and trade union movements due to its structure being more receptive to social considerations. In response, the Mercosur Social Economic Consultative Forum (Foro Consultivo Econômico Social do Mercosul - FCES) was established in Brazil in 1996 to provide recommendations for Mercosur's economic and social enhancement. Its responsibilities encompass monitoring, analyzing, and evaluating the social and economic impact resulting from the bloc's adopted policies. Correspondingly, the Brazilian Forum on Food and Nutrition Security (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional - FBSAN) emerged as a movement that “unites individuals, organizations, networks, social activities, and educational institutions in advocating for the Human Right to Food and Food Sovereignty”.<sup>2</sup>

During the 18th meeting of the Common Market Council (Conselho de Mercado Comum - CMC) in Argentina in 2000, representatives of the States Parties endorsed the Buenos Aires Charter on Social Commitment (Carta de Buenos Aires sobre o Compromisso Social). In doing so, they acknowledged that economic growth alone cannot eradicate poverty and committed to formulating standard policies to counter social exclusion.

Likewise, Roberto Grassi Neto (2013, p. 117) contributes by highlighting the establishment of the Fund for Structural Convergence and Institutional Strengthening of Mercosur (Fundo para a Convergência Estrutural e Fortalecimento Institucional do Mercosul - FOCEM) and the Social Cohesion Program (Programa de Coesão Social). These initiatives are significant projects aimed at addressing poverty and social exclusion by facilitating access to housing, education, health, and food for the most vulnerable segments of the population.

In 2006, Brazil sanctioned Law No. 11,346, the Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security (Lei Orgânica de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional - LOSAN). Elisabete Maniglia (2009, p. 173), in her examination of LOSAN, interprets that the framework established by the law shows prerequisites for the "development of policy and the national plan in this domain, encompassing directives, objectives, resources, evaluation and monitoring tools, consisting of

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<sup>2</sup> *articula pessoas, organizações, redes, movimentos sociais e instituições de ensino na luta pelo Direito Humano à Alimentação e pela Soberania Alimentar* (WANDERLEY, 2022).

cohesive actions and programs that engage various sectors of the government and society in the pursuit of adequate and high-quality food for all.”<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the ramifications of this legislation on Mercosur, Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 06) noted that the law was presented as a legislative model to the States Parties and was also advocated in various Mercosur forums, such as the Mercosur Parliament (Parlamento do Mercosul - Parlasul) and the Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture (Reunião Especializada da Agricultura Familiar - REAF). Additionally, the Mercosur Food Commission (Comissão de Alimentos do Mercosul - CA/MS), as highlighted by Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 06), was established to foster in-depth discussions among consumers on food safety, including harmonizing regulations.

In 2008, at the IX REAF Meeting in Buenos Aires (Argentina), delegates from Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay acknowledged the significance of family farming in promoting food security and food sovereignty in South America. Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 06) highlights that, during this assembly, the establishment of the Group of High Authorities (Grupo de Altas Autoridades) to deliberate on food security and sovereignty received approval.

Within the framework of Parlasul, parliamentarians have made progress in deliberations on food security, particularly within the Human Rights and Environment Committees (Comissões de Direitos Humanos e de Meio Ambiente), which exhibit heightened sensitivity to the subject, as emphasized by Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 07). In another meeting of State Parties' representatives, in 2010, a Joint Communiqué (Comunicado Conjunto dos Estados Partes) was formulated. Roberto Grassi Neto (2013, p. 118) indicated that item 33 of the document underscored the significance of advancing programs aimed at promoting food and nutritional security for the benefit of the populations in Mercosur countries and their constituents.

In recent times, Mercosur's stance on food and nutritional security has been evident in the resolutions the Common Market Group (Grupo Mercado Comum - GMC) has put forth. These resolutions reflect the bloc's perspective by assimilating specific international regulations from beyond the bloc, facilitating increased accessibility of domestically produced goods in global markets. Illustrative instances of such modifications include the introduction of front labeling for products high in fats, sodium, and sugars and adjusting the phytosanitary standards for food products.

Crucially, Mercosur persists in fostering dialogues on this matter. Edélcio Vigna (2008, p. 07) underscored that the discourse on food sovereignty and security encompasses discussions on various facets, including water, food production, distribution, marketing, sanitation, credit, and budgetary considerations.

### **The approach taken by Mercosur to sustainable agriculture**

Initially, the environment was not a primary consideration for Mercosur. However, the scenario has evolved in response to the escalating environmental crisis, heightened global awareness, and the establishment of foundations for legislating on ecological matters.

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<sup>3</sup> *formulação da política e do plano nacional nessa área, com diretrizes, metas e recursos, instrumentos de avaliação e monitoramento, composto de ações e programas integrados, envolvendo diferentes setores de governo e a sociedade na busca pela alimentação suficiente e de qualidade para todos* (MANIGLIA, 2009, p. 173).

Consequently, the bloc entered into the Mercosur Framework Agreement on the Environment (Acordo-Quadro sobre Meio Ambiente do Mercosul - AQMAM), wherein Article 3 underscores the commitment to pursuing sustainable development, and Article 6, section "c," recommends the harmonization of environmental standards (BRASIL, 2004, online).

These provisions carry noteworthy economic and environmental implications. On the economic front, they are poised to steer an ethical posture, ensuring adherence to the principle of equality among bloc members. This aims to prevent any member from gaining an advantage in trade negotiations through the violation of environmental standards, allowing the establishment of lower costs for their goods and thereby creating an unfair advantage.

Concerning the environmental dimension, the provisions mentioned above enable the adoption of a balanced stance aligning with the contemporary ecological imperatives, tethering the development of each member country to principles of sustainability and, consequently, contributing to the overall sustainability of Mercosur as a cohesive entity.

In a region characterized by commendable biodiversity metrics but concurrently exhibiting a robust structure and significant reliance on the agricultural sector, it is inherent that the dual themes of agriculture and the environment are addressed concomitantly. Whether practiced on a larger or smaller scale, agriculture must fulfill its primary objectives—producing agricultural goods for sustenance and other purposes—while adhering to prevailing human paradigms, notably sustainability-related.

Over time, agricultural progress has propelled the sector into a realm where its functions extend beyond the traditional economic categorization of the "three sectors."<sup>4</sup> It undergoes reinvention and can assimilate elements deemed significant or essential within its temporal context. As an integral component of the modern economy, its production processes must align with the imperatives of the current environmental agenda.

The state of the environment cannot endure further degradation. The existing land and natural infrastructure must, at the very least, be deemed sufficient for agricultural production. Simultaneously, efforts should be directed toward promoting necessary investments to ensure the environment is not adversely affected. There should be a move towards environmental integration within production practices, potentially through adopting systems such as agroforestry.

Within the Mercosur headquarters, to facilitate internal deliberations of the economic bloc, Working Subgroup No. 08 - Agriculture was established following the directive outlined in the Resolution of the Mercosur Common Market Group GMC/RES/No. 75/98 (Resolução do Grupo Mercado Comum Mercosul GMC/RES/nº 75/98) to facilitate internal deliberations of the economic bloc. Noteworthy negotiations transpired, particularly in the domain of family farming—a model contrary to the principles of SDG 2, as this production approach strives to advance sustainable rural development encompassing social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

These negotiations culminated in forming the Mercosur Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture (Reunião Especializada de Agricultura Familiar do Mercosul - REAF) by enacting the

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<sup>4</sup> Economic sectors are the divisions of society's economic and production activity. They are classified as primary (agriculture, livestock, and extraction), secondary (industry), and tertiary (services and commercial activities).

Resolution of the Common Market Group No. 11/04. This initiative has given rise to significant projects focused on financing, incentives, social engagement, gender equality, and mechanisms for enhancing the visibility of products and services within the sector.

Between 2006 and 2016, family farming gained prominence within the bloc, driven by elevated income levels derived from agricultural products, resulting in an increased role in production chains. The REAF initiative “played a pivotal role in fostering the creation of forums to enhance social participation in Mercosur, exerting a decisive influence on discussions about commercial and agricultural policies within the bloc”<sup>5</sup> (NIEDERLE, 2016, p. 27).

Concurrently, agribusiness holds significance. Although it actively engaged in significant negotiations in the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as those related to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (Área de Livre Comércio das Américas - ALCA), the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Mercosur-European Union Agreement, aimed at market liberalization, the Lula’s governments (2003-2010) and the Dilma Rousseff’s initial term (2011-2014) directed their focus towards the WTO. This period saw limited concluded trade agreements (NOGUEIRA, 2020, p. 13).

Regarding sustainable agriculture within Mercosur, the primary challenge revolves around implementing the agreement with the European Union. This formidable economic bloc imposes rigorous environmental requirements and significantly emphasizes the region due to its critical role in ensuring food security. Initial negotiations commenced in 1999 but concluded in 2004 due to disparities between expectations and ambitions, despite persistent efforts to revive talks. In 2016, renewed discussions took place following substantial restructuring by both parties and a shared interest in progression. In 2019, the agreement garnered approval within the blocs, pending endorsement from the member countries.

However, in 2020, the European Parliament resisted ratifying the free trade agreement unless explicit regulations were established to ensure both blocs’ commitment to sustainable development. Within the Parliament, the approval of legislation prohibiting the import of products from deforested regions underscores the significance of adhering to SDG 2. Consequently, Brazil, in particular, faces substantial consequences if it fails to adapt. The European Union holds considerable importance as a trading partner for Brazil in the agricultural sector, ranking as the second-largest purchaser of Brazilian meat and soybean oil in the initial two months of 2023. This assessment excludes acquisitions of non-food complex agricultural products by various groups (ANGELO; OLIVEIRA; GHOBRI, 2023, online).

The commodities from Brazil affected by the accord encompass cocoa, coffee, timber, maize, palm oil, soy, and animal-derived products (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2022, online). This compilation covers consumable and non-consumable agricultural categories, potentially impacting diverse agrarian sectors.

Regarding sustainable agricultural practices, given the multifaceted nature of the concept, this study adopts the criteria outlined in target 2.4 of the United Nations’ SDG 2. Specifically, it refers to resilient agricultural methods that enhance productivity and output, contribute to ecosystem preservation, fortify the capacity to adapt to climate change and

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<sup>5</sup> [...] tal vez sea más prudente reconocer que la propia REAF impulsó la demanda por más espacios de participación social [...] para influir de manera más decisiva en las discusiones comerciales y de política agrícola (NIEDERLE, 2016, p. 27).



various environmental challenges, and progressively enhance land and soil quality (INSTITUTO DE PESQUISA ECONÔMICA APLICADA, 2023, online).

From this standpoint, it is discerned that agribusiness can align with sustainability by enhancing productivity and adapting to climate variations, prioritizing ecological well-being, and facilitating scalability in sustainable practices. Simultaneously, family farming must proactively address the challenges posed by climate change while focusing on productivity, ensuring that its agricultural output remains conducive to biodiversity preservation.

It is crucial to underscore the contemporary and future relevance of family farming in Mercosur discussions. The United Nations inaugurated the Decade of Family Farming in 2019, extending until 2028. Substantiating this perspective, Brazil's pro tempore presidency in Mercosur during the latter half of 2021 endeavored to establish a methodological framework geared towards fostering sustainable food production within the economic bloc (BRASIL, 2021).

Conclusively, it is imperative to factor in the context of climate change. The Mercosur bloc has initiated deliberations on this matter, a discourse that has commenced within Parlasul, focusing on its repercussions on productive sectors (MERCOSUR PARLIAMENT, 2021, online). This endeavor culminated in the establishment announcement of a negotiating entity dedicated to climate change matters within the Mercosur framework during the 19th Conference of the Parties (Conferência das Partes 19 - COP19) - a UN assembly addressing climate issues - held in Glasgow, Scotland. However, substantive advancements in this regard have yet to transpire.

### **Food Security in Mercosur and the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals**

Pursuing food security in any context or geographical setting necessitates a sustainable foundation for comprehensive realization. While having historical antecedents in certain nations, the conceptual underpinning of this principle assumed its primary form and received its initial impetus through the Brundtland Report of the United Nations (UN) in 1987, concurrent with the notion of development.

The conceptual trajectory underwent extensive deliberations at numerous international forums, underscoring the subject's significance. The then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (1997-2006), recognizing the imperative nature of the discourse, proposed convening the Millennium Summit. This strategic move capitalized on the symbolic potency of the historical juncture to address the tangible needs of global populations. The summit's outcome materialized in the Millennium Declaration, which delineated the Millennium Development Goals, which are set to be realized by 2015.

Despite the significance of the enumerated objectives, their timely realization proved elusive. In response, the United Nations (UN), as early as 2012 during the Rio+20 Summit, initiated a deliberation process and strategizing to formulate new collective aspirations and milestones for global development. This initiative culminated in establishing the 2030 Agenda, delineating fresh goals and targets for worldwide advancement to be attained by the designated year.

Embedded within the UN's 2030 Agenda framework are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), comprising seventeen foundational objectives for humanity. To varying degrees, these goals intersect with the food security domain.

The UN actively addresses themes associated with "development" and "sustainability." The association may initially align with the conventional interpretation of development, though this is only partially congruent with economic development. If this interpretation guides the international entity, the simultaneous and timely accomplishment of all seventeen SDGs would pose a formidable challenge.

The concept of development can coexist harmoniously with sustainability. While the economic dimension holds significance, a comprehensive understanding of genuinely sustainable development necessitates the incorporation of other dimensions, namely social, environmental, ethical, political, and legal considerations.

Sustainable development, in its entirety, is intricately connected to the realm of food security. This multidisciplinary domain intersects various fields of knowledge, engaging in a dialogue to compose the constituent elements within this sphere.

In its contemporary definition, food security encompasses national security, productive capacity, storage, food safety, supply, accessibility, and nutritional quality. These facets were integrated during the twentieth century, influenced by the profound impacts of the Great World Wars, economic events, and international discussions centered around food-related issues (CARVALHO NETO, 2018, p. 22-28).

It is imperative to acknowledge the diverse global realities concerning agricultural production and the provision of food to citizens, shaped by national circumstances. These variations may stem from natural factors such as climate, temperature, and soil conditions, as well as economic and political factors, including access to credit for production, government procurement of food, and the prioritization of production for the domestic market or export. Consequently, international trade, given its intimate connection with agriculture and food, exerts a significant influence on matters of food security.

Historically, multilateral agreements were established during the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), with the World Trade Organization (WTO) continuing these agreements since its inception in 1995. The international trade negotiations of the Uruguay Round specifically addressed the Agricultural Agreement, exempting only restrictions aimed at preventing the depletion of natural resources and the establishment of stocks of agricultural products associated with food security programs (MALUF; REIS, 2013). This stance, however, constrained the scope of food security initiatives.

On the global trade platform, the subsequent WTO Round, the Doha Round perpetuated unbalanced discussions, characterized by the overarching influence of central countries, such as the United States and the European Union. Major agricultural exporters like Brazil faced a disadvantage in the discourse, leading to their marginalization (MALUF; REIS, 2013). The outcome underscores the fallacy, debated since the 1940s, that market mechanisms alone can secure food security.

Examining the scenario of food security alongside the involvement and efficacy of economic blocs, such as Mercosur, it is imperative to elucidate that domestic food production holds economic and political significance in countries. Simultaneously, the importation of food, whether as a consistent or intermittent resource, hinges on the conditions prevailing in food-exporting and importing nations. Consequently, exploring the role assigned to internal food

production and market dynamics is pertinent in addressing the complexities of the food issue (MALUF; REIS, 2013).

Mercosur boasts prominent members, notably Brazil and Argentina, who rank among the foremost producers of critical commodities such as soybeans and wheat on the global stage. However, it is crucial to recognize that numerous items integral to food security are not classified as major agricultural commodities.

Given that the member states of the bloc are developing nations with agricultural sectors of significant prominence in their respective economies, an examination of Mercosur's status aligns with the UN's proposed scenario on the SDGs associated with the thematic focus of this article. SDG 2, explicitly addressing zero hunger and sustainable agriculture, is directly relevant to food security concerns. Other objectives, such as the eradication of poverty (SDG 1), health and well-being (SDG 3), and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), touch upon aspects of food security to varying degrees. However, this article, by methodological choice, will exclusively delve into the study of SDG 2.

The UN has articulated SDG 2 as "ending hunger, achieving food security, and improving nutrition while promoting sustainable agriculture." This goal delineates thematic plans to be accomplished by 2030 in this domain, outlined across five subdivisions. In adherence to its methodology, this article will focus on studying SDG 2 without explicitly delving into its subtopics.

It is imperative to underscore that this investigation has yet to discern a standardized norm addressing food security within the South American economic bloc under scrutiny. The regulation of this matter is relegated to the internal legislation of the individual member countries constituting Mercosur. Consequently, each Mercosur member country safeguards facets of food security to varying extents, contingent upon their unique local and political realities.

Since the primary objective of this article is to analyze within an international framework—examining the Mercosur economic bloc with any normative considerations related to food security—a comprehensive conceptual framework that transcends the bloc's internal variations becomes paramount. The global understanding of food security is inherently variable and lacks uniformity within the Mercosur bloc, extending beyond this study's scope. Hence, adopting an internationally recognized schema on the subject is crucial. Notably, a commonly accepted international framework delineates four dimensions: food availability, access to food, utilization of food and nutrients, and stability, the latter intertwined with the temporal dimension, permeating all aspects as mentioned above (UNITED NATIONS, 2017).

The dimension of food availability pertains to its existence, involving both national and international aspects of production, trade, supply, and distribution. Depending on their rural conditions, nations can acquire food directly through various means such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fruit cultivation, fishing, hunting, and food collection. Alternatively, they may address availability through local trade networks or supply initiatives, such as distributing essential food baskets.

Direct food acquisition is only susceptible to the internal demands of an economic bloc concerning a country's domestic products if the quantity produced proves inadequate. In the event of this scenario or the inability to secure certain agricultural products directly, the stage

is set for national and international trade. In the case of obtaining goods through internal marketing, there are no repercussions that breach the regulations of the economic bloc. However, if interior business is unfeasible, international trade becomes the alternative, and negotiations within Mercosur may become imperative.

Food access encompasses both physical and economic facets, addressing matters ranging from the logistics and processing of food to the pricing not only of food items but also other fundamental necessities like family access to education and healthcare (UNITED NATIONS, 2017). This dimension possesses a robust economic and social size, requiring immediate or mediated attention from the States, contingent upon the political directives followed by their respective leaders.

The dimension of food and its nutrients pertains to their biological utilization by the human body. Primary sanitation conditions and individual health significantly influence this dimension, encompassing aspects of food safety in chemical and sanitary terms. Furthermore, this dimension delves into nutritional knowledge, the dietary choices and habits of the population, and the social role of food within the family and community context (UNITED NATIONS, 2014, p. 17).

As the temporal element among the preceding dimensions, stability plays a crucial role. Challenges arising in the availability, access, or utilization of food, whether transient or enduring, are pivotal in defining actions undertaken by families and shaping public policies (UNITED NATIONS, 2014, p. 17).

The internationally sanctioned definition, overseen by the same supranational entity responsible for formulating the SDGs, proves comprehensive. Yet, it allows room for countries to undertake more nuanced actions. Observing elements such as Mercosur bodies addressing the matter and the pursuit of crafting trade agreements, such as the ongoing negotiations with the European Union, leads us to infer that the States Parties within Mercosur are actively engaged in advancing the realization of the human right to adequate food and nutritional security. This inference aligns with the historical momentum initiated by the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), which spurred Mercosur member countries to address food-related issues within their jurisdictions.

Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore that attaining food security within Mercosur necessitates not merely specific measures, such as occasional food exchanges between member nations, but rather comprehensive cooperation among the countries. Viewing the current rejuvenation of Mercosur, rescued from relative obscurity, it becomes evident that the path forward should be guided by collaborative efforts across various dimensions to achieve food security within the bloc effectively.

Internal collaboration necessitates concerted efforts in areas such as coordinated tax initiatives, social cooperation among the populace, and the facilitation of preferential loans between countries. This includes considerations for the ongoing economic crisis in Argentina, emphasizing the imperative for a collective and dynamic equilibrium in the economic conditions of all bloc countries. Such equilibrium implies advancements in social and environmental conditions, specifically focusing on fostering agricultural sustainability.

To illustrate, the case of Uruguay is cited as the nation grappling with substantial challenges posed by persistent drought in the region, impacting agriculture and consequently

affecting the country's economy and its citizens. The area has experienced a deficit for the third consecutive year, reaching its most severe intensity in the last two decades (INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF COOPERATION FOR AGRICULTURE, 2023, online). Emphasizing the enduring influence of environmental and climatic factors, there is a continuous need for attention and collaboration among the participating States.

## CONCLUSION

Due to the increasing significance of the theme for humanity, this study examines the legislative consideration, or its absence, within the economic bloc Common Market of the South (Mercosur). The choice of this theme is driven by the region's unique nature, where countries play pivotal roles as productive entities in the agricultural sector. Additionally, considering that the rationale behind an economic bloc primarily revolves around commercial and financial matters, our objective is to evaluate whether an economic partnership in a region with such characteristics presents a collective advantage in addressing the theme of food security.

It is acknowledged that the global agenda has demanded attention to various issues since at least the 2000s and one persistent concern has been the pursuit of eradicating hunger within a sustainability framework (as seen in the Millennium Development Goals - MDGs and, more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs). This research aims to draw connections between the observed legal landscape in Mercosur and the SDGs, specifically focusing on the one addressing hunger eradication - SDGoal 2 (Zero hunger and sustainable agriculture).

Upon scrutinizing Mercosur regulations, it is discerned that the South American economic bloc lacks standardized legislation concerning food security matters, assigning the treatment of the subject to the discretion of each member state (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela) within their respective legal frameworks. While this stance aligns with the typical objectives of economic blocs, primarily centered around commerce, tariffs, and labor, the distinctive characteristics of the region—where all States Parties are developing nations marked by significant social inequalities and play prominent roles in global agriculture—suggest the potential for provisions beyond the conventional scope of an economic bloc.

Given that an in-depth examination of each State Party's internal regulations extends beyond this article's area, the international concept of food security is adopted to assess progress or setbacks in meeting SDG 2. The analysis of Mercosur's alignment with SDG 2 reveals that the economic bloc needs to be more engaged in addressing the theme of food security. While there are sectoral advancements, there needs to be a cohesive thematic approach within the bloc, implying that there is still room for further development.

All nations in the region grapple with an economic downturn brought about by the necessary measures to curb the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite being agricultural powerhouses under normal circumstances, this aspect is underscored concerning the attainability of SDG 2 by 2030, as per the UN target. While there is still a considerable time frame until the conclusion of the designated period, the ongoing pandemic persists, and the economic and social repercussions of the disease remain immeasurable.

Moreover, collaborative measures among the Mercosur State Parties are imperative to progress in consistently structuring and sustaining sustainable agricultural practices, which is crucial for achieving comprehensive food security. For attaining complete food security, careful attention to environmental and climatic factors is essential, as exemplified by the farming situation in Uruguay at the beginning of 2023.

Therefore, the progression of legislative safeguards for food security is imperative, notwithstanding the challenges posed by economic hardships or recovery. This endeavor is crucial to bring Mercosur member countries' populations closer to eliminating hunger and fostering social justice within their territories. Advancing enhancements in Mercosur regulations in this regard, although not inherently an obligation of an economic bloc, holds the potential to substantially contribute to the region and, indirectly, to the global sphere.

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