

# Evolution of BRICS Multilateral Platform for Agricultural Cooperation and Food Governance

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Working Paper II

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## Abstract

The study examines the evolution of BRICS as a comprehensive multilateral platform for agricultural cooperation and food governance. This article undertakes a longitudinal discourse analysis based on the joint declarations and action plans issued by BRICS Ministers of Agriculture from 2010 to 2025. The study reveals a progressive shift from declaratory language toward operational commitments. The analysis indicates a steady broadening of the themes from an early focus on food security, trade and technology towards agro-biodiversity, digital agriculture, gender, climate and resilient food systems. There is a growing centrality of smallholder and family farmers in the policy discourse, and the emergence of BRICS as an aspirational platform to reshape global food governance. The article critically assesses the gap between declaratory ambition and implementation, the implications of BRICS expansion for agricultural cooperation, and the potential of new mechanisms to address structural inequities in the global food system.

**Keywords:** Food security; agricultural policy; global food governance; climate-resilient agriculture; multilateralism; trade facilitation; smallholder farmers; sustainable development



# 1. Introduction

The global food governance has long been dominated by post-World War II institutions and frameworks; the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Cépède, 1984; Margulis, 2013; McKeon, 2021). Although these institutions have made important contributions, persistent hunger, recurrent food-price crises, and the accelerating impacts of climate change on agricultural systems have exposed the limitations of existing governance architectures (Clapp & Cohen, 2010; FAO et al., 2025). BRIC comprising of Brazil, Russia, India, China was established in 2006, becoming BRICS with addition of South Africa in 2010, and expanded to BRICS+ in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia in 2025. It has emerged as a platform for agricultural cooperation assumes particular significance for food policy (Bamidele, 2025; Stuenkel, 2020). The paper examines how BRICS agricultural cooperation evolved as a multilateral platform aspiring to reshape global food governance.

The global food system is confronting a complex and interconnected poly-crisis. Approximately 673 million people faced hunger worldwide, while nearly 2.3 billion experience food insecurity (Clapp & Moseley, 2020; FAO et al., 2025). Geopolitical conflicts are destabilizing global grain and fertilizer markets, triggering food-price spikes that disproportionately affected low- and middle-income food-importing nations (Abay et al., 2023; Laborde et al., 2020). BRICS member states collectively represent approximately 42-45 per cent of the world's population, over 33 per cent of global agricultural land, roughly one-third of global grain production, has emerged as a potentially decisive block in reshaping global food security governance (Ren et al., 2020; Swatson et al., 2024). Their combined weight in both agricultural production and consumption positions them as indispensable actors in any serious effort to reform the global food system.

Despite its significance, the trajectory of BRICS as a multinational platform in agricultural cooperation and global governance is not explored in the literature. Studies tend to focus on individual member states' domestic policies or on BRICS as a geopolitical formation rather than as a site of agricultural policy dialogue (Bamidele, 2025; Cabral et al., 2013; De Carvalho et al., 2025; Scoones et al., 2016). Where BRICS agricultural cooperation has been studied directly, the focus has been on trade complementarity indices and food self-sufficiency indicators (Ren et al., 2020; Tantri & Shaurav, 2018). This gap is notable when compared with the evidences from other multilateral initiatives (Slater et al., 2026) and G20's food security engagement (Clapp & Murphy, 2013). This article addresses this gap through a systematic, longitudinal discourse analysis of BRICS agricultural ministerial declarations from 2010 to 2025.

The paper is structured in four parts. Following this introduction, Section 2 outlines the analytical framework and methodology. Section 3 presents the main findings, tracing the

thematic evolution of the BRICS agricultural dialogue across four identifiable phases. Section 4 offers a critical discussion of the implications of this trajectory for global food governance. Section 5 concludes with reflections on future directions.

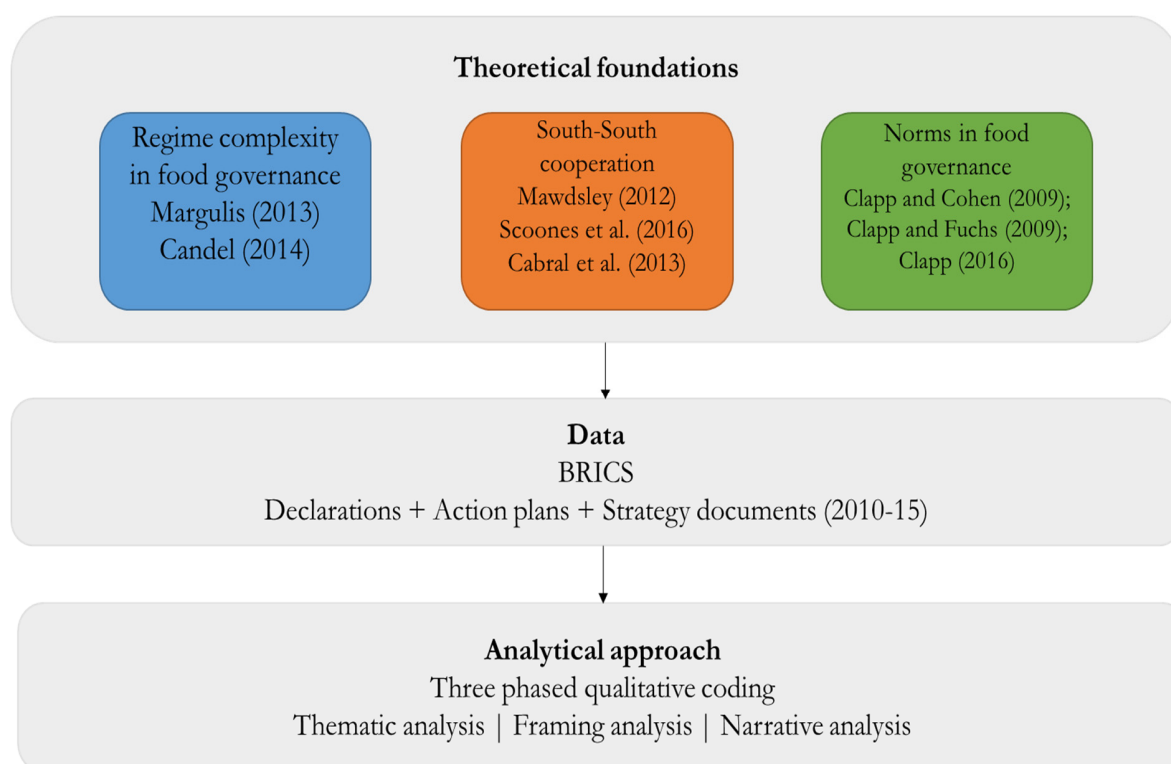
## 2. Conceptual Framework and Methodology

### 2.1 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on theories on regime complexity in global food governance (Margulis, 2013; Candel, 2014), South-South cooperation in agriculture (Mawdsley, 2012; Scoones et al., 2016; Cabral et al., 2013) and the existing food security norms in multilateral settings (Clapp and Cohen, 2009; Clapp and Fuchs, 2009; Clapp, 2016). This study analyses how BRICS declarations shapes expectations, define priorities, and create normative benchmarks against which future action is measured.

### 2.2 Data

The analysis draws on the BRICS agricultural ministerial joint declarations spanning 2010 through 2025; encompassing fifteen ministerial meetings, action plans for agricultural cooperation (2012-2016, 2017-2020, 2021-2024, and 2025-2028), the BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation adopted in 2022, and the 2023 Johannesburg Summit Declaration (Details in Appendix).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework and analytical approach

## 2.3 Longitudinal discourse analysis

This study uses a longitudinal critical discourse analytic approach that combines thematic, framing, and narrative analysis. Thematic, framing, and narrative analysis share ontological and epistemological positions, yet each provides a different perspectives of policy making and provide complementary results (Van Hulst et al., 2025). Thematic analysis focuses on the themes discussed and emerged in declarations, framing analysis examines how issue elements are selected, focused, and embedded, and narrative analysis investigates how events, actors, and settings are plotted into policy trajectories (Van Hulst et al., 2025). Together, the three permit a layered reading of BRICS agricultural cooperation as paradigm, frame, and unfolding story.

In the longitudinal discourse analysis approach, the analysis is done iteratively rather than linearly (Wash, 2020). Themes, actors, and frames are identified through manual coding, visualized with the help of Python software to trace how the themes have emerged over time. These patterns are contextualized in the global crisis; increasing food prices, COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, climate negotiations, and successive BRICS expansions. Framing analysis helps in interrogating how the themes are selected, foregrounded, and backgrounded (Van Hulst et al., 2025), and the coded material is used to build a narrative on vision, process, and outcomes (Wash, 2020). Finally, declarative commitments are read against documented action plans to surface discourse-practice gaps. The process is documented through an audit trail of coding decisions and reflexive memos for transparency of critical discourse analysis (Wash, 2020).

## 3. Results

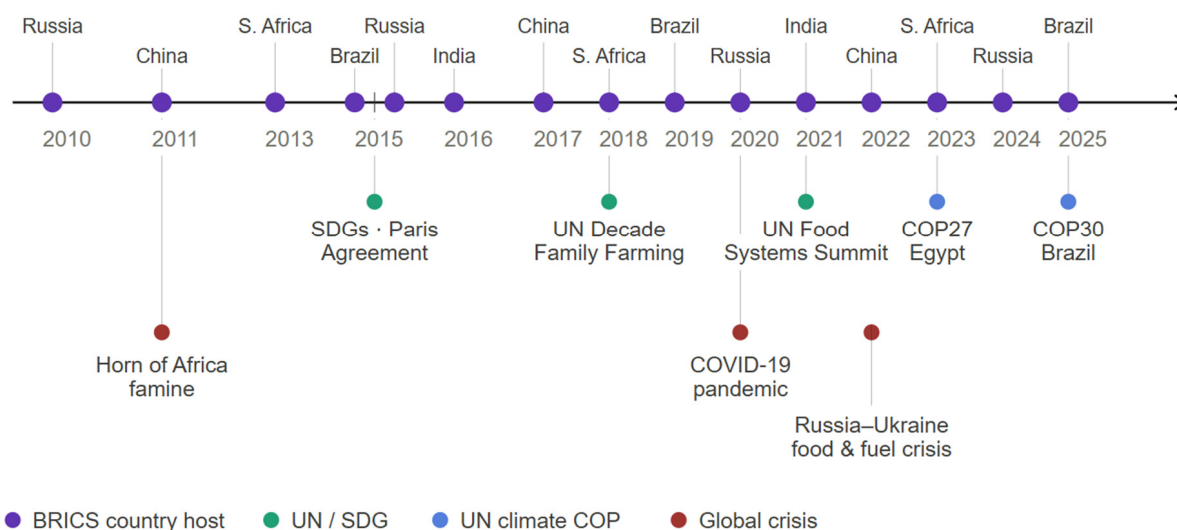
### 3.1. Rotating hosts, shifting norms and crisis response

The timeline graph tracing the evolution of BRICS agricultural cooperation from 2010 to 2025 is shown as Figure 2. Over this fifteen-year period, the hosting of BRICS Agriculture Ministers' meetings has rotated among the five founding members (Russia, China, South Africa, Brazil, and India). Each host country has shaped the thematic priorities of its meeting. China emphasised on digital agriculture and innovation in Chengdu (2011) and Nanjing (2017), South Africa's focused on climate-resilient agriculture in Pretoria (2013) and Limpopo (2023), Brazil featured family farming and food sovereignty in Brasília (2015, 2025), India featured agro-biodiversity and farmers' income in New Delhi (2016) and virtually during COVID-19 pandemic (2021).

The timeline also reveals how BRICS agricultural discourse has progressively anchored itself to the wider multilateral architecture. The early declarations (2010-2013) referenced the G20 (Group of 20)<sup>1</sup>, FAO, WFP, and Consultative Group on International Agricultural

<sup>1</sup> <https://dea.gov.in/about-g20>

Research (CGIAR)<sup>2</sup> primarily as coordination partners, positioning BRICS within the existing multi-national institutional order. A significant shift occurred in 2015, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement was adopted in the BRICS declarations a new normative concept. From the fifth ministerial onward, every BRICS agricultural declaration references the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a guiding framework. This shift from coordination with existing institutions to alignment with global normative goals can be understood as the distinction between framing and narrative in critical interpretive policy analysis (Van Hulst et al., 2025). The SDGs (2015) provided a framing device (selecting and focusing specific elements of food security as globally legitimate goals). BRICS declarations constructed a narrative by positioning the group as an indispensable actor in achieving SDGs, particularly through South-South cooperation. The BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation 2022 and the BRICS Action Plan 2025-2028 advances this narrative. Establishment of institutional architecture, research platforms, information exchange systems positioned BRICS as an inter-government governance structure within the multilateral system (Margulis, 2013; McKeon, 2021).



Note: Timeline in the horizontal-arrow style using the multilateral events explicitly cited in the BRICS declarations (2010-2025).

**Figure 2.** BRICS and other multilateral events from 2010 to 2025

The three global crises marked on the timeline; the Horn of Africa famine (2011), COVID-19 (2020), and the Russia-Ukraine food and fuel crisis (2022), resulted in visible shifts in the BRICS agricultural discourse. The 2011 famine prompted the Chengdu declaration's explicit commitment to helping African countries improve food production capacity. COVID-19 led to virtual BRICS meeting (2020 to 2022) and accelerated language around supply chain resilience and digital agriculture. In 2022, BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation was proposed in response to Russia-Ukraine war.

<sup>2</sup> <https://archivesholdings.worldbank.org/consultative-group-on-international-agricultural-research>

The timeline reveals that BRICS agricultural discourse did not evolve linearly but shifted unevenly in response to institutional milestones, external crises, and changing geopolitical ambitions. Beyond the chronology, the longitudinal policy discourse analysis reveals qualitative shifts in thematic vocabulary and framing strategies (Wash, 2020). The thematic evolution in the BRICS Agricultural Ministers declarations is given in Figure 3.

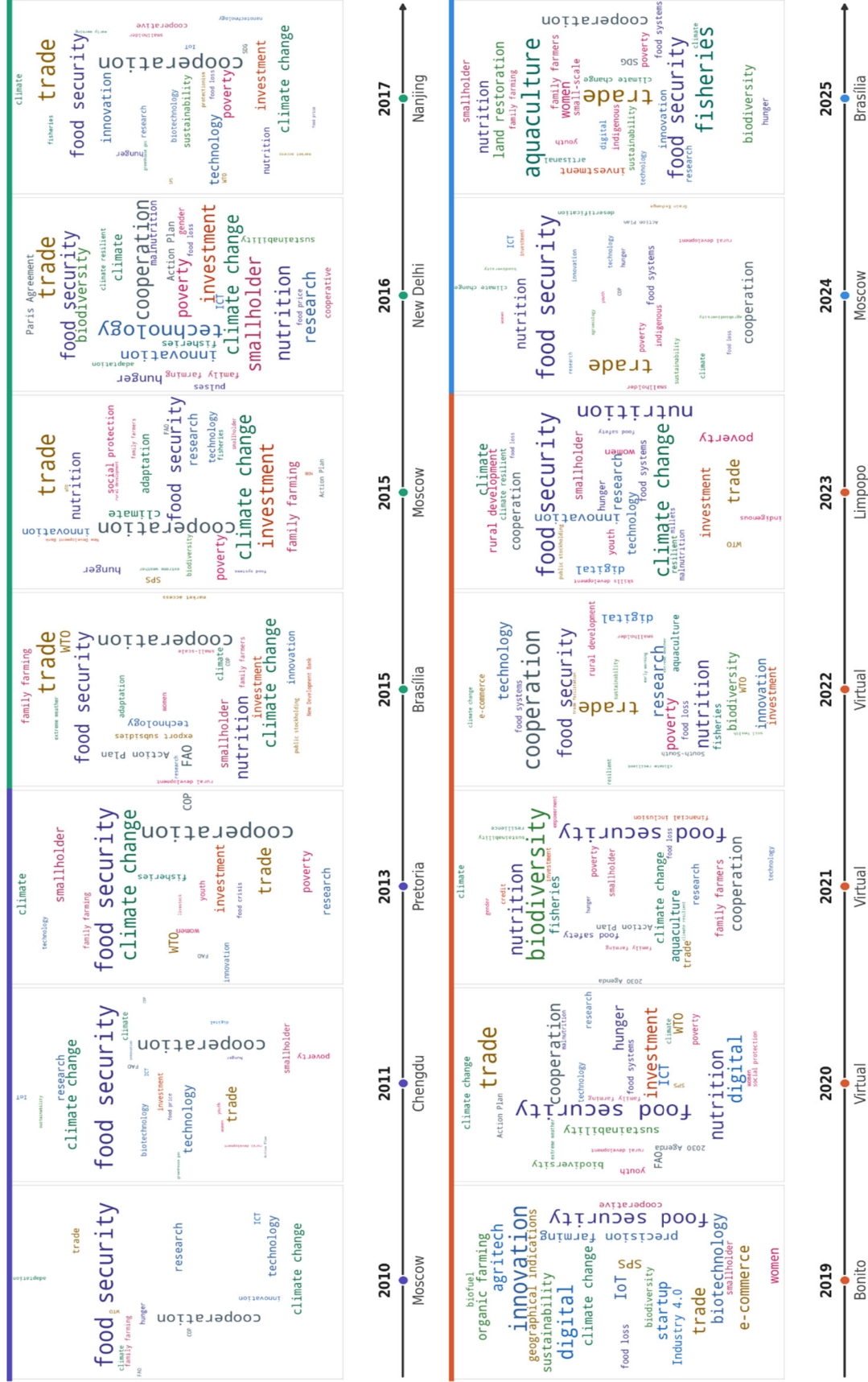
### 3.2. Aspirational discourse

The BRIC agricultural cooperation mechanism was inaugurated in 2010 established four priority areas: 1) creation of an agricultural information base system, 2) a strategy for ensuring food access for vulnerable populations, 3) reduction of negative climate-change impacts on food security, and 4) enhancement of agricultural technology cooperation. The language was predominantly aspirational, with frequent use of formulations such as “there is a need for” and “are to be considered as priorities.” The 2010 declaration established an Expert Working Group to operationalize these commitments.

The 2011 Chengdu Declaration in China, introduced several themes that are complementarity of BRICS agricultural sectors despite their diversity. The key focus was on importance of countering food-price speculation, the potential of bioenergy without compromising food security, and the significance of biotechnology for sustainable agriculture. Crucially, the 2011 declaration proposed the establishment of the BRICS Strategic Alliance for Agricultural Research and Technology Cooperation. Additionally, the first Action Plan 2012-2016 was established around five pillars of cooperation, each coordinated by different member countries.

The 2013 Pretoria Declaration, the overarching theme was climate change and food security. This declaration consolidated the early institutional architecture and connected BRICS agricultural cooperation to the broader multilateral landscape. It explicitly referenced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and called for stronger links with WTO agricultural negotiations, preceding the Bali Ministerial Conference. The declaration also noted the International Year of Family Farming, a thematic focus on smallholder agriculture that would emerge as a key theme in subsequent years.

The period from 2010 to 2015 is characterized by several notable features. First, the emphasis on information asymmetry as a root cause of food insecurity reflected in the recurring priority given to agricultural data exchange. Food security problem is framed primarily as market inefficiencies rather than structural power imbalances (Clapp, 2016). Second, the consistent references to the Doha Development Round of WTO negotiations situated BRICS agricultural cooperation as a reformist stance in the existing multilateral order (Hopewell, 2016). Third, the language on climate change remained firmly anchored in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), reflecting a collective emphasis on prioritizing development needs in climate governance (Hochstetler, 2012).



Notes: The size of the word depicts the emphasis in the declarations.

Figure 3. Thematic evolution in BRICS

### 3.3. Institutional discourse

The period from 2015 to 2017 witnessed a decisive deepening of institutional commitments. Two ministerial meetings were held in 2015 alone (Brazil and Russia), reflecting an acceleration of the cooperation agenda. First, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in September 2015 (Brazil) became a key normative framework in future discourse. The 2015 Moscow Declaration explicitly committed BRICS to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). The subsequent declarations increasingly framed cooperation priorities in SDG terms. This shift aligned BRICS with the universal development agenda, moving beyond intra-BRICS complementarity toward a broader claim of global leadership.

The Basic Agricultural Information Exchange System (BAIES) moved from concept to trial (2015) and official launch (2016). India proposed the BRICS Agriculture Research Centre (BARC), which evolved into the BRICS Agricultural Research Platform (BARP). The establishment of an informal consultative group of BRICS representatives at FAO in Rome signified an effort to coordinate positions within existing multilateral forums rather than create parallel structures.

The 2016 New Delhi Declaration (India) introduced information and Communication technology (ICT) in agriculture, genetic resource conservation, water management infrastructure. It also emphasised the need to move from input-intensive to innovation-driven production systems. The 2017 Nanjing Declaration (China), issued under the theme of innovation and sharing, added smart agriculture, nanotechnology, poverty alleviation strategies, and the concept of “greening” agriculture. It also marked the first explicit reference to Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the New Development Bank (NDB) as a financing vehicle for agricultural infrastructure.

The earlier declarations had supported WTO negotiations in general terms. The 2015-2017 declarations engaged more specifically with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards and the elimination of agricultural export subsidies (following the 2015 Nairobi WTO Ministerial). The 2017 declaration explicitly opposed protectionism while calling for WTO reform.

### 3.4. Transformative discourse

The period from 2019 to 2023 was marked by two transformative exogenous shocks; the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022. These shocks fundamentally reshaped the BRICS agricultural discourse. The thematic scope expanded into new domains previously absent from the declarations.

The 2019 Bonito Declaration (Brazil) introduced several notable innovations. For the first time, the BRICS agricultural ministers addressed agri-tech startups and entrepreneurship, intellectual property and geographical indications, e-commerce in agricultural trade, digital agriculture and the Internet of Things (IoT), the role of women in agriculture, and

organic farming and mutual recognition of organic standards. These additions reflected a broadening of the conceptual framework from a production-centric model toward a value-chain and innovation-ecosystem approach. The explicit mention of Industry 4.0 in the context of livestock, aquaculture and fisheries signaled a recognition that the digital transformation was reshaping agricultural production across all subsectors.

The 2020 Moscow Declaration (Russia) introduced a dedicated section on digital technologies for sustainable agriculture, discussed the risks of the digital divide between modern and traditional agricultural practices, and explicitly addressed the gendered dimensions of digital access. The pandemic prompted an emphasis on food supply-chain resilience, temporary trade measures compatible with WTO rules, and the role of trade as part of recovery strategies (Clapp & Moseley, 2020; Laborde et al., 2020). The declaration also introduced the concept of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) initiated by FAO, reflecting a growing interest in the integration of traditional knowledge with modern agricultural science.

The 2021 Declaration during India's chairmanship, adopted agrobiodiversity as a core theme, represented a significant thematic pivot. For the first time, agrobiodiversity was elevated to a central organizing concept. The declaration explicitly referenced to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. New sectoral areas such as fisheries and aquaculture and financial inclusion for farmers entered the discourse. The language on smallholder farmers shifted from paternalistic references to "vulnerable populations" toward an empowerment. The framing of smallholders emphasized around cooperative organization, market integration, and the transition from subsistence to enterprise farming.

The 2022 Beijing Declaration (China), held under the theme of coordinated agricultural and rural development, consolidated several themes. The emphasis was on rural revitalization and modernization as integrated processes and the importance of soil health management. The role of e-commerce and agricultural branding in upgrading value chains and the significance of reducing food loss and waste was highlighted. It endorsed the BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation, which formalized twelve cooperation areas spanning digital agriculture, inputs, trade, natural resources, disease control, and climate adaptation.

### **3.5. Assertive discourse**

The 2023 Limpopo Declaration (South Africa), adopted in the context of expansion of BRICS membership, maintained continuity with prior themes. Greater emphasis was given on post-pandemic recovery, skills development, the International Year of Millets, and public stockholding programmes for food security. Particular significance was given to the long-standing tension at the WTO over India's public stockholding practices. This suggests that BRICS was increasingly willing to use its collective weight as a bloc to advance positions on contentious global trade issues.

The most recent declarations (2024 and 2025) reveal a qualitative shift from incremental cooperation toward systemic ambition. The 2024 Moscow Declaration (Russia) introduced several breakthrough concepts. The BRICS Grain Exchange was proposed as a dedicated trading platform. It explicitly named unilateral coercive measures and politically motivated trade restrictions as threats to food security. It additionally emphasised the promotion of circular economy, bioeconomy, and agroecology as complementary approaches to agricultural sustainability. The language on trade became more assertive, calling for fertilizer and food trade to be exempted from restrictive economic measures.

The 2025 Brasília Declaration (Brazil) represents the most comprehensive and ambitious document in the fifteen-year period. The declaration document has over sixty paragraphs with a detailed annexure. It introduced an unprecedented range of new mechanisms and themes. The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, a Brazilian-led initiative launched during its G20 presidency, was integrated into the BRICS agricultural framework. A strategic food reserves discussion was formalized. Fisheries and aquaculture became a core theme, with dedicated sections on artisanal fishing communities, FAO's Blue Transformation roadmap, and aquatic food systems financing. For the first time, gender equality and women's empowerment were addressed through dedicated, substantive paragraphs. Greater emphasis was also given for youth participation in agriculture.

The 2025 declaration launched the BRICS Partnership for Land Restoration to align with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It is a structured initiative with three explicit objectives: i) advocacy in international forums, ii) collaborative research among agricultural institutes, and iii) financial coordination through development banks). It also proposed a Food Import Financing Mechanism inspired by the FAO's Food Import Financing Facility, and advanced discussions on electronic phytosanitary and veterinary certification systems to facilitate intra-BRICS trade. Moreover, a new BRICS Action Plan 2025-2028 was adopted. The declaration also explicitly referenced COP 30 in Belém and committed BRICS agricultural ministers for advocating inclusion of family farmers' in UNFCCC decisions.

## 4. Discussion

The longitudinal discourse analysis reveals a clear trajectory of BRICS from a narrow, information-sharing agenda to an aspirational platform addressing food insecurity.

### 4.1. Thematic trajectory and normative evolution

Food security and nutrition constituted the anchor theme of the BRICS agricultural dialogue from its inception, but its framing shifted substantially over the last fifteen-years. The early declarations (2010 to 2013) approached food security primarily through a production-centric lens, emphasising the stable supply of basic food grains and access for vulnerable populations. From 2015 onward, nutrition was given equal emphasis, reflect-

ing the broader international move toward nutrition-sensitive agriculture. By the 2020 to 2025 period, the discourse had matured into a multidimensional food-systems framing that integrated availability, access, utilisation, stability, affordability, and, increasingly, agency and sustainability, mirroring the expanded conceptualisation of food security (FAO et al., 2025). The most consequential development came in 2024 and 2025. The discourse moved from describing the problem toward proposing concrete instruments. Strategic food reserves, minimum price support, the Food Import Financing Mechanism were proposed as an instrument and Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty was formulated. This progression illustrates a broader normative shift. Food security ceased to be treated as an aspirational end-state and was reframed as a governance challenge requiring dedicated financing and institutional architecture.

The treatment of smallholder and family farmers underwent a remarkable transformation. In the 2010 Moscow Declaration, references to family farming were limited to a single mention of its contribution to food security. By 2025, family farmers had become a central organizing category, with dedicated dialogues, explicit definitions, land rights, financial inclusion, cooperative organization, and representation in climate-change negotiations. The evolution of this theme parallels broader shifts in the global food-security discourse (Lowder et al., 2016). However, BRICS declarations went further compared to other multilateral forums and explicitly linked family farming to both food sovereignty and rural industrialization agendas.

Attention to local, traditional, and indigenous knowledge grew noticeably in the later declarations. The early texts barely acknowledged it, framing agricultural progress almost entirely through science, technology, and modernisation. That began to shift in 2020, when the declarations first embraced Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) as a bridge between traditional practice and modern science. The 2024 declaration went further, valuing resilient traditional farming for sustainability, smallholder livelihoods, and rural renewal. The 2025 declaration repeatedly named Indigenous Peoples and local communities as central to food systems, linking native and ancient crops to both biodiversity and climate resilience. Notably, the same declarations highlighted digital agriculture and mechanisation, treating the two as complementary. A growing body of literature underscores the value of integrating local knowledge in formal knowledge systems (Šūmane et al., 2018).

Climate change followed a similar trajectory and progressively become more central theme of the BRICS agricultural discourse. Early declarations addressed it as one of four priority areas. By 2025, climate change became part of every section of the declaration; trade facilitation (climate-resilient supply chains), fisheries (low-carbon aquaculture), soil management (carbon sequestration). The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) remained a persistent but refrained position. However, the discourse shifted from primarily defensive framing (demanding technology transfer from

developed countries) toward proactive engagement (launching the Partnership for Land Restoration, advocating for inclusion of agriculture in COP negotiations).

Digital agriculture theme was absent during the initial declarations but became mainstreamed across the discourse within a decade. New Delhi Declaration 2016 first articulated the role of ICT in connecting farmers to inputs, technologies, financial services, and markets. The 2019 Bonito Declaration introduced agritech startups, the Internet of Things (IoT), e-commerce, and precision farming. The 2020 declaration devoted an entire section to digital technologies. It also highlighted the risk of a digital divide between modern and traditional agricultural practices and the gendered dimensions of unequal digital access. The most recent declarations (2024 and 2025) introduced the term digital public infrastructure. Electronic phytosanitary and veterinary certification was proposed for trade facilitation. This reflects both the maturation of member states' national digital strategies and an emerging recognition that digital transformation cuts across every other thematic domain. The trajectory illustrates how a technological theme can move from peripheral novelty to organising infrastructure. The declarations also expose an unresolved tension between the promise of digital agriculture and the equity concerns.

The trade and investment discourse evolved from general endorsements of the Doha WTO Round toward increasingly specific and assertive positions. The progression from supporting WTO negotiations (2010-2013), to opposing protectionism while defending special and differential treatment (2015-2019), to explicitly challenging unilateral coercive measures. The proposal for alternative trading platforms such as the BRICS Grain Exchange (2024-2025) shows a growing willingness to contest the existing global agricultural trade governance (Clapp, 2016; Hopewell, 2016; Margulis, 2013).

## 4.2. Institutional architecture and implementation gaps

The BRICS agricultural cooperation mechanism has developed a moderately complex institutional architecture. The rotating annual ministerial meetings, an Agriculture Cooperation Working Group with expert-level meetings, the BAIES data platform, the BARP, are the key institutional architectures. In addition to this, the action plans provide an operational framework.

However, a persistent difference exists between declaratory ambition and implementation capacity. Several commitments recur across multiple declarations. The BAIES, for instance, was proposed in 2010, trailed in 2015 and launched in 2016, and reemphasised in 2025. This suggests that operationalization has lagged behind aspirational language. The absence of binding commitments, dedicated financing mechanisms (until recently), or monitoring and accountability frameworks is a major structural limitation. Similar limitations are common to many South-South cooperation platforms (G77, 2005). The 2025 declaration's proposals for specific financing instruments (Food Import Financing Mecha-

nism, Partnership for Land Restoration with development bank coordination) may begin to address this gap, but their effectiveness remains to be demonstrated.

A further weakness is the near-absence of any system for monitoring and evaluation. Across fifteen years, the declarations announce priorities and endorse action plans. But there are no set of indicators, baselines, or timelines against which progress could be judged. The successive action plans name lead countries for each theme, yet they are read as intentions than as results frameworks. This helps explain why the same initiatives keep reappearing without any confirmation that they were delivered. Without a way to track implementation, the process risks accumulating promises than implementing them. A light-touch monitoring system, perhaps run through the BARP and reporting at each annual ministerial meeting. This would let the BRICS bloc to monitor progress and demonstrable impact.

### **4.3. BRICS expansion and agricultural cooperation coherence**

The expansion of BRICS by including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates in 2024 introduces both opportunities and challenges for the agricultural cooperation agenda. The new members are food importing countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE) and face acute food insecurity (Ethiopia). However, they are major energy producers whose economic structures intersect with food systems through fertiliser production. The 2024 declaration acknowledged the new members but offered little specificity on how their integration would reshape cooperation priorities. The 2025 declaration's emphasis on food import financing and strategic reserves may partly reflect the priorities of food-import-dependent new members. However, systematic analysis of how expansion will affect the coherence of the agricultural dialogue requires further research. De Carvalho et al., (2025) similarly highlights the challenges due to the BRICS expansion and suggest a middle path of working with the system while transforming it.

### **4.4. Positioning within global food governance**

The BRICS agricultural declarations consistently position the grouping as complementary to, rather than competitive with, existing multilateral institutions (Cooper, 2016; Stuenkel, 2020). The establishment of a coordination mechanism among BRICS representatives at FAO and the practice of referencing COP outcomes and SDG targets suggest a strategy of working within the multilateral system to amplify the voice of large developing countries rather than creating alternative structures.

The recent declarations contain more assertive posture. The proposed BRICS Grain Exchange, if realized, could create a parallel price-discovery and trading mechanism to the established Chicago and European commodity exchanges. The explicit opposition to politically motivated trade restrictions and the call for fertilizer trade to be exempt from sanctions represent positions with clear geopolitical implications. The invocation of agri-

cultural diplomacy as a concept distinct from conventional trade negotiation suggests an aspiration to redefine the terms of engagement on food security at the global level.

#### **4.5. Trajectory of BRICS future**

The current trajectory suggests that the immediate future of BRICS agricultural co-operation would depend less on thematic expansion and more on the institutional mechanism. The recurring pattern of the declarations is that the initiatives such as BARP, BAIES were repeatedly proposed but not fully operationalized. Three key developments which are likely to develop are; first, the thematic emphasis to be collective challenges rather than the national priorities and flagship programmes of the hosting countries. Second, with the expanded membership, the food importing countries could push for strategic reserves, supply chain resilience and contest unilateral coercive measures. Third, BRICS is likely to position itself as a collective voice for climate negotiation, WTO and other multi-lateral forums. This process would facilitate development of consensus, enabling members to articulate shared positions, identifying ways to address them, and coordinate their negotiating positions.

### **5. Conclusions and Policy Implications**

The analysis of the fifteen-year trajectory of BRICS agricultural cooperation reveals a dynamic and evolving policy dialogue. There has been a progressive expansion in thematic scope, institutional depth, and normative ambition. BRICS has evolved from a modest five-country information-sharing initiative in 2010 to an agricultural cooperation mechanism. It has grown into a platform addressing varying dimension of the food-security and nutritional challenge. The key themes in BRICS declarations are food security, trade, climate adaptation, digital transformation, biodiversity, fisheries, gender, youth, women, land restoration, and blended financing.

There are four key implications for global food governance. First, the BRICS experience demonstrates that South-South cooperation platforms can generate substantive policy dialogue that goes beyond rhetorical solidarity, even in the absence of binding legal frameworks. The progressive specificity of commitments; from general aspirations to concrete mechanisms like BARP, BAIES, grain exchanges and land-restoration partnerships, suggests a pattern of norm construction through iterative declaration.

Second, the BRICS agricultural dialogue offers a window into how large developing countries collectively frame the relationship on issue of food security, trade liberalization, and national sovereignty. The consistent defense of public stockholding, special and differential treatment, and the principle of CBDR, combined with increasing opposition to unilateral trade restrictions, defines a distinctive position in global food governance.

Third, the gap between declaration and implementation remains the most significant challenge facing BRICS agricultural cooperation. The establishment of dedicated financ-

ing mechanisms and the Partnership for Land Restoration in 2025 is a turning point. However, sustained monitoring and independent evaluation basic shared framework will be essential to assess whether these instruments translate into measurable improvements in food security outcomes.

Fourth, the BRICS agricultural cooperation mechanism raises important questions about representation and inclusion. While the declarations increasingly center smallholder farmers, women, youth, and indigenous communities in their language, the degree to which these populations participate via institutional framework in shaping the dialogue remains unclear. Future research should examine the processes through which BRICS agricultural priorities are set, the role of domestic agricultural constituencies in each member state, and the extent to which BRICS commitments are reflected in national policy implementation. BARP can play an instrumental role in research based agenda setting and monitoring framework.

As the BRICS grouping continues to expand and its agricultural agenda grows more ambitious, the BRICS countries cannot afford to treat this platform as peripheral to global food governance. BRICS is increasingly positioning itself as a key force in reshaping and recalibrating global food governance systems.

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## Appendix

**Table 1. List of documents used for the analysis**

	Details
	<b><i>Declaration documents</i></b>
1	BRIC Ministers of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (2010). <i>Moscow Declaration</i> . Moscow, 26 March 2010.
2	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (2011). <i>Joint Declaration of the Second Meeting</i> . Chengdu, China, 30 October 2011.
3	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (2013). <i>Third Meeting Joint Declaration</i> . Pretoria, South Africa, 29 October 2013.
4	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (2015a). <i>Joint Declaration of the 4th Meeting</i> . Brasília, Brazil, 13 March 2015.
5	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (2015b). <i>Joint Declaration of the 5th Meeting</i> . Moscow, Russia, 9 October 2015.
6	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2016). <i>Joint Declaration of the Sixth Meeting</i> . New Delhi, India, 23 September 2016.
7	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2017). <i>Joint Declaration of the Seventh Meeting</i> . Nanjing, China, 16 June 2017.
8	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2019). <i>Bonito Declaration, Ninth Meeting</i> . Bonito, Brazil, 25–26 September 2019.
9	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (2020). <i>Joint Declaration of the X Meeting</i> . Virtual Meeting, 23 September 2020.
10	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2021). <i>Joint Declaration of the Eleventh Meeting</i> . Virtual Meeting, 27 August 2021.
11	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2022). <i>Joint Declaration of the Twelfth Meeting</i> . Virtual Meeting, 8 June 2022.
12	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2023). <i>Joint Declaration of the 13th Meeting</i> . Limpopo Province, South Africa, 12 August 2023.
13	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2024). <i>Joint Declaration of the 14th Meeting</i> . Moscow, Russia, 28 June 2024.
14	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2025). <i>Joint Declaration of the 15th Meeting</i> . Brasília, Brazil, 17 April 2025.
	<b><i>Action plans</i></b>
1	BRICS (2022). <i>BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation</i> .
2	BRICS (2025). <i>Action Plan 2025–2028 for Agricultural Cooperation of BRICS Countries</i> .
3	Joint Declaration of the 15th meeting of BRICS Ministers of Agriculture Action Plan 2025–2028

**Table 2. Key thematic milestones in BRICS agricultural declarations, 2010-2025**

Year	Declaration / Location	Key Thematic Milestones
2010	Moscow, Russia (BRIC)	Four priority areas established: information exchange, vulnerable populations, climate change, technology cooperation. Expert Working Group created.
2011	Chengdu, China (first BRICS)	South Africa joins. Strategic Alliance for Agricultural Research proposed. Action Plan 2012-2016 adopted. Bioenergy, biotechnology, food-price speculation addressed.
2012*	New Delhi, India	Expert Working Group on Agro Products and Food Security
2013	Pretoria, South Africa	Climate change as meeting theme. MDGs integrated. WTO Bali preparations. International Year of Family Farming noted.
2015	Brasília, Brazil & Moscow, Russia (two meetings)	SDG 2 commitment. BAIES trial run. NDB launched. SPS standards, responsible investment principles, social protection programmes elaborated.
2016	New Delhi, India	ICT in agriculture. Genetic resource conservation. Water infrastructure. BRICS Agricultural Research Platform (ARP) endorsed.
2017	Nanjing, China	Innovation and sharing theme. Smart agriculture, nanotechnology. Africa's Agenda 2063. Poverty alleviation. Action Plan 2017-2020.
2018*	Mpumalanga, South Africa	Climate smart approach
2019	Bonito, Brazil	Agritech startups. IP and GIs. Digital agriculture and IoT. E-commerce. Women in agriculture. Organic farming.
2020	Virtual (Moscow, Russia)	COVID-19 response. Digital technologies dedicated section. Supply-chain resilience. GIAHS. Digital divide concerns. Most extensive declaration to date.
2021	Virtual (New Delhi, India)	Agrobiodiversity as central theme. Fisheries and aquaculture sector. Financial inclusion. Action Plan 2021-2024.
2022	Virtual (Beijing, China)	Rural revitalisation. Soil health. E-commerce and branding. Food loss and waste. Strategy on Food Security Cooperation adopted.
2023	Limpopo, South Africa	Post-pandemic recovery. Skills development. International Year of Millets. Public stockholding programmes.
2024	Moscow, Russia	BRICS expansion welcomed. Grain Exchange proposed. Unilateral coercive measures opposed. Circular economy, bioeconomy, agroecology. COP27/28 references.
2025	Brasília, Brazil	Global Alliance Against Hunger. Partnership for Land Restoration. Food Import Financing Mechanism. Gender equality dedicated section. Youth participation. Blue Transformation. Livestock cooperation. Electronic certification. COP 30 advocacy. Action Plan 2025-2028.

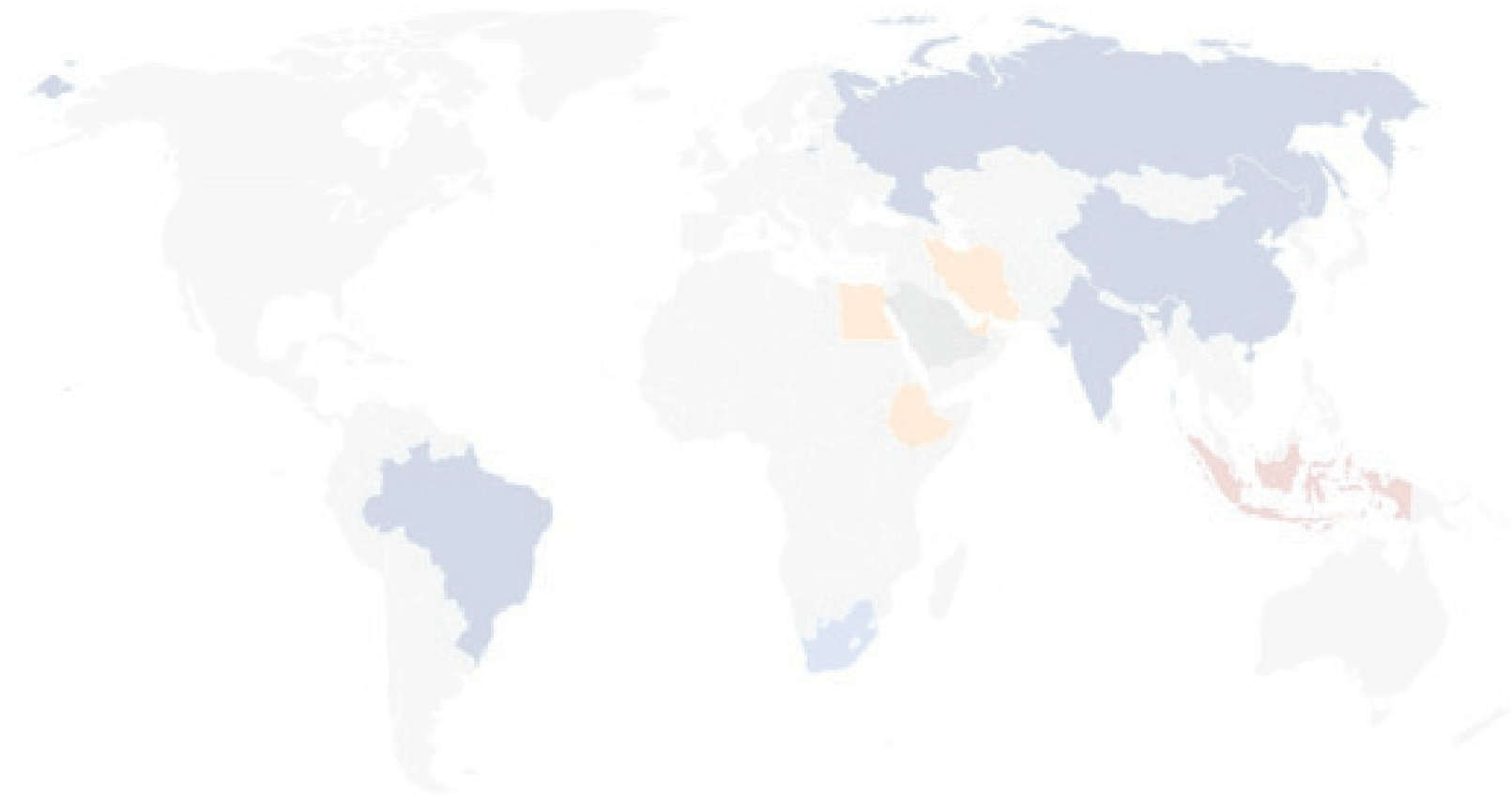
**Note:** \*No separate agricultural working group declaration available, in 2012 expert group meeting was conducted and in 2018 the BRICS summit focused on "Climate Smart Approach".

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46. Srivastava, S.K., P. Kishore, P.S. BIRTHAL and P.B. Shirsath. 2024. *Harnessing the Potential of Solar-Powered Micro-Irrigation for Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture*.
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