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EL FUTURO DE LA ALIMENTACIÓN Y RETOS DE LA AGRICULTURA PARA EL SIGLO XXI:

Debates sobre quién, cómo y con qué implicaciones sociales, económicas y ecológicas alimentará el mundo.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND CHALLENGES FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE 21st CENTURY:

Debates about who, how and with what social, economic and ecological implications we will feed the world.

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How much food sovereignty can you get for one million dollars?

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Abstract

Since the mid-1990s, "food sovereignty" has become an important mobilizing frame for social movements and also a set of norms and rights enshrined in the constitutions of some half dozen countries. This paper first outlines key debates around food sovereignty, including the question of who or what is the sovereign, the roles of long distance trade and protectionism, and appropriate policy measures for attaining food sovereignty. It then analyzes the institutionalization of food sovereignty in Ecuador, arguably the country that has gone furthest toward creating relevant legal norms and policies. The Conferencia Plurinacional e Intercultural de Soberanía Alimentaria, the state agency charged with implementing food sovereignty, has an annual budget of only one million dollars. COPISA's mandate includes community outreach and the development of enabling legislation, but much of this has been stalled in the legislature or amended in ways that generate opposition from popular organizations. The overall imbalance in budgetary support for large agribusiness and for the smallholding sector, as well as the contradictions of a leftist government highly dependent on rents from extractive and agro-export industries, limit the implementation of food sovereignty even in this best-case country.

Resumen

Desde mediados de los años 90, la "soberanía alimentaria" se ha convertido en un importante marco de movilización de los movimientos sociales y también en un conjunto de normas y derechos consagrados en las constituciones de una media docena de países. En este trabajo se examinan algunos de los debates clave sobre la soberanía alimentaria, tales como la cuestión de quién o qué es el soberano, los papeles del comercio de larga distancia y el proteccionismo, y las medidas políticas necesarias para lograr la soberanía alimentaria. Luego se analiza la institucionalización de la soberanía alimentaria en Ecuador, posiblemente el país que más ha logrado en cuanto a la creación de normas legales y políticas públicas relevantes. La Conferencia Plurinacional e Intercultural de Soberanía Alimentaria, el organismo estatal encargado de la implementación de la soberanía alimentaria, tiene un presupuesto anual de sólo un millón de dólares. El mandato de la COPISA incluye programas a nivel de las comunidades y los territorios y el desarrollo de legislación habilitante, pero gran parte de esta se ha estancado en la legislatura o ha sido enmendada a tal punto que genera oposición de parte de los movimientos populares. El desequilibrio en el apoyo institucional a los grandes agro-negocios y al sector de la pequeña agricultura, así como las contradicciones de un gobierno de izquierda altamente dependiente de las rentas de las industrias extractivas y agroexportadoras, limitan la implementación de la soberanía alimentaria incluso en este país que debería haber sido uno de los casos más exitosos.

Key words: food sovereignty, Ecuador, agriculture, extractivism, social movements

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, aspirations for "food sovereignty" have inspired and generated dynamic social movements and been enshrined in legal norms and state policies aimed at transforming food and agriculture systems. The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), for example, is a massive coalition which integrates peasant, farmer, environmentalist and human rights organizations and which lobbies in Rome at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). IPC is arguably the world's largest progressive social movement, including under its umbrella organizations of peasants, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolk and human rights, environmental and food justice activists. The largest IPC member is La Vía Campesina (LVC), a transnational agrarian movement that alone claims a global membership of two hundred million (Edelman and Borras 2016). Some half dozen countries — Bolivia, Ecuador, Mali, Nepal, Nicaragua, Senegal and Venezuela — now have provisions for food sovereignty in their constitutions and several of these have approved relevant enabling legislation or regulations (Edelman 2014). A number of other countries have passed similar measures without including food sovereignty principles in their constitutions.

Food sovereignty is also the objective of innumerable local and grassroots initiatives in diverse world regions. As a policy prescription, measures intended to enhance food sovereignty run the gamut from conventional protectionism to state-sponsored policy initiatives, such as public procurement rules that facilitate small-farmer provisioning of nearby public sector institutions (schools, hospitals, prisons, elder housing), to decentralized, innovative forms of linking small farmers and consumers, such as local markets, community supported agriculture projects and labeling or certification schemes. In many places, food sovereignty efforts eschew state involvement altogether and seek to implement new kinds of economic relations and production models at the community or regional level.

So what is food sovereignty? Scholars friendly to the concept have pointed to multiple interpretations and ambiguities, as I will indicate shortly (Edelman 2014; Godek 2015). The canonical definition, frequently cited in the literature, is from the 2007 Nyéléni Declaration, issued at the conclusion of a forum in Sélingué, Mali, attended by more than 500 delegates from over 80 countries, representing peasant and farmer, fisherfolk, and pastoralists' organizations as well as the World March of Women, Friends of the Earth International and other NGOs and social movements. That definition says that "food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni Forum 2007, 8). A more developed vision of the concept is found in the appendix of the same Declaration, where the "Six Pillars of Food Sovereignty" are enumerated. This elaboration of the idea is worth quoting at

length, since it suggestive of the broad range of issues and demands that food sovereignty encompasses:

1. Focuses on Food for People: Food sovereignty puts people, including those who are hungry, under occupation, in conflict zones and marginalized, at the centre of food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries policies, ensuring sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities; and rejects the proposition that food is just another commodity or component for international agri-business.

2. Values Food Providers: Food sovereignty values and supports the contributions, and respects the rights, of women and men, peasants and small scale family farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples and agricultural and fisheries workers, including migrants, who cultivate, grow, harvest and process food; and rejects those policies, actions and programmes that undervalue them, threaten their livelihoods and eliminate them.

3. Localises Food Systems: Food sovereignty brings food providers and consumers closer together; puts providers and consumers at the centre of decision-making on food issues; protects food providers from the dumping of food and food aid in local markets; protects consumers from poor quality and unhealthy food, inappropriate food aid and food tainted with genetically modified organisms; and resists governance structures, agreements and practices that depend on and promote unsustainable and inequitable international trade and give power to remote and unaccountable corporations.

4. Puts Control Locally: Food sovereignty places control over territory, land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock and fish populations on local food providers and respects their rights. They can use and share them in socially and environmentally sustainable ways which conserve diversity; it recognizes that local territories often cross geopolitical borders and ensures the right of local communities to inhabit and use their territories; it promotes positive interaction between food providers in different regions and territories and from different sectors that helps resolve internal conflicts or conflicts with local and national authorities; and rejects the privatisation of natural resources through laws, commercial contracts and intellectual property rights regimes.

5. Builds Knowledge and Skills: Food sovereignty builds on the skills and local knowledge of food providers and their local organisations that conserve, develop and manage localised food production and harvesting systems, developing appropriate research systems to support this and passing on this wisdom to future generations; and rejects technologies that undermine, threaten or contaminate these, e.g. genetic engineering.

6. Works with Nature: Food sovereignty uses the contributions of nature in diverse, low external input agroecological production and harvesting methods that maximise the contribution of ecosystems and improve resilience and adaptation, especially in the face of climate change; it seeks to heal the planet so that the planet may heal us; and, rejects methods that harm beneficial ecosystem functions, that depend on energy intensive monocultures and livestock factories, destructive fishing practices and other industrialised production methods, which

damage the environment and contribute to global warming. (Nyéléni Forum 2007, 39)

Elsewhere I have analyzed in detail the genealogies of the food sovereignty concept and the at times shifting and contradictory premises of its advocates (Edelman 2014; Edelman et al. 2014). I noted, among other things, that the idea and the phrase originated not with La Vía Campesina in the mid-1990s, as dozens of scholarly and activist writings on food sovereignty mistakenly maintain, but with Mexican government programs more than ten years before[1]. I further pointed out that despite the claims of its proponents that food sovereignty and food security are locked in a "global conflict" (Schanbacher 2010), definitions of food sovereignty frequently overlapped with those of "food security," a concept that critics frequently deride as overly technocratic and quantitative, since it refers mainly to adequacy of supplies without saying anything about how or by whom the food is produced. Finally, I argued that food sovereignty advocates had been largely silent about four key issues bearing on the practical implementation of their political project: (1) the question of who is the "sovereign" and what is the geographical locus of food sovereignty (the state, a region or the people, for example); (2) the role of smallholding agriculturalists who cultivate cash crops for export (coffee, tea, cacao, etc.); (3) the kinds of institutions required to localize production, control market forces and limit firm and farm size and long distance trade; and (4) the role of deeply rooted consumer preferences in the Global North for products grown in the Global South — what used to be called "dessert crops" — some of which are luxuries (e.g., chocolate, pineapple or macadamia nuts) and others of which have arguably become necessities (caffeine in coffee and tea). I initiated my 2014 polemic with the disclaimer that

> the sceptical observations that follow are offered in a spirit of deep sympathy and solidarity with the food sovereignty project, which can only advance further if its proponents sharpen their critical focus and acknowledge how daunting the challenges are. (Edelman 2014, 960)

In an epigraph to the same paper, I also invoked the words of that brilliant social scientist Albert Hirschman, who remarked in 1995 that "criticizing one's friends is more demanding and therefore more interesting than to expose once again the boring errors of one's adversaries" (Hirschman 1995, 58). Both of these caveats are relevant again here, for in the present paper I intend to raise some delicate questions about the implementation of food sovereignty.

Ecuador: a propitious site for food sovereignty?

[1] In a personal communication (September 21, 2016), David Barkin, who participated in a Mexican government delegation to the FAO in the 1980s, has confirmed this and provided many new details, suggesting as well that direct antecedents of food sovereignty — at least the concept, if not the words — may be traced back to the agrarian reform of the 1930s under President Lázaro Cárdenas.

What does all this mobilizing and theorizing about food sovereignty mean on the ground? In 2008, Ecuador became one of the first countries to fully incorporate "food sovereignty" into its constitution, declaring it "a strategic goal and a state obligation" (Ecuador 2008, Articles 13, 281). This constitutionalization of food sovereignty reflected the massive power of Ecuadorian social movements, especially the indigenous and campesino organizations that had played key roles in toppling three presidents, Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, Jamil Mahuad in 2000 and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005[2]. Some of these movements had formal and informal ties to La Vía Campesina, which had begun to enthusiastically promote food sovereignty in 1996, so it was not surprising that the idea began to gain traction in the Ecuadorian context (Clark 2017).

Rafael Correa was elected president in 2006 and took office in 2007, ushering in what he called a "Citizen's Revolution" ("Revolución Ciudadana"). Even before the election, Correa signed a pact with the Mesa Agraria, a coalition of four peasant organizations, and committed his government to initiating an "Agrarian Revolution" ("Revolución Agraria") that included a promise of working toward food sovereignty (Giunta 2014; Henderson 2017). With substantial input from indigenous and other civil society movements, a constituent assembly drafted a new constitution, which was approved in 2008 (Becker 2011). It was this document that enshrined food sovereignty as "a state obligation," as well as other novel provisions, such as guaranteeing the "rights of nature" and recognizing the plurinational character of Ecuadorian society and the state. The new state structure involved a major expansion of the public sector and an official commitment to serving citizens and implementing a national development plan aimed at realizing what in Kichwa is termed "Sumak Kawsay" or in Spanish "Buen vivir," roughly "Good Living" or "Living Well," a concept with deep roots in indigenous Andean cultures (Fatheuer 2011; García Álvarez 2016; Villalba 2013). Simply defined, Buen Vivir is

> the way of life that permits happiness and the continuity of cultural and environmental diversity; it is harmony, equality, equity and solidarity. It is not the search for opulence or infinite economic growth. (Ecuador 2013, 13). [3]

A more subtle, less bureaucratic and perhaps literal translation of Sumak Kawsay might be "plenitude of life" ("plenitud de vida")[4]. And this "plenitude" or "fullness" is widely understood as including the strengthening of social and solidary bonds within and between communities and territories.

The Buen Vivir guiding principle — with its celebration of no-growth economics (Hamilton 2004), egalitarianism, plurinationality, community, sociality, solidarity and biodiversity — would seem a natural complement to food sovereignty,

[2] In the 2005 uprising against Gutiérrez, an erstwhile indigenous movement ally, urban middle-class sectors also played a very important role.

[3] "la forma de vida que permite la felicidad y la permanencia de la diversidad cultural y ambiental; es armonía, igualdad, equidad y solidaridad. No es buscar la opulencia ni el crecimiento económico infinito."

[4] According to García Álvarez (2016, 39), "el *sumak kawsay* utilizado en Ecuador empieza con: *sumak*, que significa; plenitud, sublime, excelente, magnífico, hermoso(s), superior, integral, simbiótico y holístico. Y continúa con: *kawsay*, significa: vida, ser-estando, estar-siendo, con lo cual su traducción literal sería: 'plenitud de vida', aunque formalmente se lo traduce como, 'buen vivir', tal como lo recoge la Constitución de la República del Ecuador de 2008."

although as a model for practical policy it is equally vague and polysemous, if not more so. [5] This very imprecision, along with its allegedly millenarian indigenous pedigree, no doubt made Sumak Kawsay a politically attractive and expedient slogan for a populist political project characterized from its inception by intractable contradictions.

In Correa's first year in office, in a speech before the United Nations General Assembly, he offered to leave in the ground the 20 percent of Ecuador's petroleum reserves that lay under the Amazonian region of Yasuní as a contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The one condition was that the countries historically responsible for the majority of emissions provide Ecuador compensation of $3.5 billion over 13 years, approximately one-half of what it would receive if it exploited those deposits (Le Quang 2013). This proposal, based in part on the concept of "ecological debt," a termed coined by Chilean economists in the early 1990s (Robleto A. and Marcelo 1992) in the lead-up to the Rio Earth Summit and adopted by the Ecuadorian civil society organization Acción Ecológica (2000), met with an indifferent reception in developed-country capitals. Eventually Ecuador proceeded with further drilling and extraction in Yasuní, threatening the territories of several indigenous peoples, including two (the Tagaeri and Taromename) heretofore living in voluntary isolation[6]. The ecological debt, a subset of what other scholars called "ecological unequal exchange," is of course a counter-hegemonic concept intended to invert mainstream assumptions about the financial debt that Global South countries owe to banks, governments and multilateral organizations in the Global North. It posits that the countries of the South are, in effect, creditors and those of the North are highly indebted as a result of their long-term and multifaceted pillaging of less developed countries (Martínez Alier 1997; Rice 2009).

Ecuador under Correa joined the Venezuelan-led Alternativa Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), though in contrast to Venezuela and Bolivia, and notwithstanding Correa's very considerable charisma, its government relied less on mass mobilization and personalist leadership than on technocratic management of key state institutions, incorporation of significant middle-class sectors and neo-Keynesian "pump priming" that generated employment and improved livelihoods (de la Torre 2013; Svampa 2017). While this paper cannot explore in detail the contradictory trends and policies that unfolded during Correa's two terms as president, it should suffice to note that during the earlier part of his presidency — 2007 to 2014 — the country enjoyed an extraordinary oil price bonanza that made it possible to greatly increase the size of the public sector, as well as infrastructure spending and other public investment, with state spending nearly quadrupling during 2007-2015, before falling off in the last two years of Correa's presidency (see Figure 1). In addition, as a dollarized economy since 2000, Ecuador's exports benefited from the weak dollar that resulted from expansive monetary policies in the United States following the 2008 crisis. The extraordinarily low interest rates of that same period, together with oil rents that

[5] Clark (2017, 355) calls it "an empty signifier for state-led development."

[6] According to Acción Ecológica (2000, 1), "La Deuda Ecológica es la obligación y responsabilidad que tienen los países industrializados del Norte con los países del Tercer Mundo, por el saqueo y usufructo de sus bienes naturales: petróleo, minerales, bosques, biodiversidad, bienes marinos; a costa de la energía humana de sus pueblos y de la destrucción, devastación, y contaminación de su patrimonio natural y fuentes de sustento" (original emphasis).

grew by over 10 percent each year, made it possible to carry a larger debt burden and opened up access to new sources of finance, notably from China and from regional multilaterals such as the Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF) and the Fondo Latinoamericano de Reservas (FLAR) (Hidalgo Pallares and Hurtado Pérez 2016).

Many of these advantages evaporated beginning in mid-2014, when oil prices plummeted. As Andrés Malamud argued in a recent critique, after the collapse of oil, "no hay petroprogresismo que aguante….

> In a less dramatic way, the rise and fall [of oil] is repeated with the other commodities. For fifteen years, South America refuted the curse of Raúl Prebisch, that the terms of trade — the difference between the relative prices of exports and imports — would suffer a secular deterioration. Instead they improved. The periphery exploited the center, which had miserable growth rates. But the emergence of the third world was not a consequence of its liberation but rather of a new dependence. Behind the fantastic prices was the rise of China, which was both massive (one-fifth of the world population joining the global market) and dizzying (its annual growth was around 10 percent). But it wasn't diversified. The resurgence of Latin America was thus based on a renewal of primary product exports, which was equivalent to the relative deindustrialization [of its economies]. (Malamud 2017) [7]

This renewed reliance on primary product exports and Chinese investment, together with the other elements of the favorable 2007-2014 context outlined above (cheap credit, weak dollar, etc.), nonetheless produced genuinely significant social gains[8]. Both the booming economy and targeted government programs contributed to dramatic declines in overall and extreme poverty (see Table 1). Overall social spending, which included cash transfer programs — notably the Bono de Desarrollo Humano that now provides poor households with US$50 per month — more than tripled during 2007-2016 (see Figure 2). During the oil bonanza period Ecuador also had one of the highest rates of wage growth in Latin America (see Figure 3). The rapid construction of an extensive modern highway network became the Correa administration's signature infrastructure project, touted on roadside billboards that boasted "¡Tenemos carreteras de primera... Tenemos patria!"

It was not just the economic, political and normative context that favored a food sovereignty project. Endowed with an extraordinary variety of physical environments, many with rich soils and abundant water, Ecuador's relatively

[7] Con menos dramatismo, el auge y la caída se repite para las demás *commodities*. Durante quince años, Sudamérica desmintió la maldición de Raúl Prebisch: los términos de intercambio (es decir, la diferencia de precio entre exportaciones e importaciones) no se deterioraban sino que mejoraban. La periferia explotaba al centro, que crecía a tasas míseras. Pero la emergencia del tercer mundo no fue consecuencia de la liberación sino de una nueva dependencia: por detrás de los fantásticos precios estaba el ascenso chino, que fue simultáneamente masivo (un quinto de la población mundial se incorporó al mercado global) y vertiginoso (su tasa de crecimiento anual rondó el 10%). Pero no fue diversificado. Así, el resurgimiento de América Latina se basó en la reprimarización productiva, que equivalió a desindustrialización relativa. (Malamud 2017)

[8] Public investment and Chinese finance are clearly linked. As Correa indicated in November 2016, when Chinese Premier Xi Jinping visited Ecuador, "El financiamiento chino nos ha permitido ser el país de América Latina con mayor inversión pública" (Hidalgo Flor 2017).

modest size of slightly less than 300,000 km2 and its superb new highway network also made the country a favorable site for the realization of food sovereignty (Carrión and Herrera 2012; Lacroix and Hidalgo 2013). If food sovereignty is possible anywhere, it ought to be possible here. Ecuador is thus an ideal case for examining the construction and implementation of food sovereignty legal norms and policies, as well as the obstacles that stand in their way (Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe 2010).

The 2014 collapse in commodity prices and government revenues from oil, minerals and export agriculture, however, had consequences that affect the viability of the food sovereignty project. Increasingly, state development plans emphasize the "transformacion de la matriz productiva," which they say involves bolstering the manufacturing, export agriculture and service sectors. But the government and the businesses allied with it have nonetheless intensified the search for new sources of foreign exchange derived from extractive activities, attempting to compensate for low prices with increases in volume. Following the same logic, the government increasingly backs investment in high-value-added export-oriented agriculture[9], including so-called "flex crops," such as African oil palm, soy and sugarcane (Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2016; Hidalgo Pallares and Hurtado Pérez 2016). Both tendencies meant that the pressure on the lands of peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendent communities has continued unabated and in some cases even worsened.

The institutionalization of food sovereignty and its limits

Scholarship on food sovereignty in Ecuador has expanded exponentially in the last few years (Carrión and Herrera 2012; Clark 2015; Giunta 2014; Henderson 2017; McKay, Nehring, and Walsh-Dilley 2014; Muñoz 2010; Peña 2015). It is not my intention here to explore the institutionalization process in detail, but rather to shift the focus of the discussion from the usual concern with legal norms and development projects to the persistent asymmetries in Ecuador's rural sector that in the past three years are exacerbated by the oil price decline and the extractivist basis of Ecuadorian populism. At the risk of greatly oversimplifying, the institutionalization process has proceeded as follows:

1. In 2008, the constituent assembly includes food sovereignty in the new constitution as "a strategic goal and a state obligation" (Ecuador 2008, Articles 13, 281).

2. In 2009 the National Assembly approved the LORSA (Ley Orgánica del Regimen de Soberanía Alimentaria). After a presidential veto of several provisions, the law was passed in amended form in 2010. LORSA included important provisions on access to water, land and capital, biodiversity and native seeds, research and "diálogo de saberes," agroecology, associative microenterprises, and marketing, among others (Ecuador Gobierno 2010).

[9] Among MAGAP's programs aimed at peasants are: the Programa de Negocios Inclusivos Rurales (PRONERI), which encourages small enterprise development; the Program Socio Siembra, which provides direct subsidies for the purchase of agrochemicals; the Urea Donation Program (*Dotación de Urea*), which provides imported urea to small producers at concessionary prices; the Programa de Competitividad Agropecuaria y Desarrollo Rural Sostenible (CADERS), which seeks to raise productivity through better water use, to encourage producers' associations and link them to processing enterprises and to identify sources of credit and insurance; and various other credit, insurance and technology transfer programs (MAGAP Ecuador 2016, 1:366–69).

3. Article 32 of LORSA created the Conferencia Plurinacional e Intercultural de Soberanía Alimentaria (COPISA), an organization under the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGAP) mandated with making recommendations to the national government, forging agreements with local governments and drafting nine laws that were in effect food sovereignty enabling legislation. These law were on: (1) land and productive resources; (2) artisanal fishing, aquaculture and mangrove fisheries; (3) seeds and agrobiodiversity; (4) ancestral territories and communal property; (5) food safety; (6) agro-industrial development and agricultural workers; (7) credits, subsidies and insurance; (8) nutritional and consumer health; and (9) marketing[10]. Between 2010 and 2012, COPISA drafted all nine laws, with significant input from citizens in all parts of the country. Only one has been approved, however, the law on land and productive resources, and it severely penalizes land occupations and is widely viewed as protecting large landed property. The water law, not drafted by COPISA but viewed as addressing issues within its purview, limits collective or community ownership of irrigation systems, provisions that rural activists and indigenous groups find objectionable (Herrera Revelo 2017). The draft law on seeds and biodiversity, currently under discussion in the National Assembly, declares that seeds and plant germplasm are "patrimony of the nation," a claim that indigenous activists vigorously oppose since they believe either that seeds are the patrimony of humanity as a whole and/or that the rural communities that developed native seeds over millennia could be deprived of the benefit sharing to which they are entitled under international law (specifically the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity and its 2011 Nagoya Protocol).

4. LORSA (Article 31) also created the Sistema de Soberanía Alimentaria y Nutricional (SISAN) to elaborate proposals generated by both civil society groups and different levels of government that would then be passed on to appropriate government ministries. Nevertheless, the actual conformation of the SISAN only occurred in late 2015[11].

5. Initially the Ministry of Agriculture set up an extension training program directed at small-scale producers and called the Escuelas de la Revolución Agraria (ERAs), though these were almost moribund after three or four years and were widely viewed as a partisan political institution that encouraged peasant dependence on state largess (Daza 2015, 12; Carrión and Herrera 2012, 79; Giunta 2014, 1219).

The asymmetries of power and influence between the food sovereignty project and Ecuador's traditional and non-traditional forms of conventional agriculture are immediately evident in the building in Quito that houses both the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGAP) and the COPISA, the main institution charged with implementing food sovereignty. The towering MAGAP building is one of the taller

[10] Ley Orgánica de tierras y territorios, Ley Orgánica de pesca, acuacultura y manglares, Ley Orgánica de comunas, Ley Orgánica de agrobiodiversidad, semillas y fomento a la agroecología, Ley Orgánica de sanidad animal y vegetal, Ley Orgánica de agroindustria y empleo agrícola, Ley Orgánica de crédito y subsidios, Ley Orgánica de comercio y abastecimiento, Ley Orgánica de consumo y salud alimentaria

[11] Interview with Alberto Zambrano, COPISA, 26 July 2016.

edifices in earthquake-prone Quito and is home to a large ministry. If it is indeed the case that a few of the MAGAP's programs are oriented toward small producers, agroecological production and strengthening local markets, all key aspects of food sovereignty, it is also true that the overwhelming majority of its efforts and budget support high input, large-scale industrial export-oriented agriculture. MAGAP's overall budget in 2015 was approximately $356 million (MAGAP Ecuador 2016, 1:216). And this does not take into account the huge direct and indirect subsidies for the agroindustrial sector, such as favorable tariffs on imported inputs and machinery, infrastructure construction and credit flows, among many others.

COPISA's offices are squeezed into a small mezzanine between the first and second floors of the MAGAP building. The institution has a payroll of 28 employees, including a driver and the concierge responsible for cleaning and maintaining the offices. Its structure appears superficially like a classically corporatist organization, since it is led by nine conferencistas or representatives of different civil society sectors: indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorians, and Montubios (peasants of the Pacific coastal region, considered an ethnic group, though not a "nationality"); consumers; small and medium-size producers; small and medium-size agriculturalists; small and medium-size livestock producers; artisanal fishers and gatherers (recolectores); aquaculture sector; peasants and irrigators; and universities, technical schools and research centers. The representatives are chosen through concursos or competitions in which different accomplishments or attributes are assigned points, much as occurs with academic job searches in most countries in Latin America. It thus differs from typical corporatist arrangements where appointments to public sector positions tend to be based on clientelism. The other employees of COPISA include seven technical personnel and additional support staff. COPISA is both a dependency of the Ministry of Agriculture and also significantly autonomous inasmuch as it manages its own budget[12]. That budget, in 2015, was precisely $1,096,587, and in 2016 it was slightly under $1 million (COPISA 2016, 16)[13].

I recognize that the question that figures as the title of this paper — "How much food sovereignty can you get for one million dollars?" — could be considered a provocation. It is not exactly the case that the Ecuadorian government spends only $1 million annually to realize its constitutional obligation to bring food sovereignty to the country and that the MAGAP spends 350 times as much on conventional agriculture. Some of the programs of the MAGAP also aim at objectives that are part of any food sovereignty program. But the same Agriculture Ministry that initiated these kinds of programs invests the lion's share of its budget in coastal provinces where agoindustrial production is dominant (Clark 2015). Thus, for example, Ecuador's production of African palm vaulted from 1.8 million metric tons in 2007 to 4.1 million tons in 2015, sugarcane jumped in the same period from 6.5 to 10.1 million tons and yellow maize (used for feed concentrates and called maíz duro in Ecuador) from 900,000 to 1.8 million tons (Hidalgo Flor 2017). COPISA has been adept at leveraging its scant funds by

[12] Interview with Zambrano.

[13] The 2016 estimate is from interviews with Ruth Peñafiel, COPISA, 26 July 2016, and Pedro Aldaz, COPISA, 31 August 2016.

partnering with provincial and local governments, other national government agencies, universities and peasant organizations, but there were only 20 such agreements in 2015. Typically they involve plans to hold local consultative forums to identify and develop food sovereignty measures.

Conclusion

Ecuador already produces a very substantial portion of the food its populations consumes, with estimates ranging from 70 to 97 percent (Hidalgo Flor 2017; Daza 2017). Yet the situation of its rural population is still precarious in many respects. The failure to approve food sovereignty enabling legislation and to channel resources to the food sovereignty project reflects not only disregard for a constitutional "state obligation" but also an impasse and a lack of political coherence in the Ecuadorian state. The constitution "obliges" the state to back food sovereignty measures, such as incentives for small-scale, agroecological producers to provision local markets. Yet most state resources for agriculture are allocated to agribusiness sectors. Scholars sometimes frame contradictions such as these as "policy incoherence." They usually apply this term to cases of development assistance in which donor countries might, for example, back extension programs for small producers while simultaneously imposing a trade regime that gluts markets, lowers prices and undermines livelihoods for those same producers. Increasingly, scholars acknowledge that the sources of "policy incoherence" are often found in developing-country states as well as in donor countries (Ashoff 2013). This framework suggests that factors influencing where on the coherence-incoherence continuum particular countries may end up include: (1) the complexity of development processes; (2) lack of information; (3) the organization of the policy-making system; and (4) divergent political interests.

I would propose instead that the seeming contradictions of food and agriculture policy in today's Ecuador — and the fragile food sovereignty project there — might be better understood as reflections of broader contradictions of the "Citizens' Revolution," initiated by Rafael Correa in 2007 and that will now be carried forward by his handpicked successor Lenín Moreno, elected president on April 2, 2017. Moreno's election goes against the tide in the region, where the left populisms suffered decisive reverses in Argentina, Brazil, Honduras, and Paraguay and less definitive ones in Bolivia and Venezuela. In Ecuador, apparently, to paraphrase and invert Andrés Malamud's comment quote above, "sí hay petroprogresismo que aguanta."

But at what cost? Correa's two terms involved deeply troubling tendencies that threaten, sooner or later, to undermine Ecuador's significant social advances, if only because they facilitate the territorial advance of and impede protest against a voracious and ultimately doomed extractivism — doomed both because it depends on nonrenewable resources and because it raises greenhouse gas emissions that sooner or later will inevitably run up against environmental and legal limits. These troubling tendencies include: (1) frequent conflicts with, attacks on and occasional seizures of mass communications media and the creation of a

system of state-run media that narrowly projects administration views and authoritarian claims and rarely provides space for critical voices (Cerbino 2016; de la Torre 2013, 2017); (2) a marked centralization of power in the executive branch (Herrera Revelo 2017) and a relative absence of checks on presidential power and of accountability mechanisms for the executive branch, even though these have become pervasive throughout the rest of the sprawling bureaucracy; (3) a complicated and largely successful effort to disarticulate and at times absorb the progressive social movements and political parties that contributed to the rise to power and institutionalization of the Revolución Ciudadana (Clark 2017); (3) a concerted criminalization of social protest that has included arbitrary arrests, dubious judicial proceedings and expulsions of political asylum seekers and foreign scholar-activists; (4) efforts to circumscribe, co-opt or close — with the pretext of fomenting a uniform and first-rate system of education — the bilingual schools that for many rural communities constituted an important locus of their identity and cultural reproduction (Martínez Novo 2016); (5) a consolidation of support from significant sections of the non-financial bourgeoisie for the Revolución Ciudadana, largely because private enterprise is one of the main beneficiaries of technocratic Keynesianism; and (6) attempts to close important environmental and other non-governmental organizations, most recently Acción Ecológica¸ that have stood in the way of the expansion of petroleum and other extractivist enterprises into indigenous territories. The recent and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to shutter Acción Ecológica is especially ironic, since it was precisely this organization that provided the main arguments for Correa when he attempted to persuade the countries of the Global North to pay Ecuador for leaving the oil in the ground, underneath the Yasuní.

There's a bigger problem here that has to do with the responsibility of progressive intellectuals. One of the most striking impressions I carried away from being in Ecuador in 2016 was of constant encounters with recently arrived Venezuelans — waiters, barbers, refrigerator repairmen, drivers. They were mostly vociferous in their opposition to the collapsing Bolivarian experiment in their country and they all, without exception, spoke of fleeing food shortages and hunger. Venezuela, like Ecuador, has food sovereignty in its constitution (Schiavoni 2015).

Proponents of today's new Left populisms in Latin America have devoted remarkably little attention to understanding what went wrong with what used to be called actually existing socialism, to other heterodox Left experiments or even to the myriad problems of contemporary Cuba, which in the vision of so much of the Latin American Left remains in a category of its own — admired, heroic, not subject (at least in public) to critical scrutiny. In other words, the Left — and this includes many populists of Latin America's receding "pink tide" — often failed to learn from its own history. To cite one small example, why has the administration of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro insisted on maintaining a system of multiple currency exchange rates that created a large class of instant millionaires enriched through false invoicing schemes and speculation in dollar-denominated bonds (Astarita 2017), while at the same time impoverishing and enraging the masses? The Venezuelans could have learned something from the experience of

the Sandinistas in Nicaragua or even the social democrats in Costa Rica or in their own country (e.g., during the Lusinchi administration), who all tried the same thing with catastrophic results.

We could say that food sovereignty and extractivism are in a delicate dance or even a death embrace. Those food sovereignty advocates who favor state involvement in the project need to ask why state resources have been so scant and whether a food sovereignty project is compatible and can co-exist, perhaps indefinitely, with industrial, large-scale and frequently export-oriented agriculture and with substantial imports of staples (e.g., wheat) and even luxury foods consumed by the middle and upper classes. They need to scrutinize the difference between pro-forma consultations and genuine democratic participation in the construction and implementation of local- or regional-level food sovereignty programs. Those who eschew or reject state involvement and seek to build food sovereignty only from the bottom up, in localities and regions, as is the case with the remnants of Ecuador's once massive indigenous movement, require political space, respect for cultural difference and genuine territorial autonomy, all of which seem to be incompatible with the intensifying extractivism of the Citizens' Revolution.

Today proponents of the new Left populisms frequently manifest denial or spout rationalizations about the intensifying authoritarianism and the disastrous economic situation in Venezuela (Lander 2017; Svampa 2017), even as they uncritically hail the until now much more successful Bolivarian project in Ecuador (Grandin 2017; Weisbrot 2017). This lack of critical reflection is an abdication of intellectual and political responsibility. It is of little help to progressive political projects that are grappling with massive internal and external contradictions and that politically and in other ways are not infinitely sustainable. It also sets the stage for future disappointments and setbacks, something that in this terrible moment in history we can ill afford.

Table 1

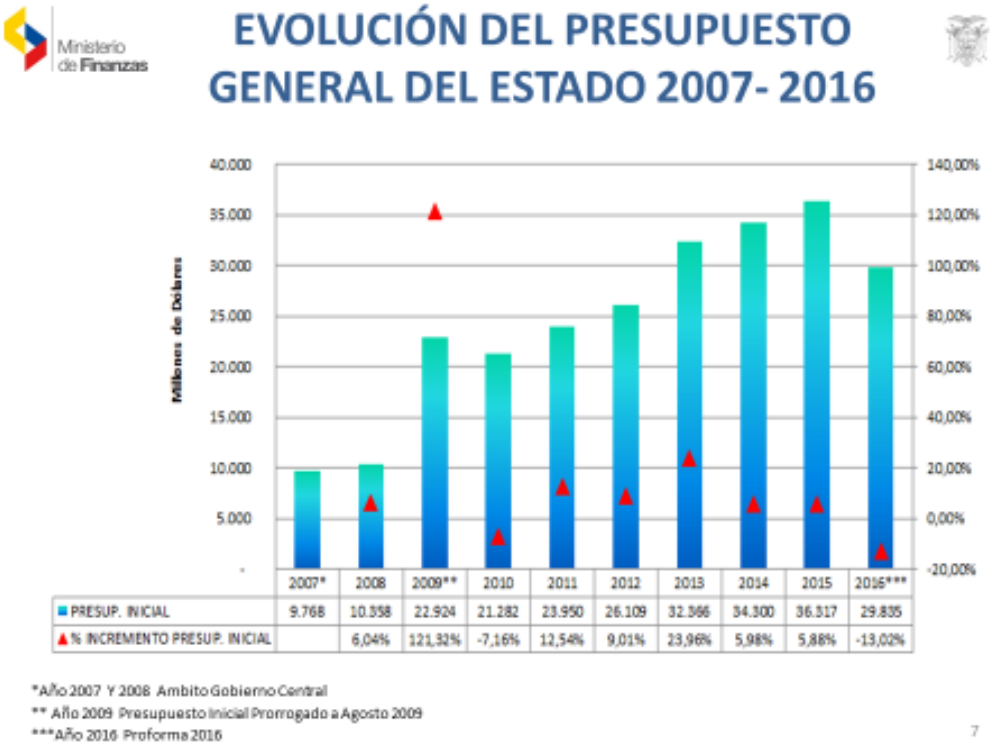
Ecuador: Pobreza e indigencia, por área geográfica
Población en situación de indigencia y pobreza según área geográfica (cifras nacionales)
(Porcentaje)

	Indigencia Nacional			Pobreza Nacional		
País / Años		Urbana	Rural		Urbana	Rural
2006	...	...	...	...	...	...
2007	16.5	7.9	33.3	36.7	24.3	61.3
2008	15.7	7.6	31.7	35.1	22.6	59.7
2009	15.4	8.2	29.3	36.0	25.0	57.5
2010	13.1	7.0	25.1	32.8	22.5	53.0
2011	11.6	5.0	24.6	28.6	17.4	50.9
2012	11.2	5.0	23.3	27.3	16.1	49.1
2013	8.6	4.4	17.4	25.6	17.6	42.0
2014	7.7	4.5	14.3	22.5	16.4	35.3

Información revisada al 07/ABR/2015

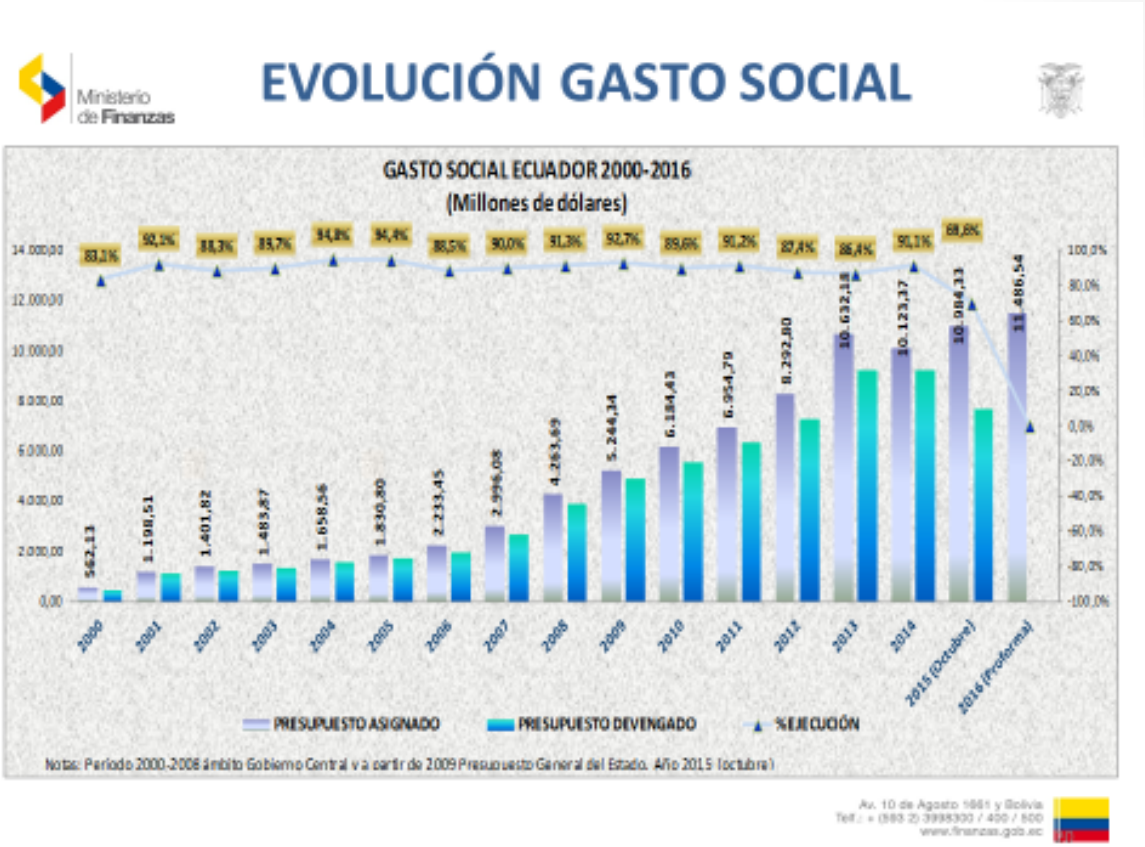
Fuente: CEPAL-CEPALSTAT Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos del Ecuador
Pobreza por ingresos - http://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/pobreza/

Figure 1



Source: Ministerio de Finanzas, Ecuador, https://es.slideshare.net/elazambranodiaz/generalidades-del-presupuesto-general-del-estado

Figure 2



Source: Ministerio de Finanzas, Ecuador, https://es.slideshare.net/elazambranodiaz/generalidades-del-presupuesto-general-del-estado

Figure 3

Latin America (14 countries): annual rates of change in earnings, in earnings per employed worker and in people employed, poor households, 2010-2014[a]

(Percentages)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of data from household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

[a] Data are for 2010-2014 except in the cases of Brazil (2009-2014), Chile (2009-2013), El Salvador (2009-2014), Mexico (2008-2014) and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009-2013). The percentage of the population analysed is the same in the first and last year of the period considered and corresponds to the poverty rate for 2010 in each country.

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