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# Agriculture and Food

The E-Newsletter of the ISA Research Committee on Agriculture and Food (RC40)

Volume 14 Number 1

September 2020



Photo: Chiswick Food Market, London, UK.

London, UK. 14th June, 2020. Stallholders set up shop in Chiswick at the return of the Sunday food market.

Liam Asmani/Alamy Live News

Content:

President’s Welcome ..... 3

Report on the International Journal of the Sociology of Agriculture and for 2020 ... 5

Status membership, finances and communications ..... 6

    Membership ..... 6

    Finances ..... 6

    Communications ..... 7

Two regional network grants awarded ..... 8

RC40 is hosting first Online Workshop for early-career agri-food researchers ..... 10

Virtual Helsinki ... or the story of why we postponed the ISA Forum ..... 11

ISA Forum going online ..... 13

Input from members ..... 14

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## President's Welcome

Dear RC40,

As the COVID 19 pandemic continues and climate change advances, there is an acute need for analysis and improvement of agrifood systems. Oxfam and the World Food Programme report mounting COVID-related famines in several nations, and the UN estimates an increase of 135 million people facing food insecurity as an outgrowth of the pandemic. Direct effects of climate change on agriculture, and indirect effects represented by heightened risks from fire and pests, are an urgent concern. As is well understood by social scientists, these crises are products of multi-scaled ecological and social dynamics. The reference to scale here includes geographic scales and levels of social organization, as well as historical processes that shape the present situation. The importance of our work grows as we consider the social stakes and the analytical complexity. It is not at all clear how the pandemic will play out, but the events of the past 6 months point to reactive/adaptive capacity at the levels of households, nations, and economic sectors. We observe tremendous fluidity and openness, and outcomes are very much indeterminate. Openness also characterizes contemporary political and cultural dynamics. In my home country, USA, fundamental institutions are very much in flux. There are great risks attached to the present moment, but also great opportunities. We live in exciting times! Through teaching, research, and engaged scholarship, we each have something to contribute. The hope is that RC40 can support your individual efforts, and, through collective engagement, the hope is that we can realize synergies and cumulative effects.

The ISA Forum scheduled for February, 2021 in Porto Alegre has now been shifted to an online event. ALLISON Loconto shares her story about ISA's initial decision to postpone the Forum in this letter. Information for participants is also posted in the letter. For more details about the Forum go to its [webpage](#). While COVID limits our interaction, this change to the Forum presents opportunities for wider participation in RC40 sessions and the Forum, as a whole. Thanks to all organizers and presenters of RC40 sessions and to Hilde Bjørkhaug, RC40 Treasurer/Secretary, for coordinating participation.

In this RC40 summer 2020 newsletter, we are fortunate to be able to showcase a wide array of initiatives advanced by the RC40 Executive Committee and by individual members. The number of ongoing projects and their promise highlight the vibrancy of RC40. While all these efforts merit attention, I want to single out two new initiatives that hold special potential for RC40 to reach out beyond our current membership to support agrifood scholarship and practical engagement. The first is Midori Hiraga and her collaborators' effort to initiate a series of online academic workshops to support early career agrifood scholars. The second is Katharine Legun and Angol Naswem's efforts to animate regional agrifood projects by awarding RC40 mini grants. We approach these efforts as pilot projects, and we will assess and adapt based on initial experience. I will not review the full contents of the newsletter here, as the individuals leading these efforts provide terrific overviews. Further, I encourage you to get involved in some of these activities by contacting the relevant people, and I encourage you to initiate your own activities.

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Hilde Bjørkhaug ([hilde.bjorkhaug@ntnu.no](mailto:hilde.bjorkhaug@ntnu.no)), who produced our newsletter in her role as RC40 Secretary/Treasurer, and I ([saw44@cornell.edu](mailto:saw44@cornell.edu)) are eager to support your engagement with RC40 members, activities, and resources. Please reach out to us during these exciting times. We will happily receive input to our next newsletter now.

Best regards,

Steven and Hilde

Steven Wolf  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY USA

Hilde Bjørkhaug  
Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Trondheim, Norway

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## Report on the International Journal of the Sociology of Agriculture and for 2020

During the 2019 calendar year, the International Journal of the Sociology of Agriculture and Food produced two issues featuring 10 original manuscripts. The editorial team was pleased with the quality of these manuscripts and hopes that many of you found these contributions to be useful to your own work. The quality of the work being published undoubtedly was a factor in Elsevier's acceptance of the journal into its SCOPUS data base. This is another step in our never-ending quest to increase the journal's reach and impact.

While we are pleased with these developments, we remain short of our goal of publishing four issues per year. One difficulty we face is the low number of submissions. In 2019, we received 19 original submissions. This means we accepted slightly over half of the submissions for publication, which is a very high acceptance rate. Therefore, we would like to encourage RC 40 members to seriously consider submitting their work to the journal.

A second issue we face is receiving timely reviews of submitted manuscripts. Currently, we send each submission out to two, rather than three, potential reviewers. This is because of the challenge of finding individuals to review manuscripts. It is not uncommon to have to contact five or six individuals to receive two reviews, and in some cases, it takes six months or more to receive a completed review from an individual who has agreed to review a paper. I would note that most of the individuals to whom we send review requests are RC 40 members and affiliates who have registered on our Open Journals System web site ([ijsaf.org](http://ijsaf.org)). If we are to move the journal forward, it is not only imperative for us to receive more submissions, but also for RC 40 members to dedicate themselves to reviewing the each other's work.

Meanwhile, we have completed one issue in 2020, are currently reviewing eight submissions, and have just begun the process of reviewing submissions for a special issue on sustainable food systems and sustainable diets that is being guest edited by Maria Grazia Quieti, Maria Fonte and Colin Sage.

On behalf of the associate editors and the editorial board, I would like to extend our best wishes to you all and hope that you are all safe in these challenging times. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [ijraf@msu.edu](mailto:ijraf@msu.edu).

Respectfully submitted,  
Raymond A Jussaume Jr.  
Editor  
International Journal of the Sociology of Agriculture and Food



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## Status membership, finances and communications



### Membership

The number of members in the RC-40 has, for many years, been gradually increasing. We are currently 108 paying members in RC40. The number of memberships is important due to allocation of activity funds, space and time at conferences, but not least engagement around RC40 scholarship and research.

Membership to the International Sociological Association (ISA) and RC40 covers a four-year period.

Membership fees for RC40 is USD 40 for Category A countries, USD 20 for category B countries and USD 10 for Category C countries. ISA membership registration form and additional information is available on <https://isa.enoah.com/Sign-In>. Remember to do the additional RC40 sign up.

### New and expired memberships are very welcome!

### Finances

RC-40 account. Balance per August 2020 (NOK 105 898,28). Of these NOK 25 400 is royalty deposit earmarked IJSAF.

By application RC40 have been awarded an activity grant of EUR 1120 from ISA. Half of this remains at ISA upon documentation of activities.

The RC40 EC allocates money to the RC40 website, IJSAF, communications, travel grants, and networks. In 2020 2xUS\$1000 is allocated regional network initiatives. These will reduce the above balance.

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## Communications

The RC40 website ([www.isa-agrifood.com](http://www.isa-agrifood.com)) is one of the sites where RC40 communications takes place. On this site, all members can post news, events or other information as they like. In 2020 the website has been strengthened with blog-site for sharing thoughts by members.

We have also launched an RC40 twitter account [https://twitter.com/ISA\\_RC40](https://twitter.com/ISA_RC40). Feel free to tag @isa-rc40 to notify the membership about relevant events, activities and publications.



Reported by

Hilde Bjørkhaug

RC40 Secretary/treasurer

## Two regional network grants awarded

Upon the deadline of 31 March 7 grant applications were received. Two initiatives were selected by the EC for US\$ 1000 each. We are looking forward to seeing how these initiatives elaborates. Katherine Legun and Angol Naswem lead this new initiative on behalf of the RC40 Executive Committee (EC).

### 1) Developing Interdisciplinary and Sustainable Food Network in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia



Coordinator of the network:

Muhammad Ulil Ahsan, Research Fellow Graduate School Hasanuddin University, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Aim is to make visible the need for food research in the South Sulawesi region.

As the “gate” of eastern Indonesia and located in a distinct geographical area of the Wallacea region, South Sulawesi province is connected to the global food market and recognised as a place of high-quality global food commodities such as cacao, coffee, palm oil, seafood, and spices. It is a rice-surplus region and has a significant role to ensure the availability of staple food (rice) for other provinces. However, South Sulawesi has been facing socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and health challenges due to massive industrial development, high use of unsustainable inputs for food production, and a dramatic shift of traditional foodways towards a highly-processed food and unhealthy diet. To tackle the challenges, it requires awareness and action of diverse actors within the South Sulawesi food system. The Center of Excellence for Interdisciplinary and Sustainability Science (CEISS) of Hasanuddin University proposes an initiative to promote collaborative action for food system transformation in South Sulawesi. The initiative will connect different stakeholders through a one-day workshop comprising activities of knowledge and experience sharing to identify, mapping, and exploring the enabling condition, and develop creative strategies to support the food system transformation in the region.



Enrekang, South Sulawesi



## 2) Public Policy Critical Analysis group in Tlaxcala, Mexico

Coordinator of the network:



Marisol Reyna Contreras (Wageningen PhD candidate) together with local organisations: the Vicente Guerrero Integral Rural Development Project (GVG) and the Tijtoca Nemiliztli A.C. 'Sembramos Vida' agro-ecology initiatives in Tlaxcala, Mexico. Aim is to develop a proposal for local and regional government on food policy.

Marisol is a Mexican PhD candidate at the Rural Sociology and Sociology of Development and Change groups in Wageningen University and Research. She is currently conducting her field-work in Mexico, in order to complete her research, "Thinking through maize: exploring the effects of the 'social-interface' and the 'partial connections' created through the implementation of food-security and agro-ecology courses of action on local food imaginings and practices in rural Tlaxcala, Mexico". Her research focuses on the exploration and analysis of the resulting social processes emerging from the implementation of different food courses of action (CoA) in the Mexican state of Tlaxcala. Departing from the idea that public policies tend to address food production, circulation and consumption independently of places, actors, knowledges, and objects specificities, I stress the need to account for the situated actions and processes of civic organization occurring on territories in order to see food as a reflexive field in which socio-political actors attempt to materialize their values and aspirations (Arce, Sherwood and Paredes, 2017: 212).

Marisol will be using the funds from the RC-40 to support a *Public Policy Critical Analysis* group in Tlaxcala, which follows from already developed (but currently inactive) GVG and *Tijtoca Nemiliztli* (and other groups) initiatives, such as the *Grupo Local de Incidencia Política Tlaxcallan* (GLIP) and the *Red por la Agroecología como Forma de Vida* (AFOVI) Network. She has received positive support from the organizations she works with, and has talked about it with the *sub-secretario de Planeación y Normatividad*, who is currently developing the creation of the *Dirección Nacional de Agroecología* at the Environmental Secretary; and his group is also very interested in promoting and participating in this kind of local initiative to discuss the new public policies. The money will be used to host a series of meetings in Tlaxcala.



Image: Gerd Altmann: <https://pixabay.com/no/users/geralt-9301/>

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## RC40 is hosting first Online Workshop for early-career agri-food researchers

September 29, 2020

RC40 is holding a new online workshop for agri-food researchers, targeting early-career researchers in more marginal positions in international academia, to support them publishing their paper in the international Agri-food academic journals. Participants receive advice and comments on draft papers from, or ask questions about the difficulties they are facing directly to, some of the editors of highly reputable international journals in the agri-food studies, in order to successfully submit and get a paper published in a high-impact journal. This is a new trial project hoping to broaden the agri-food research in the international academic journals and RC40.

### Aim:

- to support early-career agri-food researchers and provide feedback on their works-in-progress (i.e., constructive feedback on draft papers) to move the paper forward for successful publication in international journals (NOT the traditional research presentation).
- written papers will be circulated to the commentators in advance of the workshop. In the workshop, participants will NOT present the contents of paper or research, but rather, the conversation will be around specific issues/problems/difficulties in finalizing the paper for submission.

### Participants (those who present paper drafts):

- any early-career agri-food researchers who can present their draft paper, and participate in the reviewing process and the online workshop (PhD candidates or researchers within five years since achieving PhD)
- priority to those who have not yet managed to publish a paper on international journal (in English language)
- priority to non-native English language students in non-Western universities/research institutes
- participants are pre-registered and disclose their identity
- about 6 to 8 people per workshop

### Commentator/advisors in the first event:

- Michael Carolan (editor Journal of Rural Studies) and Ray Jussaume (editor International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food)

### Project team:

Midori HIRAGA  
Michael CAROLAN  
Angga DWIARTAMA



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## Virtual Helsinki ... or the story of why we postponed the ISA Forum

The ISA Executive Committee was supposed to meet in person in Helsinki, Finland from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. The core agenda items were the approval of the Theme for the XX ISA World Congress that will be held in Melbourne, Australia from 24-30 July 2022 and the ISA Forum that was to be held in July 2020. This period of mid-March was fraught with closings of universities, national borders and airports due to the quickly spreading COVID-19 pandemic. During the month preceding this meeting it seemed that each day brought news of a new member of the committee being unable to travel to Helsinki. The decision was thus taken around the first week of March to hold the event online. For me, this meant joining from the Castelli Romani region of Rome, Italy – as I had returned to my family home for the weekend on 6 March and was subsequently blocked from leaving again until the 1<sup>st</sup> of June!

This was at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and we had yet to master the various videoconferencing applications available in our universities at the time. With committee members sitting in their homes/offices from Tokyo, Japan to Vancouver, Canada – and numerous places in between – the commitment to the original Helsinki schedule meant that our coffee breaks covered all ranges of pauses from breakfast to midnight snacks. However, spirits were high and the commitment of Committee members to give the appropriate attention to the topics of concern translated into an intense 3 days, which was just a taste of what was in store for us all for the entire spring/summer of 2020.

The program committee for the ISA World Congress elaborated more specific proposals on how to orient the scientific program around the theme of the next congress, which is: *Resurgent Authoritarianism: The Sociology of New Entanglements of Religions, Politics, and Economies*. What we couldn't evaluate at the time, but what we have experienced since March, is that this particular crisis has exposed even further the authoritarian tendencies of certain national leaders (e.g., Brazil, United States, Tanzania, Philippines) and how deeply politics, religion, economies, food systems, science and race are intertwined in societal responses to the crisis. Check out the ISA blog page that is dedicated to the crisis: [Global Sociology and the Coronavirus](#).

Beyond a number of normative questions related the ISA publications, the proposals for new research committees and confirmations of the scientific program for the ISA Forum, we had to address the elephant in the room: the likely scenario that the coronavirus was not leaving anytime soon and travel to Porto Alegre, Brazil would not be possible in July. Intense discussions were held all along the entire 3 days as the decision about the Forum influenced also a number of other decisions related to the ISA activities. We began with the option of continuing to hold the meeting as originally planned, hoping that the virus would not spread to Brazil. But this was untenable, as the sociologists of health and the political economists among us argued that given the globalized world within which we live, Brazil would most likely be hit by the virus – and hit hard. We then thought about the idea of holding the meetings completely online, as some other scientific societies had opted to do. The problem with this option was quickly revealed to be socio-technical. ISA is a global association and it would be quite difficult to manage the intense global program across the time zones and in parallel. Moreover, our experience in 'virtual Helsinki' demonstrated that the platforms that we were currently using weren't yet up to par. One can easily be a techno-optimist, but it seemed a bit too optimistic to think that we would advance so far between March and July – apparently none of us had predicted the worldwide rise to domination of Zoom!

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Postponement or total cancellation were then the only two possible options for the Forum, which has grown over the past 8 years to be a vital part of the ISA experience as it is dedicated to the RCs and provides much more space to detailed scientific discussion within them. For RC 40, this has posed a logistical difficulty as we have historically held our mid-term business meeting at the IRSA Congress, which was supposed to take place in Cairns, Australia a week before the ISA Forum in Brazil. While cancellation was definitely considered (and may still be on the table if the global situation doesn't improve), postponement was the preferred option. The idea of postponement, however, brought with it additional challenges, as a year-long postponement interfered with other conference schedules and possibly put attendance at the ISA World Congress in 2022 at risk.

After much discussion and consultation with the Host University in Porto Alegre, we decided to hold the Forum the week after Carnival in February 23-27, 2021. With this decision came a number of concessions that we felt we must make in order to remain fair and inclusive:

- 1) All of the activities that we had begun to prepare for July were to be maintained. For example, RC40 has offered to help organize a local food marketplace, which we will continue to support for the February dates.
- 2) All of the papers that were selected for presentations in July, would be maintained for the February event. However, a new schedule was opened for the Research Committees in order to deal with changes in the availability of presenters. These decisions are to be taken by the RCs and the session organizers, so some sessions might not reopen their calls, but a general calendar for this process is as follows:  
October 16-25, 2020: RC 40 will publish a call for new abstracts  
October 26 – November 12, 2020: Submission of new abstracts via online platform  
December 15, 2020: Presenters final registration deadline
- 3) The Forum in February will be a hybrid format. ISA will help session organizers to find ways to hold our sessions as webinars so that presenters and ISA members who cannot make it to Porto Alegre in February will still be able to participate. More information about these options will be forthcoming in the fall.

In the end, we should be able to convene the global ISA community – and within it the RC40 family – in order to discuss the *Challenges of the 21st Century: Democracy, Environment, Inequalities, Intersectionality*. Hilde Bjørkhaug and I are slated to speak in the Semi-plenary session on Environmental Challenges, that is organized by the Brazilian Sociological Society on Friday, 26 February 2021: 12:30-14:00 (Brazilian time). RC40 also nominated a speaker to the plenary session on Connected Challenges: Democracy, Ecology, Inequalities, Intersectionality. The plenary speaker for RC40 will be Myriam Paredes, from FLASCO Ecuador will talk about *Alternative Food Networks: The Vitality of Everyday Food in Latin America*.

I am keeping my fingers crossed that Virtual Helsinki doesn't translate into Virtual Porto Alegre – but either way, I hope to see you there in February 2021! \*

Dr. Allison Marie Loconto,  
Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement (INRAE). ISA Executive Committee member and RC40 Executive Committee member (ex-President of RC40)

\* Since Sept 25 we learned that ISA forum will be an online event (ed. remark)

## ISA Forum going online

Information shared by ISA



Dear colleagues,

Due to the global pandemic that particularly affects Brazil, the IV ISA Forum of sociology will be held entirely online, between February 23 and 27, 2021, with some possibility to extend it a few more days for RC/WG/TG that wish to do so.

The theme and the structure of the Forum remain largely unchanged. All the abstracts that have been selected by the RC/WG/TG program coordinators remain valid and included in the Forum online platform.

The Forum fees have been reduced by 50% while maintaining the possibility of paying the full amount as a contribution to a solidarity fund to enable sociologists experiencing hardship to participate. The deadline for presenters' registration has been extended to December 15, 2020. However, in order to be able to plan the sessions and to ensure lively exchanges among sociologists from all continents, **we ask you to confirm your participation at the following link before October 15, 2020:**

Login to your user portal and click on "Roles in Meeting" to confirm/decline acceptance for abstracts on which you are the primary author:

**User Portal:** <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2020/gateway.cgi>

***All the abstracts that have not been confirmed by October 15, 2020 will be removed from the Forum program.***

Until October 15, 2020, authors may update their abstract on the Forum online platform, after consulting their session organizer. Session organizer contact information can be found on the Speaker Center page where you confirm/decline participation.

Please consult the presenters' guidelines available on the ISA Forum website:

<https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/conferences/forum/porto-alegre-2021/guidelines-for-presenters-2021>

We look forward to listening to insightful sessions and talks during this first virtual Forum of the ISA, at a time when sociology has much to say on a pandemic that has shaken our societies and our lives.

Geoffrey Pleyers  
ISA Vice-President for Research, President of the IV ISA Forum

Sari Hanafi  
President of the International Sociological Association

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## Input from members

### Fostering Inter-Societal Dialogues in Agriculture and Food

During August 2020, Florence Becot and Elly Engle, members of the US Rural Sociology Society's Sociology of Agriculture and Food Research Interest Group (SAFRIG), along with Matt Comi (RC40) jointly planned a collection of generative dialogues designed to encourage participants to reflect on shared research problems and to facilitate greater inter-societal collaboration. These dialogues were held over the Zoom platform with participation from members of both RC40 and SAFRIG, along with members of the Canadian Association of Food Studies (CAFS). (A special thanks to Andre Magnan, RC40 North American Regional Representative, for sharing the invitation to the dialogues with our agri-food colleagues in CAFS!)

These dialogues revolved around two themes prescient to many of our research agendas during this time: the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on food systems, along with the impacts of systemic racism on food systems/policy. These discussions were question-driven and open-ended and following our discussion of each theme, participants were encouraged to imagine how we might address, solve, or otherwise approach these problems as members of a shared research community. While the groups were small and varied in levels of engagement, we were nonetheless very excited with the results: the dialogue in these small groups was both reflective and generative and it was encouraging to see researchers across communities begin to imagine how we might promote common research trajectories, share anti-racist pedagogical materials, or otherwise collaborate across our organizations in promoting more robust agri-food research. While these discussions only included a small number of our organization's members, it is my hope that they are just a starting place, and that identifying and pursuing common goals between organizations including RC40, CAFS, and SAFRIG has the potential to benefit each organization's national and global reach. We thank SAFRIG for the chance to work together.

If you were unable to attend these discussions but would like access to notes summarizing the content of each dialogue, or if you have interest or ideas regarding the relationship between these organizations, please contact Matt Comi ([mcomi@ku.edu](mailto:mcomi@ku.edu)) along with Steven Wolf ([saw44@cornell.edu](mailto:saw44@cornell.edu)) and Hilde Bjørkhaug ([hilde.bjorkhaug@ntnu.no](mailto:hilde.bjorkhaug@ntnu.no)).

Matt Comi  
Department of Sociology, University of Kansas, US



## Agrarian Labor, Inequalities and Rurality in times of COVID-19

CLACSO Working groups bring together researchers, scholars and graduate students to develop a research agenda. The working group: Agrarian Labor, Inequalities and Rurality arranged a series of debates on how COVID-19 pandemic affects workers, communities and increases vulnerabilities of poor rural populations.

The poster features a dark background with yellow and white text. At the top left, it says 'ciclo de conversatorios virtuales'. In the center, the title 'Trabajo agrario, desigualdades y ruralidad' is written in a large, yellow, handwritten font. To the right is the CLACSO logo, which consists of four interlocking circles in blue, green, yellow, and red, with the text 'CLACSO Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales' below it. Below the title, the text '1º PANEL: Trabajo agrario, desigualdades y ruralidad frente al COVID-19' is written in white. The middle section lists speakers, commentators, and the moderator in white text, with their names and affiliations. At the bottom left, the date and time are listed in yellow: 'MIÉRCOLES 15/07', '10 hs México', and '12 hs Buenos Aires'. In the center bottom, there is an image of a hand in a work glove pointing to the right. At the bottom right, it says 'Actividad organizada por el Grupo de Trabajo "Trabajo agrario, desigualdades y ruralidad"' in white.

ciclo de conversatorios virtuales

CLACSO  
Consejo Latinoamericano  
de Ciencias Sociales

“Trabajo agrario,  
desigualdades  
y ruralidad”

1º PANEL: Trabajo agrario, desigualdades y ruralidad  
frente al COVID-19

*Exponen:*  
Isabel Margarita Nemecio - Red Nacional de Jornaleros y Jornaleras Agrícolas, México  
Eduardo Baumeister - Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Sociales y del Desarrollo, Nicaragua  
Andrés Pedreño Cánovas - Universidad de Murcia, España  
Guillermo Neiman - Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales, CONICET, Argentina  
Josefa Salete Barbosa Cavalcanti - Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil

*Comenta:*  
Mauricio Tubío - Universidad de la República, Uruguay

*Modera:*  
Paola Mascheroni - Universidad de la República, Uruguay

MIÉRCOLES 15/07  
10 hs México  
12 hs Buenos Aires

Actividad  
organizada  
por el  
Grupo de Trabajo  
“Trabajo agrario, desigualdades y ruralidad”

Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, CLACSO is a non-governmental international organization with UNESCO associate status, established in 1967. CLACSO currently brings together 654 research centres and graduate schools in the field of the social sciences and humanities in 51 Latin American countries and other continents. CLACSO has been a member of the International Science Council since 1999.

Josefa Salete Cavalcanti,

Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil

## Virtual discussions on the effects of the pandemic for the food systems

The Brazilian and the Latin American Associations of Rural Sociology have organized virtual discussions on the covid19 pandemic. This has enabled comparisons of the situation of different regions and countries, and, in addition, it has made both associations more visible (the debates are spread out on the internet).

Paulo Niederle,  
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, UFRGS, Porto Alegre, Brazil

ALASRU  
ASOCIACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA DE SOCIOLOGÍA RURAL

ALAS  
ASOCIACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA DE SOCIOLOGÍA

LA ASOCIACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA DE SOCIOLOGÍA RURAL-ALASRU Y LA ASOCIACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA DE SOCIOLOGÍA-ALAS INVITAN AL PANEL VIRTUAL (WEBINAR) TITULADO

**La sociedad rural y las cuestiones alimentarias de América Latina frente al COVID-19**

PRIMERA PARTE: jueves 4 de junio de 2020, 10:00 horas (Cd Mx)  
Jaime Rios, Presidente de ALAS / Paulo Niederle, Brasil, UFRGS  
Patric Hollenstein, Ecuador, U. Central / Silvana Vargas W. Peró, SEPIA PUCP  
Ma. Adelaida Farah, Colombia, P.U. Javeriana

SEGUNDA PARTE: 11 de junio - TERCERA PARTE: 18 de junio  
Coordinación: Hernán Salas Quintana, ALASRU

Link de acceso:  
<https://ica.bbcolab.com/guest/a51ec94677b44d88731bcfb004be88e>

FLACSO

SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA DE ECONOMIA, ADMINISTRAÇÃO E SOCIOLOGIA RURAL

60 ANOS 1960-2020

LIVE

**IMPACTOS DA CRISE DA COVID-19 NA SEGURANÇA ALIMENTAR E NO DESENVOLVIMENTO RURAL BRASILEIRO E LATINO-AMERICANO**

EVENTO ON-LINE

09 JULHO 2020 19H

CANAL DO YOUTUBE: CONGRESSO SOBER - 2020

PALESTRANTES:

JOSÉ GRAZIANO DA SILVA  
(Ex-Diretor Geral da FAO)

SERGIO SCHNEIDER  
(Professor da UFRGS)

MARGARETE BOTEON  
(Professora do CEPEA/ESALQ)

PERY SHIKIDA  
(Presidente da SOBER)

MODERADOR:

SCAN ME

/CONGRESSOSOBER/ @CONGRESSO\_SOBER\_2020

WWW.EVEN3.COM.BR/SOBER2020/



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## US-UK Scientific Forum on Sustainable Agriculture

The National Academies of Science of the United States and the United Kingdom convened a Scientific Forum on Sustainable Agriculture in Washington, DC March 5-6 of 2020. The scientists gathered addressed nutritional security, agriculture's impact on biodiversity and environmental health, agroecosystem productivity, consumption in the context of climate change. While most of the scientists gathered were diverse bio-physical scientists, attendees included UK policy experts and a Rural Sociologist from the US. Discussion focused on ecosystem and human health, rather than simply increasing productivity of a few crops. The presenters consistently took a systemic, rather than linear view of sustainable agriculture, with many using the criteria of sustainable intensification (SI). Not providing more inputs, but through systems management to provide diverse foods, soil and water quality and biodiversity in both cultivated and wild areas. Animals were an important part of sustainable agricultural and food systems, but only if managed in ways that minimized their concentration. As a sociologist, I looked at the cutting-edge science and critiques of current approaches as those gathered sought to identify ways to improve farming systems across the world.

Past emphasis on input responsiveness, which focused on external inputs, such as N, had a negative impact on food system sustainability. When subsidies for N fertilizer faded out in Mexico, production increased on the same amount of land as input efficiency increased. There was great concern about land clearing for palm oil plantations and the collateral damage that resulted in terms of plant and animal extinctions and soil and water deterioration. Research priorities which stress plant breeding (often in light of inputs – pesticide resistance or fertilizer responsiveness) over ecosystem-based approaches were critiqued. The new science on microbiome is promising but descriptive. There is not much integration of genetics and microbiomes, and none on who the interaction of the two influences how a plant grows, particularly the bioavailability of nutrients. The call was to change our research perspective to diversify agricultural systems, not just spraying a product on a field.

The goals of breeding need to be broader, with an emphasis on resilience. Many scientists spoke of the problem of public sector breeding and research innovations that then ceded Intellectual Property Rights to large multinational corporations, such as Smithfield (owned in China) and JBS (owned in Brazil).

Land use changes to monocultures was found to be detrimental. For food security, the whole food systems must be included in research. Food production as livelihoods should be considered as well as tons per acre. Increased CO<sub>2</sub> that come with climate change increased productivity, but research show it lowers nutritional quality, including availability of protein, iron and zinc.

The scientists agree that transformational adaptation is needed. As climate changes, not only must cropping systems change, but also infrastructure and support systems. For these to change, there must be dramatic policy changes. There is a big evidence-policy reality gap on sustainable food. Long food chains facilitated by industrial consolidation squeezes farms. Policy should look to shorten value chains and be multi-level, multi-sector, multi-actor and multifunctional. We no longer know the farmers' share of the food dollar and pour taxpayer money into low value, high volume agricultural products that often serve as industrial inputs, rather than food.

Nutritional deficiencies are a huge health issue. In the US 11% of mortality is attributable to low fruit and vegetable consumption. There is little attention to pollinator habitat suitability. If more of the fruits and

vegetables were produced locally, diets would change. The presenters, including the geneticists and microbiologist, agreed that we need to transform the food system, the whole value chain. The challenge is how to do it in the face of lock-in mechanisms that keep the current unsustainable system in place.

The final discussion in small groups and then shared identified the main barriers to sustainable agricultural production and how to overcome them. Different types of barrier have an influence on each other – policy affects incentives which drive research agendas.

- Policy and markets
  - Change the concept of yield to one based on sustainability and quality metrics rather than simply the amount of output – broader balanced (breeding) goals (considering ag/food system performance rather individual unit output).
  - Allocation of return/value proposition in the system that is more equitably aligned to the producer and grower – in particular recognizing that their investment to provide sustainability might only have a long-term return.
- Levers and incentives
  - Subsidies influenced by policy
- Research and capacity (and technical capacity of end users – equity of access to appropriate innovation)

The recordings of the Forum meeting are now online and able to watch

here: <http://www.nasonline.org/programs/scientific-forum/sustainable-agriculture.html>

The presentation slides from the Forum are saved

here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kzl8ig7h1van60i/AABcScqikGtMfqOxRDqWH3vra?dl=0>

Cornelia Butler Flora

Distinguished Professor of Sociology Emeritus, Iowa State University

Research Professor, Kansas State University



Image from Cornelia Butler Floras presentation

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## Understanding the ‘Land-grab’ phenomenon\*

One of the most controversial issues occupying the minds of those interested in the future of food and agriculture is that of large-scale land acquisitions. It is clear that a number of powerful actors from the global financial sector – including private equity firms, merchant banks, hedge funds and pension funds – are investing heavily in farm lands. So, too, are the sovereign wealth funds from oil-rich but land-poor nations. According to the Land Matrix some 52 million hectares of farmland have been purchased or leased in the last 20 years – often in poorer developing nations and usually in a manner which displaces local populations, including subsistence producers. The land is then used to grow crops for biofuel and for production of food and timber for both the domestic and international marketplace. Some foods are destined for repatriation to those investor nations where food security issues are a current problem, or are a perceived future problem. Today’s land purchases might be viewed as a continuation of the historical legacy of colonialism and imperialism – perpetuating past land appropriations along with the attendant violence and dispossession which accompanied those earlier land invasions. But large-scale land purchases are also occurring in the global North. And, there is evidence that governments in both the North and South are welcoming foreign investment as a new catalyst for revival of often sluggish farming economies.

How is it best to understand the ‘landgrab’ phenomenon? There are a number of insights. First, it is clear that global neoliberalism has facilitated the ‘financialisation’ of the world economy making it easier for vast sums of money to flow unimpeded across space. Capital is looking globally for investment opportunities which provide portfolio diversification – largely turning farmlands into a new asset class. Second, arable and grazing lands are becoming scarce commodities. As the human population grows (from 7.7 billion people, today, to 9.7 billion by 2050) there will be significant pressure on land to produce food and fuel. (That said, many sociologists consider the ‘food shortage’ assertion a myth.) Third, but connected to the second point, land values are increasing. So, in economically fragile post-GFC/current-COVID times that are devoid of speculative prospects in dot.com or housing investments, agricultural land is coming to be seen as a reliable medium- to long-term profit-making opportunity. Fourth, after the riots following the food price hikes of 2008, the governments of many food-vulnerable (but often wealthy) nations have been anxious to ensure that food supplies will be guaranteed into the future. Purchasing farmlands abroad can assist in fulfilling this aim. Fifth, global climate change impacts are expected to hamper the expansion of food production as droughts become more prevalent and low-lying but highly productive farming deltas are inundated by sea water. Finally, the world appears to be entering an era of ‘peak’ oil, ‘peak’ phosphorus and fresh-water scarcity where the costs of inputs to commercial agriculture are expected to rise – potentially leading to increases in food prices. Purchasing farmland can allow investors to capture food price increases and/or – in the case of lands owned abroad – help insulate overseas-based populations from food price inflation.

In relation to many of the points, above, it is possible to understand why, for economic reasons, there are large-scale acquisitions of what are conveniently considered to be ‘undervalued’, ‘underutilized’, ‘marginal’ or ‘empty’ farmlands throughout the world. But there seem to be two diametrically-opposing approaches in interpreting its significance. The first is to view investments in overseas farmlands in terms of the normal/desirable operation of free-market forces. Here, Foreign Direct Investment will move into areas in which profits can be made. In rural regions this investment will replace inefficient subsistence-style farming with commercial enterprises geared to export agriculture, increasing profits in the farming sector while removing labour. Those leaving agriculture can move into the burgeoning urban areas where jobs can be obtained in manufacturing and other industries. This modernization approach assumes that industrialization (jobs in the cities) will follow more-or-less directly from increases in agricultural efficiency and productivity – allowing people in the cities to be fed and clothed as the economy is transformed into an archetypal urbanized ‘western’ nirvana. In contrast, the appropriation of farmlands from some of the poorest peoples in the world is

interpreted as a form of neo-colonialism, one that leads to the 'de-peasantization' of the countryside, pushing rural people into urban slums where jobs are menial and difficult to obtain, and where access to food becomes a day-to-day struggle. The farmlands once producing for local consumption now grow flex crops for export and for conversion into biofuels. This restricts, rather than assists, these modernizing economies to provide food security for their citizens.

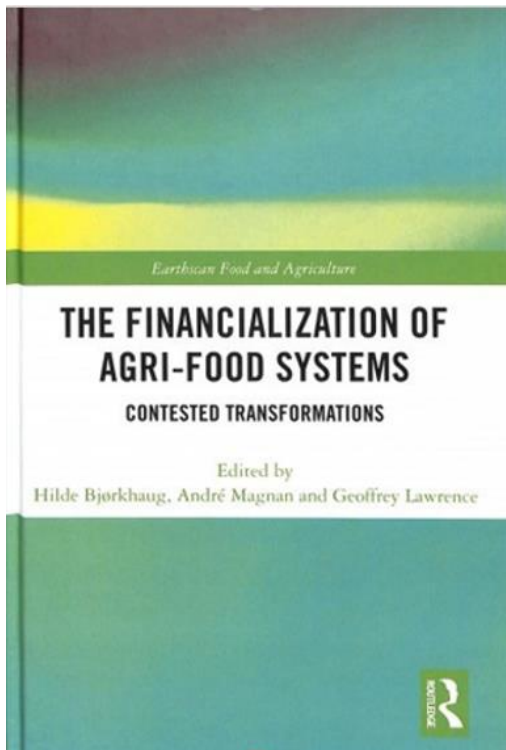
Agri-food scholars are, quite fittingly, at the forefront of these debates. But much more research needs to be undertaken to, *inter alia*, examine: the on-ground local impacts, and longer-term consequences, of large-scale land appropriations; the ways in which land, water and green grabbing are intertwined; the extent to which speculation drives investment; the economic and social consequences of 'legal' versus 'illegal' land grabbing; whether positive agro-ecological outcomes are ever possible on grabbed land; and, the extent to which food sovereignty and human rights are undermined through the on-going appropriation of the world's scarce natural resources.

Geoffrey Lawrence,  
Emeritus Professor of Sociology, School of Social Science, University of  
Queensland, Australia.



\*This has been modified from an article which appeared earlier on the IRSA website.

### Recent related book-titles



**The Financialization of Agri-Food Systems: Contested Transformations (2018)**  
EARTHSCAN from ROUTLEDGE. Earthscan Food and Agriculture series. Hilde Bjørkhaug, André Magnan, Geoffrey A. Lawrence (eds.)

- Financialization is the increased influence of financial actors and logics on social and economic life and is one of the key drivers transforming food systems and rural economies around the world. The premise of this book is that the actions of financial actors, and their financial logics, are transforming agri-food systems in profound ways. It is shown that although financialization is a powerful dynamic, some recent developments suggest that the rollout of financialization is contradictory and uneven in different spaces and markets. The book examines cases in which state regulation or re-regulation and social movement resistance are setting roadblocks or speed bumps in the path of financialization, resulting in a 'cooling off' of investment, as well as the other side of the argument where there is evidence of a 'heating up'. The authors address not only the limits to financialization, but also the mechanisms through which financial entities are able to penetrate and re-shape agri-food industries.

- This book provides both a comparative analysis of financialization blending, and empirical findings with conceptual insights. It explores the connection between financialization, food systems, and rural transformation by critically examining: the concept of financialization and how food and farming are being financialized; the impacts of financialization in the food industry; and financialization in farming and forestry - along with the impacts this has on rural people and communities. This is a timely book, bringing together concrete case studies, from around the globe, to reveal the operations and impacts of finance capital in the 'space' of agri-food.

## Fields of Gold

Financing the Global Land Rush

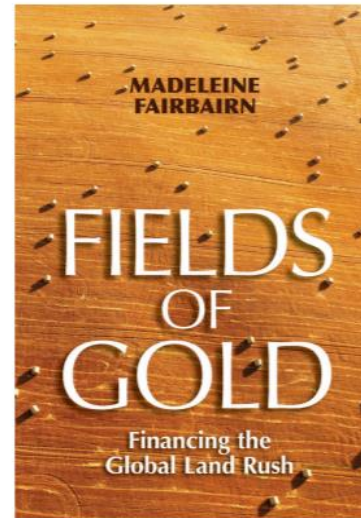
MADELEINE FAIRBAIRN

\$21.95 | 234 PAGES | PAPERBACK

*Fields of Gold* critically examines the history, ideas, and political struggles surrounding the financialization of farmland. In particular, Madeleine Fairbairn focuses on developments in two of the most popular investment locations, the US and Brazil, looking at the implications of financiers' acquisition of land and control over resources for rural livelihoods and economic justice.

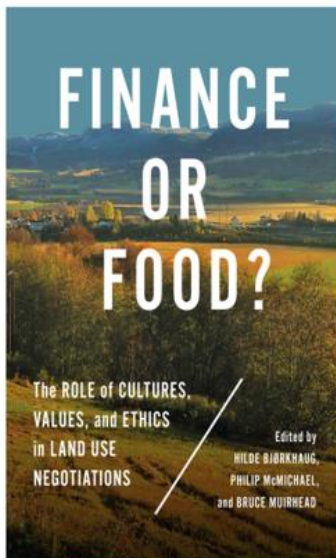
At the heart of *Fields of Gold* is a tension between efforts to transform farmland into a new financial asset class, and land's physical and social properties, which frequently obstruct that transformation. But what makes the book unique among the growing body of work on the global land grab is Fairbairn's interest in those acquiring land, rather than those affected by land acquisitions. Fairbairn's work sheds ethnographic light on the actors and relationships—from Iowa to Manhattan to São Paulo—that have helped to turn land into an attractive financial asset class.

**MADELEINE FAIRBAIRN** is Assistant Professor in Environmental Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.



"In a clear and engaging style, Fairbairn cuts to the key issues at stake in the growing investment in farmland by financial actors on a global scale."—Jennifer Clapp, University of Waterloo, author of *Hunger in the Balance*

"*Fields of Gold* is a superb, timely book on a topic that could not be more important. Fairbairn makes accessible to general and specialist readers alike the intricacies of finance and the implications of making farmland just another financial investment."—Harriet Friedmann, University of Toronto



## Finance or Food?: The Role of Cultures, Values, and Ethics in Land Use Negotiations

Edited by Hilde Bjørkhaug, Philip McMichael, and Bruce Muirhead  
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Exploring the ways in which culture, systems of value, and ethics impact agriculture, this volume addresses contemporary land questions and conditions for agricultural land management. Throughout, the editors and contributors consider a range of issues, including pressure on farmland, international and global trade relations, moral and ethical questions, and implications for governance.

The focus of *Finance or Food?* is land use in Australia, Canada, and Norway, chosen for their commonalities as well as their differences. With reference to these specific national contexts, the contributors explore political, ecological, and ethical debates concerning food production, alternative energy, and sustainability. The volume argues that recognition of food, finance, energy, and climate crises is driving investments and reframing the strategies of development agencies. At the same time, food producers, small farmers, and pastoralists facing eviction from their land are making their presence felt in this debate, not just locally, but in national policy arenas and international fora as well.

This volume investigates the many ways in which this process is occurring and draws out the cultural implications of new developments in global land use. An important intervention into a timely debate, *Finance or Food?* will be essential reading for both academics and policymakers.

### REVIEWS

"*Finance or Food?* opens up multiple, non-standard conversations about food and land. With great success, this book explores a large number of depoliticized dimensions that lie behind the broad emergence of investment trajectories in food and agriculture and the patterns and privileges of constraining opposition to commodification and suppressing alternatives."

Richard Le Heron, School of Environment, University of Auckland

"*Finance or Food?* is a major contribution to research and a valuable addition to contemporary debates over land use and the tensions and complementarities between agriculture, conservation, energy, and finance."

Emelie Peine, International Political Economy, University of Puget Sound