

The cover image features a collage of agricultural scenes: a person in a red shirt working in a field, a person in a blue shirt working in a field, and a field of crops. The title 'Agriculture and Food' is written in a large, blue, serif font across the top.

# Agriculture and Food

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

Volume 5 Number 2 .....December 2011

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## *From the President*

Marie-Christine Renard  
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The 16th of October's World Food Day did not bring us good news. According to the FAO, there are nearly one billion hungry persons in the world. UNICEF informs us that 22,000 persons die every day from hunger and diseases related to hunger. In the same month of October, at the summit of the G20, the world's leaders made a statement recognizing that we are faced with a food security problem and declaring the food question a priority. The FAO estimates that agriculture needs a 50 percent increase in investment to face the food requirements in the near future, 2050.

The problem is that these findings are not followed by concrete measures due to a lack of political will and capacity: no decisions are taken about stopping public subsidies to biofuels crops, a factor that puts pressure on prices and on the land. We do not see any clear decision on financial regulation in order to stop the

speculation with grains on the commodities market. And to the contrary, WTO policy discourages the creation by national governments of food stocks that would help to stabilize prices.

The paralysis of governments and world institutions in the face of corporate interests and power in global trade and finance has been questioned and challenged from the streets. In addition to the protests of the so called "Arab Spring", motivated in their early days by economic crisis where food is a crucial dimension, strikes and protests of "indignados" in Europe and "occupy Wall-Street" in the US ask for a real change of policies and the end of the markets and finance dictatorship. Faced with the globalization of markets, these are social movements with a global dimension in their demands, composition and communication strategy, at the same scale as the trade and financial iniquities

they protest against. In the end, however, when they need an interlocutor within their grasp, they end up going to their governments at the national level, reducing the scope and results of the protests. This shows how difficult it is for social movements to communicate in the same space where capital has been already moving for decades. The resolution of this disparity would be a first step toward the beginning of a solution to the economic inequities in general and to the question of food security in particular.

El 16 de octubre, Día Mundial de la Alimentación, no nos encontramos con buenas noticias. Según la FAO, existen casi mil millones de hambrientos en el mundo. La UNICEF no informa que cada día mueren veinte y dos mil personas de hambre y enfermedades relacionadas con el hambre. En este mismo mes de octubre, los dirigentes del mundo reunidos en la asamblea del G20 hicieron una declaración donde reconocen que existe un grave problema de seguridad alimentaria y decretaron que la alimentación es una prioridad. La FAO estima que se requiere de un aumento urgente del 50% de las inversiones destinadas a la agricultura para enfrentar los requerimientos alimentarios en un futuro no tan lejano, es decir en 2050.

El problema es que todos estos diagnósticos que se han realizado desde las instituciones que deben velar por la seguridad de la alimentación en el mundo, no han encontrado eco en todos los foros y peor aún, por falta de voluntad política, no se han visto acompañadas de medidas concretas para revertir la situación: no se ha tomado, por ejemplo, ninguna medida para frenar los subsidios públicos destinados a los agro-combustibles, reconocidos causantes de la presión sobre los precios de los alimentos básicos y sobre la tierra; no existe ningún indicio de que se vaya a tomar algún tipo de decisiones para frenar la especulación financiera de los grandes fondos de

inversión con las materias primas alimentarias que han inflado los precios en su búsqueda de ganancias. Al contrario, la política de la OMC desanima a los gobiernos nacionales que quisieran establecer reservas de granos en sus países y ayudarían a establecer los precios.

La parálisis de los gobiernos y de las instituciones internacionales frente a los poderes y a los intereses de las corporaciones del comercio y de las finanzas, está siendo cuestionada desde la calle: además de las revoluciones en varios países árabes, empujadas, en sus inicios, por una crisis económica donde el factor alimenticio tiene un peso importante, los huelguistas, los movimientos de “indignados” en Europa y los “occupy Wall Street” en los Estados Unidos exigen un cambio real de las políticas y el fin de la “dictadura de los mercados” y de las finanzas. Se trata de un movimiento social cuyas demandas, composición y métodos de comunicación tienen una dimensión global, a misma escala que los excesos del sistema financiero que denuncian. Sin embargo, al buscar un interlocutor a su alcance, terminan por dirigirse a sus respectivos gobiernos, lo que reduce el alcance y los posibles resultados de su protesta. Muestran lo difícil que es articular movimientos sociales en el mismo espacio en el cual se mueven, desde hace décadas ya, los movimientos de capitales. Resolver esta disparidad sería un primer paso hacia un comienzo de solución a las desigualdades económicas en general y a la seguridad alimentaria de los pueblos en particular.

Le 16 octobre dernier, Jour Mondial de l'Alimentation, n'a pas apporté de bonnes nouvelles. Il existe, selon la FAO, quasi un billion de personnes qui souffrent de la faim dans le monde. L'UNICEF nous informe que chaque jour meurent vingt deux mille personnes de faim ou de maladies dérivées de la faim. Au cours de ce même mois d'octobre, les dirigeants du G20 ont reconnu qu'il existe un réel

problème de sécurité alimentaire et que l'alimentation devait être considérée une priorité. La FAO estime que l'agriculture nécessite une augmentation urgente de 50% de ses investissements pour pouvoir satisfaire les besoins alimentaires de la population dans un futur rapproché, en 2050.

Le problème est que, sans doute par manque de volonté politique, tous ces diagnostics n'ont pas été accompagnés de mesures politiques concrètes destinées à changer la situation : aucune mesure n'a été prise pour réduire les subsides publics aux agro carburants, source certaine de pression sur les prix des aliments et de problèmes fonciers ; il n'existe aucun indice qui permette de penser que des mesures contre la spéculation financière des fonds d'investissement qui ont gonflé les cours des céréales, puissent être adoptées. Bien au contraire : la politique de l'OMC décourage la constitution, par les gouvernements nationaux, de réserves alimentaires qui aideraient à stabiliser les prix.

La paralysie des gouvernements et des institutions internationales face au

pouvoir et aux intérêts des corporations du commerce et de la finance est interpellée dans les rues : à côté des révolutions du « printemps arabe » dont les racines premières plongent dans la pénurie économique dont la dimension alimentaire est essentielle, les grévistes, les mouvements des « indignés » en Europe et des « occupy Wall-Street » aux Etats-Unis exigent un changement réel des politiques et de fin de la « dictature des marchés ». Il s'agit d'un mouvement social dont les demandes, la composition, et les moyens de communication sont globaux à la même échelle que les excès du système financier qu'ils dénoncent. Le besoin de trouver un interlocuteur à sa portée l'amène, cependant, à orienter les exigences contre les gouvernements nationaux, ce qui réduit la dimension et les résultats possibles de la contestation. Cela nous montre la difficulté d'articuler les mouvements sociaux dans le même espace où, depuis des décennies déjà, ont lieu les mouvements de capitaux. Résoudre cette disparité serait un premier pas vers une solution des inégalités économiques en général et du manque de sécurité alimentaire en particulier.

[Insights around the Globe]

## The Rural and Agricultural Roots of the Tunisian Revolution

Alia Gana  
University of Paris

With the “revolution of January 14<sup>th</sup> 2011”, Tunisia was the first country of the Arab region to turn a new page of its history and to engage, after more than two decades of dictatorship, in a process of democratic transition. The movement of popular protests, driven by aspirations for democracy and social justice, which forced out former president Ben Ali has shed light on the growing social and spatial disparities that have accompanied development dynamics in Tunisia, thus leading to the collapse of the idyllic image of good student of the IMF and the World Bank that was promoted

by the former regime and its international supporters.

While this revolution has surprised most analysts, including social scientists, it is however possible to detect in the strong tensions and the social conflicts that the country has experienced in the past three years the announcing signs of the popular explosion of recent months (the riot of the miners from Redayef in south Tunisia in 2008, the numerous strikes in the manufacturing sector and the occupations of factories, the multiple conflicts over water and land, etc.). With this regard, it appears crucial to have a retrospective look at

the deep causes of recent and still ongoing protest movements and to explore their links with development strategies put in place in this country, particularly over the last 20 years.

### ***Growing unemployment and spatial inequalities***

For two decades, Tunisia has experienced major socioeconomic transformations, which are profoundly linked to its engagement in a process of economic liberalization and its opening to world markets. While reinforcing the orientation of its national economy to exports (manufacturing industry, tourism, export oriented agricultural production), they have exposed it to the fierce competition of the world markets (textile industry) and also have increased its dependency on food staple imports. As a result of these development strategies based on the promotion of low productivity economic sectors, Tunisia has been faced with a major employment crisis expressed in very high unemployment rates among higher education graduates (30 to 40%). This unemployment crisis has importantly fueled social frustrations among the young population fostering the movement of social protests.

With unemployment problems, growing regional disparities represent one major cause of recent popular uprising in Tunisia. Liberalization processes since the late 80's have favored the reallocation of resources to coastal areas - where tourist and labor-intensive industrial activities are increasingly concentrated - to the detriment of inland and rural areas. And it is precisely in these marginalized regions (the central west, the northwest and the south), that social protests started and that spread later to the whole country. In fact, despite major social achievements, human development indicators in Tunisia still reveal important gaps and even growing inequalities between, on the one side, coastal and inland areas and on the other side between urban and rural areas (living conditions, health, education and employment) and, poverty remains most importantly rural.

### ***The marginalization of agriculture***

Although territorial policies geared towards reducing regional disparities and diversifying the rural economy, through the promotion of industrial activities in rural areas, have been put in place since the 1980's, job creation for rural

inhabitants has remained very limited, while the share of rural households' income generated from agriculture has been steadily decreasing<sup>1</sup>. This important regression of the agricultural sector in rural employment appears to be closely related to the specific role, which has been assigned to agriculture in development strategies, particularly since the late eighties. These aimed at reinforcing the contribution of agriculture to the global economic balance of the country, through promoting export-oriented farm production and expanding the irrigated sector. Structural adjustment resulted in major shifts in agricultural policies, with privatization of state farms, cuts in farm subsidies, farm prices' liberalization, the reorganization of the farm credit system, and the gradual privatization of food marketing networks.

These policy changes, which expressed a shift from food self-sufficiency objectives to a food security approach based on an increased integration into the world food markets, in favor of large-scale and corporate agricultural enterprises and significantly altered the economic environment of the family-farming sector. As a result, and despite the increase of agricultural exports (fruits and vegetables, see food), imports of grains and animal feed have come to represent a growing source of commercial balance deficit.<sup>2</sup> On the other side, decreasing farm subsidies, higher production costs, growing farmers' indebtedness and cuts in food staple subsidies, have importantly reduced the reproduction capacity of a large fraction of farms, particularly in the rain fed agricultural sector. As rural out migration and nonfarm employment opportunities have been declining, small farms have become survival spaces for jobless household members, increasing the pressure on family resources and exacerbating social frustrations in rural areas, where the movement of social protest has started.

It is this combination of processes, including widespread corruption that contributed to

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<sup>1</sup> The agricultural sector accounts for 11% of GDP and 15 % of total employment (compared with 20% for industrial activities and 50% for services).

<sup>2</sup> 55% of the country's consumption needs in grains are imported, 100% of food needs in the poultry sector and more than 40% of cattle fodder.

crystallize social discontent and the popular uprising of December 2010. With this regard the Tunisian revolution is now opening a new area that is giving a political dimension to rural and agricultural development issues.

***Farmers' mobilizations in the transition period: towards a reform of agricultural policies?***

In fact, the Tunisian revolution has fostered growing social protests in rural and agricultural areas. These take different forms, such as occupation by farm workers and landless peasants of corporate farm enterprises (constituted on state owned land), strikes of farm workers asking for better work conditions and wages, protests of corporate farm holders asking the transition government to protect their enterprises against occupations, contestation and eviction of farmers' union leaders, farmers' demonstrations against new pricing mechanisms imposed by private collectors of grain, refusal of small farmers to reimburse bank loans, contestation of water users' associations and refusal to pay for irrigation water, etc.

What these multiple forms of protests reveal is a profound contestation of former state policies but also a differentiation of farmers'

demands, according to the different social groups. While there is a consensus among farmers that agricultural development should be given a renewed and increased attention in state policies, we also observe growing contradictions between, on the one side demands seeking structural reforms, particularly a better access to land and water, as well as demands for the reengagement of the state in the management of agricultural activities and water resources, and on the other side, resistance of the big farmers' group and the multiplication of actions seeking to create the conditions for the reinforcement of private initiative and farmers' organizations in the management of agricultural activities.

It is of course too early to know what will be the outcome of ongoing dynamics and of mobilizations taking place in rural areas. In any case, the Tunisian revolution, which is still going on, has fostered a renewed attention on agricultural and rural issues in the political debate and farmers' groups are demonstrating their increased capacity to exert a pressure on the political sphere and probably to influence the future direction of agricultural development.

## **Report from the Editors**

### ***INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD (IJSAF)***

Mara Miele, Vaughan Higgins, Farshad Araghi

#### **Issues since the last RC-40 Newsletter**

Since the last newsletter two issues of the journal have been published online.

#### **Volume 18, Issue 2 (2011)**

1. *The Role of Trust and Moral Obligation in Beef Cattle Feed-lot Veterinarians' Contingent Adoption of Antibiotic Recommendations*

Wesley R. Dean, William Alex McIntosh, H. Morgan Scott and Kerry S. Barling

2. *Likelihood of Succession and Farmers' Attitudes towards their Future Behaviour: Evidence from a Survey in Germany, the United Kingdom and Portugal*

Miguel Sottomayor, Richard Tranter and Leonardo Costa

3. *Changes in Food Chains in the Context of Globalization*

Manuel Belo Moreira

## Interview

1. *Japanese Fish Markets, Chinese Seafood Palaces and Global Sushi: Meeting Theodore C. Bestor*

Sonja Ganseforth

## Volume 18, Issue 3 (2011)

### Special Issue

### AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Editorial Introduction

*Agriculture and Climate Change: Introduction*

Reidar Almås, Hilde Bjørkhaug and Marta G. Rivera-Ferre

#### Articles

1. *Climate Change: How Debates over Standards Shape the Biophysical, Social, Political and Economic Climate*

Lawrence Busch

2. *Climate Change and Scottish Agriculture: An End to the Freedom to Farm?*

Alan Renwick and Anita Wreford

3. *Where Is the Coherent Response to Climate Change and Peak Oil? An Examination of Policy and Practice Affecting Agriculture in Regional Australia*

Ruth Beilin, Serenity Hill and Tamara Sysak

4. *Rural Farming Community Climate Change Acceptance: Impact of Science and Government Credibility*

Chris Evans, Christine Storer and Angela Wardell-Johnson

5. *Increasing Food and Energy Prices in 2008: What Were the Causes and Who Was to Blame?*

Jostein Brobakk and Reidar Almås

6. *Climate-ready Crops and Bio-capitalism: Towards a New Food Regime?*

Elisabeth A. Abergel

# RC40 By-Laws

## **I. MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

I.A. Members are those who pay RC-40 dues and participate in the scientific activities of the committee. Dues are set by the Executive Committee of RC-40.

I.B. Members of RC-40 have the right to

I.B.1. Run for office

I.B.2. Vote in all RC-40 elections

I.B.3. Participate in RC-40 business meetings

I.B.3.a. To participate in the quadrennial business meetings, individuals must be members of the International Sociological Association

I.B.4. Have priority status for participation in any of the scientific activities of the committee

I.C. Members are strongly urged to maintain membership in good standing in the International Sociological Association

I.D. Officers of the RC-40 are

I.D.1. The President

I.D.2. The Secretary

I.D.3. The Executive Committee, which consists of

I.D.3.a. The current president and secretary-treasurer

I.D.3.b. The immediate past president and secretary-treasurer

I.D.3.c. Four elected representatives

I.E. Officers are elected in the year prior to the quadrennial World Congress and take office at that Congress

I.E.1. Officers cannot succeed themselves

I.E.2. All Officers must be members in good standing in the International Sociological Association

I.F. Duties of the President

I.F.1. The president has executive authority to organize the scientific and administrative work of the committee in consultation with the secretary-treasurer and members of the executive committee

I.F.2. The president convenes and organizes the quadrennial business meeting as well as any meetings of the executive committee

I.F.3. The president appoints the editorial committee of the International Journal of the Sociology of Agriculture and Food

I.F.4. The president, with the assistance of the secretary, organizes the publication and distribution of the semi-annual newsletter

I.G. Duties of the Secretary-Treasurer

I.G.1. The secretary assists the president in the coordination of the scientific and business activities of RC-40

I.G.2. The secretary-treasurer shall maintain a record of all committee business and executive meetings, and maintain the financial records

I.G.3. The secretary shall make a yearly financial accounting to the executive committee and a quadrennial financial accounting to the membership at the quadrennial business meeting

I.G.4. The secretary shall be responsible for conducting the elections of new officers

I.H. Duties of the Members of the Executive Committee

I.H.1. Advise the President and Secretary on all scientific and business matters pertaining to the activities of the Research Committee

I.H.2. Review the secretary's annual financial report

## **II. SCIENTIFIC WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

II.A. To promote and encourage scientific analysis of the social organization of agriculture and food systems

II.B. Organization of the substantive content of the RC-40 session of the quadrennial meetings of the World Congress of Sociology

II.C. Organization of additional international meetings, including those that are held in conjunction with the

World Congress and other scientific meetings

### III ORGANIZATION OF THE JOURNAL

III.A. The International Journal of the Sociology of Agriculture and Food is the official scientific journal of RC-40.

III.B. The content of the journal shall reflect the scientific interests of the Research Committee, which is the sociological study of agriculture and food.

III.C. The editor(s) are appointed by the president in conjunction with the executive committee. The term of service for editors shall be negotiated in consultation with the executive committee.

III.D. The editors shall between them nominate a representative who is the main point of contact for, and liaison between, the journal and the executive committee.

III.E. The editors shall, in consultation with the executive committee, appoint an editorial assistant to take charge of the daily running of the journal. The editorial assistant shall have responsibility for co-ordinating the entire submission, reviewing and publication process; responding to contributors; liaising with reviewers; maintaining the website; ensuring that the editors are provided with regular updates on contributions and reviewing; and, assisting in the planning of future issues.

III.F. The president of RC-40, in consultation with the editors and the members of the executive committee, shall appoint the members of the editorial board. The editorial board members consist of distinguished researchers in the sociology of agriculture and food and at the time of appointment must be members of RC-40.

III.G. The executive committee shall, where possible, provide financial support to ensure the ongoing viability of the journal.

III.H. The editors shall transmit regular reports on the journal to the RC-40 newsletter and shall present a report at the quadrennial business meeting.

III.I. The editors shall transmit a complete record of journal finances to the secretary of RC-40, who shall add those records to the yearly financial report that is to be submitted to the executive committee and the quadrennial report submitted to the business meeting.

### IV. AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS

IV.A. Amendments to the by-laws can be submitted by any member in good standing of the Research Committee.

IV.B. Amendments must be initially approved at RC-40 business meetings

IV.C. Amendments must then be ratified by mail ballot of members by a majority of those voting



# Upcoming Events

## **Rural Sociological Society**

**26-29 July, 2012**

Chicago, IL

<http://ruralsociology.org/>

Abstracts and proposals  
due February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012

## **Agriculture, Food & Human Values**

**June 20-24, 2012**

New York City, NY

<http://www.afhvs.org/2012mtg.html>

## **XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology**

Lisbon, Portugal

**29 July – 4 August, 2012**

[World Congress Website](#)

List of sessions:

[http://irsa2012.com/media/uploads/events/irsa2012/XIII\\_WCRS\\_sessions\\_description\\_session.pdf](http://irsa2012.com/media/uploads/events/irsa2012/XIII_WCRS_sessions_description_session.pdf)

**January 15, 2012**

**Deadline for submitting abstracts**

March 30, 2012

Early registrations deadline

May 15, 2012

Deadline for presenters' registration

## RC40 Executive Council, 2010-2014

Office	Officer	Organizational Affiliation	Country	Email
<b>President</b>	Marie-Christine Renard	Universidad Autónoma Chapingo	México	<a href="mailto:mcrenard@gmail.com">mcrenard@gmail.com</a>
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Southern Europe	Maria Fonte	<a href="mailto:mfonte@unina.it">mfonte@unina.it</a>

## From the Secretary

### [1] About the electronic Mailing List of the RC-40:

If you would like to join this e-list or if you would like to share information among the members of the RC40 or our listserv, please contact the secretary, Carmen Bain, at [cbain@iastate.edu](mailto:cbain@iastate.edu)

### [2] About the membership fee:

Membership to the International Sociological Association (ISA) and RC40 covers a four year period. To apply for membership and see the fee structure, please go to [http://www.isa-sociology.org/memb\\_i/index.htm](http://www.isa-sociology.org/memb_i/index.htm)

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