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The Practice of Food Sovereignty and *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador's Sierra Region

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by

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ABSTRACT

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by

Clayton Frederick

Ecuadorian member organizations of the transnational social movement La Vía Campesina won legal recognition of the state's responsibility to guarantee one of their central demands, food sovereignty, or the people's right to determine their agri-food systems and the extent to which this right can be exercised, in that country's 2008 constitution and 2009 food sovereignty law. These victories came after decades of uprisings by rural and indigenous social movements resulted in the election in 2006 of Ecuador's populist president, Rafael Correa, who denounced neoliberalism and made the alternative development paradigm of *buen vivir* (or "living well," from the Kichwa *sumak kawsay*) a central part of his Citizen's Revolution. Academic literature in the wake of these developments has focused on the ideas of plurinationality and ecologically sustainable development embodied in the concept of *buen vivir* (Davalos 2009, Escobar 2010, Cobey 2012, Oviedo 2014), analysis of state-social movement interaction in institutionalizing the food sovereignty policy regime (Peña 2013), and participation in this process by urban consumer movements (Van Ongeval 2012).

Nevertheless, research into the praxis of food sovereignty and *buen vivir* by rural communities themselves remains limited. In order to address the dearth in academic literature on these topics and investigate the gap between food sovereignty in principle and in practice, this project takes an action research approach to investigate practices of food sovereignty in three communities of the Sierra region of Ecuador. Specifically, the questions of 1) how practices of food sovereignty mesh with or contradict state policy and social movement rhetoric, 2) how such practices inform the notion of *buen vivir* as an alternative development strategy, and 3) the extent to which an action researcher can contribute to the food sovereignty of the communities being studied are addressed. These are addressed via the researcher's participant observation at the invitation of each community as a participant on a multicultural exchange program sponsored by the Quito-based NGO Huayra Causay, for whom the researcher interned for a period of six months.

The study finds positive outcomes such as mobilization for grassroots land reform, collaboration with multinational NGOs for targeted investment in irrigation infrastructure and the creation of community governance for its oversight, and partnership with municipal governments to promote rural producer's associations with direct marketing opportunities such as farmer's markets. However, significant obstacles still remain, such as contradictory policy, high rate of return conditionality for state investment, and intransigence of the national assembly in the participatory legislative process for food sovereignty, making the notion of *buen vivir* a still-distant ideal for the communities studied.

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List of Acronyms

AAPP – *Asociación Agrícola Plaza Pallares*, Plaza Pallares Agricultural Association

AASM – *Asociación Agrícola Santa Marta*, Santa Marta Agricultural Association

ABAPP – *Asociación de Bienes Agrícolas y Productores de Píllaro*, Association of Agricultural Goods and Producers of Píllaro

APAzuay – *Asociación de Productores Agroecológicos de Azuay*, Association of Agroecological Producers of Azuay

BNF – *Banco Nacional de Fomento,* National Development Bank

CODENPE – *Consejo de Desarollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador*, Council for the Development of the Nations and Peoples of Ecuador

CONAIE – *Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*, Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador

CONFEUNASSC-CNC – *Confederación Nacional de Afiliados al Seguro Social Campesino – Coordinadora Nacional Campesina*, National Confederation of Beneficiaries of Peasant Social Security – National Peasant Coordinator

COOTAD – *Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización*, Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy, and Decentralization

COPISA – *Conferencia Plurinacional e Intercultural de Soberanía Alimentaria*, Plurinational and Intercultural Council for Food Sovereignty

ECUARUNARI – *Ecuador Runakunapak Rikcharimuy*, Indigenous Movement of Ecuador

ERAS – *Escuelas de la Revolución Agraria*, Ministry of Agriculture Schools of the Agrarian Revolution

FENOCIN – *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras*, National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Black Organizations

FLACSO – *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales*, Social Sciences University of Latin America, Ecuador campus

FOCCAP – *Federación de Organizaciones Campesinas de la Parroquia San Andres del Cantón Píllaro*, Federation of Peasant Organizations of the San Andres Parish of the Canton of Píllaro

IEPS – *Instituto Nacional de Economía Popular y Solidaria,* National Institute for a People's Economics of Solidarity

LORSA – *Ley Orgánica del Régimen de la Soberanía Alimentaria,* 2009 Food Sovereignty Law

MAGAP – *Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Acuacultura y Pesca*, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries

MCPGAD – *Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados*, Ministry of Policy Coordination and Decentralized Autonomous Governments (defunct)

MIPRO – *Ministerio de Industrias y Productividad*, Ministry of Industry and Productivity

PAU – *Programa de Agricultura Urbana*, Urban farming program of the city of Cuenca

PNBV – *Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir*, National Plan for *Buen Vivir*

PRONERI – *Programa de Negocios Inclusivos Rurales*, Ministry of Agriculture Program for Inclusive Rural Business

SENPLADES – *Secretaria Nacional de Planificación y Desarollo*, Secretariat for Planning and Development

Introduction

A cornerstone of the political success of Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, his left-wing coalition *Alianza PAIS's* Citizen's Revolution, and the developmental paradigm of *buen vivir* (or "living well," from the Kichwa *sumak kawsay*) in Ecuador has been the enshrinement in that country's 2008 Constitution of the right of the people to food sovereignty, or popular control over the agri-food system, and the state's responsibility to guarantee it. This result was in no small part thanks to the growing outcry for food sovereignty by the transnational social movement La Vía Campesina, which since its origins in the early 1990s has made food sovereignty a master concept in its struggle to promote the livelihoods of its millions of members worldwide, and whose member organizations within Ecuador played an important role in the coalition that brought Correa to power. In 2009, the Ecuadorian national assembly further codified the country's approach to food sovereignty into law with the ratification of the LORSA food sovereignty law. This law defined the tenets of food sovereignty to be recognized by the state, such as producers' right of access to land, water, and other productive resources, and established a council comprised of civil society and social movement actors, COPISA, charged with the participatory elaboration of public policy for food sovereignty. Despite these hard-won victories, however, implementation of the LORSA's provisions remains far from the ideals of *buen vivir,* an alternative to neoliberal development linked to an indigenous cosmovision for indigenous rights and the rights of nature that has become a key concept in Correa's "socialism for the twenty-first century" project. In particular, the

extent to which the food sovereignty of rural communities in Ecuador differs in practice from transnational discourse around the topic, as well as the state's obligations under the law, remains unclear.

Past research surrounding this question has focused on the ideas of plurinationality and ecologically sustainable development embodied in the concept of *buen vivir* (Davalos 2009, Escobar 2010, Cobey 2012, Oviedo 2014), analysis of state-social movement interaction in institutionalizing the food sovereignty policy regime (Peña 2013), and participation in this process by urban consumer movements (Van Ongeval 2012). Nevertheless, research into the praxis of food sovereignty and *buen vivir* by rural communities themselves remains limited. In order to address the dearth in academic literature on these topics, this project takes an action research approach to investigate practices of food sovereignty and participation by rural communities in local, national and transnational networks, focusing on three case studies carried out in the Sierra region of Ecuador in 2012. By action research, it is meant that the researcher not only made observations but also directly engaged in these communities' struggles to build robust food sovereignty and guarantee the sustainability of their own livelihoods. Specifically, at the invitation of each of the three case-study communities, the researcher, acting as representative of the Quito-based NGO *Huayra Causay* and as a participant on this NGO's multicultural exchange program, spent from three to five weeks living in each community assisting with these communities' ongoing projects and daily activities while making observations, as will be described in detail below.

Accordingly, this research project seeks to address the following research questions:

How do practices of food sovereignty in different communities in Ecuador mesh with, contradict, or come into conflict with the notion of food sovereignty as it is envisaged by social movements such as La Vía Campesina, delineated by the state's food sovereignty policy regime, and implemented under NGO-coordinated interventions?

How do these practices inform the notion of *buen vivir* as a development strategy for a new political economy?

How can an action researcher, acting as a participant on an NGO-sponsored multicultural exchange program, contribute to the struggles for food sovereignty and *buen vivir* of rural communities of the Sierra region of Ecuador?

Background

To contextualize this action research project within the political economy of agrarian struggle both globally and in Ecuador, this section begins with a review of how the transnational social movement La Vía Campesina's member organizations within Ecuador won the recognition of food sovereignty as a constitutional right under the larger rubric of *buen vivir,* and how concerns with the institutionalization of food sovereignty policy under the presidency of Rafael Correa make appropriate an action research project to further investigate their extent and possible resolution in practice. Next, relevant academic literature on the rise of this movement, feminist analyses of agrarian political economy, and risks confronting rural social movements is reviewed. The section concludes with an account of the rise of La Vía Campesina and a review of the movement's central demand, that of food sovereignty, as a critique of industrial agriculture.

Ecuadorian Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods

In order to understand the political traction of *buen vivir* and food sovereignty in Ecuador, it is important to understand the role of agriculture in that country's political economy. Though the share of persons deriving their livelihoods from agriculture has been declining in recent times, in 2006, family farmers still accounted for almost 40% of all households, making it an extremely important sector (IFAD 2014). Today, small-scale peasant farmers account for the production of at least 65% of the food Ecuadorians consume, yet this proportion is gradually falling (COPISA 2012). The

Sierra region had the most family farmers as a percentage of total rural households, nearly 70% of which were farming families, over one million people in that region alone (ibid.). This makes the Sierra region of particular interest to a study interested in the practice of food sovereignty.

From 1954 to 2000, total arable land in Ecuador doubled; much of the expansion of agricultural land took place in the most marginal, high-altitude and highly graded lands of the mountains of the Sierra (Rosero et al. 2011). Nevertheless, most land under cultivation in Ecuador has always been in coastal provinces, with the biggest crops by area under cultivation being banana, sugar cane, and oil palm (ibid.). In contrast to the Coast region and its expansive, relatively flat plantations, Ecuador's Sierra region has become well known for the common sight of steeply graded hanging fields improbably carved into most mountainsides of its foothills by the landless peasantry. Since colonial times agricultural land had been held in large plantations by an elite landowner class, but in no small part due to the pressure applied by indigenous movements demanding land and better wages throughout the 1950s (Becker and Tutillo 2009, 155), in 1964, a populist military government decreed the country's Agrarian Reform, Idle Lands and Settlement Act, which abolished the *huasipungo* system of feudal land tenure and serfdom in the Sierra. In 1973 another military government passed a similar law providing for expropriation of land that was considered to be illegitimately obtained, currently underused, or occupied by squatters, to achieve redistribution. Predictably, efforts to carry out actual land reforms under the auspices of these laws in the late 1960s and early 70s

met with great resistance from landed elites and ultimately failed to significantly reduce inequality, as Ecuador's land Gini coefficient scarcely declined from 0.86 in 1964 to 0.85 in 1974, and to 0.80 in 2000, when 63.5 percent of the landowners owned just 6.3% of all agricultural land, while 2.3% of producers controlled 42.5% of the land. During this period, successive agrarian reform laws in 1979 and 1994 provided for limited land reform, repeatedly dividing parts of large landholdings into small parcels (Díaz 2007). Nevertheless, the scope of these redistributive efforts in practice has been minimal and over the intervening years land has been increasingly re-concentrated land in the hands of only a few large landholders.

By 2000, inequality in the agricultural sector remained acute by virtually all measures. Just seven percent of all farmers received some form of credit, and less than one-tenth of this came from private banks, as creditors considered the rural areas of the country to be high-risk. With respect to water, just 28% of farmers had access to irrigation, 40% of which were large landholdings (of 100 hectares or more). Less than seven percent of farmers received technical assistance, 68% of whom were large landowners. Further, distributors captured eighty-three percent of the value realized from the commercialization of agricultural goods produced, leaving only a small fraction to producers, a situation they see as unfair and underscoring a severe asymmetry of capital in the agricultural sector (ibid.).

A comprehensive analysis of investment in the rural sector from 1995 to 2009, an era that saw a banking crisis that led Ecuador to abandon its currency, the *Sucre*, for the US dollar, shows that most investments were managed by agribusiness and did

not benefit small producers (Rosero et al. 2011). The largest sources of technical assistance were from the NGO sector and private persons. These interventions included support for projects to initiate production of commodities such as coffee, cacao, quinoa, *toquilla* straw (the material used to weave Panama hats), guinea pigs, and so on. Such projects aimed at promoting not just production but forms of social organization and local resilience, sometimes including micro-credit, the underlying goal of which was to alleviate the poverty of very poor farming families. However, the time frame for many of these projects was of just two to three years, after which conditions would often return to their prior state (ibid.).

By some reckonings, Ecuador's indigenous movement has been one of the most politically successful in all of Latin America, having contributed to the ouster of three presidents and repeatedly securing the constitutional recognition of indigenous rights and cosmovision, notably the codification of *sumak kawsay* (as *buen vivir*) and plurinationality in the 2008 constitution (Becker and Tutillo 2009). In 1990, a broad coalition of indigenous organizations launched a highly visible ten-day uprising involving the blockading of the Pan-American highway in rejection of policies promoting a plantation-reliant, export-oriented agricultural policy under neoliberal structural adjustment, a campaign which had great success in calling attention to the indigenous community as an oppositional political force and bringing indigenous demands to the center of the national political consciousness. Not only were the demands made by rural and indigenous communities made more visible, they would lead to concrete gains in the participatory process by which the 2008 constitution was

drafted, as well as in the elaboration of laws and policy to implement its principles via new consultative and participatory workshops (Peña 2013).

The political chaos in the wake of the indigenous uprising and the financial crisis left the country's political landscape ripe for change. After the rise and fall of seven presidents in as many years, Rafael Correa rose to power in the 2006 presidential election on a populist, anti-neoliberal platform with the significant support of CONAIE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*), the country's largest indigenous organization. Nevertheless, after Correa's election, the fractures between CONAIE and other major indigenous organizations including FENOCIN (*Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras*), a Vía Campesina member organization, remained as wide as ever. In the same election, an indigenous candidate running under the *Pachakutik* party backed by CONAIE polled only two percent of the national vote. Several leading indigenous participants in Correa's populist coalition left the party after Correa insisted on adhering to what were criticized as extractive neoliberal policies, especially with regard to mineral resources in the Amazon region of the country. Despite the promulgation of the new constitution in 2008 that codified plurinationalism, an acknowledgement of indigenous rights, and the indigenous cosmovision of *sumak kawsay*, Correa's administration signed legislation that was considered objectionable by indigenous groups, including laws expanding mining rights and privatization of water sources (ibid.).

Some academic observers remained optimistic about possibilities for advancement of social movement priorities under the Correa administration. As Arturo Escobar wrote at the time, viewed in the context of the "socio-economic, political, and cultural transformations that have been taking place in South America during the past ten years, particularly in Ecuador, Venezuela, and Bolivia" sometimes referred to as the Pink Tide, "the discourses and strategies of some social movements suggest radical possibilities towards post-liberal, post-developmentalist, and post-capitalist social forms" (2008). However, "to entertain such a possibility requires that the transformations in question be seen in terms of a double conjuncture: the crisis of the neoliberal project of the past three decades; and the crisis of the project of bringing about modernity to the continent since the Conquest" (ibid.).

Another significant victory of rural social movements, at least on paper, had been the codification of food sovereignty as a constitutional obligation of the state, along with the establishment of COPISA, the Plurinational and Intercultural Council on Food Sovereignty, an organ within the Ministry of Agriculture, Ranching, Aquaculture and Fisheries (MAGAP) responsible for implementing a participatory process whereby civil society and social movement organizations directly advise ministry policy and engage in an initiative-like process to develop legislation. This process was advanced with the ratification in 2009 by the National Assembly of the LORSA, or Organic Food Sovereignty Law, which sets forth general principles by

which food sovereignty is to be promoted. The law's 33 provisions[1] cover farmers' access to water, land, technical assistance, and capital; food production and supply; consumption and nutrition; and perhaps most notably, social participation in the process of formulating public policy for food sovereignty, the specifics of which merit a closer analysis.

Demands for land reform provided for in principle by the LORSA have been repeated and longstanding, as discussed above. Rather than itself specifying the mechanisms by which land reform is to be carried out, its Article 6 emphasizes that the land has an inherent "social and environmental function" and calls for the establishment of a land law under the principles set forth in the LORSA:

> The law that regulates the regime of ownership of the land shall allow for equitable access to it, privileging small producers and women producers who are heads of household; it shall create a national land fund; regulate estates, their extent, land grabs and the concentration of land, establish the procedures for their elimination and determine the mechanisms for the fulfillment of their social and environmental function. It shall also establish mechanisms to promote associativity and inclusion of small landholdings.[2]

According to COPISA, "if the water and land do not return to the hands of small-scale farmers, all efforts to change the agri-food system in Ecuador will be useless, and food sovereignty will be an unrealizable dream" (COPISA 2012).

Another important provision of the LORSA is its emphasis on the localization of production and consumption and the establishment of new kinds of agrarian economic relations based on solidarity. According to its Article 21:

[1] See Appendix for complete text of the body of the law.
[2] Author's translation. All translations of this document are mine.

> The State shall create a National System of Commercialization for food sovereignty, establish mechanisms of support for direct business between producers and consumers, and incentivize the efficiency and streamlining of chains and channels of commercialization. Further, it shall realize the improvement of the preservation of food products in the processes of post-harvest and commercialization; and, it shall foment cooperative mechanisms between microenterprises, small and medium food producers in order to protect them from the imposition of unfavorable conditions on the commercialization of their products, namely large chains of commercialization and industrialization, and shall control the compliance with contractual conditions and terms of payment.
>
> The decentralized autonomous governments shall provide the necessary infrastructure for the direct exchange and commercialization between producers and consumers, in benefit of both, as a new social economic relationship of solidarity.

This language specifically attempts to address small producers' concerns about exploitation by distributors, processors, and other intermediaries seen as pocketing the larger share of the end cost of food products, even when those food products are sold domestically, at local markets and with minimal or inferior post-harvest processing. It also provides for the necessary infrastructure, such as permanent facilities for farmers' markets, to make possible direct sales from producer to consumer.

Nevertheless, the political commitment of the Correa administration to the implementation of LORSA provisions has been called into question over controversies such as its consideration of relaxing or eliminating the LORSA's ban on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), a position which has forestalled action on draft laws submitted by COPISA to MAGAP. For this reason, many social movement constituents of the *Red Agraria* (agrarian network) constituents of COPISA have

come to see MAGAP as an obstacle to their proposals for implementation of LORSA provisions regarding land reform, given that the ministry has the power to indefinitely forestall such legislative proposals from being presented to the National Assembly. Indeed, between 2010 and 2012, COPISA presented nine draft laws elaborated at dozens of participatory workshops attended by thousands of small civil society and social movement organizations, with considerable imposition on their members, who often were engaged in farming or fishing directly beforehand. These included laws on land and territory; artisanal fishing, aquaculture, and the conservation of mangrove fisheries; agrobiodiversity, seeds and agroecology; ancestral territories and communal property; food safety and quality control regulation; agricultural development and employment; credit, subsidies, and insurance; and consumer health and nutrition. None of these were ratified (Peña 2013, 11).

Another important recognition of social movement demands in Ecuador was in the establishment of a national development plan acknowledging the indigenous concept of *sumak kawsay*, the *Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir* (PNBV), and the establishment of a super-ministerial governmental authority, SENPLADES (*Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarollo*), or the Secretariat for Planning and Development, for its implementation. Xavier León (2012) writes that despite the development authority's statutory goal of promoting rural food sovereignty, including strengthening local production of food and democratization of access to the means of production such as land and water resources, the bulk of policies for the implementation of these objectives in reality have been at best poorly coordinated and

at worst disproportionately benefit large agribusiness. For example, a policy purported to mitigate increases in food prices during the crisis of 2007-8 waived taxes on importers and domestic producers of agrochemicals, consumption taxes on agrochemicals and other inputs, and waived contributions owed by large businesses to the national fund for electrification of rural areas, amounting to a subsidy of hundreds of millions of dollars. Another program designed for flood relief for farmers provided subsidized agrochemicals and certified seed purchased with public funds. Producers of soy and corn become entangled in the supply chain of agribusinesses producing livestock fodder, shifting the orientation of production away from staple food crops destined for local consumption. León argues that this amounts to a type of import substitution industrialization policy in corn, essentially misusing resources that could have been used to strengthen food sovereignty. While Ecuador's high degree of national self-sufficiency in certain staple crops such as rice[3] meant that the food crisis had a less severe effect there than in countries more heavily dependent on food imports, crops such as soy, wheat, and corn continued to be imported by large agribusinesses, much of which is used as fodder for livestock (Vega and Beillard 2014). When these commodities spiked in price, the government wound up subsidizing their major importers to the tune of millions of dollars through such policies (León 2012). Soy, wheat, and corn continued to be the country's top three food imports in 2011, wheat to supply flour to the burgeoning demand for bread and,

[3] Ecuador is a net exporter of rice, mainly to Colombia. The Correa administration promotes domestic production and maintains protectionist policies such as price controls, permitting, and a high tariff of up to 68% (Vega and Beillard 2014).

increasingly, feed for shrimp aquaculture, corn and soy primarily for use in livestock feed to supply skyrocketing demand for meat. Domestic wheat production has collapsed since the 1970s and now accounts for less than 2% of domestic consumption, in part suffering from competition with subsidized imports from Canada and the US and the removal in 2001 of price controls under World Trade Organization commitments, though the government has taken policy measures to combat this in recent years, such as research into varieties suitable for production in the Ecuadorian highlands and blending a proportion of domestically produced banana flour into bread flour. With regard to corn, the government has implemented policies to promote domestic production such as requiring importers to first buy up all available domestic production before a permit to import additional corn is issued[4] (Vega and Beillard 2014). While they will likely continue to result in decreasing corn imports, these policies provide further incentive to shift domestic agricultural production from food crops to fodder and are therefore likely to further erode food sovereignty and food security. More wheat used for production of shrimp for export will likely have the same effect.

Another key government policy for food sovereignty was *Plan Tierras*, aimed at achieving reductions in the concentration of land ownership as called for by the 2008 constitution and the PNBV. According to León, most of the land redistributed belonged either to the state or had been expropriated from failed banks, and no

[4] A similar policy for wheat was abolished in 2010 as untenable, not to mention in opposition to food sovereignty, as most domestic wheat production is consumed locally in the rural areas where it is produced (Vega and Beillard 2014).

mechanism had been established to answer the longstanding call for the expropriation and repurposing of nonproductive lands of large plantations. In many cases, peasant beneficiaries of lands distributed this way received no further assistance in the form of funding for productive projects under the rubric of food sovereignty. According to León, therefore, the program could thus hardly be deemed real land reform (ibid.). The *modus operandi* of SENPLADES remains a subject of controversy, with critics pointing out serious internal contradictions in its treatment of Autonomous Decentralized Governments (ADGs) such as parish councils or indigenous communities recognized under international conventions on the one hand and on the other the statutory requirement of the PNBV that these entities create development plans within the PNBV's parameters and subject to the hegemonic authority of the state. In practice, actual policies have tended to favor national modernization projects above concerns of local authorities or rural communities, for instance facilitating the extraction of mineral resources in the Amazon region or the development of new agroexport-oriented plantations in the Sierra producing such crops as broccoli, asparagus, and cut flowers (Yépez 2012).

Attempts to implement other PNBV and LORSA provisions as public policy are likely to face similar difficulties, given the intransigence of government bureaucracy toward COPISA's participatory process and the poor implementation of laws already on the books. This makes the actual fate of communities that would be affected the most by such potential reforms of great interest to this study.

Contradictions between policy and implementation such as those reviewed

above have led some observers to describe a tension between the indigenous cosmovision of *sumak kawsay* and the Correa government's interpretation thereof as *buen vivir* as it is actually being put into practice, arguing that the government's approach is essentially a centralist, hierarchical, and technocratic variation of socialism, whereas the indigenous conceptualization emphasizes balancing and stabilizing contrasting energies and beings, rather than a set of measures to impel development or bring about justice (Oviedo 2014). This tension also contributes to a perception of rapidly expanding government bureaucracy whose own growth can be at times at loggerheads with the statutory objectives of its institutions, as symbolized by the rapid growth of a professional class of bureaucrats concentrated in urban areas such as the capital and disconnected from the reality of the territories they are entrusted with administrating.[5] Such a bifurcation between principle and policy risks a shift in perception that the Correa administration has coopted the notion of *sumak kawsay* in service of a modernizing agenda that relegates the concerns of rural social movements to a peripheral status. This raises the questions, to what extent are social movements still able to strategically take advantage of administration rhetoric for their own purposes, or if this approach is not deemed sufficient, at what point in this shift might social movements begin to move away from the Correa administration in favor of *Pachakutik* or still another approach to electoral politics? Or do social movements themselves risk jeopardizing their integrity through cooptation by the

[5] While in Quito, the researcher witnessed a delivery truck of a major agribusiness corporation distributing holiday turkeys to queuing civil servants outside a branch of the agriculture ministry dedicated to promoting local circuits of production and consumption.

state? The following section reviews the rise of La Vía Campesina, whose member organizations in Ecuador continue to play an important role in shaping the direction of the country's politics as well as the food sovereignty of its citizens.

A Call to Action

On April 17, 2015, the members of the transnational peasant social movement La Vía Campesina mobilized for the 9th annual International Day of Peasant Struggle, which commemorates nineteen landless Brazilian farmers who were killed by military police forces while demanding access to land on the same date in 1996. Many thousands of peasants and their civil society allies worldwide organized hundreds of actions and demonstrations to demand recognition of peasant rights and to resist the globalization of a system of agriculture viewed as hegemonic and socially and ecologically destructive. The self-organization of peasants into a transnational social movement as well as their tactics and critiques should be of great interest to scholars of global studies, given its profound transformative implications for agrarian political economy, gender analysis, and the study of social movements. Etymologically "people of the land," the very word "peasant" has strong feudal connotations in the European context. Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* saw "subjecting the country to the rule of the town" as part of a teleological liberatory process, "rescuing a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life." Arriving at a similar conclusion from a capitalist paradigm, economic progress requires, some scholars argue, a total displacement in the values and ways of life of

"underdeveloped" peoples by market norms and institutions, a process led worldwide by the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and IMF (Berthoud 1992, 72-3). In rejecting the ideological basis of either such process, the rise of a self-described peasant social movement such as La Vía Campesina demands not only the reconceptualization of the social and ecological value of agrarian livelihoods but also the reexamination of the prospects for forms of rural development that resist devalorization of peasant knowledge and practices.

La Vía Campesina elaborated the concept of food sovereignty, which can be broadly stated as the right of nations or peoples to control their own food systems and the extent to which this right can be exercised, in its Position on Food Sovereignty document presented at the 1996 World Food Summit (Wittman 2010, 2). Food sovereignty both criticizes the neoliberal, industrial model of agriculture pursued by agribusiness corporations and articulates an alternative based on the assertion by those who produce food to their right to control productive resources such as land, water, and seeds, for the transformation of agricultural systems (ibid.). By March 2012, a major agenda item before the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean was a debate involving academia and civil society on establishing a definition of the term (FAO 2012), whose meaning had not been formally adopted within the FAO or the UN system, despite its codification in law by several UN member states, including Ecuador, Venezuela, Mali, Bolivia, Nepal, and Senegal (Peña 2013). The concept has further

gained traction in recent years as the World Trade Organization's negotiations on trade in agricultural commodities collapsed in 2008 after a year that saw food commodity prices double, while the number of undernourished rose precipitously, in what has since come to be called the world food crisis. The vulnerability of a liberalized trade regime in agricultural commodities to price shocks and the dependence of commodity prices on the prices of petroleum-based inputs such as chemical fertilizer and transportation costs are two areas of deepening concern, and in fact are seen by Ecuadorian food sovereignty scholars as key factors that helped precipitate the crisis (Rosero et al. 2011). Against this backdrop, food sovereignty has potentially profound and radical implications and has come to be seen as the master concept that unifies La Vía Campesina's action program in its criticisms of the vulnerabilities of the industrial agriculture system and a model of economic progress that would undermine its members' livelihoods.

Academic discussion of transnational social movements like La Vía Campesina has highlighted their promise, especially their potential to mobilize around issues that transcend national territory, such as the cry to resist the imposition of a neoliberal food regime, while promoting an agri-food system that is grounded in diverse local needs and realities. For Canadian scholar Annette Aurélie Desmarais, this implies a "dialectical relationship between the local, the national, and the global," wherein a broad research agenda is needed that both encompasses and looks beyond attempts to influence state regulations and to win legal reforms of rural development policy (2007

135). For social movements like La Vía Campesina resisting the globalization of industrial agriculture, transnationality means that not only resistance strategies such as protest of WTO-led trade liberalization but also alternatives such as food sovereignty are to be articulated and pursued at all three of these levels.

In her 2002 article "The Vía Campesina: Consolidating an International Peasant and Farm Movement" published in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Desmarais reviews the development of the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina from its inception in 1993, drawing on a literature review as well as her firsthand experience acquired as coordinator of a Canada-based international farmer organizing project and during field work in Mexico, India, and Honduras (Desmarais 2002). The methodology used consists therefore of long-term participant observation and interviews of movement leaders. Accounts from rank-and-file members are largely omitted from the analysis, which is somewhat troubling given the ostensibly horizontal nature of the organizations being studied. This apparent tension warrants both a closer analysis of the academic literature, to which we turn next, and also direct observations in the field.

The Vía Campesina arose at a 1993 meeting in Mons, Belgium between Latin American peasants and an unnamed non-governmental organization (NGO), when it turned out that peasant participants had a much more sweeping agenda than the host organization, extending to the foundation of a transnational social movement. They rejected the harmful effects of neoliberalism and "high" or industrial agriculture on

rural landscapes and peasant livelihoods via the processes of enclosure and what amounted to "a program of the methodical destruction of collectives" with the effect of "driving peasants and small farmers from the land" (Handy and Fehr 2010), while pursuing an alternative model of rural development based on the principles of community, gender and ethnic equality, social justice, respect for indigenous livelihoods and culture, and the central concept of food sovereignty, most succinctly defined as the right to produce one's food on one's own territory. The movement's initial attempts to participate in dialogue with international agencies such as the World Bank and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization resulted in frustrating exclusion in the case of the 1996 Global Forum on Agricultural Research, where the movement's dissent with the final consensus document, the Dresden Declaration, was ignored and denied. The movement was not invited back, a fact ascribed to its insistence on redefining "research" in a peasant-oriented way, along with its staunch criticism of neoliberal trade policy (Desmarais, 107).

The article concludes with a summary of the movement's current strategy and tactics such as the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform, begun in 1999, which emphasizes demands at the national level, such as land reform and the "social ownership of land," rejection of international free trade agreements, legal prohibition of genetically modified seeds, and the principle of food sovereignty (ibid., 110-11). However, it is perplexing that despite the author's repeated references to the movement's commitment to gender equality, mention of the twenty-five percent of

the movement's original founders who were women, frequent quotations of women leaders, and citation of her own research on women farmers in South America, there are no explicitly feminist analyses applied, feminist literature invoked, nor feminist claims made. Additionally, the question of a leadership/rank-and-file gap is left unaddressed, and local-level and ecological concerns are mostly absent. The literature reviewed below speaks directly to these issues.

Feminism and Gender

In her 2009 article "Engendering the Political Economy of Agrarian Change," Iranian scholar Shahra Razavi presents three key feminist concerns with mainstream analyses of agrarian political economy: the first a review of feminist critiques of the unitary household model, of the role and limitations of the state and the market to manage local resources, and the limitations of land privatization-based approaches to improving women's status, given the "highly unequalizing tendencies" of rural markets, especially land markets. She expresses skepticism towards the concept of "community," and the tendency of its usage to elide the patriarchal social relations of socially conservative societies. Next, she traces the "gender-blind" nature of state-led land reform efforts throughout most of the twentieth century that led to mixed results in addressing women's vulnerable position in existing land tenure institutions. Thirdly, Razavi also reviews empirical research from Sub-Saharan Africa, India, and Latin America that finds that women tended to lose rights of access to land under the implementation of private property regimes due to gender discrimination at the local

level. Given this mixed record, she is highly critical of blanket prescriptions by policy organizations such as NGOs and the World Bank that advocate strengthened private property rights as a solution (Razavi 2009, 213), and draws attention to a lack of discussion of how local systems might overcome embedded patriarchy.

Razavi calls for a "new political economy" that incorporates a gender dimension into a body of literature already critical of the abstraction of the neoclassical economic market, shown by theorists of political economy to be socially constructed and carried out, while being characterized by power hierarchies and exclusions. She recommends that "livelihood diversification," or the process by which rural families diversify economic and social activities with the goal of improving their standard of living, be viewed in terms of distinct categories, one a survival strategy and the other a process of accumulation. Lastly, she reviews the important contributions women have made in rural social movements in spite of the obstacles they face to gaining strong articulation of their demands within these movements, citing these movements' tendency to collapse women's problems into class problems (ibid., 218).

With regard to methodology, Razavi's article is based entirely on an extensive review of secondary sources, whether academic literature or government statistics, such as those on demographics and household income from South Africa. She suggests that there is further scope for research into non-commodified work, domestic institutions, and social relations. Overall, Razavi's arguments are strongly presented and their locations within debates in a broad range of literature on gender analysis in

rural political economy are carefully documented. Though she does not specify possible methodologies by which this research might be conducted, one conclusion that can be drawn is that primary research into the gender dimensions of not only agriculture but also livelihood diversification and their implications for gender equity is essential, as is consideration of literature on conducting this type of primary research.

Of particular relevance to this research are feminist constructivist conceptualizations of gender, such as those articulated by Elisabeth Prügl, which shed light on "social practices that realize relationships of power resulting in the subordination of women" and offer "practical and emancipatory knowledge and raise questions for feminist research" (1999: 7, 24). This view illuminates avenues for research not only into women's participation, but the presence and degree of prioritization of dismantling gender hierarchy on rural social movements' agendas, the strategies employed in integrating gender equality into their action programs, and above all the effect of such strategies on the status and sharing of reproductive labor and its relationship to agricultural labor. One theorization of this relationship is the so-called triple shift, whereby women are made primarily responsible for caring labor such as child care, and domestic labor such as housework, in addition to labor they perform outside the home (Moser 1993). A feminist constructivist perspective conceives of gender roles not as static but socially constructed, allowing for

emancipatory actions to be taken to reverse the marginalization of women and to dismantle gender hierarchies.

The Hazards of Transnationalism

Maria G. Rodrigues's "Rethinking the Impact of Transnational Advocacy Networks," published in 2011 in the journal *New Global Studies* provides a skeptical view of transnationalism informed by her empirical research in Ecuador and Brazil. In this longitudinal comparative analysis of the experiences of two Latin American Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs), Rodrigues examines the 1998 book *Activists Beyond Borders*, directly challenging the high expectations she argues that it raised regarding the transfer of resources and expertise via cooperation between North and South civil society actors, and showing that not only may local groups experience a reversal of the gains in empowerment (defined as political and technical capacity) made under participation in a TAN, but may undergo what she calls "complete disarticulation" (Rodrigues 2011, 1).

The two local groups in Rodrigues's study are the Rondônia network, based in Brazilian Amazonia, and what she calls the Ecuadorian anti-oil network, based in the *Oriente* region of that country. The Rondônia network arose as a civil society umbrella group representing small indigenous and environmental organizations, rubber-tappers' and rural workers' unions, which mobilized in response to the dire environmental impacts on the region of the World Bank-sponsored Polonoreste road paving and colonization project. The network demanded first a say in the

implementation of the Planafloro project, designed to correct the failures of its predecessor, then as it proved to be even worse, called for formal investigation by the Bank's Inspection Panel, winning extensive restructuring in the mid-90s. However, today the member organizations have "imploded," either dissolving, coming under prosecution for embezzling, or experiencing mass membership loss, while exploitation of timber and construction of dams continue (ibid.).

In 1990, in an alliance with US-based NGOs such as the Rainforest Action Network, the Ecuadorian anti-oil network launched the "Amazonia for Life Campaign" against the oil exploitation operations of Texaco, demanding local participation in decision-making and local monitoring, and in February 2011 winning US$8.6 billion in damages. However, Rodrigues notes that the monitoring arm of the campaign collapsed due to lack of technical capacity, as did the Rondônia network in the face of the technocratic requirements of participation in the World Bank-sponsored project (ibid., 13, 9).

Rodrigues summarizes the mixed results of the two networks, and notably faults NGOs' withdrawal from Rondônia once formal representation had been achieved, leading to cooptation of its few highly-qualified leaders by state bureaucracy. In her view, NGOs need to provide sustained support and capacity building so that local groups may meet the technical responsibilities that accompany gains in political power. Rodrigues concludes by calling for more long-term research on the impacts of

transnational activism by students of globalization and transnational social movements (ibid., 18).

As mentioned above, with regard to methodology, Rodrigues employs a longitudinal analysis, comparing data obtained over two decades of fieldwork, continuous survey of print and internet media, and via ongoing contacts with local activists, as well as review of academic literature and other secondary sources, including literature on the impact and shortcomings of TANs, notably the 2002 book *The Power and Limits of NGOs*. Her profound expertise on the topic, obtained through a long-term approach, combined with a careful dialogue with academic literature, allows her to complicate the findings of earlier studies that emphasized the short-term effectiveness of TAN participation, and means that her conclusions have serious implications for scholars of social movements.

This literature suggests that while transnational social movements and advocacy networks can gain achieve substantial political objectives at the national level, there is a risk of movement collapse as community energies and forms of organizing are shunted into national elections. The instability of food commodity prices under the industrial food regime, as illustrated by the 2007-2008 world food crisis, is one factor that suggests the need for further research into the potential of La Vía Campesina and other peasant organizations to resist imposition of this type of agrifood system, develop agroecological alternatives, and achieve food sovereignty while balancing interaction with the state with sustaining the livelihoods of their radical base. At the

same time, attention must be paid to these movements' approaches to acknowledging and dismantling gender hierarchies, especially regarding the status and sharing of domestic labor. Finally, the question of the vulnerability of movement leadership to cooptation by the state, and the extent to which horizontalism, especially in exchange of agroecological knowledge and practices, might help avert this while expanding the technical capacity of the movement must be kept in mind.

Food Sovereignty as a Critique of Industrial Agriculture

"Industrial agriculture" or "high modern agriculture" (Handy 2009) captures the notion of the application of industrial technology to agriculture, especially in the form of fossil fuel-based chemical inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, selective breeding, hybridization, and genetic engineering of seeds, mechanization of labor, construction of irrigation infrastructure, and cultivation of large-scale monocultures, designed to support industrial growth. The term is often used by critics pointing out the adverse social and environmental impacts of this mode of production, such as damage to ecological systems and the displacement of agrarian livelihoods (ibid.). Proponents often refer to the Green Revolution, or a series of such technological innovations throughout the mid-twentieth century, and credit it with increased yields. There is an ongoing debate over the relative yield efficiency of industrial agriculture, and evidence that small-scale labor-intensive polycultures have yields superior to monoculture (Altieri 2010, 122). A recent study of changes in agricultural productivity and the food security of England associated

with the industrial revolution-era enclosure of common lands showed that despite capital investment in drainage of wetlands and other "improved cultivation" measures, enclosed estates were not significantly more productive than the commons, nor had significant advantages in flexibility and experimentation with new crops and cultivation methods over smallholders, whose results were more readily shared with and thus beneficial to other producers on their communal lands (Allen 2009). Finally, industrial agriculture is associated with environmental degradation such as soil salinization, topsoil loss, aquifer depletion, biodiversity loss, and DNA contamination from genetically modified organisms.

American sociologist John Bellamy Foster has employed the term "metabolic rift" to theorize the negative impact of capitalism on ecology, the complex relationships between all forms of life, via a construction of human activity as taking place outside the logic of ecological systems (Foster 1999). The industrialization of agriculture has been one example. As Hannah Wittman puts it, "agrarian communities with long-standing relationships and rights to the land have been disconnected from the ecological basis of citizenship by rural modernization strategies based on the separation of society from nature" (2010, 91). This disconnection of ecology from human activity is reflected in the anthropocentric concept of environmental externalities in neoclassical economic discourse in reference to the limitations of market mechanisms for assigning value to natural processes and systems. The notion of the metabolic rift is consistent with alternative epistemologies, such as those

expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth by the 2010 World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and the way in which they inform alternative practices such as agroecology.

One such epistemology is that represented by the concept of *sumak kawsay*, a Kichwa term originating with the Quechua/Kichwa-speaking indigenous peoples of Andean South America. Most often rendered into Spanish as "*buen vivir*" and into English as "living well," for Ecuadorian academic and economist Pablo Davalos, *sumak kawsay* represents "a new framework of political, legal, and natural governance" based on a view of human existence that incorporates an "ethical and holistic dimension to the relationships of human beings … to their own history [and] with their natural surroundings" (2009). For Catherine Walsh, *sumak kawsay* represents a challenge to Eurocentric epistemology and raises the possibility of alternative conceptualizations of development that incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices (2010, 15). Notably, the term has been codified in the 2008 Ecuadorian constitution, providing a legal basis for claims contesting national development policy as well as for implementing alternatives at the state level. As Arturo Escobar (2008) puts it,

> Ecuador constitutes a courageous example of alternative development, with important socialist and ecological undertones, yet it still seems to be largely framed within a modernizing perspective. The alternative modernity that might come about as a result of the State-led transformation is already a significant accomplishment, one that could be radicalized by welcoming more decidedly the proposals of indigenous peoples and nationalities, Afro-Ecuadorian groups, environmentalists, and women's groups. This is particularly important

> in terms of moving forward with the articulation of pluri-nationality and interculturality envisioned by these groups, one that could effectively contribute to transforming the structures of coloniality at social, political, cultural and epistemic levels.

The qualifications made in this assessment reflect concerns over how such proposals might be put into practice given that relations between the Ecuadorian state under President Rafael Correa and indigenous and peasant social movements, which also constitute the Ecuadorian membership of La Vía Campesina, remain tense and contested, especially regarding issues such as laws on mineral exploration and water rights (Becker 2012).

Food sovereignty is etymologically related to the concept of food security and arises in part as a critique of some interpretations of that concept. Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is "a situation when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2015). As World Food Prize Laureate Per Pinstrup-Andersen points out, this definition represents modifications made to the concept since its origins in moral objections to the presence of hunger and the naïve idea that increasing food production alone can eliminate hunger. When the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) convened its 1996 World Food Summit, two important qualifications made were the distinction between the supply or availability of food and access to it by people, and the need for available food to be not only nutritious but to meet preferences (2009). As Nobel-Prize winning economist

Amartya Sen argued, poverty and inequalities in distribution, not a lack of food supply, were the major cause of the Ethiopian famine of the early 1970s, underscoring that availability of food does not guarantee access to it (1983). Proponents of food sovereignty have agreed that the FAO definition of food security has notable shortcomings. According to Hannah Wittman et al. in their book *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*:

> This definition invites an interpretation toward food related policies that emphasizes maximizing food production and enhancing food access opportunities, without particular attention to how, where and by whom food is produced. This common definition also is uncritical of current patterns of food consumption and distribution (2010, 3).

In practice, the narrowly focused pursuit of food security can have negative social consequences and according to some has actually exacerbated "a colonial pattern of extraction of food resources from South to North" (McMichael 2010, 168). For example, in industrial revolution-era England, despite widespread conversion of land use from wool production to food production, increases in food security depended in great measure on wheat imported from the Baltic states and Ireland and an increase in the consumption of sugar, produced by slave labor in colonial possessions. Further, increases in productivity depended upon the exploitation to exhaustion of Peruvian guano deposits naturally accumulated over the course of millennia (Handy and Fehr 2009).

Another implication of the above is that narrow, supply-focused interpretations of food security can still be consistent with policy measures such as

subsidies that tend to reduce diversity of production and concentrate agricultural production in the hands of large agribusiness corporations and food aid programs which dispose of overproduced agricultural commodities by exploiting liberalized global trade rules in order to sell below prevailing market prices, displacing smallholder food production, undermining self-sufficiency and risking increases in hunger (Wittman 2010, 3). Export-oriented economic development strategies such as emphasis on exports of agricultural commodities on the part of poorer countries may have succeeded in bringing in foreign exchange, but at the same time have also had profoundly negative social consequences (ibid., 93). The perceived need for a wider focus than hunger on issues concerning rural populations and agriculture has been a major factor contributing to the rise of the paradigm of food sovereignty.

Methods

Action research for this project was conducted over the course of a six-month volunteer internship at the Quito-based non-governmental organization Huayra Causay. The fieldwork was conducted in two components: 1) while assisting the staff of Huayra Causay with ongoing projects such as the selection and preparation of Ecuadorean students for participation on multinational exchange programs in sustainable agriculture, and 2) three case studies were also conducted via three 3- to 5-week solo homestays with Huayra Causay's contacts in rural communities in the North, Central and Southern Sierra as a participant observer on Huayra Causay's

multidisciplinary food sovereignty exchange program, the goal of which is to maintain and expand a network of community leaders, activists and practitioners of alternatives for sustainable agriculture. During these homestays, the action researcher contributed to the ongoing projects and daily activities of the host communities. These ranged from negotiations with the national, municipal, and parochial levels of government, to collaborations with NGOs aiming to improve rural infrastructure such as irrigation networks, to communal work parties in the fields.

The project conducted research using a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative aspects over preparatory and action research phases. In the preparatory phase, qualitative and quantitative data were collected in the form of one-on-one interviews with Quito-based subjects and reviews of manifestos and other public documents in preparation for case study research in the field. In the executory phase, action research was carried out as a participant on the host NGO's exchange program in three rural communities. During this phase, semi-structured interviews with community leaders as well as rank-and-file community members were conducted, combining ethnographic research with direct observations as a participant-observer. These included details of agroecological practices, household diet, and rates of self-provisioning versus food purchases. In particular, information regarding individual conceptualizations and strategies for achieving food sovereignty by community members themselves was recorded.

Quantitative data was collected primarily from secondary sources such as government reports and analyses by local NGOs. While on-site, quantitative time-use data was also collected along with detailed notes regarding the division of the household's domestic responsibilities and relations between household members, in order to investigate the status of intra-household distribution of domestic labor and the extent of livelihood diversification, while bearing in mind the debate over the extent to which time use surveys can further a feminist research agenda (Bryson 2008). Additionally, quantitative data on crop yields under agroecological or prevalent cultivation methods as well as household rates of self-provisioning of food and other farm products was collected.

As set forth in the introduction, this research project sought to address the question of how practices of food sovereignty by rural communities themselves confirm or contradict national and transnational conceptions of these concepts. This question is addressed by comparing the state of food sovereignty across the dimensions of the data collected, both between case studies and against the conceptualizations of food sovereignty represented by the demands of rural social movements and policy responses by the state, as reviewed in the background section. Finally, the contributions of the action researcher to the host communities and the status of their relationship to the researcher's host NGO was recorded and assessed.

Results

This study collected a) semi-structured interviews with a broad sample of movement leaders and rank-and-file participants, b) annotated data on time use and the distribution of domestic labor for households in the community where the researcher was based, c) quantitative data on self-provisioning rates for these households, d) qualitative and quantitative observations of each of three communities' communal work parties, e) crop yield data, and f) unclassified other results. With these results, I argue that rural communities have made advances toward food sovereignty, rural households' livelihoods, and inclusion in decision-making processes, though they continue to confront significant setbacks, including the feminization of agricultural and domestic labor, which has, on balance, exacerbated socioeconomic marginalization of women and gender hierarchies.

Huayra Causay

The researcher's host organization, Huayra Causay (from the Kichwa *wayra kawsay*, or winds of life) is a small Quito-based NGO established in 2006 for the purpose of promoting sustainable agriculture in Ecuador. The organization aims to promote agricultural research, direct marketing, appropriate alternative technologies, and the revalorization of community and local culture by carrying out sustainable development and food sovereignty projects, creating and participating in multinational exchange programs, and building strategic partnerships with other actors and institutions. As one example, the organization maintains an exchange program where community leaders train abroad at organic farms in the United States,

then return to Ecuador to apply what they have learned by initiating participatory development projects in their communities. These leaders then exchange results, experiences, and materials at periodic conferences convened by Huayra Causay.

In addition, Huayra Causay maintains a network of program alumni and other community leaders, activists, and practitioners of alternatives for sustainable agriculture, organizes periodic conferences on sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty, and hosts volunteers from abroad who come to participate in its multidisciplinary food sovereignty exchange program. The organization conducts participatory research projects across the country and some members concurrently pursue postgraduate studies at the Quito campus of FLACSO, the Latin American Social Sciences Institute. Finally, the organization benefits from strategic relationships with major civil society actors such as COPISA and *Acción Ecológica*, one of Ecuador's most prominent non-governmental organizations. Huayra Causay therefore plays an important role not only by autonomously carrying out its statutory objectives, but also in contributing to a civil society space in which the efforts and aspirations of local practitioners can inform the development of public policy on a national level and a transnational awareness of the praxis of sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty in Ecuador.

The researcher also benefitted from the host NGO's connections to public officials and academics, a number of whom the researcher was able to speak with in preparation for or conjunction with his work in the field. Various obstacles, both those already identified in the literature as well as new issues were raised. For

example, a representative of CONFEUNASSC, Peasants' Social Security, was interviewed. He was candid about his view of the creation of the peasants' social security system, wherein a prior president Jamil Mahuad, had created the institution in the last days of his administration in a desperate, unsuccessful bid to buy off rural organizations' 11 million beneficiaries and prevent his ouster. Most interestingly, the welfare institution persisted after he was forced out of office, however, and in his view, remained a controversial tool for the national government to manipulate rural interest groups, who found themselves competing over who would have access to social security payments. Indeed, the official felt that the "critical sense" of major rural social movements such as CONAIE and FENOCIN, many of whose leadership have gained posts in the Correa government, had been largely blunted. The pattern of cooptation of social movement leadership into establishment institutions, jeopardizing their effectiveness as oppositional organizations, is a noted risk confronting such movements elsewhere on the continent (Rodrigues 2011).

In addition, a coordinator at COPISA was interviewed, who confirmed that the National Assembly's recalcitrance on acting on its submissions of draft legislation was a major problem for the council. He added that COPISA's internal cohesion suffers due to a dynamic of competition between two competing factions, those with a more agroecological focus, and those with a more partisan political focus. Frustrations with the legislative process have meant that COPISA is increasingly looking at measures that can be implemented without national-level legislation, such as the expansion of programs to expand small producers' access to market facilities

including dedicated farmer's markets, and to promote awareness of the importance of agroecology among urban consumers, such as with the Quito-based *¡Qué Rico Es!* ("How sweet it is!") campaign. Nevertheless, the institution has also promoted a controversial approach of integrating small producers into agribusiness and supermarket supply chains, underscoring conflict-of-interest concerns and structural obstacles confronting efforts to implement the LORSA's provisions.[6]

Site 1: Píllaro, Tungurahua Province (Central Sierra)

The first of three case studies carried out as part of the food sovereignty exchange program was conducted in the rural community of Quillán, approximately ten kilometers northeast of the city of Ambato in the parish of San Miguelito, Píllaro Canton, Tungurahua Province. The community is located on the eastern bank of the Cutuchi River and the slopes of its canyon above. Over an approximately three-week period, action research was conducted as guest and participant in the daily activities of a host family, one member of which had been elected as the secretary of an association of farmers known as ABAPP (*Asociación de Bienes Agroecológicos y Productores de Píllaro*). The researcher also made observations in the parish of San Andres, located to the north of central Píllaro.

Quillán is a small settlement on the steeply graded canyon walls of the Cutuchi River to the relatively level banks at the base of the canyon, 400 meters lower than the plateau above. Despite its high elevation of 2200 meters, the town enjoys a

[6] One civil servant at COPISA confided to a Huayra Causay representative that he sold his own chickens to a large agribusiness distributor.

temperate microclimate that allows the production of avocados, sweet granadilla, blackberries, cherimoya, babaco, *chamburo* (mountain papaya), *taxo* (banana passionfruit), and tamarillo. Vegetables such as bok choi, kale, and mustard greens are also grown. Other important crops include staples such as corn, beans, *chocho* (Andean lupin), and potatoes. Farmers also often maintained a small number of livestock to complement farm operations and enhance self-provisioning, such as chickens for eggs, pigs for disposal of kitchen scraps, and one or more dairy cows for milk. The settlement benefits from the previously subterranean water that emerges from the canyon walls as springs, providing irrigation by gravity and helping make much of the steeply graded land arable. The abundant water supply also allows the cultivation of watercress and construction of small pisciculture ponds where rainbow trout are raised, a non-endemic species whose production is dependent on motor travel to a nursery to purchase fingerlings and processed feed, expenses considered justified by the fish's $4 per kilogram market price. Another prominent if seasonal source of economic activity in the community was tourism, as especially on weekends and during the summer a few travelers from the coast to the Amazon would descend the windy road into the community to visit one of three or four small lodges offering swimming and soaking pools filled by river water or rustic diners serving freshly caught trout.

ABAPP's emphasis has been on commercializing the products of its members and improving their market access via both direct sales and by negotiating directly with large purchasing institutions such as major supermarket chains, obviating the

need for an intermediary and capturing the added value of this link in the supply chain. As a member of province-wide producers' association PACAT (*Productores Agroecológicos y Comercio Asociativo de Tungurahua*), ABAPP has the right to sell at a farmer's market conducted once weekly at a permanent market building in the provincial capital of Ambato. ABAPP has also purchased a processing facility with the aid of a loan of approximately $100,000 from the government, and a small adjacent plot of land with a loan from a cooperative lending institution based in Quito. Nevertheless, according to the professional agronomist hired by ABAPP, the association membership has declined from its peak of 180 members to a mere 50, and member dues collected to meet debt obligations for the land purchase and copayments on financing for the processing center have increased from $20 per member per month to $44. Also, because the opportunity for direct marketing at the farmer's market is only once per week, farmers also resort to selling much of their product to intermediaries at wholesale markets in Píllaro and Ambato for comparatively poor prices. For example, at the farmers' market, avocados could be sold for three or four per dollar, whereas a wholesale price considered good for a crate of 70 avocados sold to an intermediary was $15, a difference of as much as 56% that could be captured by the producers. Many or most ABAPP members owned a parcel of their own land.

ABAPP holds regular *mingas* (from the Kichwa *minka*), or communal work parties, though these are much less common than those of the community in the second case study as the association's landholdings are much smaller, and make much more of a celebration out of routine farm labor such as the harvest. The

observed *minga* included the preparation of a communal lunch at considerable expense, including the slaughter of valuable guinea pigs and the purchase of bottled beverages. These preparations were aimed in part at promoting good attendance at the *minga* held at the communal plot, located at considerable distance from the homes of many association members. Food preparation duties were entirely or nearly entirely assigned to women, who comprised the vast majority of *minga* participants. The *minga* attended by the researcher was for the purpose of harvesting a crop of potatoes on the association's approximately 1/8 hectare under cultivation of *Súper Chola* variety potatoes, accounting for most of the communal land. At the end of the meeting, members were briefed on a government-NGO joint program for adaptation to the effects of climate change and signed to signify their attendance.

In half a day's labor, a yield of 13 quintals of approximately 52 kilograms each of the largest-sized potatoes, or 5.7 metric tons per hectare, was realized, and the next crop was sewn using the discards. A small amount of what the researcher was told was nitrate fertilizer was applied carefully to each seed potato. This yield was significantly inferior to the average yield of 9.2 metric tons per hectare for this variety found by one study of other Tungurahua producers (Agreda 2013). However, the harvest also yielded 5 quintals of medium-sized potatoes and 14 quintals of small-sized potatoes, which were valued at lower prices and in some cases consumed by the association members themselves. If these inferior-sized potatoes are included in the calculation, then yield figures rise to 15.5 metric tons per hectare, exceeding the previous average. Nevertheless, ABAPP members considered the overall yield poor,

commenting that one reason was a lack of water, as the communal plot was being dry farmed. The largest potatoes were sold to a publicly-supported distribution consortium for small- and medium-size producers for $23.50 per quintal, or $0.45 per kilogram, a price well above the average of $0.26 found by one study during the same time period (ibid.). Due to the equatorial climate, two harvests of potatoes are possible each year.

The ABAPP processing center is adorned with a sign provided by the Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion declaring "together for *buen vivir*" and "the citizens' revolution marches on" and showing that over $55,000 had been invested toward the purchase of the building to benefit 86 member families of ABAPP. The center, essentially a large warehouse, contains storage and rudimentary processing facilities such as plastic trays and wrap, and a small storefront mystifyingly stocked with processed foods. The rear of the warehouse contains a variety of inputs provided via various MAGAP initiatives, such as alfalfa seed produced in California and nitrate fertilizer.

ABAPP is engaged in an effort to commercialize its products directly to large supermarket chains in the hopes of bypassing intermediaries. The researcher attended one such negotiation with a large Quito-based supermarket, where association representatives brought samples of both fresh whole vegetables and vegetables that had been processed and packaged using the association's processing center equipment, such as a mix of chopped carrots and shelled peas ready for soup. After a drive of about two hours to Quito, they managed to arrange a confidential meeting

with a quality control official who informed them that they would have to improve their sample in terms of minimum vegetable size and yield numbers in order to be considered for a supplier contract, and quoted low prices that left the representatives disappointed. The association's hired agronomist stated that the biggest reasons for the association's drop in members were the low prices offered by large buyers and the instability of those prices. To a growing extent, rather than intermediaries, producers now see large retailers as the supply chain entity able to capture most of the market price. The issue of how statutorily small- and medium- sized producers' organizations like ABAPP might ever be able to leverage market power analogous to that of giant supermarket chains seems intractable, raising concerns as to structural obstacles to the construction of a "social and inclusive" economy for peasant farmers.

One possible avenue for nationwide coordination might be a collaboration of provincial organizations such as PACAT (*Productores Agroecológicos y Comercio Asociativo de Tungurahua*), of which ABAPP is a member organization. The researcher interviewed PACAT's secretary, who stated that the organization boasts over five hundred member families across some thirty-four associations. As a province-wide organization, PACAT does not accept individual memberships but is statutorily limited to member associations constituted of at least ten members, which must pay $100 in monthly dues. In exchange, PACAT provides technical assistance such as training in agroecological methods, access to inputs such as tools and certified seed, microcredit, and perhaps most importantly for farmers, access to market space at permanent market facilities in the provincial capital of Ambato. To operate a stall

in the weekly farmers' market held there, two to three farmers must agree to bring three to four crates of produce each per week, produced using agroecological methods ostensibly supervised by PACAT's professional agronomists. This model of certification might draw a comparison to the trend toward organic certification, but unlike many organic producers in the global North, PACAT's growers do not command a premium price for their produce, despite PACAT-produced signs festooning the market declaring the "clean," agroecological methods by which the market's products were produced. It can be surmised that buyers place only insignificant monetary value on PACAT's certification methods, or the notion of nominally agroecological production as compared to actually prevailing production methods, an issue that could not be accounted for by PACAT leadership.

Displayed in PACAT's office is a plaque announcing their "affiliation process" with FENOCIN, the national-level peasants' social movement associated with the Socialist party and Vía Campesina. However, when the secretary was queried about this, he vociferously disclaimed any political endorsement on the part of PACAT, especially with respect to the Correa administration's *Alianza PAIS*, suggesting a politically savvy and highly strategic consciousness with respect to possibly alienating opposition-oriented local government officials.

One Quillán resident who had previously worked in pisciculture, but now worked as a roustabout for an oil extraction operation of the Ecuadorian state oil company PetroAmazonas in the Amazon region, was interviewed. Pressured to seek work away from the family farm, at one point he had worked for the municipal

sanitation department as a contract worker for $10 for a one-day shift each week, an income that was far from adequate. He commented that during the right season in Quillán, a good living could be made from raising and selling trout to tourists. However, the business required significant investment. In the first place, concrete pools to contain the fingerlings as they matured to adulthood were relatively cheap to construct, and the river water was abundant enough year-round to support basic pisciculture, though the government had levied a water usage tax of $57 per year on the community. While a certain number of trout could be prepared and sold at a stand with minimal costs, scaling up the business beyond this would entail building a dining room and competing with the three or four well-established diner/hotels. The interviewee stated that he far preferred his work for the state oil company, which while dirty and dangerous, not only allowed him to support his family, engaged in farming, with his income, but also allowed him one week in three as leave to spend at home with them. He enthused about the Correa administration and the hope it gave the country and people like his co-workers at PetroAmazonas.

Another community resident planned to expand direct sales to tourists via her own farmer's market, taking advantage of microcredit available from a financial cooperative. Her family resided along a road with high foot traffic near important recreational facilities and found initial success selling fruits and vegetables such as avocados and sweet granadilla directly to tourists during weekends via a temporary stand, and sought to expand sales via a collaboration with other nearby producers. During the researcher's stay, this resident invested in sweet granadilla seedlings as

well as additional avocado saplings to increase production and invited others to sell other products such as cleaned rainbow trout. This approach to livelihood diversification was not without its drawbacks, as demand for the additional production was highly seasonal and the most important products sold were not staples for autoconsumption, limiting its importance for the food sovereignty of her family. Another family, supported by the financial assistance of remittances from family members outside the community, had built a communal seed nursery and a greenhouse for the production of high-value crops such as babaco, peppers, and tomatoes, well suited to direct marketing due to their fragility.

Direct observations of food consumed in the community showed a degree of specialization that sometimes came at the expense of self-provisioning and therefore food sovereignty. Families whose most important products for income were non-staples such as avocado, tamarillo, sweet granadilla, babaco, and trout, while they often consumed these products themselves, tended to produce a lower volume of staple crops. Such families tended to consume more rice, a product of the coast region, than other staples such as potatoes, toasted or boiled corn, and *machika*, a flour made from grains such as barley, though these were still an important part of their diet. On the other hand, in highland areas, producers of barley more frequently consumed *machika* as well as and dairy products produced from their own cows, a degree of self-provisioning that can be considered a hallmark of food sovereignty. One such producer stated that while surplus milk only sold for $0.33 per liter, it could also be made into a type of cheese that required three liters of milk but sold for $2.

The producer also sold alpaca wool for $1.50 per pound.

The state of the division of labor with respect to gender among the households observed in Quillán confirmed a feminization of agricultural labor. All six of the women household members worked full-time in agriculture on their family's land, while of the four men, only one worked predominantly in agriculture, but also spent significant time working outside the community. One of the women had obtained a teaching credential and had worked as a teacher outside the community at a rural school, but was forced to resign after having children in order to perform reproductive labor while her husband continued to work outside the community. Another woman was studying for a teaching credential while working in agriculture, though as the last daughter remaining at home, her mother put considerable pressure on her to remain engaged full-time in the running of the family's farming activities. The uncompensated nature of reproductive labor and the relegation of women to the duties of primary reproductive labor providers and agricultural labor confirmed findings in the academic literature on this topic discussed above, such as the tendency for the concept of "community" to elide a patriarchal social hierarchy, and the tendency for women to be made responsible for a "triple shift."

The researcher also interviewed a hydrological engineer employed by an NGO to lead the technical aspects of a major irrigation project in the neighboring parish of San Andres, located in the same canton of Píllaro, and attended a meeting of the community's newly constituted water council. This project had been undertaken in collaboration with the local peasant organization FOCCAT (*Federación de*

Organizaciones Campesinas de la Parroquia San Andres del Cantón Píllaro), founded in 1995 around the community's demands for land reform and access to water. The engineer stated that despite considerable geographic obstacles, such as the community's location atop a plateau that had made irrigation impossible and a rate of emigration of heads of households as high as 80%, the $2 million NGO-led project had successfully put 3,200 hectares of smallholders' land under irrigation. Over six hundred (and counting) of these were irrigated by aspersion, a method requiring a degree of water pressure that was rare throughout the country, irrigation by gravity being the most common method. This irrigation system had been achieved by capturing a portion of the outflow of a hydroelectric dam that had been built in the 1970s for electricity generation, creating a reservoir high in the *páramo*, or the moors of the Andean plateau, on whose western slopes the community is located. Until the advent of the project, residents could only watch bitterly as the life-giving resource represented by the dam outflow gushed into a canyon nearly directly below, having completed its electricity generation duties, and bemoan the government's neglect of their demands for assistance to access the water. The fact that the modest financial investment for the irrigation project, compared to the large investment necessary for the construction of the dam, had to be made by a coalition of NGOs, rather than the Ecuadorian government, the engineer explained, reflected badly on the government's priorities in the intervening years since the construction of the dam. The captured outflow was directed into a 16.5 km-long primary canal that supplied twenty-three small communal reservoirs constructed by the labor of community members

themselves, spaced at intervals, each secured by a fence and locked gate, and administrated by community water councils operating under the aegis of FOCCAT. These councils were direct democratic institutions responsible for the caretaking of the water supply as well as ensuring equal access by community households, as well as collecting a modest usage fee of $4.55 per year per hectare under irrigation. As part of their duties, community members took shifts as caretakers, each day making the trek uphill to their community's reservoir to unlock the gate of the reservoir's enclosure, open and close the irrigation valves, monitor the reservoir for any contamination, and guard against any attempts at illegitimate use such as siphoning. Any concerns about fairness of distribution were raised at periodic, well-attended meetings of the water councils, one of which the researcher attended. These meetings showed a high degree of equality of participation between genders, with leadership as well as rank-and-file speakers roughly equally divided between men and women, provided for direct engagement with the hydrological engineer and the transparency and dissemination of information regarding improvements in the system of irrigation by aspersion, and served as a springboard for other areas of community organizing, as concerns voiced were not strictly limited to water issues. As a result, the area had been able to shift agricultural production from only the most drought-tolerant of crops such as hardy squash to more than seventy crops including leafy vegetables and even pasture for dairy cows. The engineer's NGO employer had invested $1 million in loans aimed at underwriting 80% of the purchase price of dairy cows by smallholders, and according to a survey conducted by the NGO, over 3,000 households in the

community had become owners of at least one cow. Besides allowing the advent of dairy production in the community, the water supplied was of such purity and volume that a trout hatchery and ecotourism lodge could be established.

The trajectory of development in San Andres showed the complex and strategic and nature of social movement-NGO interaction. What was initially a peasant organization-driven movement for land reform and access to water, after winning considerable successes in the redistribution of plantation lands and investments in irrigation infrastructure via highly participatory governance, provided the basis for NGO-led investment initiatives above and beyond FOCCAT's demands, such as the provision of European varieties of dairy cows and the technical upgrade of infrastructure via the further construction of an aspersion irrigation system, and even led to the rise of private businesses such as the trout hatchery and ecotourism lodge. Despite a stunning degree of neglect by the national government for decades, by canny collaboration with the municipal government and international NGOs, the community had made great strides toward food sovereignty and the sustainability of its members' livelihoods. Indeed, unable to ignore FOCCAT's successes, the national Ministry of the Environment had begun its own, similar initiative in a neighboring community using water from the same dam, but according to the CESA engineer, the project was burdened by bureaucratic inefficiency and lack of sufficient collaboration with the community, and construction was lagging behind promised timetables, underscoring the importance of rural organizations and a horizontal approach to such projects.

Overall, the situation in Píllaro encompasses a diversity of rural livelihoods and approaches to *buen vivir*. While some residents had won great successes in organizing for land reform and access to water, as exemplified by FOCCAT, others fortunate enough to enjoy access to both of these, found mixed results. Members of ABAPP concerned with scaling up to commercialization to increase income via sales to distant markets, met with limited success, while other residents, especially men, found that wage labor supporting key industries associated with modernization such as petroleum drew them outside their communities, in some cases turning them into migrant laborers within their own country. For women of the community, men's participation in wage labor, as migrants or otherwise, tended to reinforce a feminization of agricultural and reproductive labor. Direct, associative marketing arrangements such as ABAPP's participation in the PACAT farmers' market in Ambato were of limited importance, as the market was held only weekly and PACAT's emphasis on agroecology did not guarantee a premium price for agroecological products. ABAPP's declining membership, indeed, showed that many members did not place enough value on their membership to continue. Both FOCCAT and PACAT maintained highly strategic approaches to the politics of relations with NGOs and local governments. Yet FOCCAT, with its emphasis on securing fundamental aspects of food sovereignty such as land and access to water, combined with its horizontal and transparent governance, had arguably achieved the most for its members since its founding well before the Correa administration.

With regard to the action researcher's impact on the buen vivir of Quillán and

other communities in Píllaro, apart from direct contributions to farm labor made while conducting semi-structured interviews with subjects, the overall effect the researcher had was minor. To make the researcher more effective during his three-week stay, the hosts could have prepared concrete tasks apart from farm labor that contributed to one of their long-term projects such as the establishment of a farmer's market within the community and publicizing it via social networks or online media. Nevertheless, the researcher's biggest success may have been the reinforcement of relations with the host NGO, Huayra Causay. The researcher's host in Quillán, a former participant on Huayra Causay's multinational exchange program for sustainable agriculture in the US, renewed her contact with the next generation of leaders at Huayra Causay as they made several visits. Finally, Huayra Causay was invited to host a participatory workshop in Quillán, attended by community members as well as local government officials, in which the researcher participated. Though contributions were modest and improvements in the wellbeing of the community incremental, the researcher was honored to have been invited to take part.

Site 2: Uksha, Imbabura Province (Northern Sierra)

The second of two case studies was conducted in the rural community of Uksha, located approximately ten miles to the east of the city of Otavalo, in the parish of San Pablo del Lago, Otavalo Cantón, Imbabura Province. The community is situated 3000+ meters above sea level in a broad saddle between two mountains, 3800m Cerro Cubiliche to the north and Cerro Cusín to the south. Of particular interest to the investigation was the formation by the community of the Asociación Agrícola Plaza

Pallares (AAPP), an agricultural cooperative engaged in farming the land of a previously privately held estate. Over a five-week period, action research was conducted in two capacities, a) as guest and participant in the daily activities of two different host families, both in their work obligations as AAPP members and their private household affairs, and b) as clerical assistant to the AAPP administration.

Uksha, a Kichwa word for a native species of alpine grass, is a rural community of some three hundred Kichwa-speaking families of the descendants of *huasipungueros,* or indigenous indentured laborers given access to the marginal lands on the plantation's periphery to cultivate for their family's private use in exchange for labor on the plantation of a large landowner in a feudal arrangement famously depicted in Jorge Icaza's 1934 novel *Huasipungo*. One community member told the researcher that as recently as his grandparents' generation, the indigenous indentured laborers were required to remove their hats and lower their gazes when in the presence of the landowner. The *huasipungo* system was officially ended in 1964 with the passage of the Agrarian Reform law, though as discussed above such reforms have been limited in practice and the economically marginalized status of many indigenous in communities of the Sierra region continues to the present day.

CONAIE considers the people of the San Pablo area as ethnically *Kayampi* (CONAIE 2010), though community members did not themselves identify with this or any other formal label. Some community customs, such as the wearing of blue ponchos by men, are considered by CONAIE as characteristic of the *Kayampi* (ibid.). With regard to nationality, community members distinguished themselves from the

indigenous peoples of both Otavalo to the west and those of the Zuleta plantation, who identify as *Karanki*, to the east, citing differences in hairstyle and dress. The community is affiliated with FICI (*Federación de los Pueblos Kichwa de la Sierra Norte del Ecuador*), a local chapter of ECUARUNARI (*Ecuador Runakunapak Rikcharimuy*), or the Indigenous Movement of Ecuador, representing the Kichwa-speaking peoples of Ecuador's Sierra and comprising a plurality of the membership of CONAIE. However, the leadership of the AAPP hastened to assert that the association itself had no such official political affiliation, concerning itself solely with agricultural issues.

The AAPP, formed in 2009, cooperatively produces barley, quinoa, fava beans, several varieties of corn, potatoes, and other Andean crops considered traditional for the benefit of its member families. According to the president and community leader, the association grew out of the community's long-standing demands for indigenous rights, chief among these land reform. The AAPP's statutory aims are:

– to promote the food security of its members and the larger community via local practices including the use of non-chemical fertilizers, crop rotations, and communal work;

– to promote environmental and local biodiversity protection programs;

– to strengthen cultural identity in such aspects as the Kichwa language, customs, ancestral knowledge, spirituality, and others;

– to acquire land to cultivate by any legal means;

– to maintain relations with similar organizations at the local, regional, national, and international levels;

– to negotiate with local, national, and international organizations the implementation of production plans that permit the improvement of economic income and the quality of life of the members and the community in general;

– to create training programs on the importance of the use of ancestral cultivation techniques and the importance of a diet of local, organically produced foods;

– to secure loans and technical assistance for the social good from national and foreign entities, whether public or private;

– to promote strategies for the improvement of production, productivity, storage, and conservation of products;

– to secure collection centers and markets to guarantee commercialization of the Association's products;

– to establish channels of fair commerce for its products;

– to contribute to the social, economic, and cultural development and improvement of its members; and

– to contribute, by all communal activities, to the unity and strengthening of the community.

Notably, the statute further obliges members to observe the indigenous creed of *ama killa*, *ama shuwa*, and *ama llulla* (neither steal, lie, nor be idle), to perform

agricultural labor on the association's land in *mingas*, and to pay membership dues, among other bylaws. The association leadership set the number of days to be labored and the amount of dues separately at sixty days of labor per year and approximately $300 of dues per year per family.

With a loan of over $1,000,000 from Ecuador's national development bank, the *Banco Nacional de Fomento* (BNF), in 2009 the AAPP purchased 375 hectares from the Galo Plaza Lasso plantation, an estate created with its bequeathal to Jesuits by the Spanish crown during the colonial period. According to AAPP leadership, the sale to the association was made possible after the departure to nearby cities of the landowners who had administrated the plantation lands around Uksha, which had become unprofitable. Though it was not explicitly stated, one reason for the decline of profitability was presumably the end of the *huasipungo* system of essentially free labor by indigenous serfs. Another factor may have been a fall in the price of wheat associated with an increase in wheat imports in recent years, wheat having been a principal product of the plantation.

As part of the NGO-sponsored exchange program, the action researcher assisted the Association's administration with clerical work for a bureaucratic process leading to the restructuring of the loan, the terms of which included a lower interest rate amounting to a substantial government subsidy. This process included repeat visits to the municipal government in Otavalo, the Agriculture Ministry in Quito (MAGAP), helping community members to obtain and submit copies of identification, deeds demonstrating land ownership and other documents, census taking and other

paperwork. During the course of this fieldwork, the researcher was invited to do homestays with two different families of the community, to contribute to communal work parties, and assist the association secretary with clerical work while making participant observations.

With regard to the procedures of the census of AAPP members being carried out, an Agriculture Ministry official confirmed that such measures are seen as necessary to eliminate fraud and ensure that public funding is responsibly allocated to actually existing persons living under circumstances of real need. As part of the vetting process, the Ministry dispatched field agents for census taking on-site at a general assembly of the community specially convened for the purpose. Conditions to be investigated included the adequate participation of women, the participation of a supermajority of members at general assemblies, that the average monthly wages of member families did not exceed thrice the minimum statutory amount established by the Ecuadorian government of $292 in 2012 (Ecuador 2011a), and that households possessed less than five hectares of private landholdings. Many aspects of the vetting process imposed a significant burden on the community. Though nominally the Association's administration was made responsible for submitting the necessary paperwork, in particular the Ministry's requirement of documents confirming the property ownership of each of the association's member families meant that in actuality the families themselves were made responsible for obtaining these documents, a time-consuming and costly process requiring a representative of each family to take multiple trips to the offices of the municipal government in Otavalo

and pay substantial processing fees.

One significant challenge to the success of the AAPP are the payments it is required to make in service of the million-dollar loan made by the national development bank. To make these payments, the association has mandated the payment of monthly dues from each of its member families and has resorted to the sale of much of its crop yields, especially barley, to intermediaries at wholesale prices. Monthly dues were significant, representing several days' worth of income, and many families found themselves falling into arrears. An analysis of the association's cash flow carried out by the treasurer and presented at a general meeting attended by the researcher immediately after he arrived suggested that at current payment levels the debt service was unsustainable and it would be necessary to restructure the debt in some way, leading to the aforementioned negotiations with the agriculture ministry. Discussion about sustainability of debt service seemed to revolve around the interest rate: while the initially negotiated terms of the loan had an interest rate of about 12%, the AAPP leadership was pushing for a reduction of the association's obligations, whether through subsidy by the agriculture ministry or a restructuring of the loan by the national development bank itself, to an effective rate of 5%, invoking the state's constitutional obligation to provide preferential treatment to cooperative enterprises.

Participants in *mingas* are overwhelmingly women, girls, and the elderly, as men leaving the community for day work in nearby cities and floriculture plantations has led to the feminization of association labor, a situation acknowledged by the

leadership. When men participated, the division of labor was strongly gendered, with exclusively men performing tasks such as repair of buildings and felling of timber. However, intensive manual labor such as the hauling of heavy sacks of grain over one's shoulder or on one's back was shared among all adult participants regardless of age or gender. Nevertheless, the proportion of actual *minga* labor borne by women to the number of women in the association leadership was highly asymmetrical. Of the AAPP's four executive committee members, only the vice-president was a woman, seemingly selected as a token representative, as many of the committee's formal meetings were conducted without her presence, as were most of their informal interactions, which as observed by the researcher appeared to be just as frequent and important for decision making and coordination, if not more so. When queried about this, the leadership admitted that they preferred that the vice-president participate and viewed her inability to do so as a problem, but it could be little helped considering her domestic responsibilities to her husband and family. Indeed, the current vice-president was the only executive committee member who was not on the committee at the time of the association's founding, having replaced another woman whose resignation was surely influenced by domestic pressures. This situation was illustrative of a persistence of patriarchal social relations in the community and again underscored findings in the academic literature on the status of women and reproductive labor.

One community member traveled some distance, nearly from a neighboring village, in order to fulfill her obligations to participate in the *mingas*. When asked

why she continued to contribute her labor without immediate remuneration or other apparent material benefit and to make her dues payments, a significant financial burden, she replied simply, “for the land,” indicating that she was acting at least in part for the larger cause of restoring the land to the indigenous people of the community. The continued support of so many members of the community, despite issues concerning gender equality in *minga* participation, remuneration for labor contributed, and the financial burden represented by dues payments, indicated the saliency of this cause throughout the community, a cause frequently appealed to by the association president at general assemblies. Yet, payment of dues was uneven, as many members were in arrears, while others received support from family members working abroad and sending remittances.

Besides the *minga*, other instances of the egalitarian sharing of responsibilities for the benefit of the community or the daily operations of the association were evident. For example, families took short-term shifts residing in colonial-era buildings at the association’s processing center, where they were in charge of keeping night watch, preparing association products such as fava beans and guinea pigs for consumption by visitors such as ministry officials or day laborers from outside the community who were involved in the reforestation project, preparing a fermented beverage called *chicha* made from barley and other flours and carrying it in a large drum to *minga* participants during their breaks in the fields, and other tasks related to operations of the processing center. These duties may have been a continuation of a plantation-era policy aimed at providing domestic help to the plantation owners, but if

so they had been repurposed for the benefit of the association. Another example was a committee of community members, independent of the AAPP, to clean and maintain a communal spring used as an emergency water source.

During the researcher's stay, the community carried out the harvest of a large field of barley, calling a larger than usual *minga* for its collection. The AAPP had recently begun participating in a barley cultivation program sponsored by the national beer brewery in which inputs such as chemical fertilizers and certified seeds were provided with the ultimate goal of sourcing malt barley varieties, currently entirely imported, domestically (*El Financiero* 2012). An industrial combine was hired for the harvest, but due to the hourly cost and the fact that the machine could not carry the entire yield in one pass, rather than transport the winnowed grain down the steep, windy road to the processing center from the barley field and return, the driver was asked to deposit it onto a plastic sheet placed in an already harvested area of the field, where the *minga* participants awaited to transfer it by hand into quintal sacks. These were then weighed at adjusted to 50 kg, sewn shut with cord, and loaded into the association's truck for transport to the processing center. There was not enough daylight left to bag all the harvested grain, so the remaining pile was covered in plastic and eucalyptus branches and left until the next day. All told, the barley harvest appeared to be approximately 700 quintals. Without post-processing equipment to de-hull the grain efficiently or access to nearby marketplace space, the association was ill able to market the crop directly, and indeed found it difficult to secure a fair price from an intermediary. Ultimately, the association leadership contacted the provincial

office of the agriculture ministry, who referred them to a buyer. After some haggling with these buyers, the price agreed was $21.25 per quintal paid in cash, somewhat less than the AAPP's hoped-for price of $25. Some ten quintals of the barley were selected and saved for sowing as the next crop's seed. With proper investment, the AAPP president claimed, production of barley on the association's largest field should reach 1000-1200 quintals, up from the approximately 700 harvested during the researcher's tenure.

Association leadership stated that nitrate fertilizer provided by the regional branch of the agriculture ministry had been provided at a reduced cost as part of a production program, amounting to a subsidy for its producer. Notably, even though association leadership stated that a substantial proportion of the area under barley cultivation had been set aside for a special program using organic fertilizer, there was no way to certify or otherwise distinguish the barley grown with organic fertilizer from that grown with conventional fertilizer in a way that would command a price different from the one agreed upon with the intermediary, and so the entire crop was harvested together with no distinction made regarding the type of fertilizer used. The fact that association leadership did not state that nitrate fertilizer was used in the production of other association crops destined for consumption within the community suggests that there may be doubts about its cost-effectiveness, safety, or both.

Coinciding with the barley harvest in Uksha, the Ecuadorian national brewing company presented an event billed as an "International Barley Forum in Imbabura" with the support of MAGAP and an agricultural consulting firm. Representatives of

the AAPP were invited to attend two days of lectures about the nutritional value of barley and purportedly cutting edge research into its cultivation presented by practitioners and researchers from all over South America. Most of this research centered on highly capital-intensive, industrial post-processing such as silage, not techniques for small-scale production under dry farming conditions, raising doubts as to the forum planners' selection of information in terms of its relevance for the food sovereignty of the community.

A representative of the national brewery in charge of sustainable development stated that this conference was part of a larger import substitution initiative to replace malt barley used by the brewery, which is currently entirely imported, with domestically produced malt sourced from producers in Imbabura, a historically important barley-producing region. According to government statistics, the province of Imbabura represents 35.2% of national barley production, all of which is currently destined for household consumption and none for malt (Ecuador 2013). The brewery representative stated that the project meant that barley growers who had in the past been forced to sell their product to intermediaries at prices as low as $5 per quintal could now sell directly to the buyer at $22 per quintal. The representative went on to enthuse that area under barley cultivation by program participants had risen from 23 hectares in 2009 to 500 in 2012, and program-average yields were near two metric tons per hectare, well above the national average of 0.6 tons per hectare (El Financiero, 2012). According to government statistics, average barley yields for Imbabura were 1.97 metric tons per hectare (Ecuador 2013). The actual process by

which AAPP was able to sell their barley (at a price of $21.25) seemed a bit different from that account, yet there was no doubting the price obtained was significantly better than $5 per quintal. With 37 hectares under barley cultivation and approximately 700 quintals harvested, the AAPP's yield was slightly less than one ton per hectare, though when calculated using previous years' figures of 900-1000 quintals, the yield would increase to over 1.3 tons per hectare. The association leadership seemed enthusiastic about the prospect of participating in the barley cultivation program, yet the fact that the urgent financial pressure to do so under the terms of the AAPP's debt service meant that the association's production choices were to be constrained was troubling. In the extreme case, should the majority of areas under cultivation be converted to malt barley for beer production elsewhere, it could have an adverse impact on the ability of the association to meet its first statutory obligation, that of providing for the food security of the community.

One important source of community cohesion in Uksha is the Kichwa language. Most community members speak both Spanish and Kichwa, and there is a strong sense of indigenous identity. Even after long days of work in the fields or outside the community, members often convened meetings in the chilly Andean evenings after dark to commiserate and discuss the direction of the community. These meetings are held in a tiny community center entirely separate from meetings of the AAPP, and provide a chance to speak in Kichwa, which cannot be widely used outside the community. One such meeting attended by the researcher involved discussions about who to send as a representative to a political convention called by Rafael Correa's

Alianza PAIS. Few wished to spend days traveling by bus to the convention on the coast in distant Guayaquil, even though transportation expenses were to be covered. Other topics of discussion at meetings include the planning of traditional cultural events, such as the celebration of a marriage engagement, involving a nighttime banquet, an elaborate exchange of gifts, and a late-night parade throughout the community with musicians and singing. Community members are well aware that the youth of the community increasingly view city life as attractive, and the researcher learned that considerable time is devoted to discussion about how to make community life appealing enough that young people choose to remain.

Though the LORSA food sovereignty law stipulates that the agriculture ministry provide technical assistance to the AAPP, in practice such assistance has been inconsistent and less than satisfactory, the association leadership reported. Agroecology and organic cultivation are promoted through subsidized inputs considered to be organic, but also through ongoing programs to supply subsidized synthetic fertilizer manufactured via an industrial process. AAPP administration recorded frequent visits by local MAGAP officials pursuing these and other programs, but expressed skepticism as to their effectiveness in promoting the Association's founding purposes. The association went so far as to hire a private agronomist to formulate production plans, yet ran into difficulties reconciling his recommendations with the association's statutory principles, and perhaps more importantly, with the limitations of the natural environment. For example, production plans called for a variety of crops, some of which are ill suited to dry farming. Such

crops may not be viable until irrigation infrastructure can be improved, and even the area that can be dedicated to their production may be limited to a few hectares, the researcher was told.

Access to water is a serious issue, as naturally occurring water sources nearby suitable for use as sources of irrigation water are seasonally unavailable. The household water supply, which is derived entirely from rainfall on the marshy summit plateau of Cerro Cusín to the south and collected in a cistern high on its northern slopes, is sporadic throughout the community, with service only weekly or even more seldom, so that when it functions households must stockpile water in open concrete cisterns, raising sanitation concerns. This limited supply must then be divided between drinking water and all other household uses. Even this erratic supply is subject to total outages of as long as three weeks during the dry season, and community members must resort to treks to a small, communally managed spring or effluence of precipitation captured by the summit plateau of Cerro Cubilche to the north. During such outages, local authorities delivered supplies of drinking water by truck, but community members said the deliveries were not made on a sufficiently regular basis and amounted to only a few token gallons per household, necessitating recourse to the spring.

Irrigation infrastructure on the communal landholdings of the association was in a similar state of affairs, with the entire area currently under cultivation being dry farmed. During the plantation era, seasonally available water from an arroyo on the northern skirts of Cerro Cusín had been diverted into a kind of earthen reservoir

above major cultivable areas, from which it could be drawn by gravity for irrigation, but this had fallen into disuse and the system of pipes used to divert the water for storage had become inoperative and needed an unknown extent of repairs. The AAPP was urgently seeking to address this issue, as a key part of its production plans was more water-intensive crops such as fruits and vegetables, the production of which under dry farming during the summer months was impossible. At the invitation of the association leadership, a team of technical advisors representing the Venezuelan government visited and made initial assessments, but according to the AAPP's executive committee, other options that might include monetary aid and technical assistance from Ecuador's agriculture ministry were under consideration and repairs to the irrigation system remained in the planning stages. Cost, which according to early estimates could be on the order of hundreds of thousands of dollars, was a significant obstacle. The association's leadership maintained a canny approach to securing the best offer, the president reiterating the pressing need to begin construction as soon as possible regardless of the source of funding, but at the same time aware that accepting the Venezuelan delegation's offer could alienate MAGAP, while the Venezuelan moves to take on the project could become motivation for MAGAP to initiate a counterproposal more quickly. The international interest in the affairs of a few hundred *campesinos* in the hinterlands of Imbabura seemed to the researcher to underscore the political symbolism and importance of their organization and joint efforts.

Erosion is another serious issue as winds carry off dusty soil during the dry

season. During the researcher's stay, several strong wind events were observed including a whirlwind about ten meters high that damaged the plastic roof of the processing center and the colonial-style tile roof of the adobe hacienda. In order to obtain replacement plastic sheet, it was necessary to travel to the offices of an agribusiness supply company a half-day's journey away in Cayambe which supplied construction materials for greenhouses to floriculture plantations. The repairs were made exclusively the community's men, many of whom had experience in construction from working as day laborers in nearby cities. The dependence on rain for dry farming and erosion control are factors that could make the community vulnerable to destabilization of weather patterns associated with climate change.

In part to mitigate some of the risks discussed above, another important project being carried out by the association is its reforestation project. According to the association president, during initial negotiations plantation owners offered almost exclusively forested areas for sale to the community, with arable areas being withheld from offer. After some negotiation, the association won the sale of some arable land, yet much of the overall hectareage consisted of heavily graded areas of eucalyptus forest. Under the reforestation plan, this eucalyptus, considered an invasive species, would be harvested by the association, processed into timber, and sold, with funds realized this way to be applied to the reforestation of logged areas with native species. To this end, the association had constructed a mill and hired a crew of laborers to harvest the timber and process it into lumber on site. Not only was this an important source of revenue for the association, but it also allowed the removal of an invasive

species considered to be water-intensive and whose foliage produced an herbicidal effect on falling to the ground and decomposing.

To deal with these and other challenges, the association maintains a flexible, creative approach to its land use that is responsive to the input and needs of its members, which can be voiced at its regularly held meetings. For example, the entire crop in a large field of peas had failed due to an unexpected shortage of rain and had been overrun by a drought-tolerant species of weedy pea. Instead of simply plowing under, the association salvaged what peas it could, and then divided the weedy field into lots whose grazing rights were sold to association members, the weedy peas making good fodder for family cows. On other marginal lands, cover crops such as vetches are grown to fix nitrogen and improve the soil. Instead of tilling crop stubble such as corn stalks into the soil, community members use it as fodder, grazing their cows directly in the harvested fields so as to eliminate the step of collecting the fodder. Depending on the soil and other conditions, crops were rotated under a diverse rotation that included potatoes, cereals and pulses.

Unlike an industrial-scale operation where vast areas could be put under monoculture production in an attempt to realize economies of scale, production at AAPP was highly diversified, an approach that not only took the nutritional needs of community members into consideration but also the vulnerability of monoculture to price fluctuations. One production plan presented to MAGAP called for the cultivation of barley, wheat, *chocho*, potatoes, fava beans, *suave* corn, quinoa, and tamarillo. Other crops actually under cultivation included *morocho* corn, peas,

amaranth, Peruvian groundcherry, alfalfa, and vetches. The association also maintained hutches for guinea pigs and rabbits. As vehicle traffic in the community was low, chickens belonging to association members could be safely permitted to forage on communal lands. A cat was kept at the processing center to control vermin attracted to the grains frequently being processed there.

Community members maintained small family plots as doled out during the land reforms of the late 60s and early 70s, which when divided among descendants over successive generations resulted in an ever-smaller area, already fractions of a hectare in many cases, that could be used for cultivation by a given family. Such divisions have thrown the long-term sustainability of livelihoods based solely on these already marginal plots into serious question. Farm produce appeared to be mostly for household consumption, but surpluses such as milk that exceeded the household's daily consumption were sold to an intermediary who collected the milk by truck each morning. One of the researcher's host households reported receiving $50 per month income from sales of surplus milk produced by its one Holstein cow at approximately $0.30 per gallon. Another significant product was barley, which was milled using association equipment and used for household consumption as hulled groats or flour, not sold. Other important self-provisioned crops included fava beans, corn, and potatoes.

The rate of self-provisioning, an important factor for food sovereignty, was the highest of the three cases studies examined by the researcher. In an analysis of the diet of the researcher's host families, food that was produced either by the host

families themselves or by the AAPP accounted for the highest proportion of the diet of any of the three. Crops like rice and even processed foods such as noodles were still often consumed, reflecting a shift away from a strictly traditional diet, but foods such as *sopa uchuhaku*, a soup made from a flour of grains and pulses, or *chuchuka*, a kind of corn, were staples. Green vegetables apart from fava beans were rarely consumed during the dry season and usually came from outside the community, owing to an acute lack of irrigation. Meat was bought at market and rarely from slaughtered animals of the community, except in the case of guinea pigs.

Community members did not exclusively derive income from farm products, but engaged in various forms of livelihood diversification, including day labor and crafts. Some of these were quite gender-specific, while others were not. For example, while it was almost exclusively men who made day trips to neighboring cities to work in construction, and women who embroidered white blouses and other cloths with colorful threads for sale in the tourist-frequented city Otavalo nearby, both men and women worked at nearby large-scale floriculture plantations. AAPP leadership estimated that household incomes in the community were somewhat lower than the minimum wage of $292. This meant that with dues of $300 per year owed to the association, on average, member households were required to contribute more than a full month's wages as dues, though in practice many families had fallen into arrears on dues payments.

Transportation options in the community were limited, as there was little traffic over its deteriorating, plantation-era cobblestone and dirt roads. The association's

treasurer was said to be the only community member who owned a vehicle, while the association itself owned just one large truck for transporting harvested crops and other hauling duties. Early each weekday morning, one private bus would arrive at the community center to transport workers to day jobs in the cities of San Pablo and Otavalo, returning in the late evening. During commute hours, it was possible to hail a driver for a bumpy ride of approximately two kilometers in the back of his pickup truck to a bus stop along the nearest major road, where a bus route operates serving the outlying communities of San Pablo. Outside of these methods, walking was the only option. In spite of the community's isolation, a major road improvement project initiated by the Correa administration to connect Otavalo with Zuleta to the east with asphalt and passing directly through the AAPP landholdings was reported to be entering the planning stages at the time the researcher departed.

In terms of access to education, the Uksha benefits from a small elementary school near the main buildings of the former hacienda, which was attended by most of the community's children. The school had two main classrooms as well as a computer room and a poured concrete basketball court apparently constructed by a group of Canadians representing an unknown NGO as part of an international aid project. One of the teachers spoke Kichwa fluently enough to conduct classes, a skill not only very practical for the education of the community's many Kichwa speakers, but seen as vital for the goal of interculturality in education for a plurinational country, as recognized by the 2008 constitution. The school also benefitted from occasional visits throughout the summer by a native English-speaker volunteer

teacher living in Otavalo who rotated visits to various rural schools. During a break, the researcher witnessed, students filed from the playground into a traditional mud-walled hut for a snack of *colada*, a thin porridge-like traditional beverage prepared with grain flours and sugar, and education ministry-procured individually wrapped cookies. To the consternation of the community, however, the school was reported to be slated for closure as part of a consolidation of several rural schools in the area to a more centralized location. This raised several concerns regarding the availability of Kichwa-speaking teachers at the proposed new school, the additional travel distance for the children of the community, some of whom who were already walking several kilometers, and in general the level of control of rural communities, especially indigenous communities, over their children's' education.

The researcher participated in several official delegations of association representatives to the agriculture ministry in Quito, where they received an audience, bypassing the provincial office of the ministry entirely. The direct access of a community of a few hundred to a ministry charged with the overseeing of millions was surprising, especially given the near-universal negative attitudes in Ecuadorian society about ineffectual and retrograde bureaucrats within certain departments of the ministry. Academics, NGO observers, and farmers themselves all remarked to the researcher on the ministry's perceived ineffectiveness, from providing technical assistance by trained agronomists to its parsimoniousness when it came to funding for infrastructure improvements and land reform. The ministry's reputation of classism and largely excluding indigenous from the ranks of its civil servants, made it of

particular interest that the MAGAP official in charge of coordinating the refinancing of the AAPP's loan with the national development bank was himself indigenous, hailing from a nearby community and drafting plans demonstrating the financial viability of the project that showed an understanding of local conditions as well as savvy for presenting a project proposal with the highest likelihood of approval.

As a result of these consultations with MAGAP, the proposal drafted by the time of the researcher's departure for refinancing of the AAPP's loan included funding for the restoration of irrigation infrastructure, one year of production plans and the salary of a plan administrator, to be disbursed by ministry-NGO partnerships, in addition to a subsidy amounting to 30% of the principal of the loan, to be assumed by the ministry. In exchange, AAPP members were to continue to pay dues and contribute labor via participation in *mingas*. Part of the reasoning presented by the proposal for these terms was that the project was "fully framed within food sovereignty," reinforcing the idea that this long-term goal was a main justification for short-term policy measures such as subsidies. Nevertheless, among other conditions in the financial assessment of the project, the projected rate of return on investment necessary for the approval of the project was over 12%. To treat a land reform project formulated under principles set forth in multiple layers of law to promote access to land by the landless as a business venture for which a 12% return on investment was a necessary precondition seemed inconsistent with those principles. In effect, the ministry's subsidy merely went toward raising the real return from whatever it would have been to the rate set forth by the policy for projects, suggesting this rate was set

artificially high, and amounted to a direct payment from MAGAP to the development bank, suggesting at best an inefficient lack of coordination between organs of government and at worst a predatory relationship of extraction of public funds by the BNF. One interpretation could be that the agriculture ministry was caught in the unenviable position of reconciling investing public resources in its rural citizens' livelihoods on the one hand, and profitability demanded by the national development bank on the other, raising questions as to the bank's obligations under the principles of *buen vivir* and lending credence to criticisms of the implementation of the *Plan Tierras* project such as those reviewed above.

In an interview with the researcher, the AAPP's president outlined his vision for the association and the community. Though the AAPP had come into possession of its land through a loan, the terms of which might be unsustainable without restructuring, he insisted that he was not asking for a handout per se, declaring "we will pay." With regard to the high interest rate imposed by the BNF, he stated, "the politics of the bank are not social, rather, they are in favor of profitability." He said MAGAP had an obligation to help the community, rather than jeopardize it, by helping to renegotiate the conditions of the loan, and expressed a degree of confidence that timely help would be received, given the gravity of the financial situation he said the AAPP would be under if it were not. Eventually, the president hoped to expand the community's production projects, including machinery, technical assistance from agronomists, seeds, markets, a better processing center, an irrigation system, and in the long term, an agrotourism complex.

Reflecting on the action researcher's contribution to the food sovereignty of Uksha, small successes can be claimed in assisting the AAPP leadership in administrative tasks, such as the streamlining of documents used to maintain the member roster and the strengthening of relations with the researcher's host NGO, as well as direct participation in *mingas*. Despite objectively minor contributions in the course of five short weeks, the researcher was declared an honorary member of the AAPP by resolution of its general assembly of members at the end of his stay. The researcher's most enduring contribution is likely to be the improved relationship with Huayra Causay, who are monitoring the situation in Uksha closely in hopes that obstacles can be overcome and tactics can be shared with other participants in the NGO's network of key rural actors.

Looking at its most positive aspects, the case of Uksha can be interpreted as an example of one approach to the implementation of the collaborative economy called for as part of the *buen vivir* development paradigm. If repayment of the loan for the purchase of land can be made successfully and the necessary investments in productivity can be secured, the AAPP could represent a reversal of colonial patterns of landholding via the transformation of a plantation into an agroecological collective run by the descendants of the plantation's indentured laborers, which can be interpreted as de-enclosure or "commoning," land reform, and ecosystem restoration put into practice. If managed sustainably, the grassroots mobilizations of Uksha and the AAPP could result in an equitable redistribution of land and investment of important resources into a cooperative association statutorily committed to the well-

being of its members and to the integrity and food sovereignty of the community, an encouraging trajectory toward a more social and inclusive economy.

Yet, the community continues to confront significant obstacles and possible paths to their resolution remain complex and unclear. Disparities in basic infrastructure and livelihood diversification mean that more young people are laboring outside the community, and a critical number may be pressured into abandoning their heritage, electing to emigrate. The proposed consolidation of the local school could jeopardize access of the community's children to an intercultural education that included instruction in the Kichwa language. The community's water supply and irrigation options are already in a critical state that could be made untenable by changes in rainfall patterns associated with climate change. Continued use of MAGAP-supplied subsidized inputs such as fertilizers could result in chemical-dependent production methods that are vulnerable to the discontinuation of their subsidized supply or to fluctuations in price argued in the literature to have been a key factor contributing to the 2007-8 food crisis. The considerable debt obligations of the association mean that, in the short and medium term, land and labor must be dedicated to production of crops for sale and consumption outside the community, in effect imposing a reduction in food sovereignty contrary to the AAPP's statutory goals. Debt service also means that association members must contribute not only their labor but also the considerable financial burden of dues payments. In practice, women and the elderly are bearing the primary responsibility for contributing labor, exacerbating their socioeconomic marginalization, the feminization of debt service,

and the erosion of gender equality in the *minga*. For the moment, debt service remains necessary, and the AAPP appears fated to continue with a situation in which the formation of a fundamentally associative peasants' organization with indigenous leadership that enjoys the strong support of the community has been achieved, but in actuality its members are subjected to conditions with alarming parallels to indentured servitude that are in practice not so dissimilar from the *huasipungo* past, only now under the aegis of land reform for food sovereignty. Until the debt is completely eliminated and other conditions improved, true *buen vivir* may remain frustratingly out of reach for the people of Uksha.

Site 3: El Valle, Azuay Province (Southern Sierra)

The research project's third case study was realized in El Valle, a rural parish of the municipality of Cuenca located approximately five kilometers to the southeast of the city on the opposite side of the Tomebamba River in Azuay province in the southern Sierra. As part of the host NGO's exchange program, the researcher was invited to do a three-week homestay with the family of a parish council junior officer in charge of rural development projects. Many of the family members were not only farmers but also active members of the community, providing the researcher valuable insight into local conditions and community concerns.

Of particular interest to the study was APAzuay (*Associación de Productores Agroecológicos del Azuay*), an association of over 200 farmers established in 2005 and statutorily dedicated to the chemical-free production of various crops and livestock for local consumption within the municipality of Cuenca. The association

operates several farmers' markets with support from the municipal government of Cuenca's urban gardening program to develop local markets and other institutions beneficial to rural communities. This relationship was formally codified in 2010 with an agreement that, among other benefits, dedicated significant floor space within four of Cuenca's public market buildings for the exclusive use of APAzuay vendors and permitted the association to hold daily and weekly temporary markets in other public spaces such as plazas. In its preamble, the agreement explicitly locates the establishment of the accord and the dedication of municipal resources to the association within the larger context of the support for agroecology and urban farming guaranteed by the constitution and the PNBV. According to the agreement, the association promised to distribute the market space fairly between its members such that no one member received more than one stall; that they pay a usage fee to offset the costs of facilities maintenance; that vendors offer agroecologically produced, wholesome, and fairly-priced products; that they maintain fair dealings, respect, comportment, and solidarity between producers and consumers; wear uniforms established by the association and abide by other marketplace rules and regulations established by the municipality. In exchange, the city of Cuenca guaranteed that it would provide access to the agreed-upon marketplace stalls and spaces, offer training and consulting to producers via the city's urban agriculture program, and promote the organizational integrity and participation of the producers.

The AASM (*Asociación Agroecológica Santa Marta*) is a 25-family community organization started with some difficulty by the parish council junior officer and his

sister, who is currently serving as the association's President, with one major purpose for its founding being to qualify for state funding for investment projects such as the construction of chicken coops and guinea pig hutches. Unlike Uksha's AAPP or Píllaro's ABAPP, neither AASM nor APAzuay maintain communal landholdings. The association is registered with the Ministry of Industry and Productivity (MIPRO). According to its statute, the AASM is established with the following aims:

– to promote citizens' participation, social redistribution and the responsibility of the members of the legally constituted organization;

– to support agriculture and livestock production and the transformation of primary products based on practices that are agroecological and environmentally sustainable, to obtain products such as cheese, chicha, jam, *fritada* [fried pork with hominy], grilled chicken, and guinea pigs, etc., destined for human consumption;

– to establish systems of production, transformation, certification, and associative commercialization at the local, national, and international levels of production, under principles of fair and social commerce;

– to vend products produced ecologically, transformed or processed to the region, country, and abroad;

– to train its members in the areas of agroecological production, small industry, human relations, administration of accounts, communitarian leadership, and others considered priorities for the effective development of all the activities which the organization may execute;

– to develop programs and projects of social service considered necessary for social coexistence and human dignity;

– to advance the food security and food sovereignty of the Ecuadorian populace;

– to import and export seeds, brood, inputs, machinery, tools, and other elements necessary to improve and disseminate one hundred percent natural production and transformation of products; and

– to keep vigil over the comprehensive development of its members, taking all necessary measure to promote their active participation.

According to the statute, in order to achieve these statutory aims, the AASM shall:

– Join with public, private, and communitarian entities on the local, national, and international levels in all matters that concern productive activities in order to achieve *buen vivir*,

– Form agreements or letters of understanding with public, private, national, or foreign institutions for the development of specific production projects and yield of agroecological products,

– Carry out these practices for the achievement of agroecological production and one hundred percent natural processing of products based on traditionally commercialized products, such as the production of livestock, pisciculture, apiculture, and others characteristic of each part of the region,

– Provide services, consulting, equipment, and whichever other means that

may be required for the better fulfillment of its aims,

– Promote the creation and management of processing centers that permit the storage and commercialization of products,

– Develop without any restriction all those activities oriented toward the achievement of its aims.

For their part, members are statutorily forbidden from joining any other such organization, and must pay dues and attend meetings to be held no less frequently than quarterly. The organization's emphasis on the importance of the production of livestock products to achieve *buen vivir*, food security, and food sovereignty reflects the historical importance of animal husbandry in the region, with Azuay accounting for the country's largest share of beef cattle by province with 7.7% of total production, for example (Ecuador 2013). Additionally, the focus on marketing prepared food products underscores an adversity towards production of primary products for sale to intermediaries, focusing instead on direct marketing of value-added goods to consumers to capture value. Many AASM members kept dairy cows, chickens, and guinea pigs for self-provisioning, though according to the parish council officer, communities throughout El Valle tended to specialize in either guinea pigs, chickens, pigs, dairy cows, or sheep for commercialization.

Rather than being related to agricultural production, the AASM's *minga* observed by the researcher consisted of improving drainage around a town hall building built with one wall recessed into a hillside. The division of labor was highly gendered, with men doing almost all of the digging, earth moving, and transport and

cutting of pipes, while women were put in charge of preparing and serving the midday meal. Members of leadership when interviewed expressed discontentment with setbacks such as the slow start to the project due to the tardiness of many participants, the need to repeatedly announce the start of the *minga* over the community PA, and the heavy consumption of spirits during the project. The fact that the scope of the *minga* no longer included agricultural labor per se could be in part due to the work experience of so many of the community's men in construction or other non-agricultural sectors, with farm labor, like food preparation, coming to be viewed as women's work.

According to community members, especially in the years following the banking crisis of the late 90s, more and more community members sought work abroad, emigrating to countries of the global North to support their families back home. Notably, many of the community's men have personally worked abroad in the United States and elsewhere earning much more than would be possible in the countryside of Azuay. This contributes to a gendered division of labor as women evidently rarely become migrant laborers, and are expected to take on all the responsibilities of childrearing and looking after the daily operations of the farm in the men's absence. Remittances have contributed significantly to the economic transfiguration of the countryside; however, these resources are not always invested in ways that community members perceive as beneficial to the community's economic sustainability and wellbeing. For example, funds are often used to build large houses, rather than to invest in farm inputs and equipment. These spacious

homes, often complete with driveways of poured concrete that end abruptly where they meet the unpaved, bumpy country roads, stand in stark contrast to the community's traditional earthen-walled dwellings either still inhabited by the older generation or now standing abandoned in the middle of fields. Alcoholism is another problem that plagues the community, attested by a prominent sign of the local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Other APAzuay producers were interviewed over the course of the exchange program. At one market in central Cuenca, APAzuay vendors enjoyed daily access to dedicated floor space as stipulated by their agreement with the city, set apart by green uniforms, tables with white vinyl covers, and banners urging patrons to "consume healthy, clean, agroecological products for *buen vivir*." Products were mostly fresh vegetables but also included corn, strawberries, eggs, and plucked chickens. All of the vendors were women. One vendor confided that she felt the roughly ten dollars she could make selling her produce each day was "not much." The mother of the parish council official, on the other hand, made a significantly higher revenue selling the family's eggs, chickens, and organic strawberries, the latter produced in a greenhouse whose construction required substantial investment, but yielded year-round. The council official himself boasted of the strawberries' freshness and quality, unmatched by the fruit-selling intermediaries outside the APAzuay section of the market. However, this situation suggested asymmetries in the way benefits of participation in the market were distributed, strongly linked to the producers' ability to invest in profitable crops rather than staples. Indeed, the council official had also invested in

larger-scale tomato production due to the crop's perceived potential profitability.

The researcher interviewed a former treasurer and the current president of APAzuay. The former treasurer, a middle-aged woman chicken farmer, related that the organization had begun with just seven members, who upon beginning direct marketing immediately encountered hostility from intermediaries at the market. APAzuay finds itself in competition not only with intermediaries, but also with other agricultural associations, such as the MAGAP-supported organization El Austro. One of the reasons for APAzuay's focus on agroecological production methods, she admitted, was pressure from the city of Cuenca's urban farming program, PAU, whose agronomists, she said, can be quite demanding. For example, PAU demands that chicken farmers use certified agroecological feed or feed grown by the producers themselves, an added expense she felt was not justified by the slightly superior prices they could command—$1.90 per pound versus $1.30 per pound, not to mention the costs of other "non-chemical" inputs for parasite control and so forth. When asked about self-provisioning as a benefit of chicken production, she was dismissive, insisting that the chickens she ate she sold to herself. Regarding food sovereignty, she said, the national government has done little to benefit herself or APAzuay. The current president, a middle-aged man, confirmed the organization's primary focus on eliminating intermediaries via direct sales to consumers in order to capture value for the association's member producers.

The researcher also visited a rural cheese factory and interviewed its owner, a member of APAzuay who sold at a local market. The owner purchased approximately

300-350 liters of milk from nine medium-sized producers and a number of smaller producers along his route, paying $0.40 per liter and in addition returning the whey byproduct of the cheesemaking process to the producers for use as fodder. With approximately nine liters of milk needed for one kilogram of soft cheese, this meant that 33-39 kgs. of cheeses could be produced each day, which were sold to approximately ten buyers in the city of Cuenca, as well as via direct sales at APAzuay markets, where the owner charged the same price as when selling to institutional buyers, $5 to $6 per kilogram, despite typical sales of only about five kilograms at these markets. The two employees of the two-room factory, both young women working half-day shifts, were interviewed. One was unrelated to the owner and said she was paid $200 per month, lower than the government's minimum salary for full-time employment, but for part-time. The other employee was the owner's daughter, who said she had been paid only $60 for over two months' work and promised a pig in payment. In addition to the obvious labor issues, the factory also faced sanitary issues and water supply issues that had outpaced the growth of rural infrastructure, and various outstanding debts. The owner suggested his reasons for participation in APAzuay were less for access to direct marketing and more for access to credit for capital improvements to his factory and means of distribution, an old pickup truck.

One APAzuay member stated that joining an APAzuay member association similar to AASM had improved relations with her spouse. Previously, he berated her for failing to bring in cash income, and initially derided her efforts to grow vegetables, declaring it a waste of time. Nevertheless, by selling vegetables and

surplus milk, she was now bringing in an income of as much as $10 per day. While the husband no longer criticized her farming ("now he says nothing," she said), the woman was still primarily responsible for childcare and housework and received little help from her husband. The parish council official, who had encouraged her to join the association, confided that the woman was a victim of domestic violence. This woman's case was no exception to the tendency of women to bear primary responsibilities for agricultural and domestic labor, yet confirmed the great potential significance for individuals, especially women, of participation in associative rural institutions and the broad social value of the presence of these organizations, notably in contrast to the AAPP women whose efforts are essentially uncompensated.

During the exchange program in El Valle, the researcher audited a seminar presented by SENPLADES for local government officials on how local governments should submit project proposals in order to obtain funding entitled "Planning, Development, and Public Investment Projects." Workshop participants were local government public servants whose responsibilities included the design of development projects to guide the rural investments of the municipalities they represented. Similar to the approval conditions on the loan to the AAPP in Uksha, assistance is conditional on a return on investment (ROI) analysis, and requires co-contributions from beneficiaries. Furthermore, projects are expected to generate a rate of return that is competitive relative to international financial markets, as stipulated by the ministry, and feasibility proposals must project this. During the question and answer period, several workshop participants expressed concerns with these types of

conditions. One stated, “I’m concerned that we cannot achieve *sumak kawsay*, the Andean cosmovision, with capitalist tools.” Another asked, “What about food sovereignty?” to which the workshop facilitator’s reply was “Apples and oranges” -- in other words that food sovereignty had “nothing to do” with project approval. After the workshop, one participant admitted that the high rate of return stipulated meant that there was considerable pressure to make very optimistic projections about a project’s potential for growth and profitability in the planning stages. Meanwhile, the technical assistance provided was not perceived to be adequate to assure that the conditions imposed could be met. Once again, return on investment appeared to be the dominant criterion for policy when it came to state approval for rural development projects, rather than food sovereignty, which was all but declared to be a marginal concern.

In practice, the projects initiated by the parochial government of El Valle, several of which have included the AASM as beneficiary, have ranged from the subsidized construction of chicken coops for both egg and meat production to construction of hutches for guinea pigs, as well as stock animals themselves. Guinea pigs are an important livestock animal for producers of Ecuador’s Sierra region, which accounts for 95% of their total production, averaging about 15 animals per farm regardless of size according to one study, but are especially important for smallholders as they account for a larger share of total farm produce, provide a year-round animal source of nutrition every 3-4 months, and contribute to food sovereignty. They are especially important for Azuay, which accounts for the largest

share of production by province, edging out the second-largest producer, Tungurahua, by 22% to 20% (Casa del Migrante 2012). As described above, such projects require feasibility studies on the part of local government officials, the examination of one of which is illuminating. Though the supply chain study shows that small- and medium-sized producers' guinea pigs are destined ultimately for sale in one of two Cuenca markets or to local restaurants, its preamble insists that "liberalization of international commerce requires an increase in the competitiveness of the rural sector, a context which creates opportunities and challenges for the small and medium rural businesses in global markets" (ibid.), a seemingly compulsory rehash of neoliberal rhetoric at odds with prevailing market conditions that provides some insight into the culture of preparing such reports. Guinea pigs sold for between $4 and $11 depending on factors such as weight or whether the animals had already been slaughtered, with prices of animals sold to intermediaries averaging $1 to $2 less than price of those sold directly to consumers or restaurants.

Collaboration by the associations studied with the municipal and parochial governments has been strong, but cooperation with national-level organizations has been limited by comparison. According to a study of social movement participation in COPISA workshops on food sovereignty policymaking on the national level, Azuay's rural population and agricultural organizations have been underrepresented in these workshops (Peña 2013). This reality may be accounted for in part by these organizations' focus on collaboration with the municipal government in initiatives with local scope, raising questions about the effectiveness of local and national level

coordination within social movements and underscoring the potential hazards of verticality within these movements with respect to organizing priorities and scope. Alternatively, this may reveal a divergence in the importance placed on workshop participation between producers engaged primarily in animal husbandry versus those engaged in horticulture. Though registered with MIES since its founding, the AASM in reality has had little more than an on-paper relationship with the ministry. During a visit to the ministry's local branch attended by the researcher, possible avenues of industry support appeared to be in the earliest stages of preliminary consultations and expressed in the vaguest of terms. Other members did not appear to share the parish council officer's optimistic attitude toward the potential for building a productive working relationship with the ministry.

When interviewed, the parish council officer cited the COOTAD (*Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización*), a 640-article law ratified in 2010 laying out the mechanisms for establishing greater autonomy for local governments, as a major achievement of significant potential for rural development. In particular, his optimistic attitude appeared to be influenced by language within the code's preamble written by the Minister of the MCPGAD (*Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados)*, a now-defunct ministry, who calls the document a tool to implement the decentralization of government and the autonomy of local governments, goals which are themselves called part of *sumak kawsay*, concluding with the line, "into the hands of provincial governments, parish assemblies,

mayoralties, other local authorities, and citizens we put this Code, fundamental for the construction of the new State" (Ecuador 2011b). However, the reality that local governments' project proposals were subject to various conditions such as return on investment analysis and final approval at the hands of central government authorities holding the purse strings was undeniable. The council officer admitted that despite their encouraging fundamental principles, in his experience actually working with the *Instituto Nacional de Economía Popular y Solidaria* (IEPS), or various MAGAP programs such as the *Programa de Negocios Inclusivos Rurales* (PRONERI) and *Escuelas de la Revolución Agraria* (ERAS), could feel like credit and funds were being abused to "divide and take advantage of" rural organizations. Campaigns such as that by APAzuay to win access to physical space at market facilities in Cuenca had been successful, but further efforts to show preference for small- and medium-producers and a social, inclusive economy by further reducing the space available to intermediaries had met with opposition. He took pride in his direct relationship with producers, which he saw as much more desirable than that of ministry bureaucrats, whose dealings with producers tended to be indirect and less likely to be sympathetic or understanding.

Overall, the case of El Valle provides an instructively contrasting perspective on the status of food sovereignty from the other cases studies realized. The action researcher's contributions to the community being studied were the most limited in this case study of the three, as most of the researcher's time was spent with the parish council junior officer engaged in planning, workshops, surveys, and in general

activities that were one or more steps removed from associative undertakings such as the *minga*. When the *minga* was observed, it was of the least significance of the three case studies, being unrelated to the activities of agricultural associations. Of the three case studies, El Valle demonstrated the highest incidence of capital investment in agroecology, the parish officer's tomato and strawberry greenhouses being the primary example, though this was arguably as much for long-term benefits to the farm's ecosystem as it was for short-term prices. Further, El Valle benefitted from an exceptionally high degree of remittances, which were not necessarily invested in agricultural productivity but instead for instance in large, suburban style houses and private vehicles. As observed by the researcher, gender inequality and feminization of agricultural labor, as well as factory labor, were as high as any other community studied. With regard to government collaboration, the community had benefitted from affiliation with and technical support from the local government of Cuenca via its urban gardening program, but this coincided with a distancing from national-level assistance and the COPISA workshops. Indeed, attitudes of the rank-and-file toward the potential to create productive relationships with government ministries were pessimistic, and given the stance of SENPLADES as emphasized in its workshop for local government officials, perhaps well justified. Indeed, the straightforward attitude with which the workshop facilitator stated that rate of return on investment was to be the single most important criterion for the approval of development projects submitted by local governments showed that other factors that local government officials were required to consider in feasibility studies and other supporting

documents, not to mention the food sovereignty and voices of the communities they represented, were decidedly secondary considerations.

Conclusion

At its outset, this project sought to provide insight into the gap that exists between food sovereignty as it is articulated as a goal of transnational social movements such as La Vía Campesina, the ideals such as *buen vivir*, and the policies their member organizations in Ecuador fought for and won as a recognition thereof, and actual conditions as they are still experienced on the ground. Indeed, there have been many promising developments in the rural communities of Ecuador's Sierra region studied during this research project, many beginning before the advent of Correa's Citizen's Revolution. These include grassroots land reform initiatives such as the AAPP's reclamation of plantation land, the self-governing water councils of FOCCAT, which enabled effective investment in irrigation and repurposing of existing rural infrastructure, APAzuay's collaboration with local government institutions in establishing daily farmers' markets and other direct marketing channels and gaining access to credit and technical assistance. These achievements represent significant advances toward the establishment of robust local networks and institutions for the promotion of sustainable rural livelihoods in the Sierra region, and provide a hopeful counterexample to the trend identified by Handy and Fehr of agricultural collectives being methodically destroyed and peasants displaced from their land (2010).

With regard to the potential contributions of an action researcher to the food sovereignty of host communities, the short-term nature of the research project, combined with its hybrid approach to breadth as well as depth, meant that in practice

actual impact was limited. Nevertheless, the nature of the researcher's invitation into the rural communities via their exchange program relationship with the researcher's host NGO Huayra Causay allowed the researcher to effectively execute his action research role while acting as liaison. By carefully documenting and reporting on the activities carried out in each community, the researcher was able to raise NGO awareness of local conditions, contributing to the expansion and strengthening of the relations between the rural communities and the host NGO and laying the foundation for further collaborations. The researcher regards the totality of the contributions made during the course of the research project as modest but positive overall, the recognition of which was expressed by the AAPP's naming the researcher an honorary member.

However, the unevenness of progress toward the principles of *buen vivir* across the nation, ranging from investment in basic services infrastructure to initiatives for the integrity of local agrifood systems, remains highly visible in rural communities. Policies to promote domestic corn and wheat production for animal fodder to satisfy the intensifying urban appetite for chicken and the shrimp export businesses' quest for profits will tend to erode food security and food sovereignty as Sierra communities under economic duress like Uksha will face a perverse incentive to shift production from staple food crops consumed locally to fodder for industrial feedlot and aquaculture operations. The integrity of indigenous communities is under threat in other ways, as their schools face closure or consolidation and the future of instruction in Kichwa is in doubt. In a generation's time those who have a visceral

understanding of the words "*sumak kawsay"* may be far fewer. The culture of the *minga*, a powerful manifestation of rural communitarianism, is under threat by the feminization of agricultural labor, transforming what was once a vital tradition that reinforced community solidarity into a peripheral, economically devalorized activity increasingly relegated to women. This not only undermines the integrity of communities and communitarian agricultural associations such as the AAPP, but also exacerbates the socioeconomic marginalization of women. While for women like the APAzuay member interviewed, agriculture, when coupled with the city of Cuenca's inspiring support for direct marketing, represented an opportunity for a viable livelihood, in stark contrast the women of the AAPP have been effectively locked into a kind of debt peonage reminiscent of the *huasipungo* era under the terms of the association's high-interest loan. Obstructionism of the COPISA process for turning rural voices into public policy, widely attributed to perceived influence of agribusiness in government and the continued investment of public resources that prioritize agribusiness over smallholders, perpetuates skepticism toward lawmakers' ability to turn the potential promised by the LORSA into public policies that benefit agrarian communities. Even for development projects explicitly targeted at rural communities, priorities clearly remain on profitability over food sovereignty as demonstrated by return on investment conditionality, and on oversight via national-level bureaucracy over local autonomy.

Future Directions

The extent to which the three rural communities studied during the course of

this research have succeeded in creating and expanding food sovereignty varies depending on the unique situation and needs of each community and the specific elements of the broad rubric of food sovereignty being considered. While this makes generalizations across the three case studies difficult, interesting lessons can be drawn from their comparison, as has been seen. Yet the lack of a quantitative way to measure food sovereignty makes evaluating progress difficult, a lack that is surely acutely felt by COPISA in the face of Assembly obstructionism. One participatory study by the *Institut d'Economia Ecològica i Ecologia Política* (IEEEP) of Spain's Catalonia region, an organization that collaborates with rural organizations throughout Latin America, provides an informative look at how the quantification of food sovereignty might be achieved, while carefully considering factors that numbers tend to oversimplify (2010). Similar to the COPISA process in Ecuador, the study held participatory workshops to identify fifty-four indices for food sovereignty in twelve broad categories: culturally adequate nutrition, healthy and balanced diet, short supply chains of proximity, minimization of byproducts, popular control over agriculture and nutrition, diversity of regional production, food sovereignty education, rural vibrancy and productivity, just gender relations, agroecological production, fair and transparent commercial relations, and relations of trust and cooperation. For instance, the study found that women accounted for just 36% of persons linked to agriculture, yet this figure was misleading as women were often employed as temporary workers, did not receive fixed salaries, or worked in "submerged economies," not appearing in the statistics as a consequence. Also, the

study found that holdings of land were increasingly concentrated into fewer hands, and that the share of commercialization via supermarkets had increased to the detriment of traditional commerce, involving shorter supply chains or direct producer-consumer marketing (ibid.). Despite the political obstacles to specific legislative proposals, the potential for a primarily qualitative participatory approach to the development of quantitative food sovereignty indicators remains a promising avenue for a deeper understanding and realization of the sustainability of rural livelihoods and the integrity of rural communities, certainly warranting further research.

Appendix - Organic Law on Food Sovereignty - Ecuador

LEY ORGÁNICA DEL RÉGIMEN DE LA SOBERANÍA ALIMENTARIA

Título I Principios Generales

Art. 1.- Finalidad.- Esta Ley tiene por objeto establecer los mecanismos mediante los cuales el Estado cumpla con su obligación y objetivo estratégico de garantizar a las personas, comunidades y pueblos la autosuficiencia de alimentos sanos, nutritivos y culturalmente apropiados de forma permanente.

El régimen de la soberanía alimentaria se constituye por el conjunto de normas conexas, destinadas a establecer en forma soberana las políticas públicas agroalimentarias para fomentar la producción suficiente y la adecuada conservación, intercambio, transformación, comercialización y consumo de alimentos sanos, nutritivos, preferentemente provenientes de la pequeña, la micro, pequeña y mediana producción campesina, de las organizaciones económicas populares y de la pesca artesanal así como microempresa y artesanía; respetando y protegiendo la agrobiodiversidad, los conocimientos y formas de producción tradicionales y ancestrales, bajo los principios de equidad, solidaridad, inclusión, sustentabilidad social y ambiental.

El Estado a través de los niveles de gobierno nacional y subnacionales implementará las políticas públicas referentes al régimen de soberanía alimentaria en función del Sistema Nacional de Competencias establecidas en la Constitución de la República y la Ley.Art. 2.- Carácter y ámbito de aplicación.- Las disposiciones de esta Ley son de orden público, interés social y carácter integral e intersectorial. Regularán el ejercicio de los derechos del buen vivir -sumak kawsay- concernientes a la soberanía alimentaria, en sus múltiples dimensiones.

Su ámbito comprende los factores de la producción agroalimentaria; la agrobiodiversidad y semillas; la investigación y diálogo de saberes; la producción, transformación, conservación, almacenamiento, intercambio, comercialización y consumo; así como la sanidad, calidad, inocuidad y nutrición; la participación social; el ordenamiento territorial; la frontera agrícola; los recursos hídricos; el desarrollo rural y agroalimentario; la agroindustria, empleo rural y agrícola; las formas asociativas y comunitarias de los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores, las formas de financiamiento; y, aquéllas que defina el régimen de soberanía alimentaria.

Las normas y políticas que emanen de esta Ley garantizarán el respeto irrestricto a los derechos de la naturaleza y el manejo de los recursos naturales, en concordancia con los principios de sostenibilidad ambiental y las buenas prácticas de producción.

Art. 3.- Deberes del Estado.- Para el ejercicio de la soberanía alimentaria, además de las responsabilidades establecidas en el Art. 281 de la Constitución el Estado, deberá:

a) Fomentar la producción sostenible y sustentable de alimentos, reorientando el modelo de desarrollo agroalimentario, que en el enfoque multisectorial de esta ley hace referencia a los recursos alimentarios provenientes de la agricultura, actividad pecuaria, pesca, acuacultura y de la recolección de productos de medios ecológicos naturales;

b) Establecer incentivos a la utilización productiva de la tierra, desincentivos para la falta de aprovechamiento o acaparamiento de tierras productivas y otros mecanismos de redistribución de la tierra;

c) Impulsar, en el marco de la economía social y solidaria, la asociación de los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores para su participación en mejores condiciones en el proceso de producción, almacenamiento, transformación, conservación y comercialización de alimentos;

d) Incentivar el consumo de alimentos sanos, nutritivos de origen agroecológico y orgánico, evitando en lo posible la expansión del monocultivo y la utilización de cultivos agroalimentarios en la producción de biocombustibles, priorizando siempre el consumo alimenticio nacional;

e) Adoptar políticas fiscales, tributarias, arancelarias y otras que protejan al sector agroalimentario nacional para evitar la dependencia en la provisión alimentaria; y,

f) Promover la participación social y la deliberación pública en forma paritaria entre hombres y mujeres en la elaboración de leyes y en la formulación e implementación de políticas relativas a la soberanía alimentaria.

Art. 4.- Principios de aplicación de la ley.- Esta ley se regirá por los principios de solidaridad, autodeterminación, transparencia, no discriminación, sustentabilidad, sostenibilidad, participación, prioridad del abastecimiento nacional, equidad de género en el acceso a los factores de la producción, equidad e inclusión económica y social, interculturalidad, eficiencia e inocuidad, con especialatención a los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeña y mediana producción.

Título II Acceso a los factores de producción alimentaria

Capítulo I Acceso al agua y a la tierra

Art. 5.- Acceso al Agua.- El Acceso y uso del agua como factor de productividad se regirá por lo dispuesto en la Ley que trate los recursos hídricos, su uso y aprovechamiento, y en los respectivos reglamentos y normas técnicas.

El uso del agua para riego, abrevadero de animales, acuacultura u otras actividades de la producción de alimentos, se asignará de acuerdo con la prioridad prevista en la norma constitucional, en las condiciones y con las responsabilidades que se establezcan en la referida ley.

Art. 6.- Acceso a la tierra.- El uso y acceso a la tierra deberá cumplir con la función social y ambiental.

La función social de la tierra implica la generación de empleo, la redistribución equitativa de ingresos, la utilización productiva y sustentable de la tierra. La función ambiental de la tierra implica que ésta procure la conservación de la biodiversidad y el mantenimiento de las funciones ecológicas; que permita la conservación y manejo integral de cuencas hidrográficas, áreas forestales, bosques, ecosistemas frágiles como humedales, páramos y manglares, que respete los derechos de la naturaleza y del buen vivir; y que contribuya al mantenimiento del entorno y del paisaje.

La ley que regule el régimen de propiedad de la tierra permitirá el acceso equitativo a ésta, privilegiando a los pequeños productores y a las mujeres productoras jefas de familia; constituirá el fondo nacional de tierras; definirá el latifundio, su extensión, el acaparamiento y concentración de tierras, establecerá los procedimientos para su eliminación y determinará los mecanismos para el cumplimiento de su función social y ambiental. Así mismo, establecerá los mecanismos para fomentar la asociatividad e integración de las pequeñas propiedades. Además, limitará la expansión de áreas urbanas en tierras de uso o vocación agropecuaria o forestal, así como el avance de la frontera agrícola en ecosistemas frágiles o en zonas de patrimonio natural, cultural y arqueológico, de conformidad con lo que establece el Art. 409 de la Constitución de la República.

Capítulo II Protección de la agrobiodiversidad

Art. 7.- Protección de la agrobiodiversidad.- El Estado así como las personas y las colectividades protegerán, conservarán los ecosistemas y promoverán la recuperación, uso, conservación y desarrollo de la agrobiodiversidad y de los saberes ancestrales vinculados a ella. Las leyes que regulen el desarrollo agropecuario y la agrobiodiversidad crearán las medidas legales e institucionales necesarias para asegurar la agrobiodiversidad, mediante la asociatividad de cultivos, la investigación y sostenimiento de especies, la creación de bancos de semillas y plantas y otras medidas similares así como el apoyo mediante incentivos financieros a quienes promuevan y protejan la agrobiodiversidad.

Art. 8.- Semillas.- El Estado así como las personas y las colectividades promoverán y protegerán el uso, conservación, calificación e intercambio libre de toda semilla nativa. Las actividades de producción, certificación, procesamiento y comercialización de semillas para el fomento de la agrobiodiversidad se regularán en la ley correspondiente.

El germoplasma, las semillas, plantas nativas y los conocimientos ancestrales asociados a éstas constituyen patrimonio del pueblo ecuatoriano, consecuentemente no serán objeto de apropiación bajo la forma de patentes u otras modalidades de propiedad intelectual, de conformidad con el Art. 402 de la Constitución de la República.

Capítulo III Investigación, asistencia técnica y diálogo de saberes

Art. 9.- Investigación y extensión para la soberanía alimentaria.- El Estado asegurará y desarrollará la investigación científica y tecnológica en materia agroalimentaria, que tendrá por objeto mejorar la calidad nutricional de los alimentos, la productividad, la sanidad alimentaria, así como proteger y enriquecer la agrobiodiversidad.

Además, asegurará la investigación aplicada y participativa y la creación de un sistema de extensión, que transferirá la tecnología generada en la investigación, a fin de proporcionar una asistencia técnica, sustentada en un diálogo e intercambio de saberes con los pequeños y medianos productores, valorando el conocimiento de mujeres y hombres.

El Estado velará por el respeto al derecho de las comunidades, pueblos y nacionalidades de conservar y promover sus prácticas de manejo de biodiversidad y su entorno natural, garantizando las condiciones necesarias para que puedan mantener, proteger y desarrollar sus conocimientos colectivos, ciencias, tecnologías, saberes ancestrales y recursos genéticos que contienen la diversidad biológica y la agrobiodiversidad.

Se prohíbe cualquier forma de apropiación del conocimiento colectivo y saberes ancestrales asociados a la biodiversidad nacional.

Art. 10.- Institucionalidad de la investigación y la extensión.- La ley que regule el desarrollo agropecuario creará la institucionalidad necesaria encargada de la investigación científica, tecnológica y de extensión, sobre los sistemas alimentarios, para orientar las decisiones y las políticas públicas y alcanzar los objetivos señalados en el artículo anterior; y establecerá la asignación presupuestaria progresiva anual para su financiamiento.

El Estado fomentará la participación de las universidades y colegios técnicos agropecuarios en la investigación acorde a las demandas de los sectores campesinos, así como la promoción y difusión de la misma.

Art. 11.- Programas de investigación y extensión.- En la instancia de la investigación determinada en el artículo anterior y en el marco del Sistema Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología y el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, se creará:

a) Un programa de difusión y transferencia de tecnología dirigido al sector agroalimentario, con preferencia en los pequeños y medianos productores que tendrá un enfoque de demanda considerando la heterogeneidad de zonas agrobioclimáticas y patrones culturales de producción; y,

b) Un programa para el análisis de los diversos sistemas alimentarios orientar las existentes en las diferentes regiones del país, a fin de políticas de mejoramiento de la soberanía alimentaria.

Título III Producción y comercialización agroalimentaria

Capítulo I Fomento a la producción

Art. 12.- Principios generales del fomento.- Los incentivos estatales estarán dirigidos a los pequeños y medianos productores, responderán a los principios de inclusión económica, social y territorial, solidaridad, equidad, interculturalidad, protección de los saberes ancestrales, imparcialidad, rendición de cuentas, equidad de género, no discriminación, sustentabilidad, temporalidad, justificación técnica, razonabilidad, definición de metas, evaluación periódica de sus resultados y viabilidad social, técnica y económica.

Art. 13.- Fomento a la micro, pequeña y mediana producción.- Para fomentar a los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeña y mediana producción agroalimentaria, de acuerdo con los derechos de la naturaleza, el Estado:

a) Otorgará crédito público preferencial para mejorar e incrementar la producción y fortalecerá las cajas de ahorro y sistemas crediticios solidarios, para lo cual creará un fondo de reactivación productiva que será canalizado a través de estas cajas de ahorro;

b) Subsidiará total o parcialmente el aseguramiento de cosechas y de ganado mayor y menor para los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores, de acuerdo al Art. 285 numeral 2 de la Constitución de la República;

c) Regulará, apoyará y fomentará la asociatividad de los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores, de conformidad con el Art. 319 de la Constitución de la República para la producción, recolección, almacenamiento, conservación, intercambio, transformación, comercialización y consumo de sus productos. El Ministerio del ramo desarrollará programas de capacitación organizacional, técnica y de comercialización, entre otros, para fortalecer a estas organizaciones y propender a su sostenibilidad;

d) Promoverá la reconversión sustentable de procesos productivos convencionales a modelos agroecológicos y la diversificación productiva para el aseguramiento de la soberanía alimentaria;

e) Fomentará las actividades artesanales de pesca, acuacultura y recolección de productos de manglar y establecerá mecanismos de subsidio adecuados;

f) Establecerá mecanismos específicos de apoyo para el desarrollo de pequeñas y medianas agroindustrias rurales;

g) Implementará un programa especial de reactivación del agro enfocado a las jurisdicciones territoriales con menores índices de desarrollo humano;

h) Incentivará de manera progresiva la inversión en infraestructura productiva: centros de acopio y transformación de productos, caminos vecinales; e,

i) Facilitará la producción y distribución de insumos orgánicos y agroquímicos de menor impacto ambiental.

Art. 14.- Fomento de la producción agroecológica y orgánica.- El Estado estimulará la producción agroecológica, orgánica y sustentable, a través de mecanismos de fomento, programas de capacitación, líneas especiales de crédito y mecanismos de comercialización en el mercado interno y externo, entre otros.

En sus programas de compras públicas dará preferencia a las asociaciones de los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores y a productores agroecológicos.

Art. 15.- Fomento a la Producción agroindustrial rural asociativa.- El Estado fomentará las agroindustrias de los pequeños y medianos productores organizados en forma asociativa.

Art. 16.- Producción pesquera y acuícola.- El Estado fomentará la producción pesquera y acuícola sustentable, y establecerá las normas de protección de los ecosistemas. Las tierras ilegalmente ocupadas y explotadas por personas naturales o jurídicas, camaroneras y acuícolas, serán revertidas al Estado de no solicitarse su regularización en el plazo de un año, de conformidad con las normas vigentes en la materia, con el fin de garantizar procesos de repoblamiento y recuperación del manglar.

Serán revertidas al Estado las zonas ocupadas en áreas protegidas, sin que éstas puedan regularizarse.

El Estado protegerá a los pescadores artesanales y recolectores comunitarios y estimulará la adopción de prácticas sustentables de reproducción en cautiverio de las especies de mar, río y manglar. Se prohíbe la explotación industrial de estas especies en ecosistemas sensibles y protegidos.

Art. 17.- Leyes de fomento a la producción.- Con la finalidad de fomentar la

producción agroalimentaria, las leyes que regulen el desarrollo agropecuario, la agroindustria, el empleo agrícola, las formas asociativas de los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores, el régimen tributario interno y el sistema financiero destinado al fomento agroalimentario, establecerán los mecanismos institucionales, operativos y otros necesarios para alcanzar este fin.

El Estado garantizará una planificación detallada y participativa de la política agraria y del ordenamiento territorial de acuerdo al Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, preservando las economías campesinas, estableciendo normas claras y justas respecto a la operación y del control de la agroindustria y de sus plantaciones para garantizar equilibrios frente a las economías campesinas, y respeto de los derechos laborales y la preservación de los ecosistemas.

Capítulo II Acceso al capital e incentivos

Art. 18.- Capital.- Para desarrollar actividades productivas de carácter alimentario, el Estado impulsará la creación de fuentes de financiamiento en condiciones preferenciales para el sector, incentivos de tipo fiscal, productivo y comercial, así como fondos de garantía, fondos de re-descuento y sistemas de seguros, entre otras medidas. Los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores tendrán acceso preferente y diferenciado a estos mecanismos, de conformidad con el Art. 311 de la Constitución de la República.

Art. 19.- Seguro agroalimentario.- El Ministerio del ramo, con la participación y promoción de la banca pública de desarrollo y el sector financiero, popular y solidario, implementarán un sistema de seguro agroalimentario para cubrir la producción y los créditos agropecuarios afectados por desastres naturales, antrópicos, plagas, siniestros climáticos y riesgos del mercado, con énfasis en el pequeño y mediano productor.

Art. 20.- Subsidio agroalimentario.- En el caso de que la producción eficiente no genere rentabilidad por distorsiones del mercado debidamente comprobadas o se requiera incentivar la producción deficitaria de alimentos, el Estado implementará mecanismos de mitigación incluyendo subsidios oportunos y adecuados, priorizando a los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores afectados.

Capítulo III Comercialización y abastecimiento agroalimentario

Art. 21.- Comercialización interna.- El Estado creará el Sistema Nacional de Comercialización para la soberanía alimentaria y establecerá mecanismos de apoyo a la negociación directa entre productores y consumidores, e incentivará la eficiencia y racionalización de las cadenas y canales de comercialización. Además, procurará el mejoramiento de la conservación de los productos alimentarios en los procesos de post-cosecha y de comercialización; y, fomentará mecanismos asociativos de los

microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores de alimentos, para protegerlos de la imposición de condiciones desfavorables en la comercialización de sus productos, respecto de las grandes cadenas de comercialización e industrialización, y controlará el cumplimiento de las condiciones contractuales y los plazos de pago.

Los gobiernos autónomos descentralizados proveerán de la infraestructura necesaria para el intercambio y comercialización directa entre pequeños productores y consumidores, en beneficio de ambos, como una nueva relación de economía social y solidaria.

La ley correspondiente establecerá los mecanismos para la regulación de precios en los que participarán los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores y los consumidores de manera paritaria, y para evitar y sancionar la competencia desleal, las prácticas monopólicas, oligopólicas, monopsónicas y especulativas.

El Estado procurará el mejoramiento de la conservación de los productos alimentarios en los procesos de post-cosecha y de comercialización.

La ley correspondiente establecerá los mecanismos para evitar y sancionar la competencia desleal, así como las prácticas monopólicas y especulativas.

Art. 22.- Abastecimiento interno.- El Estado a través de los organismos técnicos especializados, en consulta con los productores y consumidores determinará anualmente las necesidades de alimentos básicos y estratégicos para el consumo interno que el país está en condiciones de producir y que no requieren de importaciones.

Art. 23.- Comercialización externa.- Los Ministerios a cargo de las políticas agropecuarias y de comercio exterior establecerán los mecanismos y condiciones que cumplirán las importaciones, exportaciones y donaciones de alimentos, las cuales no atentarán contra la soberanía alimentaria.

Además, el Presidente de la República establecerá la política arancelaria que se orientará a la protección del mercado interno, procurando eliminar la importación de alimentos de producción nacional y prohibiendo el ingreso de alimentos que no cumplan con las normas de calidad, producción y procesamiento establecidas en la legislación nacional.

Capítulo IV Sanidad e inocuidad alimentaria

Art. 24.- Finalidad de la sanidad.- La sanidad e inocuidad alimentarias tienen por objeto promover una adecuada nutrición y protección de la salud de las personas; y prevenir, eliminar o reducir la incidencia de enfermedades que se puedan causar o

agravar por el consumo de alimentos contaminados.

Art. 25.- Sanidad animal y vegetal.- El Estado prevendrá y controlará la introducción y ocurrencia de enfermedades de animales y vegetales; asimismo promoverá prácticas y tecnologías de producción, industrialización, conservación y comercialización que permitan alcanzar y afianzar la inocuidad de los productos. Para lo cual, el Estado mantendrá campañas de erradicación de plagas y enfermedades en animales y cultivos, fomentando el uso de productos veterinarios y fitosanitarios amigables con el medio ambiente.

Los animales que se destinen a la alimentación humana serán reproducidos, alimentados, criados, transportados y faenados en condiciones que preserven su bienestar y la sanidad del alimento.

Art. 26.- Regulación de la biotecnología y sus productos.- Se declara al Ecuador libre de cultivos y semillas transgénicas. Excepcionalmente y solo en caso de interés nacional debidamente fundamentado por la Presidencia de la República y aprobado por la Asamblea Nacional, se podrá introducir semillas y cultivos genéticamente modificados. El Estado regulará bajo estrictas normas de bioseguridad, el uso y el desarrollo de la biotecnología moderna y sus productos, así como su experimentación, uso y comercialización. Se prohíbe la aplicación de biotecnologías riesgosas o experimentales.

Las materias primas que contengan insumos de origen transgénico únicamente podrán ser importadas y procesadas, siempre y cuando cumplan con los requisitos de sanidad e inocuidad, y que su capacidad de reproducción sea inhabilitada, respetando el principio de precaución, de modo que no atenten contra la salud humana, la soberanía alimentaria y los ecosistemas. Los productos elaborados en base a transgénicos serán etiquetados de acuerdo a la ley que regula la defensa del consumidor.

Las leyes que regulen la agrobiodiversidad, la biotecnología y el uso y comercialización de sus productos, así como las de sanidad animal y vegetal establecerán los mecanismos de sanidad alimentaria y los instrumentos que garanticen el respeto a los derechos de la naturaleza y la producción de alimentos inocuos, estableciendo un tratamiento diferenciado a favor de los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores.

Título IV Consumo y nutrición

Art. 27.- Incentivo al consumo de alimentos nutritivos.- Con el fin de disminuir y erradicar la desnutrición y malnutrición, el Estado incentivará el consumo de alimentos nutritivos preferentemente de origen agroecológico y orgánico, mediante el apoyo a su comercialización, la realización de programas de promoción y educación nutricional para el consumo sano, la identificación y el etiquetado de los contenidos nutricionales de los alimentos, y la coordinación de las políticas públicas.

Art. 28.- Calidad nutricional.- Se prohíbe la comercialización de productos con bajo valor nutricional en los establecimientos educativos, así como la distribución y uso de éstos en programas de alimentación dirigidos a grupos de atención prioritaria.

El Estado incorporará en los programas de estudios de educación básica contenidos relacionados con la calidad nutricional, para fomentar el consumo equilibrado de alimentos sanos y nutritivos.

Las leyes que regulan el régimen de salud, la educación, la defensa del consumidor y el sistema de la calidad, establecerán los mecanismos necesarios para promover, determinar y certificar la calidad y el contenido nutricional de los alimentos, así como también para restringir la promoción de alimentos de baja calidad, a través de los medios de comunicación.

Art. 29.- Alimentación en caso de emergencias.- En caso de desastres naturales o antrópicos que pongan en riesgo el acceso a la alimentación, el Estado, mientras exista la emergencia, implementará programas de atención emergente para dotar de alimentos suficientes a las poblaciones afectadas, y para reconstruir la infraestructura y recuperar la capacidad productiva, mediante el empleo de la mano de obra de dichas poblaciones.

Art. 30.- Promoción del consumo nacional.- El Estado incentivará y establecerá convenios de adquisición de productos alimenticios con los microempresarios, microempresa o micro, pequeños y medianos productores agroalimentarios para atender las necesidades de los programas de protección alimentaria y nutricional dirigidos a poblaciones de atención prioritaria. Además implementará campañas de información y educación a favor del consumo de productos alimenticios nacionales principalmente de aquellos vinculados a las dietas tradicionales de las localidades.

Título V Participación social para la soberanía alimentaria

Art. 31.- Participación social.- La elaboración de las leyes y la formulación e implementación de las políticas públicas para la soberanía alimentaria, contarán con la más amplia participación social, a través de procesos de deliberación pública promovidos por el Estado y por la sociedad civil, articulados por el Sistema de Soberanía Alimentaria y Nutricional (SISAN), en los distintos niveles de gobierno.

Art. 32.- Institúyase la Conferencia Nacional de Soberanía Alimentaria como un espacio de debate, deliberación y generación de propuestas en esta materia, por parte de la sociedad civil, para la elaboración de la Ley que desarrolle la soberanía alimentaria.

Art. 33.- La Conferencia Nacional de Soberanía Alimentaria se conformará por ocho representantes de la sociedad civil, los que serán seleccionados mediante concurso público de merecimientos de entre los delegados de las diferentes organizaciones de

la sociedad civil, universidades y escuelas politécnicas, centros de investigación, asociaciones de consumidores, asociaciones de pequeños y productores, organizaciones campesinas de los diferentes productivos, en materia de soberanía alimentaria, con la del Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social.

Art. 34.- La Conferencia Nacional de Soberanía Alimentaria, sin perjuicio de las demás atribuciones que se establezcan en la Ley o en los Reglamentos, tendrá las siguientes:

a) Aprobar las normas internas que regulen su funcionamiento;

b) Promover procesos de diálogo para canalizar las propuestas e iniciativas provenientes de la sociedad civil;

c) Impulsar estudios e investigaciones sobre la problemática de la soberanía alimentaria; y,

d) Emitir informes y proponer alternativas para la formulación del proyecto de Ley por parte del Ejecutivo.

Art. 35.- Las propuestas que elabore la Conferencia Nacional de Soberanía Alimentaria deberán ser enviadas al Ministerio del ramo, para que proponga las políticas y los cambios legislativos y reglamentarios correspondientes.

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