



Agriculture and Food

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

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From the President

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The era of cheap food is over. The 2008 crisis in food prices was only the first warning that the global food system has entered an extended period of price rises and instability. Prices are now more than 30 percent higher in 2011 than last year and international institutions, such as the FAO and the World Bank, acknowledge the fact that this volatility will last several more years.

Some causes are well known though not always fully accepted: long term tendencies such as the rise in demand for grains from Southern countries, crops oriented to produce bio-fuels, and climate disruptions, whose effects are amplified by speculation on commodities and financial future markets. Other causes are too often left aside: the withdrawal of the State in many countries from the regulation of their food sector and the distribution of basic foodstuffs, allowing private corporations to fill this task; the

lack of support to small scale farmers and peasants, expelled from their land by trade liberalization and by imports of subsidized food from northern countries, imports whose price increases make them unaffordable for the majority of the poor. The high level of concentration of the food industry and trade explains that high prices do not benefit small or medium size producers but rather a small group of agro-food transnational corporations and speculators.

The increased levels of hunger, malnutrition and poverty have already produced riots and revolts in several Southern countries. In the poorest countries, families spend nearly the totality of their income on purchasing food.

Governments react as if responding to a scarcity problem, trying to fill their warehouses, importing more expensive food and, in some cases, buying or renting

land in other countries in Africa or Latin America, with the subsequent exclusion of local peasants from their land and water. Following a neo-Malthusian perspective, some propose a new Green Revolution, looking to increase production and yields.

The solution to the food crisis needs a deep reorganization of the food system and the determination to realize it. With the existing imbalance of power inside food chains, the question is where is the solution going to come from: Governments? Supra-national institutions? Will social movements who fight for the right to food be able to articulate global alternatives? RC40 should contribute to the debate and the search for alternatives. This is one of the reasons why RC40 will organize at the XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology taking place in Lisbon in 2012 a Mini Conference entitled "Imagining Resilience: Lessons from the global food crisis". We expect an interesting discussion and hope for large participation.

La repetición, en 2011, de los aumentos de precios de los granos básicos y de otros alimentos en los mercados mundiales, nos muestran, si falta hacía, que no estamos frente a un episodio pasajero sino frente a una crisis de larga duración y que el alza de los precios y su volatilidad durará, cuanto menos, varios años más. Así lo han reconocido organismos internacionales como la FAO y el Banco Mundial. Aparte de los factores ampliamente difundidos, como son problemas climáticos, el aumento de la demanda en ciertos países emergentes y la utilización de cosechas para la elaboración de bio-combustibles, cuyos efectos han sido amplificadas por la especulación en los mercados financieros y de materias primas, existen otras causas de esta crisis que a los gobiernos les cuesta reconocer: el abandono de la regulación de su sector agrícola y de las funciones de acopio y distribución de los

granos básicos, que han permitido a corporaciones privadas llenar este espacio; la expulsión de pequeños productores de sus tierras, empujados por la liberalización del comercio agrícola y por las importaciones masivas de granos subsidiados provenientes de los sistemas de producción industrial e intensiva de países del Norte. El incremento de los precios de estos alimentos los hace inaccesibles para la mayor parte de la población más pobre de los países pobres. El nivel elevado de concentración del comercio y la industria agro-alimentaria explica que los precios altos no lleguen a los productores pequeños y medianos sino que se queda en manos de unas corporaciones globales.

El incremento del hambre, de la desnutrición y de la pobreza fue uno de los detonantes de algunas revueltas en países del Sur.

Los gobiernos responden al alza de los precios como si fuera un problema de escasez e intentan llenar sus almacenes con más importaciones de granos caros. Otros, con una visión neo-malthusiana, proponen una nueva Revolución Verde para aumentar la producción y los rendimientos.

La solución a la crisis alimentaria requiere de un cambio radical del sistema agro-alimentario y de la voluntad de alcanzarlo. Con el profundo desequilibrio de poder existente en este sistema, la cuestión es de donde provendrá la solución: ¿de los gobiernos? ¿De instituciones supra-nacionales? ¿El movimiento social que lucha por el derecho a la alimentación tendrá la capacidad de articularse alternativas globales? El RC40 tiene entre sus tareas participar en este debate. Por ello es que proponemos la organización, en el seno del XIII Congreso Mundial de Sociología Rural, que tendrá lugar en Lisboa en 2012, de una Mini-Conferencia sobre el tema: "Imagining Resilience: lessons from the global food crisis". Esperamos una amplia participación y una rica discusión.

Les dernières augmentations des prix

des aliments au cours de cette année nous montrent, si besoin en était, que nous ne trouvons pas face à un épisode passager mais à une crise plus profonde du système agro-alimentaire. La FAO et la Banque Mondiale ont reconnu que la hausse des prix et la volatilité des marchés se prolongerait pendant plusieurs années encore.

Outre les causes déjà largement connues, comme des incidents climatiques, l'augmentation de la demande de certains pays émergents, l'utilisation de produits agricoles pour élaborer des bio-combustibles, phénomènes dont les effets sont multipliés par la spéculation sur les marchés financiers et de matières premières, d'autres causes, profondes, sont moins souvent évoquées : l'abandon, par les gouvernements, de la régulation du secteur agricole et des organismes chargés de l'approvisionnement, qui a permis aux corporations d'occuper cet espace ; l'expulsion de nombreux paysans de leurs terres suite à la libéralisation des marchés agricoles et les importations massive de céréales subsidiés en provenance de pays du Nord. L'augmentation des prix de ces aliments les rendent hors de la portée des plus pauvres. La concentration du commerce et de l'industrie agro-alimentaires explique que le bénéfice des prix élevés ne parvienne pas aux petits et moyens

producteurs. L'augmentation de la faim, la dénutrition et la pauvreté se trouvent, entre autres, à l'origine de révoltes dans certains pays du Sud.

Les gouvernements répondent à cette situation comme s'il s'agissait d'un problème de pénurie et cherchent à remplir leurs réserves en important plus de grains chers. D'autres préconisent une nouvelle Révolution Verte, cherchant à augmenter la production et la productivité.

La solution à la crise alimentaire requiert d'un changement profond du système agro-alimentaire et de la décision nécessaire pour y arriver. Le déséquilibre des relations de pouvoir au sein des chaînes alimentaires nous amène à poser la question de savoir d'où proviendra la solution : des gouvernements ? des institutions supra-nationales ? Le mouvement social qui défend le droit à l'alimentation sera-t-il capable d'articuler des alternatives globales ? Une des tâches du RC40 est celle de participer à ce débat. C'est pour cette raison que le Comité organisera, dans le cadre du XIII Congrès Mondial de Sociologie Rurale qui aura lieu à Lisbonne en 2012, une mini-conférence sous le thème "Imagining Resilience: lessons from the global food crisis". Nous y espérons une ample participation et une discussion intéressante.

[Insights around the Globe]

March 11, 2011 Disaster in Japan: Interim Report

Yoshimitsu Taniguchi, Akita Prefectural University
Masashi Tachikawa, Ibaraki University

How should we recover from the great disaster?

Three months have passed since a great earthquake accompanying by a terrible tsunami hit on March 11 the coastal areas of North East Japan, especially Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures. According to reports, more

than 15,000 people have been found dead, and 9,000 are still missing. No doubt it is one of the worst disasters in Japanese history. To make matters worse, the tsunami destroyed the Fukushima nuclear power plants and caused a catastrophic accident. This has made the disaster much more complicated and

difficult to solve.

When we think of the recovery from this disaster, we have to remember that the most severely damaged areas include many rural and disadvantaged communities. Even before the disaster, these communities had been suffering from depopulation, aging, and the decline of the agriculture and fishing industries. It was reported that 55% of the dead killed in the disaster were more than 65 years old, illustrating that the younger generation had moved out of the region.

To rebuild the stricken areas, we need to consider the importance of sustainable rural development, including the recovery of a subsistence economy, reciprocal relationships, local self-sufficiency and local autonomy. Actually, Iwate Prefecture has presented in its restoration plan three principles for its restoration: the restoration of its livelihood, security and subsistence economy (*nariwai*, in Japanese). On the other hand, however, Miyagi Prefecture, next to Iwate, is willing to take this opportunity to restructure its agriculture and fishing industries by consolidating small farmland and fishing ports. For instance, Mr. Yoshihiro Murai, Governor of Miyagi Prefecture, wants to liberalize the fishing rights from local fishermen to private corporations. We want to point out that neoliberal economic policies under the name of “restoration” might be enforced and could threaten the livelihood base of local farmers and fishermen.

At the same time, however, the suffering of stricken areas have reminded many Japanese people of the spirit of social solidarity. Victims of the disaster deeply impressed not only their fellow Japanese but also many from around the world with their composure, patience, modesty and altruism even in the most chaotic situation after the disaster. “No panic, no violence among victims” was often reported by the overseas media with surprise and respect, but, from the viewpoint of agricultural and rural

sociologists, it is understood as part of the rural morality and attitude towards an inevitable destiny which has been fostered during the long history of rural communities. A nation-wide chorus of “Don’t give up, Tohoku (North East Japan)!” prevailing across the country since the disaster could be the beginning of a rural-urban solidarity movement. It is difficult to say in which direction it will go, but many NGOs are now discussing possibilities for building alternative supporting programs.

Nuclear Accident as Rural Disaster

Regarding the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, the accident is still ongoing and many experts believe the spillage of nuclear materials will continue well into 2012. This accident is now regarded as the second worst nuclear accident in the world after Chernobyl. Japanese people are now facing enormous uncertainty regarding their health risks from long term exposure to low level nuclear materials. There is no scientific consensus regarding the health risk at this level, and we are totally at a loss to know whose opinion is too pessimistic or too optimistic.

There has been a series of market recalls of food items, mainly vegetables and fish, which have shown to be contaminated with nuclear materials. These incidents are reported occasionally and the government repeatedly asks people to trust the food sold on the market since all items showing higher levels¹ of radioactive material are being pulled from market. Every time the Prime Minister’s cabinet office gives a press release on findings of radioactive

¹The government has set a temporary standard of maximum intake of radioactive materials in food; 500 Bq/kg for cesium, and 2,000 Bq/kg for radioactive iodine. Also, the government has set maximum allowable exposure to radiation as 20 mSv/year based on ICRP radiation protection standard. These standards are now widely contested by various stakeholders, in particular parents and teachers. They argue these standards are too high for children.

materials in vegetables and fish, officials announce that there is no “immediate” risk even if people consume these food items. However, it is very hard for the lay public to understand what this “immediate” risk means. This might mean there IS risk 20 years later!? Consumers are facing conflicting messages from various information sources, and tend to have great concerns over food safety. In general, the government and the electric power company are very unwilling to disclose important information on the nuclear accident and the distribution of radioactive materials around the power plant. So information provision is one of the major sources worsening the integrity of risk management.

Food safety concerns are also widely shared among farming and fishing communities. Farmers are very anxious about their products and worried about their future. The earthquake happened just before spring farming activities starts, such as seeding and tillage on rice paddies. The local government of the neighboring area of the power plant

asked farmers not to start farming. If the area is under the evacuation zone (basically within 20 km radius from the power plant), farmers cannot stay there and must move out of their hometown. Livestock farmers faced the immediate decision of how to deal with their animals. Large numbers of animals/poultry have just starved to death from the discontinuation of their feed supply. This situation has faced serious criticism from animal welfare organizations.

Like other nuclear power plants around the world, it is typical that nuclear power plants are located in rural areas or, more typically in Japan that they are located near fishing communities. Therefore, every kind of nuclear power accident poses immediate threats to rural/fishing communities and urban residents via food and water. Nuclear accidents means rural disaster. Rural/agriculture/food researchers are urged to have a long term commitment with these communities and to make indispensable contributions to resolving the problems in the aftermath of the accident.

IJSAF

Report from the Editors

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD (IJSAF)

Mara Miele, Vaughan Higgins, Farshad Araghi

We are pleased to announce some important changes that we believe will help to re-launch IJSAF. We have nominated the **editorial advisory board** of the journal that will help the editors to strengthen the profile of the journal. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all the colleagues who have accepted to join us in this exciting enterprise and we look forward to work with all of them, the list of members of the editorial board is available at the

webpage <http://www.ij saf.org/board/index.html>

Dr. Adrian Evans, who acted as editorial assistant in the past two years while working at Cardiff University, has now moved to Essex University and has resigned from this job. However Adrian has accepted to act as Book editor of the journal and will help us to develop the section dedicated to book reviews. If you have published a book recently or would like to signal a book that might be of

interest to RC40 members and to our readership, please get in touch with Dr Adrian Evans, Department of Sociology, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ, United Kingdom; e-mail: abevans@essex.ac.uk.

We have also renewed the journal's webpage <http://www.ij saf.org/index.html> in order to facilitate access to the articles, to upload the papers for submission (this function will be activated by the end of June) and to provide better information about the journal.

We aim to publish three issues per year (February, June and October). This year, Issue 19 of volume 18 will be a regular issue and issue 20 will be a special issue on Agriculture and Climate Change (edited by Marta G. Rivera Ferre, Animal and Food Sciences Department, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, Reidar Almås, Centre for Rural Research, Trondheim, Norway, Hilde

Bjørkhaug, Centre for Rural Research, Trondheim, Norway). We are now accepting submissions for year 2012 and we would like to invite all RC40 members to consider sending us a paper about their research.

We look forward to receiving your feedbacks,

Mara Miele, Farshad Araghi and
Vaughan Higgins

Issues since the last RC-40 Newsletter

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

Vol. 17, Issue 2 (2010)

Articles

1. *Marketing the 'Slippery' Local with the Contrived 'Rural': Case Studies of Alternative Vegetable Retail in the Urban Fringe of Nagoya, Japan*
Aaron Kingsbury, Yosuke Maeda and Makoto Takahashi
2. *Local Organic Certification in Northern Thailand: The Role of Discourse Coalitions in Actor-Networks*

Brett Wyatt

3. *Local Food at Italian Farmers' Markets: Three Case Studies*

Riccardo Vecchio

4. *Supermarkets' Governance of the Agri-food Supply Chain: Is the 'Corporate-Environmental' Food Regime Evident in Australia?*

Kiah Smith, Geoffrey Lawrence and Carol Richards

Vol. 18, Issue 1 (2011) Special Issue: Collective Farmers' Marketing Initiatives.

Editorial Introduction

Collective Farmers' Marketing Initiatives in Europe: Diversity, Contextuality and Dynamics

Markus Schermer, Henk Renting and Henk Oostindie

Articles

1. *Quality, Coherence and Co-operation: A Framework for Studying the Mediation of Qualities in Food Networks and Collective Marketing Strategies*

Egon Noe and Hugo F. Alrøe

2. *Co-producing Transition: Innovation Processes in Farms Adhering to Solidarity-based Purchase Groups (GAS) in Tuscany, Italy*

Gianluca Brunori, Adanella Rossi and Vanessa Malandrini

3. *Direct Markets as Multiple Consumption Spaces: The Case of Two Norwegian Collective Marketing Initiatives*

Gunnar Vittersø and Anne M. Jervell

4. *Rebuilding and Failing Collectivity: Specific Challenges for Collective Farmers Marketing Initiatives in Post-Socialist Countries*

Talis Tisenkopfs, Imre Kovách, Michal Lošťák and Sandra Šūmane

5. *Social Capital as a Success Factor for Collective Farmers Marketing Initiatives*

Boldizsár Megyesi, Eszter Kelemen and Markus Schermer

RC40 By-Laws

I. MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

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

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

I.B.1. Run for office

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

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

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

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

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

I.D. Officers of the RC-40 are

I.D.1. The President

I.D.2. The Secretary

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

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

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

I.D.3.c. Four elected representatives

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

I.E.1. Officers cannot succeed themselves

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

I.F. Duties of the President

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

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

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

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

I.G. Duties of the Secretary-Treasurer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. SCIENTIFIC WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

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

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

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

World Congress and other scientific meetings

III ORGANIZATION OF THE JOURNAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IV. AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS

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

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

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

Upcoming Events

XXIV European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS) Congress
Inequality and diversity in European rural areas <http://www.ruralsociology.eu/>
22-25 August, 2011
Chania, Greece

Rural Sociological Society
28-31 July, 2011
Boise, Idaho. U.S.
<http://ruralsociology.org/>

4th Fair Trade International Symposium
Liverpool Hope Business School
United Kingdom
2-4 April, 2012
Abstract (5 pages) due 30 September, 2011
www.fairtradeinternationalsymposium.org

XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology

Lisbon, Portugal

29 July – 4 August, 2012

[World Congress Website](#)

February 15 to June 15, 2011

Call for working sessions

September 2011 to January 15, 2012

Call for abstracts

March 30, 2012

Early registrations deadline

May 15, 2012

Deadline for presenters' registration

RC40 Executive Council, 2010-2014

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From the Secretary

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

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

[2] About the membership fee:

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

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