



# Agriculture and Food

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

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## *From the President*

Gianluca Brunori  
President, RC-40  
[gbrunori@agr.unipi.it](mailto:gbrunori@agr.unipi.it)

I wish to warmly welcome our members to the fourth newsletter of RC-40.

Agriculture and food are back at the centre of the world concerns. The recent street riots in Egypt, Burkina Faso, Haiti, and Indonesia triggered by rising food prices, show time and again how illusory were the promises of wealth and development accompanying the liberalization of trade and the massive introduction of industrial agricultural technologies into developing countries. After decades of agricultural modernization, food systems of poor countries are now dependent from global food production, oil prices, rich countries' consumption of feed and fuel and agribusiness-produced knowledge. They have lost capacity to mobilize their own resources such as biodiversity, local knowledge and social capital. New waves of regulation – in the fields, among others, of intellectual property regimes - are reducing farmers' control over the means of production and reproduction. In the rich and emerging economies, food systems have generated overconsumption, waste and unhealthy eating styles. Industrial agriculture, despite its potential capacity to warehouse carbon into plants and soils, contributes to one third of world carbon emissions.

There is a growing awareness that the present agricultural food regimes are not sustainable, and that new regulatory principles should be enforced. Since its birth, RC-40 has provided a critical view on mainstream approaches, offering empirical evidence, theories and methodologies to highlighting the impacts of agricultural modernization, to discovering hidden trends, to deconstructing dominant discourse. In times like these, the work of our scientific community is essential to support the emergence and the growth of alternatives to the present state of affairs.

[Insights around the Globe]

## ***Export Retentions and Agrarian Conflict in Argentina***

**Mónica Bendini**

Argentina is a traditionally agro-exporting country, which in the last few decades has experienced an intensive production restructuring that adopts the form of concentrated modernization. Moreover, changes in the social organization of agriculture has occurred due, in part, to the expansion of crops for export that require major dependence on technological packages of seeds and agrochemicals: from the process of agriculturization, that characterized a good part of the last century the agriculture-cattle activity, towards the end of the '80s to the process of soyization which strongly occupied a large part of the productive space at present (the total area of land under soybean cultivation changed from 8% in 1980 to 52% in 2006, its production for export is 95 % and the current crop is estimated at 24,0000 million dollars). Though the meadow pampean zone is the region with major differential rent for the production of soybean and grains in general, there is expansion to areas considered marginal traditionally based on family farming and peasantry forms; with also redefinition of the cattle producing borders. Changes in the use of land have been accompanied by changes in the forms of ownership (purchase/sale and renting). Furthermore, the issue of the transgenic soybean and the social and environmental effects of this process complete the complexity of the agrofood system. The exports of grains and by-products are concentrated in five companies: Cargill, Bunge and Born, Dreyfus, Aceitera General Deheza and Vicentin; in case of Cargill, the corporation includes 45 regional stores, 5 grain ports, 4 milling plants of oilseeds and different diversifications including the commercializing of seeds associated with Monsanto.

After the national crisis of 2001, the policy of competitive change and the rise of international prices for traded goods increased the productive and territorial expansion of grains and oilseeds. The increase in commodity prices was accompanied by the increase of the price of the land by 300%. In maize growing areas, for example, the average price was 2500 dollars per hectare in 2001 to 10,000 dollars per hectare at present; these average values could be comparable with the ones in Iowa, USA. Therefore, there takes place a substantial increase in the renting of the land (the average for soybean moved from 168 dollars per hectare to 360 in the same period), which led to the transfer of lands and producers who some of them in turn to live on land income. Likewise, the pools of sowing expanded and new investors appeared.

In this context, the Government with the National Decree 125/08 issued on March 11, 2008 announced an increase in export retentions on grains and oilseeds. In the case of the soybean, tariffs changed from 35 % to 44 %, which along with the mobile character that the retentions assume, engenders one of the most important agrarian conflicts in Argentina.

The governmental reasons for implementing the export tariffs are to discourage the extension of monocultures, especially of products that do not contribute to the agro-food model of the national population; and to avoid inflation through the transfer of the international prices of primary products to the local market, among others reasons. However, those who are opposed to the implementation

of the Decree, view it as an attempt on the rentabilities of the sector and, as an attempt, on the part of the State, to control the agrofood chain, particularly the producers..

On the one hand, the tariffs are valued as a redistributive, anti-inflationary tool, for production diversification and to guarantee the food sovereignty. On the other hand, they are criticized as a distortional and confiscatory instrument. In fact, export retentions are an instrument admitted by the WTO and used in a third of its country members for primarily agricultural products and hydrocarbons.

Export tariffs in Argentina were important in the period of industrialization, from half of last century until middle of the decade of the '70s, also from middle of the '80s into the '90s associated with the parity of exchange peso/dollar. From 2002 they were re-implemented or increased progressively up to 35 % for soybean, 32 % for sunflower, 28 % for wheat, 25 % for maize, in 2007.

From the major trade union entities of the agro-industry, several mass media outlets, and different political sectors and parties there immediately arose the opposition to the governmental Decree and its rejection. The conflict represents a political bid that is inserted in the context of the question of national income and how it should be distributed. That it is the question of the appropriation and distribution of the economic surplus in a phase of expansion of the national economy with permanent high values of commodities and the push to the development of biofuels.

A tactical alliance has taken place between the producers who are unionized in four principal agrarian associations of the country (Sociedad Rural, Coninagro, Federacion Agraria y Confederaciones Rurales). There were brief and failed initial attempts of negotiation between the government and the producers, which resulted in immediate direct actions by the producers including -lock out, mainly with cuts of routes. This producer alliance includes the traditional sectors of big producers and landowners as well as medium and small producers and/or lenders, mostly of the pampean region.

Concerning the governmental measure that detonated the conflict, numerous political, technical, academic debates have been generated; the retention issue floods the political arena as well as the social quotidian scenery where the role of the mass media is important in the formation of images and positioning. The confrontation is portrayed as the countryside versus national government.

This image gives a view of a homogeneous countryside that represents those who work and generate currencies and of countryside that produces grains, but also meat and milk products. It appears to be a countryside socially undifferentiated at the level of the discourse and protest, and also in the initial scope of the governmental measure; besides a landscape and lifestyle geographically centered on pampean and peri-pampean zones and productions.

Essentially, it is a conflict of economic interests that has spread throughout society -protests in rural communities, pots rattling in urban centers, demonstrations in support of the government. This conflict makes apparent old animosities; and is expressed in a powerful political conflict that is still without resolution after more than three months, and with uncertain consequences to level of constitutional legitimacy of the measure and of its application, as well as to level of governability.

Responding to claims concerning the undifferentiated scope of the Decree, the government later incorporated compensations, different refunds and subsidies for small producers. In addition, with the June, 17th 2008, the Executive Power recognized its right, -given by the Customs Code - to issue the Decree for the increase of the retentions, but, given the extent of the crisis affecting the entire nation -which includes difficulties to transit routes, shortage of supplies, paralyzed negotiations- proposed an extension of the democratization of the measure and transferred its handling to the National Parliament.

## ***Report from the Editors of The INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD (IJSAF)***

### **1. Location and management of the journal**

The journal has recently shifted its institutional home from the Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Food and Environment, University of Otago (New Zealand) to the School of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University (UK). The day-to-day operations of the journal are managed by Joek Roex who has had considerable experience in journal editing and production. The new web address for the journal is <http://ijsaf.org>

We are grateful to the School of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University, and Florida Atlantic University for supporting the journal in terms of funding both an editorial assistant and upkeep of the website. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the RC-40 Executive Council in providing a one off payment of US\$2,000 to assist in the running of the journal.

The editorial team would like to take this opportunity to thank CSAFE for its financial support over the past three and a half years. We are particularly grateful for the exceptional level of assistance provided by Scott Willis. The day-to-day running of the journal would not have been possible without Scott's organisation and attention to detail.

### **2. Current editors**

The current editors of the IJSAF are Dr Vaughan Higgins (Monash University, Australia), Professor Farshad Araghi (Florida Atlantic University, USA), and Dr Mara Miele (Cardiff University, UK).

### **3. Numbers of Issues since the last RC-40 Newsletter**

Since the last newsletter there have been two issues of the journal: one an ordinary issue and the other a special issue on 'Competing Discourses of Farm Animal Welfare and Agri-Food Restructuring'. Depending on the number of manuscripts submitted the editors are planning on two ordinary issues as well as one special issue for 2008.

### **4. Visibility and Impact of the Journal**

IJSAF has recently been included in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOJA). The journal has been chosen also by Stanford University Libraries as a candidate for digital preservation through the LOCKSS Program. Stanford University Libraries noted 'the high quality of research published by International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food'. While there has been progress, the quantity of articles submitted and published per year continues to represent a major problem in ensuring the production of regular issues and thereby improving the journal's impact. It is hoped that annual special issues of the journal will help in improving the exposure of the journal and thereby attract a higher rate of submissions to ordinary issues.

### **5. Proposed Special Issues**

The first of a series of annual special issues has recently been published. Proposed special issues for 2008/09 are 'Fair Trade: Myth of Reality?' guest edited by Niels Fold (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) and Bill Pritchard (University of Sydney, Australia); and, 'Sources and Mechanisms of Power in the Global System and in Rural

Sites: Domination, Counter-Domination, and Alternatives' guest edited by Alberto Arce (Wageningen University, The Netherlands) and Tomiko Yamaguchi (International Christian University, Japan).

Future planned future special issues may include:

- Global restructuring in the dairy industry
- Neoliberalism, de-peasantisation and peasant mobilisation.
- NGOs and corporate social responsibility.
- Labour processes in the global agri-food system.

However, the editors would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in proposing, and guest editing, a special issue that accords with the general aims and scope of the journal.

Vaughan Higgins  
Farshad Araghi  
Mara Miele

**Draft (as of June 16) Program of Working Group 14 (RC40-organized session)**  
***Scientific Discourse, Governance and the Agri-Food System***  
**XII World Congress of Rural Sociology**  
**(July 6<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Korea)**

*(Note :) The following is the excerpt from the latest program of the IRSA 2008 which is available currently. Please refer to the final program which would be distributed at the entrance of the conference.*

Cluster 1 – Monday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 14:00 to 15:45

Cluster 2 – Monday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 16:00 to 17:45

Cluster 3 – Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 10:45 to 12:30

Cluster 4 – Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 14:00 to 15:45

Cluster 5 – Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 16:00 to 17:45

**Cluster 6 – Thursday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 10:45 to 12:30**

*Working Group 14 – Scientific Discourse, Governance and the Agri-Food System –*  
Co-chaired by Elizabeth Ransom, Gianluca Brunori and Masashi Tachikawa.

“Introduction to the Working Group.” Elizabeth Ransom (University of Richmond), Gianluca Brunori (University of Pisa) and Masashi Tachikawa (Ibaraki University).

“Food Safety Science: Law, Science, and Market.” Lawrence Busch and Toby Ten Eyck (Michigan State University).

“Civic science?: Japanese Consumers' Involvement in Food Safety Standards.” Aya Hirata Kimura (University of Hawaii at Manoa).

“Control of Scientific Discourse about Food and Agriculture.” Tomiko Yamaguchi (International Christian University).

“The Science of Surveillance: Monitoring Food Safety.” Craig Harris

(Michigan State University).

“Science for Trust and Trust in Science: The Case of Japan in Dealing with BSE Risk.” Keiko Tanaka (University of Kentucky).

### **Cluster 8 – Friday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 09:30 to 11:15**

*Working Group 14 – Scientific Discourse, Governance and the Agri-Food System* – Co-chaired by Elizabeth Ransom, Gianluca Brunori and Masashi Tachikawa.

“Understanding changes on food supply chains in the globalization context.” Manuel Belo Moreira (Portugal).

“Conceptualizing the Mainstream Agri-food System.” Raymond A. Jussaume Jr. (Washington State University).

“The struggle for transition to sustainable consumption: the role of alternative food networks” Gianluca Brunori (University of Pisa).

“New trends of food re-localisation and role of alternative food networks.” Ada Cavazzani (Università della Calabria).

“In the name of conservation: coffee "Practices" in the protected area El Triunfo, Chiapas, Mexico.” Marie-Christine Renard (Universidad Autaunoma Chapingo).

“Agrarian Society and Livestock Economy: Reflection on Governance” Bishnu C. Barik (S R T M University).

Cluster 9 – Friday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 to 12:30

*POSTER SESSION*

### **Cluster 10 – Friday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 14:00 to 15:45**

*Working Group 14 – Scientific Discourse, Governance and the Agri-Food System* – Co-chaired by Elizabeth Ransom, Gianluca Brunori and Masashi Tachikawa.

“Technology Assessment in social context.” Frank Vanclay (University of Tasmania).

“A Japanese tradition of study on agricultural ethics.” Motoki Akitsu (Kyoto University).

“Farmers as social learners: Sustainable farming and communities of practice.” Selyf Morgan (Cardiff University).

“When “Perceptions” Become “Knowledge”: Publics and Risk Assessment Procedures in New Zealand.” Carolyn Morris (University of Canterbury).

“Processed Foods: An Indian Consumer Perspective.” Manisha Singla (Indian Institute of Management).

### **RC-40 Business meeting immediately following Session 3**

## Upcoming Events

[2008]

- **XII International Rural Sociological Association**  
July 6-11, 2008  
Goyang, Korea  
<http://www.irsa-world.org/>
- **RC40 Business Meeting**  
**Immediately after the closure of Working Group 14, IRSA, Korea**
- **Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting (USA)**  
“Rural Sociology as Public Sociology: Past, Present, Future”  
July 28-31, 2008  
Radisson Hotel, Manchester, New Hampshire  
<http://www.ruralsociology.org>
- **Slow Food Nation 08**  
August 29 – September 1  
Various places around San Francisco, California, USA  
<http://slowfoodnation.org/>
- **First ISA Forum of Sociology**  
Sociological Research and Public Debate  
September 5 - 8, 2008  
Barcelona, Spain  
<http://www.isa-sociology.org>

## Resources of Interest

- **Special Issue: “Agro-Food Activism in California and the Politics of the Possible”**  
*Geoforum*, Volume 39 Issue 3 (May 2008)
- **Liberalizing Food Trade to Death**  
Author: Shawn Hattingh  
<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/hattingh060508.html>
- **Special Issue: Towards Sustainable Local Food Systems**  
*Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*,  
Volume 13 Issue 3 (2008)

We are accepting resources of interest from YOUR contribution. Please send your information to the Secretary. Such information will be circulated via e-list and this newsletter.

## By-Laws of the RC-40

### 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 can not 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 editor(s) are appointed by the president in conjunction with the executive committee 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

III.D. The president of RC-40, in consultation with the editor and the members of the executive committee, shall appoint the members of the editorial board

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

#### 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

#### RC-40 Executive Council, 2006-2010

Office	Officer	Organizational Affiliation	Country	E-mail
President	Gianluca Brunori	University of Pisa	Italy	<a href="mailto:gbrunori@agr.unipi.it">gbrunori@agr.unipi.it</a>
Secretary/ Treasurer	Masashi Tachiakawa	Ibaraki University	Japan	<a href="mailto:mtachi@mx.ibaraki.ac.jp">mtachi@mx.ibaraki.ac.jp</a>
Executive Council	Monica Bendini	Universidad Nacional del Comahue	Argentina	<a href="mailto:mibendini@yahoo.com.ar">mibendini@yahoo.com.ar</a>

	Vaughan Higgins	Monash University	Australia	<a href="mailto:Vaughan.higgins@arts.monash.edu.au">Vaughan.higgins@arts.monash.edu.au</a>
	Elizabeth Ransom	University of Richmond	USA	<a href="mailto:eransom@richmond.edu">eransom@richmond.edu</a>
	Marie-Christine Renard	Universidad Autónoma Chapingo,	México	<a href="mailto:mcrenard@gmail.com">mcrenard@gmail.com</a>
	Tomiko Yamaguchi	International Christian University	Japan	<a href="mailto:tyamaguc@icu.ac.jp">tyamaguc@icu.ac.jp</a>
	Manuel Belo Moreira	Universidade Técnica de Lisboa	Portugal	<a href="mailto:mbelomoreira@isa.utl.pt">mbelomoreira@isa.utl.pt</a>
	Wynne Wright	Michigan State University	USA	<a href="mailto:wrightwy@anr.msu.edu">wrightwy@anr.msu.edu</a>

### RC-40 Regional Representatives, 2006-2010

Latin America	John Wilkinson	<a href="mailto:jwilkins@uol.com.br">jwilkins@uol.com.br</a>
Australia/New Zealand	Geoffrey Lawrence	<a href="mailto:g.lawrence@mailbox.uq.edu.au">g.lawrence@mailbox.uq.edu.au</a>
East Asia	Yoshimitsu Taniguchi	<a href="mailto:tani@akita-pu.ac.jp">tani@akita-pu.ac.jp</a>
South Asia	Bishnu C. Barik	<a href="mailto:bishnu_barik@rediffmail.com">bishnu_barik@rediffmail.com</a>
Northern Europe	Reidar Almås	<a href="mailto:reidar.almas@rural.no">reidar.almas@rural.no</a>
Southern Europe	Maria Fonte	<a href="mailto:mfonte@unina.it">mfonte@unina.it</a>

## From the Secretary

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

- You can post information which could be shared among the members of the RC40 via the mailing list: [isaRC40@ml.affrc.go.jp](mailto:isaRC40@ml.affrc.go.jp).
- If you would like to joint this e-list, please send an e-mail to the secretary: [mtachi@mx.ibaraki.ac.jp](mailto:mtachi@mx.ibaraki.ac.jp).

### [2] About the membership fee:

Every member shall pay their fee for every 4 years. Please refer to the amount of the fee at the website of the ISA ([http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/memb\\_i/index.htm](http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/memb_i/index.htm)). Current RC-40 secretary do NOT accept personal cheques because of the banking system in Japan (due to the high cost for money transfer fee).

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Editor: Masashi Tachikawa, RC40 Secretary  
Ibaraki University, Japan  
[mtachi@mx.ibaraki.ac.jp](mailto:mtachi@mx.ibaraki.ac.jp)  
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