FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND HOME GARDENS IN NORTHERN NICARAGUA

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RESEARCH SITE: NORTHERN HIGHLANDS OF NICARAGUA, THE SEGOVIAS
Adaptabilidad actual y futuro para el cultivo café

Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical, 2010
RESEARCH QUESTION

- Are home gardens an effective strategy to reach food sovereignty in the face of climate change?

- Why may farmers in participating communities of northern Nicaragua be resistant to changing their food production and consumption strategies?
METHODS

- Epistemology
  - Naturalist research paradigm
- Document analysis
- Purposive Sampling
- Participant Observation
- In-depth interviews and garden site visits
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

- communities’ widespread loss of control over food markets, environments, land and rural cultures
  - Economic policies based on corporate-led model of agriculture
- the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems:
  - their own markets
  - production modes
  - food cultures and environments
  - alternatives to the dominant neoliberal model for agriculture and trade
- Food Security
Implications of the Typical Food Security Agenda

- Food related policies that emphasize maximizing food production and enhancing food access opportunities, without particular attention to how, where and by whom food is produced.

- Promotion of agricultural trade liberalization and the concentration of food production in the hands of fewer, and larger, agri-business corporations.
Total area: 4499 m²

Zone 1: Residential
Zone 3: Ornamentals with shade trees
Zone 4: Shaded coffee
Zone 5: Multi-purpose trees
Zone 7: Ornamentals with vine-crop shade
Zone 9: Herbaceous crops
CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME GARDENS IN NICARAGUA

- Provide a diverse and stable supply of socio-economic products and benefits to the families (Ninez, 1987).

- **Agrodiversity** Nicaraguan home gardens found the diversity of plant species ranged from 22 to 106 with an average of 70 (Mendez et al 2001)

- Medicinals, fruit trees, ornamentals, and plants for timber and construction are consumed in the home or sold on the local market

- Promotion of home gardens in Nicaragua for diet diversity and control of food system
WHY FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

- Put the control of productive resources in the hands of those who produce food
- Land, water, seeds and natural resources
- Collaboration between governments, community-based organizations and development organizations like non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
RESEARCH RESULTS: INHIBITING FACTORS TO HOME GARDEN DEVELOPMENT

- Farmers perceive production agriculture and the market to ‘work better’ than subsistence home gardens
  - Plant more coffee and use income to purchase food
  - Subsistence versus market – either/or?

- Altering Food Habits
  - Nicaraguan farmers tend to maintain a relatively undiversified diet

- Food consumption is wrapped up in history, culture, and identity
  - Strategy brought from outside agencies with legacy of top-down development projects

- Who says farmers WANT to be food sovereign?
  - Dependency on outside providers for seeds
**Development Discourse**

- Long history of northern-based countries directing development projects
- Farmers may make decisions not to participate in a food sovereignty agenda
- Resistance to the processes of change defined by project decision makers
Discourse embodied in farmer’s identity and subsequently their responses to project information gathering

A ‘development discourse’ or “the hegemonic epistemological space of development –inscribed in multiple forms of knowledge, political technologies and social relations” (1992:23)

Employment of development strategies such as home gardens rely on a discourse embedded in farmers that itself has to be dismantled if projects aimed at food sovereignty want to include farmer input in a way that does not inhibit successful outcomes
Participatory action research approach

- Action research in schools (1)
- Farmer participatory research (2)
- Action research in organizations (3)
- PAR in Latin American education and community development (4)
- PAR for environmental justice, livable communities and public health (5)

Sources—Selener, 1997
COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND DECISION-MAKING

ASDINEC Nicaragua

Funders

GMCR CAN

Member Farmers

PRODECOOP second level co-op

Agro-ecologists Research team
Conventional Extension

Researchers develop a technology

They conduct field trials at an experiment station

They do more trials on a farmer’s field

Extensionists set up demonstration plots, and host field days for farmers, and/or visit farmers to promote the technology

The peasant family adopts or rejects the technology

Campesino to Campesino

A peasant already has a solution, or innovates a solution, to a problem that is common for many peasants

S/he becomes a promoter of this new or rediscovered solution

Exchanges are set up, where other peasants visit his or her farm to learn, or where s/he visits the farms of other peasants to share the solution with them.

Other peasants teach other peasants this as well as other solutions
FARMER TO FARMER EXCHANGE
**Final Products**

- In-depth interview manual en español for the NGO’s internship program

- Exit presentation and report
  - Used in decision-making meetings

- Final findings report
FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS