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Food procurement in countries of intense agrarian conflicts:

examples from South America

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the implementation of public food procurement policies, where the food produced by family farmer and peasant agriculture is purchase by the state and then donated to low income people, in Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay as one of the characteristics of post-neoliberalism in South America. These countries are characterized by intense territorial disputes and contradictions between the agribusiness and family farmer/peasant agricultural development models, which we understand as *conflictuality*. The Brazilian experience that began in 2003 has become a reference for Ecuador and Paraguay as of 2015, when a technical cooperation agreement is signed between the Brazilian Federal Government and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to reproduce the Brazilian public food procurement model in other countries of the Southern Hemisphere. We demonstrate how such experiences rupture, in part, with the control that large agri-food corporations exert in the food systems of Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay. This is because, at the same time that public food procurement has created a new market opportunity for family farmers and peasants, they have also functioned as a mechanism to combat hunger and promote democratized access to good food. Moreover, such initiatives can be understood as a possibility to re-spatialize food, by promoting closer contact between food producers and consumers.

Keywords

Institutional food procurement policies; post-neoliberal; Brazil; Ecuador; Paraguay.

Acronyms

CONSEA	National Food and Nutritional Security Council (<i>Conselho Nacional de Segurança</i>	
Alimentar e Nutricional)		
DAP	Declaration of Aptitude	
FAO	The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization	
FHC	Fernando Henrique Cardoso	
FNDE	National Fund for Education Development (Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da	
Educação)		
FPA	Agricultural Parliamentary Front (Frente Parlamentar Agropecuária)	
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (Ministério da Agricultura e Ganaderia)	
MES	Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social)	
MTICPAF	Interinstitutional Technical Committee for Public Purchases from Family Agriculture	
(Mesa Técnica Interinstitucional de Compras públicas de la Agricultura Familiar)		
PAA	Food Acquisition Program (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos)	
PAD	India's Public Distribution System	
PFZ	Brazil's Zero Hunger Program (Programa Fome Zero)	
RVDB	National Democratic Mobilization Party (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro)	
PNAE	National School Meal Program (Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar)	
PPA	Food Provision Program (Programa de Provisión de Alimentos)	
PRN	National Reconstruction Party (Particlo da Reconstrução Nacional)	
PROALMENTOS Food Provision Institute (Instituto de Provisión de Alimentos)		
PSDB	Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira)	
PT	Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores)	
SAN	Food and Nutritional Security (segurança Alimentar e Nutricional)	
US	United States	
UN	United Nations	
WP	UNWorld Food Program	
WIO	World Trade Organization	

1. Introduction

In the beginning of the 21st century, multiple center-left governments came into power in South America. Though they did not rupture structurally with capitalism, greater importance was given to South-South integration and the implementation public income distribution policies (Maluf and Prado, 2015). For these reasons, they are defined here as post-neoliberal (Sader, 2013b). Examples include: Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), in Brazil; José Mujica (2010-2015) and Tabaré Vázques (2016-ongoing), in Uruguay; Fernando Lugo (2008-2012), in Paraguay; Rafael Correa (2007-2017), in Ecuador; Hugo Chávez (1999-2013) and Nicolás Maduro (2013-ongoing), in Venezuela, and; Evo Morales (2006ongoing), in Bolivia¹. Vergara-Camus and Kay (2017) assert that despite there being multiple studies published about these experiences at the national level there is still a lack of comparative studies that draw attention to the successes, limits, and contradictions of these experiences in terms of their agricultural and agrarian policies.

In hope of offering a contribution that addresses this gap, this paper aims to discuss policies that promote peasants and indigenous peoples' access to the institutional food market in three of these South American countries: Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay. These countries were chosen because they have particular factors in common, such as the prevalence of agribusiness as a hegemonic model of development for the countryside, and high indicators of poverty among family farmer/peasants and indigenous peoples alongside a large number of people who are subjected to hunger, due to the process of food mercantilisation. Nevertheless, these countries also have strong political-economic differences that need to be taken into account when discussing the process of South American integration in the context of the rise of center-left governments. The 2012 and 2016 removal of Fernando Lugo and Dilma Rousseff from power (i.e., *coup d'etat*) in Paraguay and Brazil, for example, ended governments with progressive positions. In turn, Lenin Moreno replaced Rafael Correa as the president of Ecuador in 2017. While both are from the same

¹ In addition to these South American countries that make up the focus of this study, post-neoliberal governments also came to power in two Central American countries: Daniel Ortega (2007-ongoing), in Nicaragua, and Mauricio Funes (2009-2014), in El Salvador (Sader, 2013a).

party, the *Aliança País* (Country Alliance), Moreno's brief time in office has been indicative of a rupture with Correa's post-neoliberal stance.

It is essential to recognize that perhaps more than anywhere else on the world, South America's food systems are characterized by intense *conflictuality* (Fernandes, 2014). At the same time that this region has some of the most significant players in global agribusiness (e.g., Brazil and Argentina are among the main producers of grain), it has also given rise to and contributed towards the consolidation of the largest coalition of peasant movements of the world, *La Vía Campesina*² (Desmarais, 2007; Schmitt and Maluf, 2010). In other words, the expansion of the agribusiness development model and strategies of resistance by peasants and indigenous peoples (Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2010), occur concomitantly in this region which characterizes a context of intense *conflictuality*. The unequal and contradictory development of capitalism is what causes this (Oliveira, 2007), a fact that requires emphase the complex nature of reality.

In this context, the creation of mechanisms that contribute to a greater insertion of family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples into institutional markets can be recognized as a component of the dispute over how agri-food systems are organized at the national level (McKay, Nehring and Walsh-Dilley, 2014; Coca, 2016b). Such an assertion is important because the greatest innovation that the policies of access to the institutional food markets in South America offers is the focus on specific groups of producers, i.e., family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples (De Schutter, 2013). At the same time, these policies also seek to contribute to the fight against hunger by donating all the food procured by the state to people in conditions of social vulnerability (FAO, 2015). In other words, such actions can be seen as a proposal for structural intervention in local agrifood systems, going beyond sectoral proposals that have a long tradition in South America (Coca and Barbosa Jr, 2016).

In terms of the methodology, this work is based on bibliographic and documental review of public food procurement policies carried out in Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay. Print and digital sources were consulted, with special attention to official documents, i.e., those produced by governments and/or institutions directly linked to the policies studied. This material was organized in the bibliographic referencing software Mendeley, which facilitated its use for

 $^{^{2}}$ The importance of Latin America, which includes South America, to the consolidation of *La Vía Campesina* is so evident that the very name of this international coalition of peasant movements is given in Spanish (Desmarais, 2007).

posterior analysis. The Brazilian case has also been studied through fieldwork conducted between 2013 and 2018 in the regions of Cantuiquiriguaçu and Norte in the state of Paraná, Pontal do Paranapanema in the state of São Paulo, and South and Southwest in the state of Minas Gerais.

This paper is comprised of two efforts. First, we discuss the relationship between the state and the disputes over the organization of agri-food systems, focusing specifically on role of public food procurement policies. Here we characterize the state beyond simplistic and ready-made explanations, accounting for the way different social classes compete for the direction of the state. Then, we introduce examples of public food procurement policies in Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay. With this, we show how the emergence of center-left governments in South America has contributed towards changes in agrifood systems through the institutional market in a context of intense territorial disputes in the countryside.

2. The state and public food procurement

The experiments implemented by General Augusto Pinochet, in Chile (1970s), and Víctor Paz Estenssoro, in Bolivia (1980s), turned South America into the cradle of neoliberalism (Anderson, 1995). With the establishment of the Washington Consensus³ in the late 1980s, South American countries began to massively adhered to the neoliberal ideals and implement a series of policies that included: tax reform (i.e., tax reduction for corporations), fiscal adjustment, the opening of markets and withdrawal of labor rights (Harvey, 2005). Among the main factors that motivated this was a great international propaganda campaign, promoted by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, on top of the fight against an old foe of South American society: inflation. This was so vigorous that, during his first term as Unites States President Bill Clinton (1992-1996) did not visit a single South American country, believing that the region presented no threat to the progress of the market economy (Sader, 2009).

³ The term "Washington Consensus" was coined by Williamson (1989) in reference to a set of market liberalization measures proposed by financial institutions based out of Washington DC, in the United States in the late 1980s. These include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United States Department of the Treasury.

However, at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, center-left governments came to power in many South American countries. As a result, many countries in the region become a reference in the combat against neoliberal principles (Sader, 2009).

The new context that characterized South America eroded simplistic and ready-made readings of the evolution of capitalism. Including the belief that such contradictions would immediately lead to socialism or, conservatively, that neoliberalism represented the "end of history" do to the widespread diffusion of democracy and market-based values. That is to say that, the very contradictions of neoliberalism led to the emergence of post-neoliberal governments, which share the following characteristics, they:

a) prioritize social policies and not fiscal adjustment; b) prioritize regional integration processes and South-South relations, not free-trade agreements with the United States; c) prioritize the state's role as an inducer of economic growth and income distribution, instead of a minimal state and the centrality of the market (Sader, 2013b, p. 138, our translation).

Under these circumstances, to carry out this papers objective of offering an account of the significance of public food procurement policies in South America as characteristic center-left governments first demands an interpretation of the state-capitalism relationship. Vergara-Camus and Kay (2017) identify five approaches to the state that stand out in the international literature on agriculture and ecology:

- i) the neo-Weberian, that understands the state as endowed with relative autonomy that acts authoritatively and/or in developmentalist terms, however, always being governed by bureaucracy as an apparatus of domination;
- ii) the Schumpterian, that understands the state as determined based on its sources of income, so that rich countries tend to produce rentier states. In this approach, emphasis is placed on the importance of innovation as the engine of capitalism.
- iii) the Marxist, that sees the state as an instrument for reproducing the interests of hegemonic classes, with the role of maintaining the *status quo*;
- iv) the Foucauldian, that interprets the state through governmentality (i.e., the establishment of a rationality that reproduces its own interests in individuals and institutions);

 v) the eclectic, which sums up some of the previous propositions and defines the state as an arena for conflict of interest, where diverse actors develop their strategies through different levels and scales.

In this paper, the option is made to assess the relationship between states and agrifood systems through the eclectic approach. Wolford *et al.* (2013) is an reference that employs such a perspective in agricultural and/or ecological studies, in their research of large land deals carried out by foreigners after the 2007/2008 crisis, a process known as "land grabbing". In this work, the authors seek to draw attention to the complexity that characterizes the formation and activity of states in the current context of neoliberal globalization. For these authors, the current Agrarian Question refers to a wide range of micro-processes that reconfigure the understanding of governments and governance. This occurs because states are not composed of homogeneous bodies; on the contrary, they are permeable to the different interests of the groups and social classes in society. Evidently, in a context such as the present where capitalism is hegemonic, the tendency is for the state to respond more intensely to the interests of the capitalist hegemonic class. This does not mean, however, that the state fails to meet all of the propositions put forward by subaltern forces.

This was evident in South America during in the beginning of the 21st century. As we mentioned, the center-left governments that came to power in the region had broad support from popular forces, among them the socio-territorial movements linked to *La Vía Campesina*. The promise of structural changes in the countryside are included midst the factors that contributed to this, chiefly agrarian reform and food sovereignty. However, the correlations of forces that characterize these governments were unfavorable to the fulfillment of such proposals, which has led many of them, if not most to

[...] have not significantly managed or even attempted to alter the model of rural development inherited from the process of neoliberal globalization. While rural poverty has declined, notably because of cash transfer payments by left-wing governments, inequality is still high, although in some instances it has declined slightly. All of these governments, to different extents, use food sovereignty, *buen vivir*, or other pro-peasant agendas in their public discourse, but not many of their most important policies are geared at building a new post-neoliberal model of rural development (Vergara-Camus and Kay, 2017, p. 241).

This mismatch between the proposals put forth by center-left South America governments and the occurrence of structural changes in agrifood systems highlights the importance of the approach adopted by Wolford et al. (2013), for whom governance is a continuous process and not an isolated fact. Thus, the contradictions of capitalism and the social relations that seek to overcome it, along with the disputes between social classes and interest groups, do have repercussions on the structure and direction of governments (Rocha and Barbosa Jr, 2018).

In the midst of such conflicts and contradictions, access to the institutional food market came to be seen by family farmers, peasants, and indigenous movements as a possibility to contest the South American center-left governments of the early 21st century (Coca and Barbosa Jr, 2016). This is because when understood beyond their quantitative aspects public food procurement can contribute towards strengthening a proposal for the development of agriculture that favors groups of producers and consumers who are subjected to unfavorable conditions within capitalism, thus, creating new opportunities (Mcmurtry, 2014). In other words, the purchasing power of the state can be recognized as an inductive factor in the fight against socio-spatial inequalities (Coca, 2016b). Markedly, such kinds of public policy can emerge only in contexts where the state is not exclusively guided by the neoliberal perspective.

Adopting public procurement as a strategy to correct some of the market economy's problems is not new. In the recent past, such actions have been used, for example, to create jobs for immigrants and racial minority groups in the United States and South Africa, to promote gender equality in European countries, and for the empowerment of Canadian indigenous peoples (de Schutter, 2014). Since then, this mechanism, through which the state intervenes in markets, has been employed as a means of reshaping specific stages of food systems. Such examples are found in high income countries (Kloppenburg and Hassanein, 2006; Friedmann, 2007; Joshi, Azuma and Feenstra, 2008; Strohbehn and Gregoire, 2008; Coca and Barbosa Jr, 2018) and, also, in low-income countries (van der Ploeg, Jingzhong and Schneider, 2012; Beghin, 2014; Cristancho Garrido, 2015; Schneider *et al.*, 2016).

Recognizing the importance of these experiences, the great novelty brought about by the policies of access to institutional markets in the midst of the center-left governments in South America at the beginning of the 21st century is that they favor specific groups of producers such as family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples (de Schutter, 2014; FAO 2015). This is important because, through bureaucratic mechanisms such as public bids, these producer groups,

who generally do not have a strong insertion in institutional food markets, can access the program in a privileged way. Thus, at the same time that measures were adopted in South America to increase the insertion of family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples into institutional markets, the option was made in favor of agribusiness as the hegemonic development model for the countryside (Wilkinson, 2009). The result of this was the production of intense *conflictuality* in the dispute over the orientation of agrifood systems, as well as the meaning of food for particular societies (Fernandes, 2014).

Seeking to deepen this discussion, examples of policies that create conditions for specific vulnerable producers groups to access institutional markets in Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay are explored.

3. Public food procurement and disputes over agrifood systems in South America

As indicated earlier, post-neoliberal or center-left governments that emerged in South America in the late 20th and early 21st century were not without contradictions. On the contrary, such governments reflected elements of the *conflictuality* characteristic of the societies from which they arose, especially in terms of their agricultural and agrarian policies. In this sense, the promotion of family farmers/peasants and indigenous access to institutional food markets must take into account the disputes over the development models for the countryside and, more generally, the different orientations of agrifood systems. Based on this perspective, the contexts for constructing policies for family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples to access the institutional markets by in Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay are critically assed in this section. First, the pioneering role of Brazil's Zero Hunger Program (*Programa Fome Zero* – PFZ) is construed and, in sequence, the significance of adopting public policies inspired by this country's example as part of the South American regional integration process is explored (Beghin, 2014).

3.1 Brazil

In Brazil, there is a great discrepancy between family farmer/peasant agriculture and agribusiness, with the latter being privileged to the detriment of the former (Barbosa Jr and Coca, 2015). Although family farmer/peasant agriculture occupies only 34% of the land and receives a meagre 14% of the public credits for agriculture, it generates 70% of the jobs in the countryside and produces 70% of the food consumed by Brazilian families (IBGE 2006). On the other hand, agribusiness mainly produces commodities for the foreign market, with emphasis on the production of soybeans, coffee, raw sugar, and meats. This discrepancy is historically rooted, from the time when the Portuguese occupied the Brazilian territory in 1500, and because of this development for the countryside has been based on large estates and monoculture production for export (Moreira, 2011). Nowadays, enunciated praise for Brazilian agribusiness is considered fundamental for the country's economic and social balance, such as the collection of advertisement campaigns entitled "agro is pop" (*agro é pop*), which are linked to Rede Globo, the largest and most influential TV broadcaster in the country.

The origin of actions that sought to provide family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples with access to the institutional food market in Brazil can be traced back to the 1980s, in the circumstance of the country's re-democratization. As an opposition to the centralizing government of the Military Dictatorship (1964-1984), several public policies – especially social policies – started to be conceptualized through the perspective of popular participation. Councils made up of representatives of both the state and of civil society were among one of the most recurrent models (Alves, 2003). As part of this, a social system for Food and Nutrition Security (*Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* – SAN) began to be assembled as part of the Health Reform Movement (Leão and Maluf, 2009). It is thus, that the discussion about SAN in Brazil gained momentum in a context in consonance with public health policies.

A new element came into play after the 1989 elections. These were first elections with the popular vote after the Military Dictatorship and Fernando Collor de Mello, from the National Reconstruction Party (PRN), was ultimately victorious in the runoff election against Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, from the Workers' Party (PT). In opposition to the result and as an act of protest a "Parallel Government" was created which the PT was a part of, alongside several social

movements, artists, intellectuals, and others. The Parallel Government gave rise to the Citizen Institute (*Instituto Cidadania*), which had figures such as the sociologist Hebert de Souza, popularly known as *Betinho*, as one of its main exponents. He was a central protagonist in the campaign "Christmas without Hunger", that sought to provide food pantries for people in conditions of social vulnerability.

With Collor' impeachment and the beginning of Itamar Franco's (1993-1994), from the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), "buffer" government, the Citizen Institute was able to formalize one of its main propositions: the National Food and Nutritional Security Council (CONSEA) (Maluf, 2010). Nevertheless, one of the first measures of the following government, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) (1995-2002), from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), was the extinction of this council. Due to the option for neoliberalism, the FHC Presidency marked a period of little progress in the struggle towards democratization of the access to food. The government's main priority was the combat inflation through the stabilization of the new currency.

However, with the beginning of Lula da Silva's government in 2003, Brazil broke with this first neoliberal phase and entered into post-neoliberalism (Sader, 2013a). The son of northeastern immigrants who came to São Paulo to escape the effects of the drought and a former trade union leader, Lula da Silva had the fight against hunger as a main priority as during his Presidency (Maluf *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, one of his first measures was the creation of the Zero Hunger Program (PFZ), which was characterized by aggregating a series of structural and emergency public policies aimed at eliminating hunger and poverty in Brazil (Silva, Grossi and França, 2010).

As part of the PFZ, the two main public policies for family farmer, peasant, and indigenous access to the institutional food market in Brazil were created: the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the new version of the National School Meal Program (PNAE) (Leão and Maluf, 2009). During Lula's 8 years administration and the 5 years his successor, Dilma Rousseff (2012-2015), also of the PT, were in power PAA and PNAE represented one of popular movements' main achievements. Even though it only made up a small part of the budget destined to the countryside, due to the priority given to agribusiness in that same period (Fernandes *et al.*, 2017). The success of these policies was made evident in 2014, when Brazil was for the first time not listed in the Hunger Map, which is prepared by annually by FAO.

PAA was established by the Law No. 10,696 of July 2, 2003 and foresees the acquisition of products from family farmer/peasant agriculture without bidding. It gives preference to producers organized in cooperatives and associations, especially those with significant participation of women (Siliprandi and Cintrão, 2014). Participation is conditional on farmers' receiving a Declaration of Aptitude (DAP) from Pronaf, which validates that the production unit is in fact family-based. Products certified as organic or agroecological are purchased at a price 30% higher than the conventional ones, which indicates the intention to have this public policy contribute to the sustainability of agricultural practices, reducing dependence on pesticides and generating positive externalities in terms of public health (Galindo, Sambuichi and Oliveira, 2014). The food procured by the Federal Government is donated to institutions registered in the socio-welfare network, such as day-care centers, nursing homes, hospitals and others, that is, there is the structural objective of generating income in the countryside while also combating hunger in cities (Coca, 2016a).

PNAE has existed since 1955, however, with Law No. 11,947 of June 16, 2009 – responsible for its newest version – it was determined that at least 30% of the products purchased with funds from the National Fund for Education Development (*Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* – FNDE) should come from family farming (Wittman, 2015). In this case, preference is likewise given to producers organized in cooperatives and associations, especially those with significant participation of women. Similarly, organic or agroecological products are purchased at a price 30% higher than conventional ones (FNDE 2014). These two programs have lead Brazil to become one of the countries in the world with the most advanced food programs (Wittman and Blesh, 2017).

These public policies have been singled out as innovative because, unlike other experiences of public food purchases, they identify family and peasant farmers as priority producer groups to supply institutions that serve people in conditions of social vulnerability (de Schutter, 2014; FAO 2015)⁴. In other words, it can be seen that the PAA and the PNAE have structural objectives, going beyond the sectorial proposals for the development of the countryside and the democratization of agri-food systems.

⁴ India's Public Distribution System (PAD) and the United States' National School Lunch Program are examples of public food procurement policies that do not target family farmers as priority groups.

It is noteworthy that, even with the criticisms that the United States' government has placed with the World Trade Organization (WTO), arguing that these public policies as indirect forms of subsidy (O Estado de São Paulo, 2013), they have been well evaluated by others institutions and forums. As further evidence of this, in June 2015 the Brazilian Federal Government established a technical cooperation agreement with the FAO, with the aims to make the Brazilian experience of fighting hunger a reference for other countries in the Southern Hemisphere, especially in South America (ONU BR, 2015). Thus, these actions are part of the scope of South-South cooperation agreements that have been characterized as one of the main components of Brazilian diplomacy during the PT governments, especially during the Lula da Silva administration (Maluf and Prado, 2015).

However, it is important to stress that the PT governments are not exempt from the contradictions of post-neoliberalism. With regard to their agrarian policies, at the same time that new market opportunities were created for family farmers/peasants, namely through these institutional purchasing policies, a broad partnership with agribusiness was likewise established. During the PT governments there was no rupture with Brazil's monoculture-export model, on the contrary, this was reinforced through massive public investments (e.g., infrastructure creation, productive financing, and others) (Delgado, 2010). It is no wonder that Lerrer and Carter (2017) insist that the contradictory agrarian policies of the PT was one of the factors that contributed to the end of post-neoliberalism in Brazil. With the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, in 2016, through a *coup d'etat* and with the Michel Temer Presidency (2016-current), from the new version of the PMDB, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), Brazil has entered a second neoliberal phase (Fernandes et al., 2017). As part of this process, there has been a significant reduction in the resources allocated towards policies for family farmers, peasants, and indigenous access to the institutional food market. One of the factors that help explain this context is that Dilma Rousseff's impeachment was sponsored, among others, by agribusiness representatives, especially through the so-called Agricultural Parliamentary Front (Frente Parlamentar Agropecuária – FPA), popularly known as the "bulls caucus" (bancada do boi). Not surprisingly, authors as Welch (2018)⁵, Mitidiero Junior and Feliciano (2018), and Lima, Pereira, and Barbanti

⁵ Originally published in English as a working paper during BICAS 2017, see Welch (2017).

(2018) characterize this process as an "agri-*coup*" (*agrogolpe*). Temer's arrival to power has represented a setback in the access of popular groups to the public policies in detriment to an even more evident option for agribusiness.

In summary, while the post-neoliberal governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff did not break with the hegemony of agribusiness, it promoted family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples' access to the institutional food market in special conditions through specific policies. Yet, Brazil's return to neoliberalism has been accompanied by an increasing reduction in resources destined to such policies due to a more clearly pronounced preference for agribusiness as a hegemonic model of development for the countryside. These are examples of how rebuttals of disputes by governments directly affect the organization of agri-food systems.

3.2 Ecuador

In Ecuador, peasant agriculture represents 88% of the production units and, even though it occupies only 41% of the land, it generates 45% of the total agricultural production (Fernandes, 2014), that is, peasant agriculture in Ecuador is characterized by high productivity. However, peasants and indigenous peoples are among the sectors of society most prone to poverty in that country. Among the people who live in the countryside and in the forests, 43.35% are considered poor and 19.74% extremely poor (INEC 2015). According to Clark (2017), the explanation for this context must be sought in the impacts generated by the colonial legacy of racism that characterizes the agrarian structure of Ecuador, privileging the European whites to the detriment of indigenous and mestizos. One of the main expressions of this is a *hacienda* system – large land holdings destined to agricultural production and livestock –, which has predominated in the Andean portion of Ecuador since the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, and is fundamental reason for the country's land concentration.

Nevertheless, in 1964, the Military Junta who came into power in Ecuador effected the Law of Agrarian Reform and Colonization with the intention of replacing the *haciendas* with "modern" agricultural properties, that is, it sought to give a new appearance to capitalism in the countryside. This was of fundamental importance for Ecuador's insertion in the process of mechanization of the countryside promoted by the United States government through the FAO

and called the "Green Revolution" (Marshall and Perkins, 1999). As in other countries of the Southern Hemisphere, this new stage of capitalist development in the Ecuadorian countryside was also accompanied by a significant subordination of peasant labor:

The rise of modern agribusiness in Ecuador, particularly on the production side, is inextricably linked to the decline of the *hacienda* system and the emergence of a larger pool of land-poor peasants in the highlands, who became the workforce in these modernized agro-industrial operations (Martínez, 1984). The elimination of the *hacienda* system deepened the integration of smallholders into the rural labour market and capitalist social relations (Clark, 2017, p. 352).

In 1973, shortly after President José María Velasco Ibarra was deposed by the military, a second agrarian reform was carried out. However, just as it had occurred in 1964, this did little to overcome capitalism in the countryside. Among other factors, this was due to the fact that most of the areas destined for the settlement of landless peasants was in reference to public land in the regions of the coast and the Amazon (Peña, 2017). Thus, in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the capitalist model of agricultural and agrarian development prevailed without major changes, contributing to Ecuador's inclusion as a primary producer in the international division of labor.

A new element appeared in 2007, when Rafael Correa was elected to the Presidency. Correa became known to the general public when he served as Minister of Economy of the Interim Government of Alfredo Palacio (2005-2006), standing out for adopting a progressive stance in guiding national finances. Correa gained wide support from popular movements in the countryside (Giunta, 2013), even promising to hold an "Agrarian Revolution" and to implement the Agrarian Bureau (*Mesa Agrária*), a national organization with almost all the family farmers, peasants, and indigenous federations of Ecuador (Clark, 2017).

However, after assuming the Presidency, Rafael Correa's position regarding the Agrarian Question was characterized by ambiguity (Clark, 2013). Even though he was elected by a coalition that counted on the participation of important family farmer, peasant, and indigenous organizations, he did not break with the model of capitalist development of the countryside. On the contrary, during Correa's term of office, the negative impacts of agribusiness intensified. Between 2000 and 2010, for example, about 618,000 hectares were deforested for the production of agricultural crops for export (Houtart, 2014). In addition, in recent years, natural gas, and oil extraction activities in Ecuador have grown rapidly through massive public investments (Wittman,

2015). Thus, before assessing the policies brought forth by the Correa government for the commercialization of family farmer, peasant, and indigenous products in the institutional market, it must be remembered that this government was not able to contribute to a real change of the status quo in the country's agri-food systems (Clark, 2017).

Among peasants and indigenous peoples' main achievements was the fulfillment of Rafael Correa's campaign promise: a new Constitution for Ecuador. This took place in 2008. One of the multiple novelties presented by this legal document was the objective of implementing food sovereignty in the country (Peña, 2013; Wittman, 2015). On this, Clark (2017, p. 349) indicates that: "Of all of the countries in Latin America that have had Pink Tide governments, it could be argued that Ecuador has, on paper at least, the most advanced legal framework for food sovereignty in the region". It is also worth noting that the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution was based on the concept of *buen vivir* (good/well living), which is formed by a set of reflections that contemplate the Andean cosmovision (worldview) and the contribution of academics and popular movements (Giunta, 2013). Although it is still a concept under construction, *buen vivir* makes it very clear that a new model of development is necessary, which must be endogenous to and go beyond capitalism, valuing peasant and indigenous ways of living and producing (Gudynas, 2011).

In this context, the Food Provision Program (*Programa de Provisión de Alimentos* – PPA) was created in 2009, with aims to "provide food, supplements, and food supplements for central and institutional public administration, as well as other public sector institutions which require it; as well as providing goods and services related to food supply and managing projects related to its main purpose [...]" (República del Ecuador, 2014, p. 4, our translation). The PPA is managed by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (*Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social* – MIES). Prior to the PPA, social programs to combat hunger in Ecuador were encouraged by the UN World Food Program (WFP). However, the participation of the Ecuadorian peasants and indigenous producers in such actions was practically nonexistent, since large international corporations had no great dependence on the food marketed (FAO 2011). Among other factors, this was due to the fact that the creation of WFP in the second half of the 20th century was an imposition of the United States government, which saw it as a possibility to dispose of its growing agricultural production (Margulis, 2017). Thus, the PPA's main objective was to create institutional mechanisms that would allow Ecuadorian family farmers, peasants, and indigenous farmers to contribute to the institutional food market by marketing of some of their products.

As a key step in the institutional consolidation of the PPA in 2013, Executive Decree 129 created the Food Provision Institute (*Instituto de Provisión de Alimentos* – PROALIMENTOS), to coordinate the Ecuadorian public sector's food supply. As a result, efforts have been made to ensure that at least 30% of public food purchases in Ecuador come from family farmer, peasant, and indigenous agriculture. On the results of this strategy, FAO (2017, our translation) indicates that:

The project has improved school meal programs for school-age children and youths with healthy, fresh, and nutritious foods to combat malnutrition, obesity, and overweight. On the other hand, the household income of 1,438 families was stimulated by opening new markets that prioritize the purchase of products at fair prices.

Therefore, although recent, the Ecuadorian experience of promoting family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples' access to the institutional food market has presented some positive results. Similar to the case of Brazil, a structural objective is observed, since public purchases generate impacts on both producers and consumers.

3.3 Paraguay

Paraguay is one of the countries with greatest inequality of land ownership. Only 2% of the owners occupy 85% of their agricultural land (Paraguay, 2009). One of the main reasons for this extensive land inequality is that because of Paraguay's defeat in the Triple Alliance War (1864-1870)⁶, large amounts of land were transferred to the foreigners (Ezquerro-Cañete and Fogel, 2017). This situation became even worse when, between 1947 and 2008, the Colorado Party was in power, especially during the Dictator Alfredo Stroessner's government (1954-1989). It is estimated that between 1954 and 2003, 7.8 million hectares of land (32% of the country's arable land) was transferred illegally to private individuals, a key factor for understanding the current structure of agribusiness in that country (Larsen, 2015).

⁶ The Triple Alliance War was the largest conflicts between South American countries, placing Paraguay, one side, and Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, on the other.

Currently, about 92% of Paraguay's arable land is occupied by export crops, among which soybeans stands out, as Paraguay is the fourth largest producer and sixth largest exporter in the world (USDA, 2016). The advance of soybeans in Paraguay occurred through the border with Brazil, as part of the demand of large Brazilian landowners for cheap land to expand their agricultural crops. This has contributed to Paraguay's current high levels of conflicts between agribusiness and small-scale family-based agriculture. According to the Human Rights Coordination of Paraguay (*Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay*) (Codehupy 2014), between 1989 and 2013, 115 family farmers were murders due to conflicts over land tenure. The border with Brazil is one of the areas where territorial disputes are most intense, due to the agribusiness aggression on the territories of family and indigenous agriculture (Fabrini, 2012).

In this context of intense disputes over territory and the agricultural development model, Decree 1,056 of 2013 created reserved access for family farmers/peasants in the institutional food market, contributing at least partially to a rupture of the power of large agribusiness corporations. Through this Decree, it was determined that the Paraguayan public institutions should apply simplified processes for the acquisition of products cultivated by small producers. Those interested could present themselves individually or through associations. If they chose, they could receive 30% at the time of sale and the other 70% 30 days after (FAO 2015).

In July 2014, with the enactment of Law 5,210, a school meals program was established as a right of all Paraguayan students. Once this occurred, preference was given to the purchase of products from local family farmers that reside near the schools. In addition, Decree 3,000/15 of January 27, 2015 reorganized Decree 1,056/13, advancing in the following aspects: i) farmers interested in participating in the institutional market should be registered in the Family Agriculture Registry (*Registro de la Agricultura Familiar*) *a*nd receive technical assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (*Ministério da Agricultura e Ganaderia* – MAG) or other bodies; ii) the Interinstitutional Technical Committee for Public Purchases from Family Agriculture (*Mesa Técnica Interinstitucional de Compras públicas de la Agricultura Familiar* – MTICPAF) was created to contribute to the administration of these public policies. The Paraguayan government provides an annual budget of about \$105 million US dollars for the implementation of these public food procurement policies, (Caldas and Ávila, 2017).

It is important to note that the Brazilian experience has been of great influence for the development of the Paraguayan institutional food procurement program, which attests to how

South American integration in the context of post-neoliberal governments also occurred through the diffusion of public food procurement policies.

The Family Farmer Direct Public Procurement Program in Paraguay is a mix of Programs established in other countries in Latin America. The broader parameter of influence over Paraguay is the set of measures taken in Brazil in terms of public purchases from family agriculture, with emphasis on the Food Acquisition Program and fundamentally the National School Meal Program (Caldas and Ávila, 2017, not paginated, our translation).

The main link for these exchanges of public food procurement experiences has been the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile. In recent years, this institution has encouraged policies that promote the access of family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples to institutional market as a means of combating hunger and poverty. It is no incident that FAO is currently chaired by José Graziano da Silva, who was one of the main figures who implemented the Zero Hunger Program in Brazil.

4. Final considerations

This work reflects on the policies that allow family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples to access the institutional food market in three South American countries: Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay. All three represent examples of the emergence of post-neoliberal governments in the region, that despite not breaking structurally with capitalism, place greater emphasis on social policies and South-South integration. By adopting an eclectic approach towards understanding the state, we show that governance is a process and therefore cannot be interpreted mechanically and linearly. That is to say that, while select opportunities have allowed for the implementation of policies that are of interest to family farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples in the analyzed countries, the agribusiness development model has received continued emphatic support.

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