

## **BOLIVIA:**

### **The Food Summit we need.... Or one more maneuver?**

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#### **The Summit on Food Systems.**

The international call of the United Nations (UN) to the Summit on Food Systems (September 2021) purpose to establish commitments that transform food systems to eradicate hunger, reduce diseases with food and protect the planet.

It is expected to be a Summit that: i) questions the food and public policies in force in countries like Bolivia, policies that threaten Food Security and Sovereignty, the environment and biodiversity; ii) that it is not an event to legitimize the biotechnological agribusiness of Transnational Companies-TNCs (which promote the intensive use of agrochemicals and GMOs, deforest, extract natural resources, destroy biodiversity) and even less, provide them with financial resources<sup>1</sup>.

The UN suggests that nutritious food should be more affordable to the population, that people have healthy diets and eat healthy foods; however, it is forgotten that the largest segment of the undernourished and hungry population are small farmers; and what is most needed is the diversity of their sustainable crops to improve nutrition.

He also forgets to mention that small family farming generates the most food, represents the largest source of employment, improves livelihoods, protects the environment and promotes sustainable development.

Faced with this call, the government, through the Vice Ministry of Foreign Relations, has called for the elaboration of "The Country's Position Facing the Food Summit" through a diagnostic document and a series of Regional Summits.

#### **Food is not a commodity**

As part of these Summits on Food Systems, on 21 / V / 2021 the IBCE held a virtual forum<sup>2</sup> with the sponsorship of UNDP and the Vice Ministry of RREE, wanting to take advantage of the occasion of the Summit to introduce an extractivist model indicating that there are products (14 investment chips, with export opportunities and high commercialization, and with very profitable financial returns) such as sugar cane / alcohol, sunflower, corn, and of course soy and beef / pork among others. But the most insolent thing about this commercial proposal - as if food were just merchandise - is that it states that this investment is directly related to the

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<sup>1</sup>. This is stated because it is striking that the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Food Systems Summit is Ms. Agnes Kalibata, who is the one who directs AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa), a program of the Bill Gates Foundation where they invested billions of dollars in GMOs and synthetic fertilizers and failed to achieve the objectives set (increased yields) (Timothy Wise, <https://www.iatp.com>), so they are now looking to leverage greater financial resources.

<sup>2</sup> "Mapo de oportunidades de inversión privada en el sector agroalimentario para el logro de los ODS"

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Nos. 2, 5, 8, 12 and 15 (for its value economic and prices; for equal pay, for freedom of association) ... and that this is the way to end poverty!

The proposal of the Bolivian food system should not propose commercially-based alternatives as was raised in the aforementioned virtual forum, since food is more than just merchandise. It should be based above all on the dictates of the Human Right to Food (HRF)<sup>3</sup> and also on the Voluntary Guidelines (VG) on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests<sup>4</sup>.

## Food systems in Bolivia

In Bolivia there are different food systems according to the zones / regions. In the highlands and valleys, systems based on family farming predominate, characterized by small properties with greater incorporation into the market according to products, and with less incorporation into the market where the exchange of products still prevails; combining agricultural production with small-scale livestock, growing use of agrochemicals, and limitations in irrigation, technology and training, among others.

In the eastern part of the country, there are several productive subsystems, but two stand out for their magnitude and importance: the agribusiness, mono producer that intensively uses agrochemicals, GMOs, large extensions of land and modern technology, expands the agricultural frontier, monopolizes land, Extensive livestock farming (bovine and pork in the process of expansion) linked to TNCs through agrochemicals, GMOs and the export market.

The second subsystem is characterized by a series of activities and means of life, in an agrosilvopastoral combination between hunting, gathering, agricultural crops, non-timber forest production, Amazonian fruits, livestock small-scale and fishing among others; called Sistemas Agro Forestales (SAF), in the Amazon and Chaco regions, and put into practice by Indigenous Peoples.

Despite this diversity of systems, the current dominant system is the extractivist system (soybeans, meat), with political and economic power, which generates a series of negative effects on the environment, natural resources, water, biodiversity, expansion of the agricultural frontier and the substitution of food crops, among others.

It is already known then, what are the food systems in the country, and also what systems are suitable for human life, the forest, the environment, biodiversity. Deforestation is also known; the intensive use of herbicides, inadequate soil management, monocultures, the use of pesticides and transgenics, are unsuitable for human life and biodiversity.

## One wrong effort

It constitutes a wrong effort to carry out a "Diagnosis" of the food systems again since there are already enough studies, reports, investigations that detail the various productive systems throughout the national territory<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> That supports the production of healthy food, encourages productive diversification, use of native seeds, safeguards biodiversity, empowers poor farmers, Indigenous Peoples, among others.

<sup>4</sup> Above all, in the systems of tenure of Indigenous Peoples, climate change, forests and the adequate protection of the legitimate rights of land tenure of Indigenous Peoples.

<sup>5</sup> The studies of CIPCA, TIERRA Foundation, PROBIOMA, CEDLA, FPASOS, IICCA; UMSA among others, as well as various doctoral theses, Regional Development Strategies; project evaluations and others.

What should be emphasized and should occupy a central place in Bolivia's Agenda for the Summit, is the Transformation of the Agroindustrial System, in the alternative to the extractive agribusiness model that is burning the Amazon, is introducing GMOs , expanding the agricultural frontier, trafficking land, intensifying the use of agrochemicals, polluting water, land, the environment, depleting soils, killing biodiversity, changing land use (PLUS Beni), invading protected areas and the lands of Indigenous Peoples.

And the "alternative" to this model is what is proposed by indigenous peasant<sup>6</sup> family agriculture based on agroecology and the concept of Conservation agriculture; alternative that was discussed, analyzed and validated for several years between various public institutions (MDRyT; MMAyA, municipal governments) private (NGOs, Cooperation Projects, FAO and others) and producer organizations from various regions through various Tables-Thematic , putting forward a series of proposals to make food production sustainable and nutritious; requiring greater capital investments (credits, grants); technical education / training; short markets; technological innovation; machinery suitable for soils; fair prices that cover the costs of production, rescue and use of traditional seeds; strengthening of the various SAFs and their expansion in the valleys and the highlands; recover land and soils to increase productivity; that schools / colleges buy local organic products; and also suspending subsidies for soy exports, and paying adequate taxes (as in other countries) as this affects the prices of other foods; among others.

It is necessary, therefore, the need for a transformation of our food system that is dominated to a great extent by the agribusiness logic that induces us to intensify the extraction of our productive resources, of more money at any cost; to mono production; model that does not provide food security or adequate nutrition. Rather, it has led the country to a growing dependence on food due to excessive imports and food smuggling, a dependence on pesticides, and a displacement in the cultivated area of traditional products<sup>7</sup>. This destructive model can generate foreign exchange earnings for the country, but current productivity and sustainability is at the cost of the national economy.

A clear example of this destructive model of food systems is the exploitation of quinoa in Potosí and Oruro<sup>8</sup>; and currently soy in Santa Cruz<sup>9</sup>.

## A paradigm shift

A paradigm shift is urgently required and the redesign of our agri-food system based on agroecological production (which means stopping GMOs and pesticides); Conservation Agriculture (instead of the tillage method that damages the land) and productive diversification

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<sup>6</sup> See the "Estrategia de Desarrollo de la Agricultura Familiar Campesina Indígena del CIOEC-Bolivia" (2020) (<https://coprofam.org> y <https://Julioprudencio.com>)

<sup>7</sup> See the different municipal development plans of the municipalities of Santa Cruz showing the decrease in the cultivated area of various crops rich in nutrients, and the increase in the cultivated area of soybeans.

<sup>8</sup> The auquéridos that nourished the earth were displaced; and productive diversification (potato, barley, etc.) was displaced by monoculture; and all the small mountains that generated microclimates (that stopped the winds and frosts) were flattened. This system, which was implemented and sustainable for hundreds of years, was destroyed by the single-producer model - encouraged by the government and FAO (Crispim Moreira- "2013 International Year of Quinoa") - which even introduced agrochemicals to produce more, being the current result, a desert area with eroded land and unable to produce any crops, intense winds that cause sudden thermal variations, frosts, transport of pests and diseases among others.

<sup>9</sup> That expands the agricultural frontier, displaces other agricultural crops, intensively uses agrochemicals that pollute water and land, and kill biodiversity; also influencing climate change, which in turn generates droughts, storms, and river overflows.

(which generates more nutritious and healthy food / diets) with a particular focus on family farming<sup>10</sup>, the only way to achieve the SDGs and also contribute to the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and the Convention on Biodiversity that the country signed; and also put into practice the Human Right to Food (HRF) and the Voluntary Guidelines (VG) of Land and Territory Governance.

Therefore, the Bolivian proposal should recommend:

i) The "Coherence and coordination" between Supreme Laws and Decrees, and Public Policies (PP) in local, regional and national development.

The incoherence between what the Laws propose (for example, Law 3525 on the promotion of ecological agricultural production; Law 300 on Mother Earth) and the facts cannot continue. This contradiction between love for Mother Earth and the permissiveness of burning the Amazon and deforestation cannot continue to exist; for land use change (PLUS) and for the use of pesticides (which shows, on the other hand, the submission of public politics to the interests of agribusiness). At once comply with the provisions of the Political Constitution of the State and the Laws!

ii) It is urgent to propose the creation of a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of agricultural plans and projects; of evaluation according to the laws and Supreme Decrees; and above all the creation of an International Mechanism for Accountability of what has been done, which can put the directors and executives of the institutions (ABT, INRA, Ministers, etc.) on the bench that do not comply with the laws and regulations (and who traffic in land).

iii) The Bolivian approach should be based on HRF approaches as well as on the Land Governance VGs, which emphasize strengthening the inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples (IP) not only in food production but also in the possession of productive resources (land, water) and its long experience in their sustainability, as well as in biodiversity. And establish fair and adequate income for those activities.

iv) There is adequate knowledge of the food systems in force in the country so the key now is to develop structural reforms with macro and microeconomic policies that lead us to protect the environment such as Agroecological production, Conservation Agriculture, regenerative of the land, preferably in an environment of a family agriculture without agrochemicals, with emphasis on the diversification of food production according to the different microclimates and socio-cultural contexts that the country has; the rescue and promotion of the variety and richness of traditional seeds; reinforce traditional practices that constitute mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Thus, Food Nutrition Security with Sovereignty will be achieved.

Only with these approaches and paradigm shift will it be possible to advance in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2, which is to reduce poverty, and which has now increased with the pandemic.

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<sup>10</sup> Because they represent the majority (82.84.%) of the small Agricultural Productive Units (- 50 Has) in the country (but they own only 12% of the land) although they also implement aggressive practices to the land and the environment, due to the use of agrochemicals, not as aggressive as agroindustry, but aggressive and growing... The green revolution influenced her too!