

# FROM THE EDITOR

With this issue the **International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food** changes format by abandoning its traditional opening section, the "Forum." This change has been motivated by the emergence of a variety of relevant substantive interests within the area of sociology of agriculture and food. Accordingly, a journal issue which presents differing yet interrelated topics is preferred to one devoted to a principal theme complemented by related articles. The section on "proposed research" has been preserved to underscore the continued commitment of the Research Committee on Sociology of Agriculture and Food's members to share ideas about on-going scientific activities. Simultaneously, the effort to publish articles addressing points of view generated from various regions of the world has been maintained along with the bi-lingual character of the journal. As in the past, the objective of fostering a global dialogue remains at the forefront of the RC40 agenda.

This issue opens with four articles conceived within the discourse of globalization. The opening article by Luis Llambi discusses the relationship between the development of a global system, the emergence of superstates and the growth of transnational corporations (TNCs). He argues that the process of globalization has been paralleled by the rise of three large geopolitical and commercial superstates (the United States, Japan and the European Community) and by the consolidation of transnational corporations. TNCs may differ in national origin, Llambi argues, however they are all interested in global sourcing and in taking

advantage of new economic opportunities worldwide. Simultaneously, they are interested in consolidating their positions regionally through the expansion of their powers within the three superstates. The satisfaction of this objective mandates TNCs' actions toward increasing their presence in the region of origin (superstate of origin) and/or penetrating other superstates. As far as the superstates themselves are concerned, Llambi contends that each of them pursues two common strategies. The first involves maneuvers to secure the most favorable global order. The second consists of actions aimed at enlarging their individual economic and geopolitical sphere of influence.

Aspects of the process of globalization are further discussed by Mónica Bendini and Marta Palomares. In their article "Globalization and Production Units' Strategies in the Fruit and Vegetable Sector: Their Effects on Small Producers," these authors discuss the concomitant phenomena of concentration and disintegration fostered by globalization. Focusing on the Argentinean case, they maintain that in the fruit and vegetable sector the integration of Argentinean production in global circuits has generated the subordination of agricultural activities to industrial capital along with processes of marginalization of small producers and family labor. Furthermore, they argue that the marginalization of small producers has negatively affected both the operations of large producers and the conditions of hired workers. They conclude by stressing that this crisis demands that existing

neo-liberal policies be overcome.

The relationship between the establishment of global production and consumption circuits and consequences at the local level is explored by Alberto Arce in his article "New Tastes in Industrialized Countries and Transformations in the Latin American Countryside." Adopting the cases of Mexico and Chile, the author analyses the connections between the growth of the demand for fresh fruits and vegetables in the developed North and responses that this situation creates in the developing South. More specifically, Arce takes a closer look at the position of actors and communities in Mexican and Chilean fruit and vegetable producing regions and at the ways in which the production of export oriented commodities reorganizes everyday practices. Departing from more common analyses of globalization, Arce emphasizes cultural, spatial, social and political dimensions and the manners in which they become central for the historical manifestation of globalization at the local level.

The fruit and vegetable sector is further discussed in Robert Schaeffer's "Standardization, GATT and the Fresh Food System." Schaeffer illustrates the contradictions encountered by this sector in its attempts to establish "quality of products." Quality is identified through standardization, which refers to the fresh fruit and vegetable industry's attempts to establish product standards and, at the same time, produce standardized commodities. These efforts, Schaeffer argues, are contradicted by the introduction of GATT's "Codex Alimentarius" as the entity responsible for setting product standards. This move, it is maintained, extends patent protection to agricultural technologies, reduces agricultural tariffs and subsidies, eliminates restrictions on agricultural exports and, in so doing, counters the possibility of introducing higher production standards.

The regional dimension of the agricultural

and food system is addressed in the four remaining papers of the "articles" section. In the first of these Pascal Byé and Maria Fonte reflect on the relationship between territorial concentration of agricultural production and the development of industrial techniques of production in agriculture. Employing the case of Western Europe, the authors maintain that segmentation of rural space and regional depopulation have been key consequences of the evolution of the above mentioned relationship. Furthermore, they demonstrate that "Fordist" techniques are unable to address the new emerging demands, such as those for a better environment, healthier products and recreation. A call for information intensive modes of management is identified as a possible alternative avenue.

Concern for the future of the rural environment is expressed by Frank Vanclay and Geoffrey Lawrence in their article "Environmental and Social Consequences of Economic Restructuring in Australian Agriculture." The process of agricultural restructuring in Australia has resulted in patterns similar to those experienced in other countries. In essence, it has been characterized by the expansion of corporate farming, the growth of subcontracting and the development of new biotechnology. Moreover, these developments have been paralleled by the disappearance of a significant number of family farms and the concomitant crisis of these remaining. The authors argue that the process of restructuring entails considerable environmental degradation and, as such, it should be re-evaluated at the policy level if preservation of the environment is the desired objective. It is also maintained that agricultural restructuring generates significant negative consequences which jeopardize the nature of farming and the nature of settlements in rural areas.

The article by Olivier Delahaye "New Agents in the Agricultural Land Market in

Venezuela" shifts attention to Latin America. Delahaye argues that the agrarian reform in Venezuela has failed its formal objective of distributing land to small and medium family producers. Through an analysis of the evolution of land ownership since the late fifties, the author argues that land property has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of companies and professionals. International organizations have demonstrated a growing interest in the land market which, however, has not been translated into direct intervention due to resistance at the local power structure level.

Land tenancy in Latin America is further discussed by Sonia Bergamasco in her article "Family Agriculture, Modernization and Rural Development in Brazil." Through the study of two settlements in rural Brazil, Bergamasco analyses strategies for the persistence of farmers on the land. It is argued that settlers who have been part of programs with minimal coordination from the State have demonstrated more interest in the use of modern technologies. This condition, combined with a complex set of other characteristics, has allowed farmers to have a better chance of remaining on the land. Conversely, settlers who have gained control of land through programs with higher levels of State intervention have displayed a somewhat diminished ability to remain on the land.

The final paper of the "articles" session discusses the issue of relationship between agricultural transformation and colonialism. Seung Woo Park and Gary Green compare the economic development of a fast growing country, Korea, with that of a underdeveloped country, the Philippines. Through an examination of internal class dynamics and external world economic forces, it is maintained that structural transformation in agriculture and rural class relations were crucial factors in explaining the different developmental path taken by the two countries. More specifically

and departing from previous analyses which underscored differences in the role of the State, business-government relations and psychological factors, the authors stress that an adequate understanding of the issue at hand cannot be reached without considering the differences in the colonial experiences of the two countries.

The "proposed research" session contains a report by William H. Friedland on "The Globalization of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable System." It summarizes the results of a workshop held in Santa Cruz, California in December of 1991 aimed at both developing a better understanding of the global evolution of the industry and establishing a common future research agenda. In regard to the latter, the creation of a network of researchers interested in this topic and the systematization of analysis of the sector were identified as immediate needs. At the substantive level, the workshop underscored the truly global evolution of the sector. This conclusion is substantiated by the multiplication of anti-seasonal and/or exotic products in "Northwestern" markets, the growth of international consumption of fruits and vegetables and the development of non-traditional export agriculture in the "South." A summary of the discussion on the implications that the globalization of the sectors has at the social, environmental and economic levels is also presented.