

## ANNEX A

# ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY AND LAND RIGHTS CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICA

Persistent inequalities and changing climate patterns are exacerbating food insecurity in Latin America. In 2023, 247.8 million people – or 37.5% of the region’s population – were affected by moderate to severe food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> Rural populations are disproportionately affected, underscoring the importance of promoting food sovereignty across the region. Compounding food insecurity is the distribution of land in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is the most unequal of any world region. Reports indicate that more than half of the region’s agricultural land is held by just 1% of the largest estates. In contrast, 80% of the smallest farms lay claim to less than 13% of productive land.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 REGIONAL VOICE

The expert group provided a regional snapshot of the most pressing issues for food security in Latin America: the adverse impacts of large agroindustrial companies and the erosion of land rights. These interconnected challenges threaten food security, sovereignty and sustainability in the region, particularly for indigenous and rural communities.

The expansion of agroindustry across Latin America impacts fragile ecosystems and undermines the ability of rural communities to establish resilient food systems. The following two examples illustrate the concerns of the regional group. In Bolivia, the widespread practice of replacing primary forests with crops of African oil palm (mainly for biofuel) and soy (mainly for animal feed) is accelerating deforestation and disrupting ecosystems. At the same time, gold mining operations in the Amazon Basin are releasing mercury into the environment, contaminating water sources and posing a health risk to the surrounding communities. These practices undermine food security by contaminating water sources and causing droughts. In Mexico, extreme weather and reduced rainfall are disrupting the traditional agricultural cycles of communities. For instance knowledge systems related to weather cycles and planting, which have been developed over thousands of years by the peoples of the Ayuujk region, risk being lost due to climatic disruptions.<sup>3</sup> As these examples show, extractive practices, deforestation and climate change are changing weather patterns and disrupting fragile ecosystems, which in turn destabilizes food systems and undermines food security in the region.

The struggle for land rights and the absence of clear legal frameworks hinder the pursuit of food sovereign-

1 OCHA 2023. Latin America and The Caribbean Weekly Situation Update. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

2 Cerrato, A., Ramirez, M. and Hackbart, R. 2022. Land governance in Latin America and the Caribbean – Innovation and inclusion for economic recovery and resilience. Food and Agricultural Organization. Santiago de Chile, Chile.

3 La milpa de las lenguas y el llamado cambio climático. Medium, 23 of March 2024. [https://medium.com/@milpa\\_climatica/diazniipyjoojt-ku-yë-et-näxwii-nyët-tyëk-äjts-atëtsnë-729a2d02b9e5](https://medium.com/@milpa_climatica/diazniipyjoojt-ku-yë-et-näxwii-nyët-tyëk-äjts-atëtsnë-729a2d02b9e5).

ty for indigenous and rural communities. The regional group found two examples that illustrate the struggles that communities in Latin America face in accessing land and establishing resilient food systems. In Argentina, large agribusinesses monopolize land and often displace indigenous people and rural communities from their land, thereby violating their territorial autonomy as guaranteed under the 1989 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention. Additionally, the agri-food value chain in Argentina is dominated by just four corporations, which account for almost 50% of wheat flour production and over 55% of exports.<sup>4</sup> Argentina controls 73% of the Latin American market in this sector. The disparity over land access disproportionately affects smallholder farmers and rural communities, undermining their food and territorial sovereignty. In Mexico, rural and indigenous peoples also struggle to cultivate land autonomously due to dispossession, exploitation, and the dangers posed by drug trafficking and organized crime.

## 1.2 KEY MESSAGE

In Latin America, the adverse impacts of agroindustry and territorial inequalities threaten food security in the region. These impacts manifest through economic practices that drive deforestation, disrupt ecosystems and pollute water sources, impacting local livelihoods. This is compounded by the unequal distribution of land and the erosion of land rights, which prevent communities from building resilient food systems to sustain themselves and often expose them to violence. Additionally, agricultural cycles are increasingly being disrupted by climate change, worsening food insecurity in the region. Amid these interrelated challenges, it is important to implement environmentally just policies that promote fair land distribution, food sovereignty and environmental conservation.

<sup>4</sup> Orhani, F. and Badaracco, F., 2019. Sano, rico y barato. Seis puntos para construir una alternativa al modelo alimentario excluyente. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

## 1.4 TARGET AUDIENCE

The working group identified key stakeholders to address these challenges: states, local authorities, local producers, shareholders of agroindustrial sectors and the regional bloc CELAC (Community of Latin American and the Caribbean States).

## 1.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve the vision of environmentally just policies that promote fair land distribution, food sovereignty and environmental conservation, the following actions are recommended for regional and national actors. It is important to note that the group's recommendations provide a general direction and are not meant to be specifically tailored to each identified audience.

1. Acknowledge that solutions to food insecurity, like adaptation programmes and public policies, need measurable, verifiable, reportable criteria on their design and implementation, to evaluate their impact. Proposed solutions must respond to national, subnational and local food security issues and must be adequately operationalized into specific recommendations.
2. Ensure institutional integrity and independence in the application and control of mining regulations, ensuring that extractive activities comply with legal and ethical standards, by protecting the rights of nature and humans.
3. Call upon states to implement policies that formalize legal ownership, to provide people with security in the tenure of the land that they inhabit and have worked on. States should also implement policies for land title regularization, ensuring that families that have inhabited and worked on the land for decades obtain property titles. Additionally, policies should guarantee small-scale producers secure access to land.
4. Develop policies to strengthen the productive capacity, food distribution, and commercialization of small- and medium-scale producers for the domestic market. States should acknowledge the importance

of smallholders by increasing their market share. Additionally, market mechanisms should be used to control prices, decentralize the agricultural sector, and ensure that industrialized farming practices respect land and life.

5. Use land according to soil vocation and strengthen land-use regulations. For instance, convert land used for large-intensive production of soy for export to organic production. Additionally, incendiary regulations must be modified or annulled in countries like Bolivia. Similarly, regulations that enable land speculation and allow for community lands to be sold and privatized should also be annulled.
6. Research ancestral, ecological and agroecological farming practices for the benefit of the lands of indigenous peoples and rural communities. This diffuses knowledge related to the land, food production, and healthy eating habits. In addition, generating sustainable trade between rural communities will strengthen sustainable food systems and security.
7. Ensure that climate policies align with the ancestral nature protection practices and collective land rights of Afro-descendant, Quilombola, and indigenous women. All involved parties should acknowledge the roles of race and gender, and coordinate with women's groups and civil society organizations. Addressing historical climate injustice and eradicating systemic racism are essential for reparations in the context of the global ecological crisis.