FOOD SECURITY & SOVEREIGNTY IN LAS SEGOVIAS, NICARAGUA

CATEGORY:

POLICY **RESEARCH** **FIELD** **CLIMATE**

LOCATION/SCALE:

Nicaragua (National)

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION:

CAN (Community Agroecology Network)

PERIOD:

2009 - now

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The Food Security and Sovereignty in Las Segovias Project is a collaboration between CAN and PRODECOOP, a coffee farmer cooperative organization. The project **aims to improve food security and reduce seasonal hunger** among 1500 smallholder coffee farming families in Northern Nicaragua.

CAN engaged in a participatory planning process to define strategies based on recognized needs to establish year-round access to healthy food in participating rural communities.

One important pillar of this project are the **Corn storage and distribution centres** (CADA). The CADAs help farmers to store their harvest centrally and use it in thin months for the whole community. A second pillar are the seven **seed banks** to provide farmers with quality seed (mainly corn and beans) all year long. A third aspect is the diversification of farms especially with fruit trees, cassava, plantain and sweet potatoes, which has always been practiced in South America.

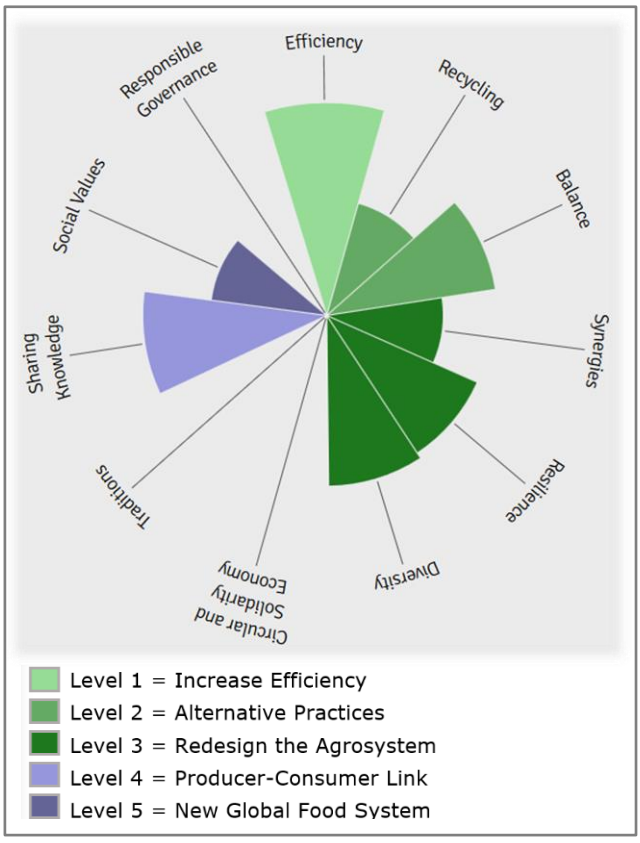

Figure: Assessment of the FSSN based on FAO Elements of Agroecology and Gliessman's five levels of food system change

CONTEXT

In Nicaragua, seasonal hunger is one of the biggest challenges. Food insecurity has especially risen since the coffee-leave rust outbreak in 2011 and the start of a drought in 2014. Central America has seen a succession of droughts, hurricanes, and other hazards in the past decade and is likely to be hit by the threats of climate change in the future more often.

Nationwide, the prevalence of undernourishment dropped from 55% to 20% between 1990 and 2010 and several government assistance programs have expanded. Despite these gains, food insecurity remains a pressing challenge among many rural Nicaraguan smallholders.

OBJECTIVE

The main goals of this project are improved food availability, access, and food utilization through CADAs, seed banks, farm diversification and experimentation, and organizational capacity building in order to reduce seasonal hunger and erase undernourishment among children.

KEY INTERVENTIONS/RESEARCH

FARM LEVEL:

- Distribution of fruit trees and different varieties of vegetables to enhance diversification
- Metal silos have been distributed to improve grain storage methods and reduced rates of grain spoilage and loss

REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL:

- Build food storage and distribution centres known as CADAs to mitigate hunger in thin months
- Construction of seedbanks, which are operating and helping seed production, especially corn and beans, mitigating the impacts of harvest loss and responding to the farmers' seed demand with efficiency and availability of quality seed
- Training, research, dissemination, and ongoing farmer and promoter development

LESSONS LEARNED/CHALLENGES

The Participation Action Research implemented by the project allowed to refine the set of strategies that are the most needed by farmers through constant feedback and reflexion on lessons learned. Four more strategies were added to the original three, such as increase household capacity and access to seed and rootstock production.

Another lesson is that the elimination of the thin months and reaching every single family, their cooperatives and communities is a slow process. The cumulative effects of multiple hazards remains the main challenge. For instance, the coffee leaf rust and other pests that has affected nearly all coffee farming families, adds up to the effect of drought.

There is also a need to promote strategies for the preservation of local and patrimonial varieties, especially in consideration of climate change adaptation and the lack of water.

RELEVANT LINKS & REFERENCES

- CAN: "Food Security & Sovereignty in Las Segovias, Nicaragua" Website http://canunite.org/our-work/projects-2/las-segovias/
- Bacon, C. et al. 2017: "Vulnerability to Cumulative Hazards: Coping with the Coffee Leaf Rust Outbreak, Drought, and Food Insecurity in Nicaragua" World Development 93: 136–152. http://canunite.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ChrisBacon_2017Vulnerability-to-Cumulative-Hazards.pdf

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