

3.2. Launch of project “Improved Mapping and Spatial Analysis of Food Security and Poverty in Ecuador”

Objectives

- ?? Identify how access to food varies spatially in Ecuador
- ?? Identify the linkages between food security and the spatial dimensions of the wider socioeconomic and biophysical environment
- ?? Communicate these insights to decision makers in Ecuador
- ?? Develop cross-scale spatially explicit food security model
- ?? Strengthen Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) activities in Ecuador

Methods

Three visits were made to Quito in 2002 (April, June, and October). The first visit was to make contact with all institutions involved in food security mapping and evaluation and assess their capacities, needs, methods and potential for collaboration. The June visit was to host a workshop to launch the project inviting participants from institutions involved in strengthening food security in Ecuador. In October, we coordinated work plans with FAO - Ecuador and World Food Programme – Ecuador, searches for information in order to complete data inventory, and reached agreements of understanding with key data providers.

A network of stakeholders is crucial for this project to have impact in Ecuador. Much of the data required will come from in-country stakeholders, and the products and methods produced will be used principally in Ecuador.

A consultation exercise was initiated in Quito that introduced the project to potential stakeholders, which included FAO – Ecuador, the World Food Programme (WFP) – Ecuador, Fundación Ecuatoriana de Estudios Ecológicos (EcoCiencia), Oficina de Planificación de la Presidencia de la República del Ecuador (ODEPLAN), Programa Especial de Seguridad Alimentaria (PESA), Red Estratégica para el Desarrollo de la Cadena Agroalimentaria de la Papa (REDCAPAPA), and Alianza Jatun Sacha – Corporación Centro de Datos para la Conservación del Ecuador (CDC).

As a result of the first trip to Quito, the following conclusions were reached.

In the past 5 years Ecuador has been “dollarized”, privatized and decentralized, or is moving in those directions. In order to modernize the state, national institutions are being stealthily dismantled. As a result, initiatives at the national level are being neglected or have never been implemented. The need for national level assessments (using subnational level data) remains high, but the institutions capable of doing this, or of securing funds for this, are few. In summary, any results produced by this

or subsequent projects will be to the benefit of many different institutions in both targeting their resources and their research.

The launch workshop was held in Quito on the 19th and 20th of June and attended by 12 participants from 10 institutions. The workshop was organized in four sessions covering the following themes:

- (1) Hypotheses of the causes of poverty and food insecurity in Ecuador,
- (2) “Possible Futures” of poverty and food insecurity in Ecuador,
- (3) Project Case Study sites in Ecuador, and
- (4) Communication Strategies – inter-institutional Web site.

As a starting point, the participants came to an agreement for a working definition of food security, i.e., the definition from the World Food Summit of 1996:

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

For Theme 1, the participants shared an experience that dealt with food insecurity or poverty in Ecuador, be it from their personal or professional life. These experiences were anecdotal and descriptive. The group subsequently analyzed these, and a matrix was constructed highlighting the principal driving forces and the levels at which they are experienced. The participants discussed the concepts of opportunities and threats as a means of constructing scenarios of possible futures (Workshop Theme 2). It is interesting to note that most of the opportunities were thought to operate at the local scale, whilst the threats tend to be global in nature.

From the list of factors the following scenarios were constructed:

- ?? More frequent and forceful return of the El Niño phenomenon;
- ?? Arrival of the Area de Libre Comercio de las Américas (ALCA) Andean trade agreement with markets opened even further;
- ?? Decentralization (taking advantage of social capital, and the knowledge and resilience of the population); and
- ?? Improved productivity in the agricultural sector (including better post-harvest management).

Future work in the project will involve the construction of these scenarios in terms of the factors that influence food insecurity.

Having discussed the hypotheses of the causes of poverty and food insecurity, it was apparent that different problems exist in different locations within Ecuador (Table 3). One of the project activities is to locate case studies in the three regions of continental Ecuador, viz. the coast, the sierra, and the Amazon basin (Figure 16). Using criteria, which include geographical balance (one study in each region), intermediate sites (not too poor nor too wealthy), existence of threats, availability of data, institutional presence, and

support of the community, the participants selected nine candidates for case study locations.

Table 3. Factors of food insecurity in Ecuador according to scale.

| International | National | Regional / provincial | District / parish | Household |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| - | - | Drought | Access to water | Soil quality |
| - | Gender | Gender | Cultural factors, gender, access to land | Gender |
| Markets | Markets | Markets | Productivity, diversity of production | Income |
| Trade, ALCA ^a | Bad management of harvest, commercialization | Deterioration of natural resources => migration? | - | - |
| Influence of countries and institutions | Education and information, policies | Education and information, climate (El Niño phenomenon) | Education and information, organization | Education and information, lack of knowledge of cooking all types of foodstuffs |
| Global economy, consumption patterns, international treaties | Gender, income, social capital, access to health services, consumption patterns | Gender, income, social capital, access to health services, consumption patterns | Gender, income, social capital, access to health services, consumption patterns | Gender, income, social capital, access to health services, consumption patterns |
| - | Coverage of health services | Diseases are dependent on altitude | Initiatives of home gardens (and others), access to markets | Composition of the diet, respiratory and diarrheal diseases |
| - | Importation of foodstuffs, commercialization. | - | - | Income, training and education about the proper use of foodstuffs |
| - | - | Inequality in land tenancy and in available resources | - | Fertility of women |

a. ALCA, Area de Libre Comercio de las Américas.

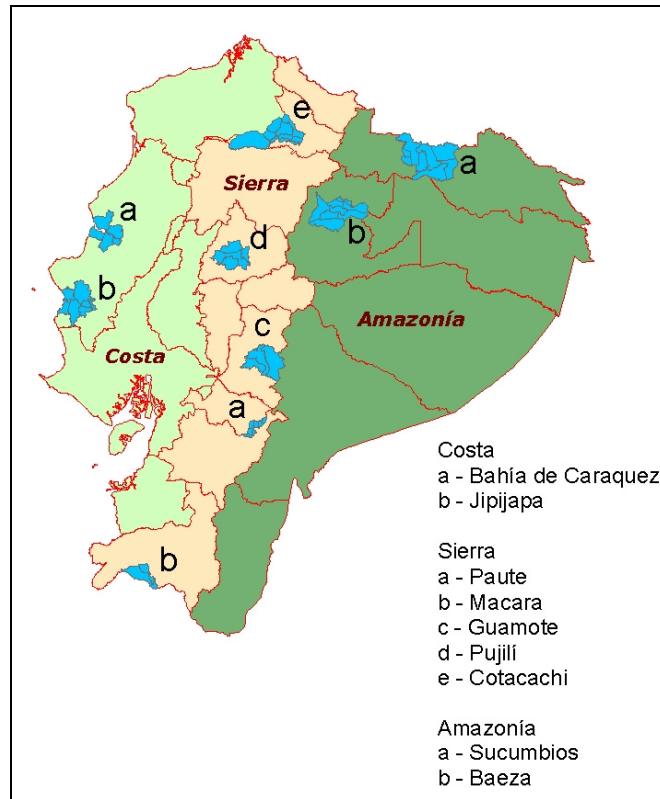


Figure 16. Candidates for case study locations (map source: ODEPLAN [Oficina de Planificación de la Presidencia de la República del Ecuador]. 1999. INFOPLAN. Atlas para el desarrollo local. ODEPLAN, Quito).

A very important aspect of the project is the communication of the methodology and the results. For this reason, the participants discussed the possibility of creating a Web site designed around the theme of food security in Ecuador. A proposal that the Web site form part of REDPESA (Network of Ecuadorian Food Security Projects) was presented to the committee of REDPESA in their meeting on the 3rd of July 2002, and was accepted. A five-member committee will be formed to evaluate the reports and maps that will appear on the Web site:

- (1) Andrew Farrow - CIAT
- (2) Carlos Larrea - Independent
- (3) Silvia Vidal - Centro de Planificación y Estudios Sociales (CEPLAES)
- (4) Rafael Burbano – Politecnica National
- (5) Malki Saenz - EcoCiencia

The Web site has the URL <http://www.ecuamapalimentaria.info>, and has been active since September 2002. The workshop proceedings can be found on the Web site.

In the final visit to Quito, the project moved forward considerably in the definition of methodologies with both Carlos Larrea and partner institutions (FAO, World Food Programme). EcoCiencia provided new data and an agreement was reached with the

Dirección Nacional de Recursos Naturales Renovables (DINAREN) for them to provide the project with more biophysical data. A similar agreement was arranged in order to access some data from the 2000 agricultural census, but this is less than hoped for. The definition of vulnerable populations has also been advanced with the inclusion of base data from the *Defensa Civil* and vulnerability maps from OXFAM-Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)-Sistema Integrado de Indicadores Sociales del Ecuador (SIISE), and DINAREN.

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