

The Importance of Peasant Production and Family Farming as the Basis for Food Sovereignty

Guzman, Adolfo; student of master in development practice, CATIE (Centro Agronomico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza), Costa Rica, adolfo.guzman@catie.ac.cr

For several decades, the development model has been based on the extraction of natural resources, the appropriation of biodiversity and the generation of dependence on agriculture. This has caused the marginalization of indigenous communities who own the knowledge and have managed to create the basis for a healthy and safe feeding through traditional agriculture.

Therefore our work as practitioners must collaborate with indigenous and peasant rural communities; for an inclusive, development and conservation comprehensive and sustainable development. Thus, this way consolidates a community base for endogenous development, achieving greater impact at local and regional level.

In this sense, both family farming and traditional production acquires great importance for further strengthening local processes, based on organic farming, suitable production facilities, closed production cycles and the balance between natural and sociocultural environment.

Our work was in San Antonio Los Altos, Chiapas-Mexico, between the years 2010 - 2013, and it focused on promoting and strengthening integral production initiatives with a sustainable approach in the community. The community established seven integral systems of permaculture, which do not harm the environment and which can generate a production with a closed ecological cycle. This way had a steady and healthy production without harming the environment and was resilient when the production unit was degraded. It also generates surpluses to activate a productive local economy and ensures food security.

The work area contained the units of a rural production community and as a result, seven different systems of eco-technologies were established, which helped reduce pressure on the use of natural resources and to strengthen the process of consolidation of food security.

- Stoves and ovens savers firewood system reduces smoke emissions to environment, and additionally they can reduce the use of firewood by 50%.
- Dry ecological toilets system, which help reduce gastrointestinal diseases, prevent contamination of groundwater and reduce overall water consumption. In addition, they catch waste, which are used as organic fertilizers and repellents in crops.
- Integrated water management systems in housing, where infrastructures collecting rainwater were established for household supplies. Also it established collectors for treatment and reusable wastewater through filters, to reuse water from sinks and showers.

- Composting organic waste and separation of solid waste from households, which involves the use of organic materials to produce fertilizer and reuses solid wastes for construction or other practical uses.
- Production of backyard animals, which gives food to families directly or through secondary products. Where the excrement of animals is important for making fertilizer for crops.
- Bio-intensive garden system with double digging, which maintains a constant production of vegetables and spices for family feeding and selling surplus. This system generates parallel production of medicinal plants, fruit trees and timber.
- Integral housing system, where local and specific materials of the region were used for building houses, respecting the ethics of ecological balance, without ignoring the importance of welfare and safety.

Through actions like these, this approach of inclusion and endogenous development aims to build social power from families with self-sufficient households. Implementing actions help improve nutrition, health and the environment, which at the same time involves ecological and social awareness of family members. Likewise this approach aims to be strengthened through capacity building and organization to generate community processes which continues promoting the importance of family farming and peasant production.