

Agriculture and poverty (Short, non-academic version)

Neoliberal economies depend on endless growth. This growth can be achieved by the same people consuming more and/or by expansion to new areas where more people are joining the production-consumption circle. Therefore more and more areas which were mainly practicing subsistence agriculture are being aggressively pushed towards cash and export crops. By shifting to export crops, people become subject to unstable economies of shrinking markets and increasing food prices, loss of diversified crops and therefore increasingly poor diets consisting on growing proportions of carbohydrates like rice, bread, pasta, etc; all adding to rapidly diminishing food security and quality of life as well as growing malnutrition and in some cases obesity.

The pressure of sustaining their family in growing poverty and insufficient lands leads farmers to intensify their farming systems. Shortening fallows in low-input agricultural systems further lowers the land's long-term productivity and yields, and increases soil erosion, as well as other negative consequences. The application of agricultural chemicals, with the intention of combating these processes, often causes further environmental deterioration. Obviously the use of chemicals genetically and modified crops is aggressively promoted putting in jeopardy the environment as well as the health of the producers and us consumers.

Additionally, many of the export crops such as coffee, cocoa, palm oil, sugar, tobacco etc., are not only unnecessary for human diet, they are often harmful to our health, making consumers addicted to both the products themselves as well as to the medicines, sports etc. that are consumed to mitigate their effect.

Both big and small NGO's often support or introduce cash crops (usually organic) to local communities as part of their conservation and development intervention. When done without responsible planning and cultural sensibility, especially where people not reliant on monetary system it can be counterproductive, serving Neoliberal need for permanent GDP growth and leading to the problems mentioned above.

Reclaim Conservation promotes consumption oriented diversified, organic agriculture for local communities in highly biodiverse areas.

Bibliography

Moseley, W., Schnurr, M., & Bezner Kerr, R. (2015). Interrogating the technocratic (neoliberal) agenda for agricultural development and hunger alleviation in Africa. *African Geographical Review*, 34(1), 1-7.

Questions

In general, do you agree that the text explains the relations between Agriculture and poverty, or do you think there are better ways to tackle this issue?

Does this need more background info?

Is it easy and interesting to read? Does the English need editing? Can you suggest edits?

Are parts of the text irrelevant, repetitive, or should be rephrased or deleted?

Are there any relevant issues that are not covered by this text? Would you be able to add them or just list them to be added by us?

Can you suggest a person or an institution that might have the right experience and perspective to rewrite this text? Are you happy to forward this text to them?

Do you know of any academic work related to the subject?

This is the shorter, less academic version of this issue. Are you interested in writing the longer, academic version?