

Food sovereignty and conservation of biodiversity

Aina Estarellas Maurín

UAB
Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona – Facultat de Veterinària
Gener, 2017



Introduction

At the present time, the amount of people that suffer from hunger is constantly increasing in a world where food is produced in abundance. Institutional agreements to combat hunger have not yield any results and, because of that, alternatives to guarantee the right for food are required. Food sovereignty appears with the aim of providing new strategies that help to end poverty and the biodiversity loss the current agro-industrial system and free market cause

Objectives

Through a detailed bibliographic review, the food sovereignty topic is covered, examining the principles it advocates and both social and environmental consequences of its non-application.

Food sovereignty

It is the fundamental right of a country to define its own farming policies and sustainable production, distribution and food consumption strategies, guaranteeing the rights for a healthy and nutritious diet for the whole population, taking care of the culture and diversity of their production, commercialization and management systems of their rural regions.

Origin

On the 1993, the 'Via Campesina' was born as a group of rural communities from four different continents, in Mons, Belgium. They sought to develop a common view to fight a globalized agro-industrial system that they considered to be a major drive for global hunger and poverty, especially within rural communities.

How is it built?

1. **Make a land reform.**
2. **Promote agro-ecology**
3. **Avoid the use of transgenic seeds.**
4. **Claim the right to land, seeds and other consumables**
5. **Right to water**
6. **Understand that agriculture is not a merchandise**
7. **Improve the social and work conditions in the agricultural food system**

Monoculture and biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variability among all classes of living organisms, including diversity within and between species and ecosystems.

The agro-industrial model promotes the expansion of monocultures on a broad scale. These practices, contraries to the food sovereignty ideals, cause adverse socio-environmental impacts very difficult to reverse, such as biodiversity loss and precarious farming.



Fig 1. Palm oil plantations in Peru

Consequences

Environmental

-Monocultures drain the soil nutrients; eroding it and making it lose its fertility. This causes the replacement of the native vegetation of the area, so the natural control of the herbivorous is halted and the plagues increase.

Socials

-Loss of native cultures and traditions that rely on the original ecosystems.
-Work loss in areas of farming tradition
-Insecurity and poor working conditions
-Expulsion of rural communities

Sustainable palm oil

A possible sustainable production of palm oil has been considered due to an increasing knowledge about the consequences of intensive palm oil monocultures.

RSPO was born in the 2004 with the aim of establishing the limits in the palm oil production abuses and certify those that fulfil a set of good practices. There are currently two forms of palm oil supply:

- ☐ **CSPO:** certified sustainable oil
- ☐ **Book&Claim certificate:** a sustainable palm oil producer is paid, but the oil could origin from any source.

Currently there are 3.51 million hectares of certified crops by the RSPO, producing a total of 21% of the global production (13.18 tons).



Fig 3. CSPO seal



Fig 4. Book&Claim seal

Palm oil

It is produced from the African palm fruits (*Eleis guineensis*), grown in tropical countries. It has become a crucial raw material used at the global level in food, cosmetic and biofuel industries. Indonesia and Malaysia own the 85% of its world production.

The expansion of intensive palm oil monocultures hides the deforestation of tropical forests, the appropriation of the lands owned by the native communities, abuses against human rights and the death of specimens of different animal species such as elephants, orangutans and Sumatran tigers.

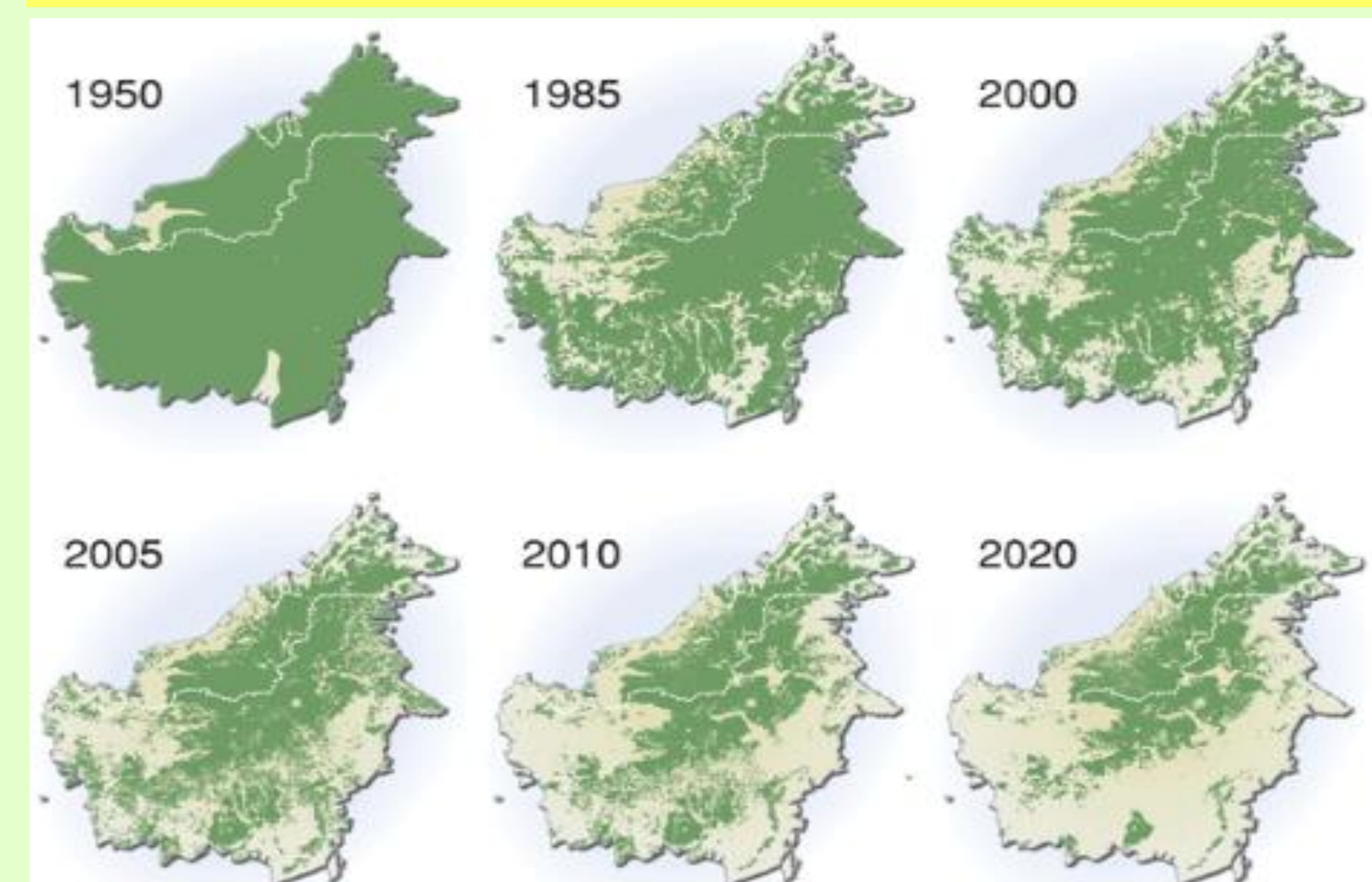


Fig 2. Deforestation in Borneo

Conclusions

In the presence of the food and environmental crisis our world faces, food sovereignty has become something necessary, an interdisciplinary strategic route that can lead to a world where poverty is reduced, hunger disappears, natural environment get its stolen biodiversity back and social inequalities form part of the past. Even though this is a utopic idea, it is the veterinarian duty to safeguard the public health and defend the environment conservation. For this reason, we should fight to make of our profession a way towards a better world.