

Just transition in food systems – the concept and its meaning in different contexts



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Languages and Practices of Sustainability Workshop, 25-26 May 2023, Bern

Structure of the talk



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1. Challenges in modern food systems and the need for change
2. Definition of a food system
3. Justice and sustainability in food systems
4. Principles and criteria for just transition
5. Just transition in context – the Brazilian soy value chain



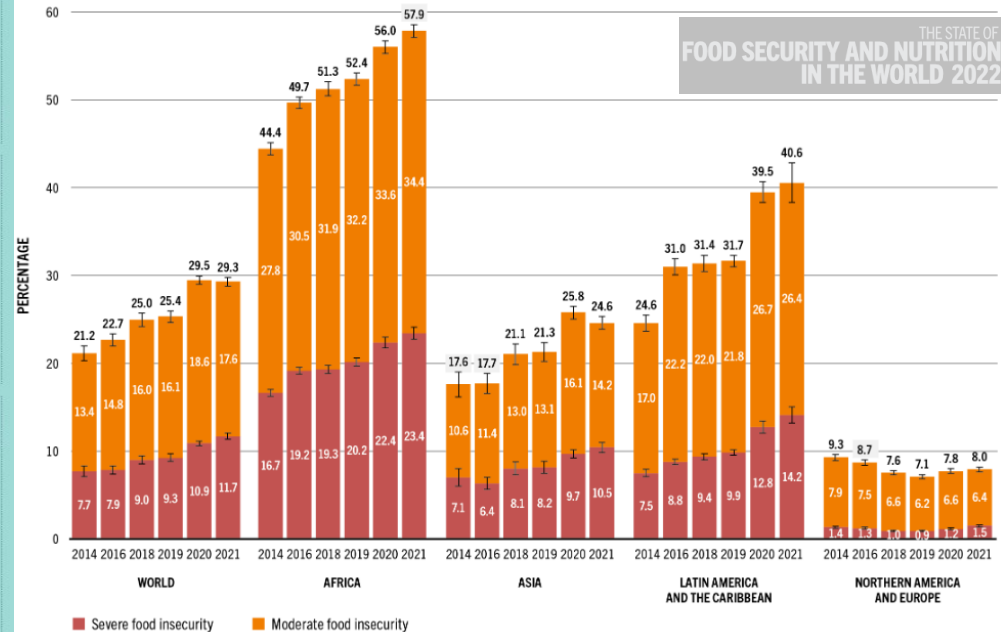
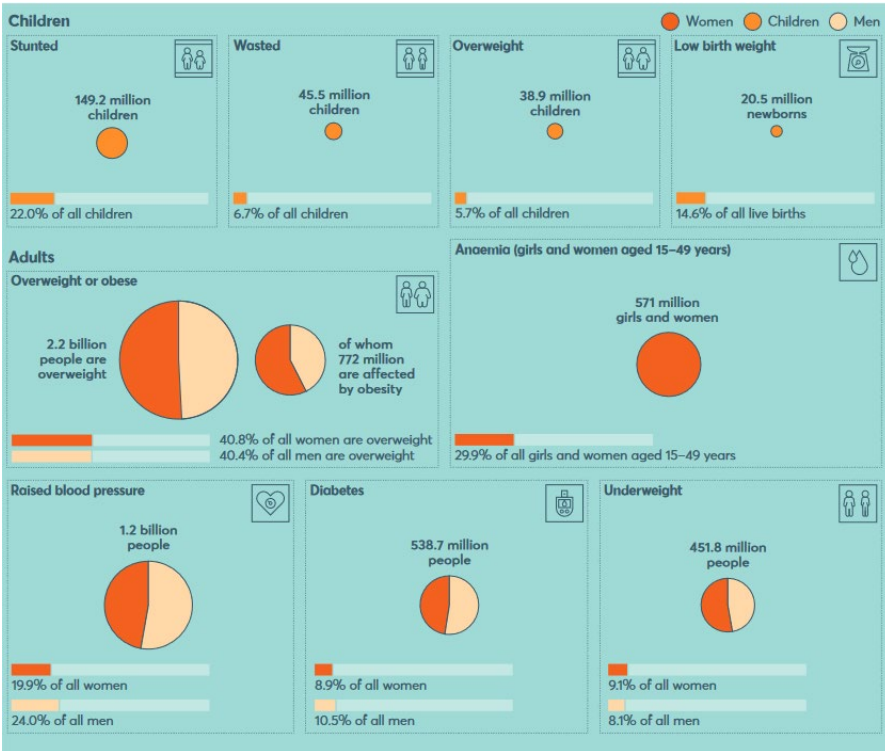
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1. Food and nutrition security





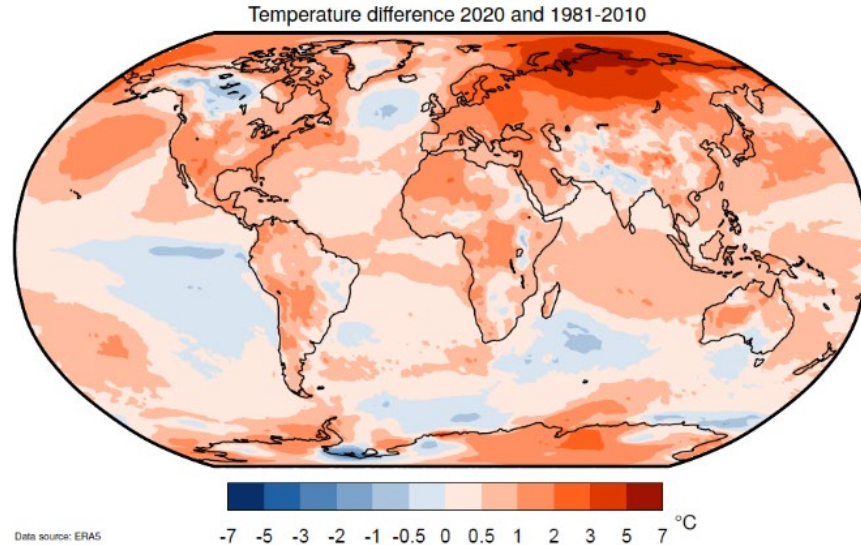
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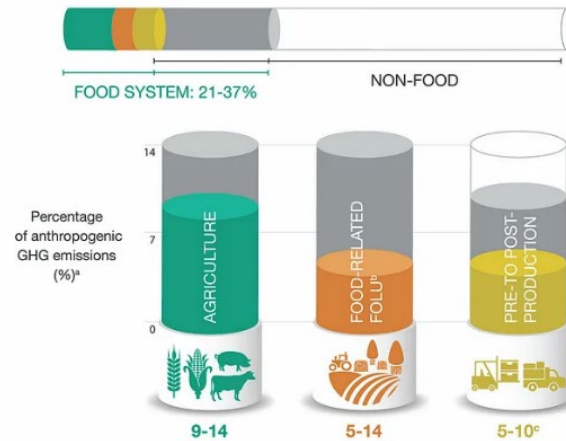
1. Climate change



Data source: ERA5



Global greenhouse gas emissions from the food system



Data source: *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*

^aComputed using a total emissions value for the period 2007-2016 of 52 GtCO₂-eq per year

^bForestry and Other Land Use

^cRounded to nearest fifth percentile due to assessed uncertainty in estimates

1. Land use and land use changes



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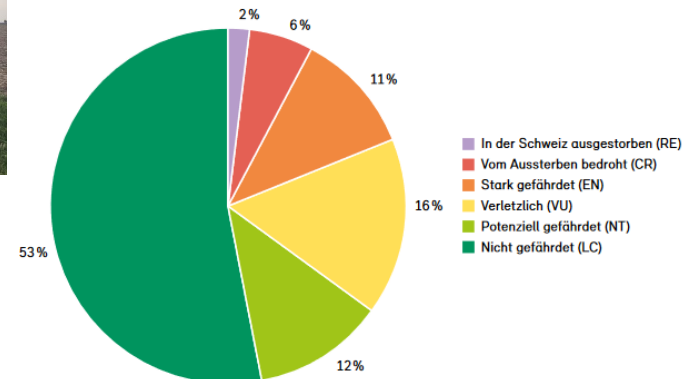
Maluf 2019



Own picture 2023

Abb. 2: Anteil der Arten pro Rote-Liste-Kategorie in der Schweiz

Arten, die in die Kategorien CR, EN und VU eingestuft wurden, gelten als gefährdet.



Quelle: BAFU



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Transformation is needed and urgent!



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2. FAO – the food system wheel

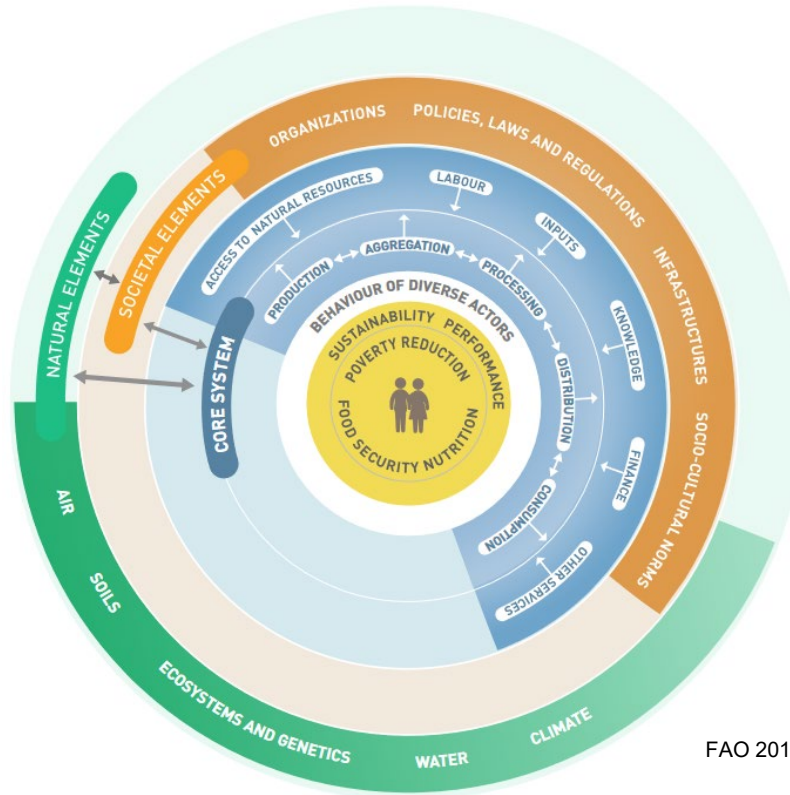


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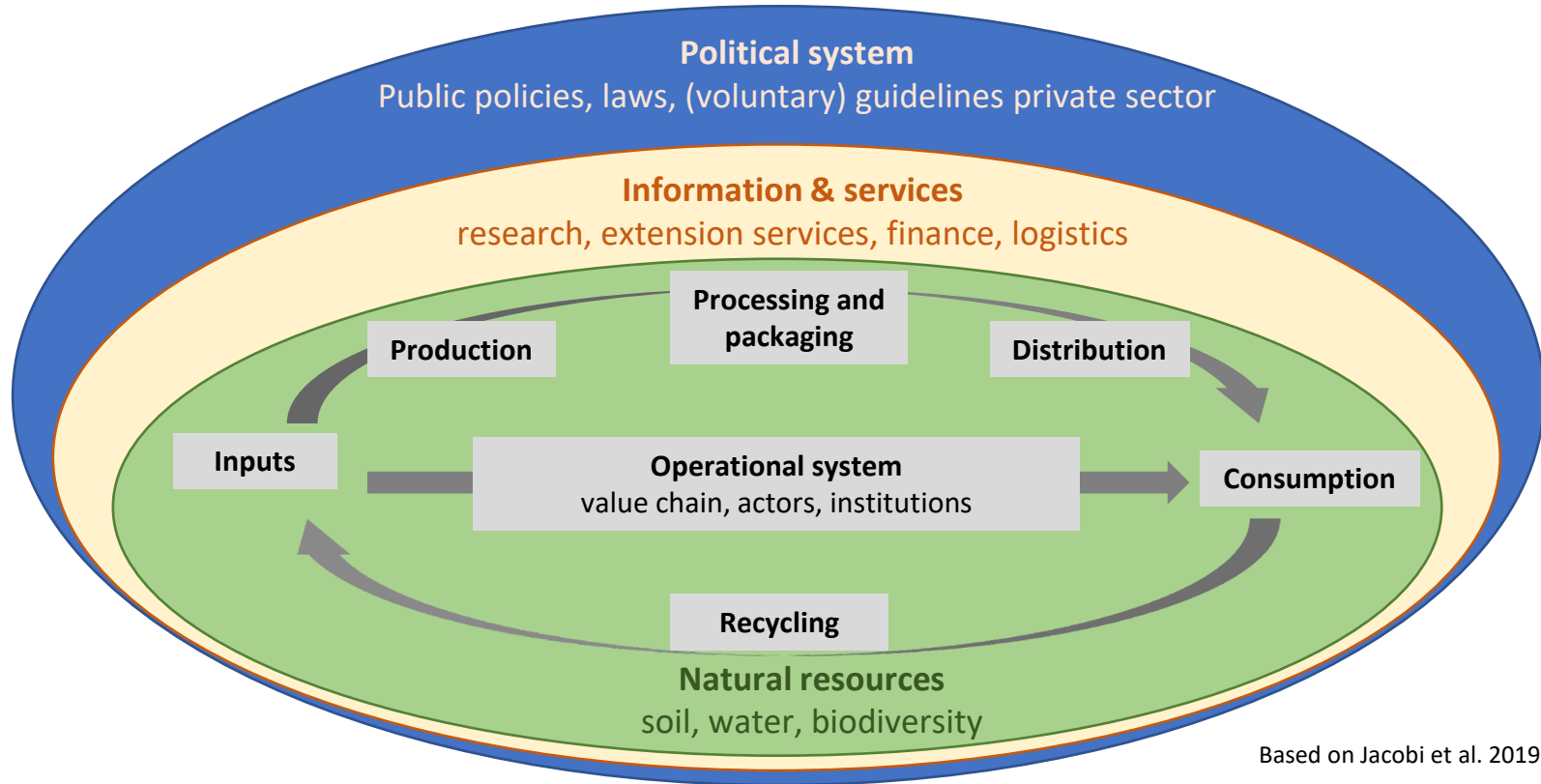
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2. Food systems and their subsystems





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2. Soy for feed: an example

Finance: high investments in
machinery, inputs, logistics

Private sector guidelines: Roundtable
on Responsible Soy (RTRS)

Seeds,
pesticides



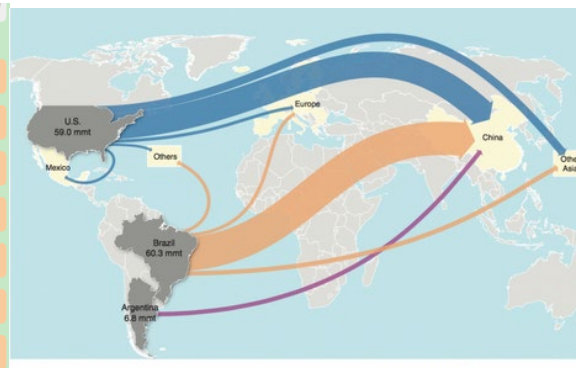
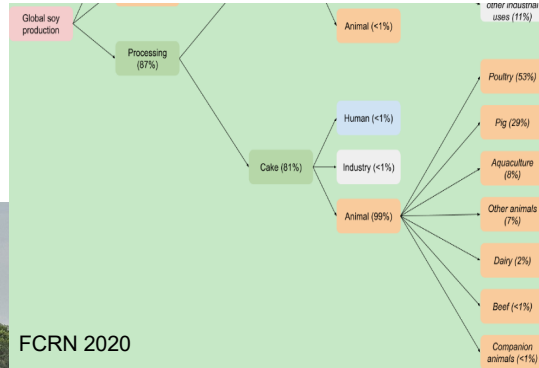
Processing soybean



International trade



Animal feed



FCRN 2020

Note: Chart shows production of soybeans by United States, Brazil, and Argentina during 2016/17. Width of arrows represents volume of exports. mmt = million metric tons.
Source: ERS analysis of customs data from IHS Global Insight, Global Trade Atlas.

Large land resources are needed for soybean production

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3. Justice in dietary transitions

- Research topics along the 3 dimensional framework from social (Fraser 2009) and environmental justice (Schlosberg 2007):
 - Distributional justice: access and affordability to nutritious food, path dependencies and innovation capacities in agricultural production, distribution of benefits along new value chains (alternative proteins), capacity building for disadvantaged groups
 - Recognition justice: resolving socio-cultural tensions between different notions of “good diets”, shaping of diets by dominant narratives and power distribution, marginalisation, devaluation, and invisibility of farmers and farm labour, ethical questions in animal production
 - Procedural justice: negotiating socio-cultural tensions and conflicting claims, roles and responsibilities in public/private governance, more inclusive food democracies to consider and navigate inequalities



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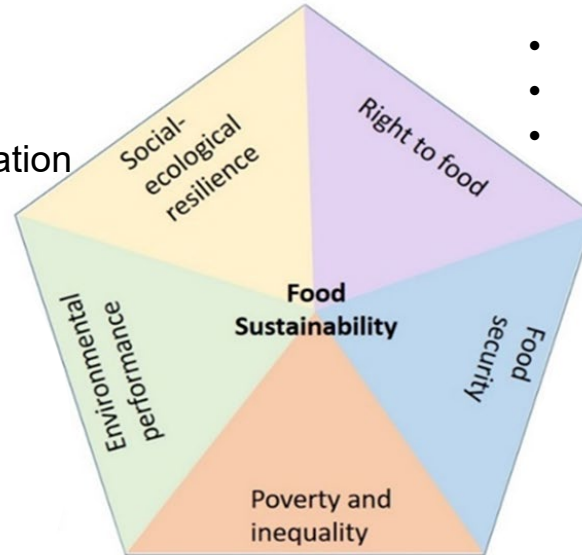
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3. What makes food systems sustainable?

- Buffer capacity
- Self-organization
- Learning and adaptation

- Landscape management
- Carbon footprint
- Health impacts



- Non-discrimination
- Access to information
- Effective participation

- Household level
- Power relations
- Capacity to store and process food

- Income and expenditure
- Access to infrastructure
- Performance of value chains

Rist and Jacobi, 2016

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4. Principles and criteria for just transition

Definition of just transition: Low-carbon transition towards sustainable, healthy and fair food systems

- How can one tell if a particular mitigation process, pathway, or policy is just, why, and for whom?
- How to make sense of competing claims for justice?



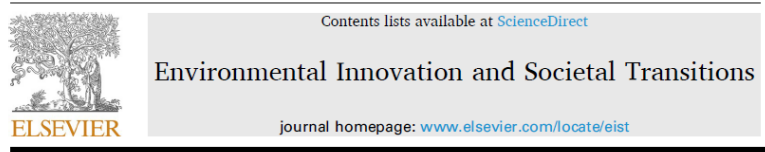
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4. Principles and criteria for just transition



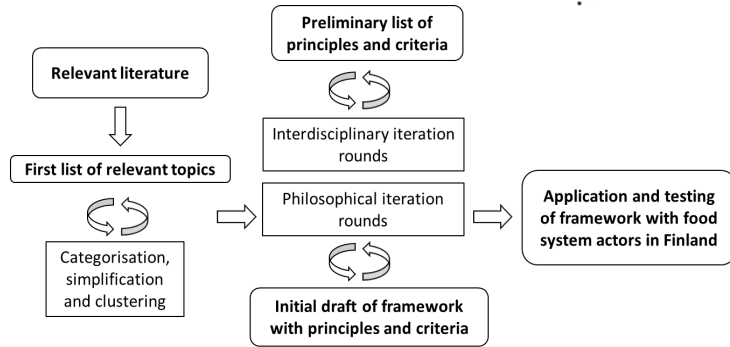
Just transition principles and criteria for food systems and beyond

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13 principles and 28 criteria for just transition in food systems



- E.g. criteria cosmopolitan justice:
- Decarbonizing activities do not cause food insecurity and
 - Decarbonizing activities respect the participatory control over and access to productive resources elsewhere in the world.

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5. **Just transition in context – the Brazilian soy value chain**

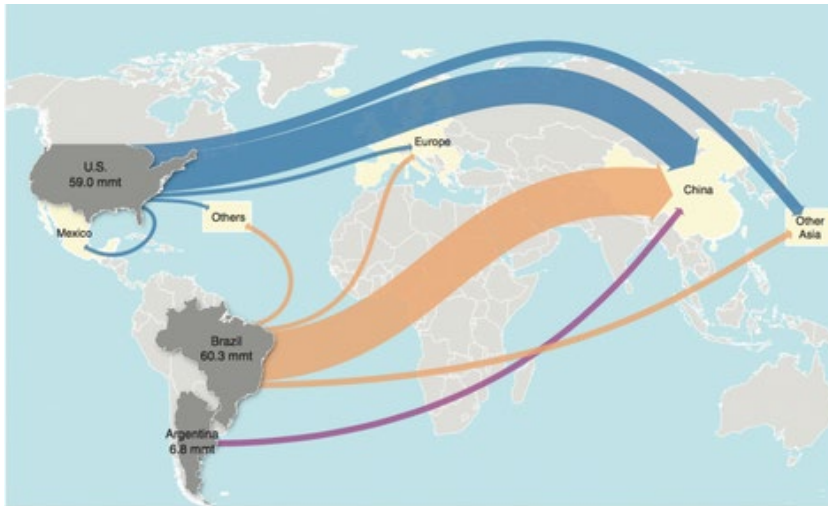


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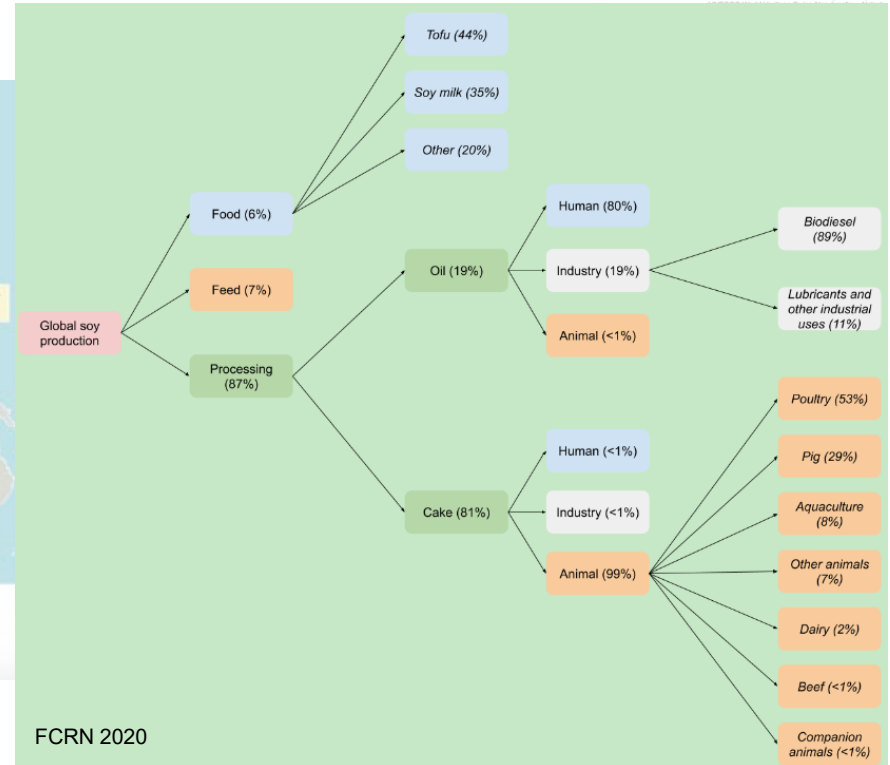
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4. The Brazilian soy value chain



Note: Chart shows production of soybeans by United States, Brazil, and Argentina during 2016/17. Width of arrows represents volume of exports. mmt = million metric tons.

Source: ERS analysis of customs data from IHS Global Insight, Global Trade Atlas.



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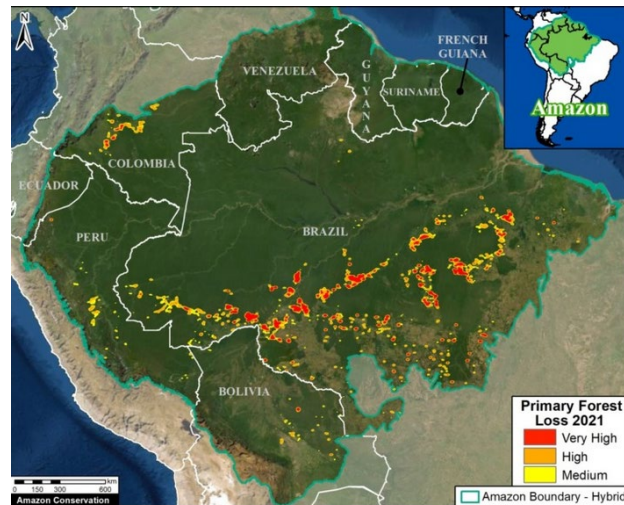


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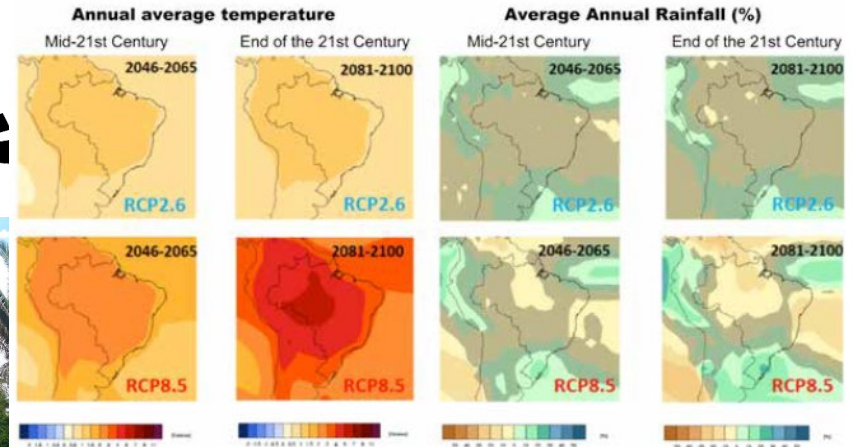
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4. The Brazilian soy value chain

- Biggest country in LA and 5th biggest country in the world
- World's biggest soy and second biggest producer of beef -> high input production
- Rich in biodiversity and ecosystems -> Amazon is seen as the green lung of the world



Base Map. Deforestation hotspots across the Amazon in 2021 (as of September 18). Data: UMD/GLAD, ACA/MAAP.



Marengo & Souza, 2018



4. (In)justice in Brazilian soy value chain

To what extent and with what requirements is a just and sustainable transition in Brazilian soy value chain feasible? => **Not feasible in our view!**

- Distributive: meat consumption in Global N, social and environmental costs Global S among most vulnerable population groups
- Procedural: strong political coalitions and lobbying fronts among the agro-industrial sector lead to influencing public policies
- Recognition: power asymmetries between dominant soybean model and social movements of family farmers, peasants and indigenous people
- Initiatives to reduce emissions without changing the underlying structural causes of injustices cannot be considered as just transition



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4. Ideas and proposals in dispute

Aim: Identify actors, discursive repertoires, and private strategies / public policy proposals for just and sustainable food system transition

Document mapping

Commercial private sector



Efficient economic use of natural resources => distributive justice issues

- Policy initiatives of both repertoires visible in different government plans and documents and partially contradict each other
- Influence of the two bodies clearly visible in different institutions

Civil society movements/organizations



Paradigm shifts, agroecology, democracy and rights => all dimensions

Thank you!

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<https://www.cde.unibe.ch/>

<https://justfood.fi/en-US>



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