

Letter to editor  
USAL Agronomy, Research to Face the Challenge.

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Argentina in 2015, a Japanese man looks at endless wheat fields of the Pampas. A Swiss feels delighted in a Cordoba's dairy farm. A French national enjoys Mendoza's vineyards. A Spanish resident feels Catamarca's olive groves as his. Any citizen of the world, at any Argentine productive corner, feels that has all the tools to create a successful production plan in the context of a strong country and supplier of food to the world.

Guayaquil in 1822, an Argentine general, hero of the South American liberation, along with other prominent liberator soldiers, concludes his military action in the liberating campaign with that symbolic embrace. (Mitre, 2010).

Nearly two centuries away, what was the key to long-term development of the South American Patria Grande [Greater Homeland] that San Martin, O'Higgins and Bolívar visualized? (Pigna, 2010).

Patriots who forged our independence were not just the generals commanding of the liberating armies. They not only posed the strategic military scenario but they foresaw the political guidelines that should be organized to achieve integration and thus develop a new post-colonial continent (Pigna, 2010, Mitre, 2010). Such guidelines should certainly be access to food, food sovereignty.

Five centuries ago, Spanish and Portuguese came to our lands looking for precious metals and minerals. Certainly, it was another world. They look for gold and silver, not wheat and water. Later, the Jesuits arrived with new ideas of culture, including improving farming techniques that allowed increased amounts of harvest in the traditional crops.

To the south, Buenos Aires starts becoming the gateway of raw materials and manufactured goods. In its surroundings, the "Colonial estancia [ranch]" is born, which laid the foundations of Argentina's livestock becoming later in the nineteenth century Argentina

economic engine, which later complemented with the "Grain holder of the world " Argentina in the first half of the twentieth century (Felgueras , 2011).

The Colonial Estancia [ranch], which since 1700 began to spread in the extraordinary fertility of the Pampas, is key to the process of political organization of the River Plate [Rio de la Plata] and, ultimately, ends up being the economic power, based on food production, that supports the warlords leading the May Revolution of 1810 and, in part, of the campaigns for the independence of the region (Pigna, 2010, Mitre, 2010).

In that double English attempt to seize the port of Buenos Aires in the early nineteenth century, we could already detect an effect of the comparative advantages of these latitudes in primary food production. The English did not come mainly for land or precious metals, they were interested in business that supplied beef, grain and leather to almost half of Europe for almost two centuries (Pigna, 2010).

Locating the revolutionary events of the first quarter of the nineteenth century in the global and regional geopolitical context of the time, leads us inevitably to analyze them from the strong economic interests that had its embryo by 1700, when the distant lands of the Indio began to be transformed into estancias with thousands of cattle heads, and where the economic power of the River Plate was founded, based on a strategic key: primary food production.

History finds similarities throughout that rich, green, fresh South America, with unique features. The South American continent is an orchard that could be the sustenance for the rest of humanity if the situation so requires (Munck, 2015). Food, water, energy, land. But it seems that the secret is like the fingers of one hand. A finger by itself is more or less useful for either task. Far from being the perfect tool symbolized by a hand, with all fingers aligned in the common interest.

Two centuries, since that meeting in Guayaquil, radically transformed that scenario that led to the great liberation feat. But apparently, those dreams of integration transited more roads to nowhere and bogged roads down with no other plan than yielding lobbying benefits to politicians on duty.

South American integration has a primary solution, and it is based on food production, as well as the access to fresh water, either as a primary element of life or as power generation. Food and water: the common factor that should integrate the countries of the region

(Kliksberg, 2002). South America has it all and, in turn, seems to have nothing, in the light of some human development indexes (Schweinheim, 2010) than, in average, stuck the subcontinent in a present of underdevelopment that fails to define its future, beyond specific country policies, that insert it, to greater or lesser extent, at the international level.

The heroes of South American freedom dreamed of a *Patria Grande*. That same one which has not exceeded contemporary regional blocks that have only made more complex a system based on bureaucratic aspects, but far from effective integration that improves the quality of life and enhances the comparative advantages compared to the rest of the planet. We are now at the fork in the road. On the one hand, continue to trial and error, using circumstantial recipes with political objectives for the benefit of those in power.

On the other hand, we face the opportunity to create a strategic plan on agricultural, agri-food and agro-industrial policies, with every involved doer consensus, which ensures its viability, beyond the political sign in power in each country. Thinking about having the way to go on food production in the next five, ten, fifteen years is an obligation for the political, social and professional XXI century leaders in each of the countries of the dreamed *Patria Grande* (Kliksberg , 2002).

With the sustainability of our region, and ensuring the quality of life of its inhabitants, through access to protein foods, water and energy, we should then address our efforts to become global suppliers of food, thinking of adding value to our source commodities. The strategy for the development of each of the South American countries should be articulated with an integration strategy. We must articulate the debate to generate a strategic plan that includes nutritional sovereignty and safety for the whole region, giving each inhabitant economic and material access to food required for a nutritional quality life -key in the development of our future generations intellect and main axis in a sustainable strategic plan. Having all agro-ecosystems, and, through them, the diversity of regional productions and economies, is full guarantee that integration is the way to development.

South America is orphan of a shared vision. For two hundred years, we have made every effort to enforce the interests of each nation and we have not favored a project as a region. On the contrary, in regional blocs we have made a priority the tough defense of the particular interests of each country over communitarian interests (Munck , 2015). In many

cases, we wonder why do we hold a regional economic bloc if it will not watch over relevant aspects of the quality of life of the involved societies?

It is not very difficult to analyze. No one marries without a couple or family project. No one considers a career without a professional practice objective. We should then have a regional project. We should all sit at the table of debate and decide over the way to go, the path that leads us to achieve equal opportunities for social welfare, global competitiveness, and, above all, confidence among South Americans, leaving aside years of disagreement. It is time to look around, to quantify our resources, to qualify potentialities, to plan our future together (Kliksberg, 2002; Munck, 2015).

Each of us who live in these latitudes, we will be protagonists of another hundred years of failure and misunderstandings, or, we will be responsible for the foundation of a real Patria Grande, like the one our liberators dreamed, moving towards the same pluralistic, inclusive target, capable of understanding that disagreement does not entitle us to medieval behavior.

The key is food, in order to ensure, through integration, nutritional sovereignty, to improve human development indexes in an integral way, creating a regional strategy that allows us to position ourselves globally as food suppliers.

South America has it all. But if only one of its inhabitants is being deprived of food, water, or energy, that South American dream will only be that, a dream.

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