

SDC 2019 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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Title: Food Security and the Viability of Yucatec Maya Sustainable Traditional Subsistence Strategies



Following a decade of improvement in global food security, factors associated with climate change are resulting in negative shifts in that trend. Indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to these shifts due to their high levels of poverty in many places around the world. In an effort to better understand the current issues related to food security and sovereignty from the indigenous perspective we conducted research in three Yucatec Maya communities in Yucatan, Mexico. The Yucatec Maya having a 3,000 year tradition of practicing agro-ecology for their subsistence. However the adoption of neoliberal policies in Mexico over the last 30 years have reduced the viability of this sustainable subsistence strategy. We developed a survey instrument using a participatory process with academic and local community members that relates to the Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) but covers areas not addressed by existing Mexican government data. The survey instrument was administered to 40 people across 3 communities. We show that low wage employment in regional urban centers is being incorporated into or replacing the traditional mix of livelihood strategies by many Yucatec Maya families and is leading to a decrease in food security and sovereignty among these families. These findings contribute to the burgeoning body of scholarly work on sub-national development and the localization of the SDGs through providing evidence of local perspectives on food security that are complementary to existing regional and national data. Ultimately this work has the intended practical application of providing a guide to the development of locally appropriate interventions to improve food security among the Yucatec Maya. This work is more broadly situated in the meeting theme of sustainable development and indigenous peoples as a part of efforts to reverse the loss of indigenous food sovereignty that have accelerated with the expansion of neo-liberal policies throughout the developing world.