



## The European Green Deal on rural agriculture, energy transition and neo-colonial collapses in the Global South

Nubia Barrera Silva

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### Abstract

The European Green Pact aims to address the economic contradictions between agribusiness and the declining primary sector, which are causing irreparable damage and fracturing nature. We also analyse the double standard of the Deforestation-Free Supply Chain Law, one clearly evident in the EU and the other, hidden, and extra-territorial, in the Brazilian Amazon. Added to this is the unlimited demand for the extraction, production, and consumption of strategic materials of geopolitical interest. In contrast, the EU deliberately ignores the limited storage capacity of mines in peripheral countries of the Southern Cone, the Sahel Belt and the rising hegemonic power of China. The energy transition, under the Ukrainian and other ongoing wars in the planetary geography, increases the exponential demand of the periodic table of minerals for security, defence, arms purchases and endless wars.



[Photo by Martijn Baudoin on Unsplash](#)

Not yet enough, investments in climate mitigation have been directed towards NATO interests. This has led to an increase in eco-environmental cascades, especially in Southern Europe, plus another continental threat of global reach, the approaching breakdown of the AMOC Current under the indifference of EU politicians and rulers.

### Introduction

The primary sector of the European Union (EU) is dying out under recurrent economic and eco-environmental crises as it is thrown into the ultra-liberal drift of continental Europe's agrifood sector. Global warming amplifies the relevance of planetary food sovereignty, and from this perspective, the latest periodic crises have been worsening since December 2023 through repeated signs of protests, blockades and large-scale mobilisations. From Poland, Spain, France and Germany, they spread to the Netherlands, Lithuania, Romania and Belgium through the seizure and blocking of streets and the parade of tractors in the main cities. Farmers converged on the same complaints: low profitability of products, tax cuts on diesel required for the mobility of heavy machinery and the suspension of environmental regulations imposed by the European Community (EC) and the definitive suspension of the negotiations of the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Polish farmers created the first focal point of peasant protests, under economic pressures from Ukraine, that turned into an unfair competition for the entry of agricultural products exempt from EU tariff restrictions and obligations. Besides the protests from Poland and Romania, we add the increase in tariffs, insurance, fuel and fertiliser prices. In 2023, farmers in the Netherlands erupted against the obligation to reduce nitrogen emissions, and farmers in Eastern Europe demanded a shield against Ukrainian grain. In an almost immediate response to the mobilisations, French president Emmanuel Macron promised to cut red tape, additional subsidies for winegrowers in financial difficulties, the maintenance of tax exemptions for agricultural diesel and better enforcement of laws aimed at ensuring fair wholesale prices. He also suspended measures to reduce the use of pesticides, and achieved a relaxation of the EU regulation requiring farmers to leave 4 per cent of their land fallow, a measure to protect biodiversity. In addition, tariffs on imports from Ukraine, including inexpensive chicken, eggs, and sugar, have been imposed.

The relevance of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), issued in 1962, among farmers and society, had among its main objectives, the improvement of agricultural productivity with 'reasonable guarantees to farmers' livelihoods', a stable food supply and affordable prices to consumers. During the early years, it contributed to climate change policy and sustainable management of natural resources. It included the preservation of landscapes, rural areas and the sustainability of the rural economy, through agricultural employment, agrifood industries and associated sectors. Farmers in the European primary sector were given access to modern machinery, new techniques, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Following the 2003 reform policy, new requirements were incorporated for producers receiving income support, under the compliance with certain environmental standards, animal welfare and food safety. Subsequently, the 2020 reform added three new challenges to agricultural policy until the end of the decade: ensuring food security,

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Luisa. "El inquietante poder de los agricultores franceses". DW. <https://www.dw.com/es/el-inquietante-poder-de-los-agricultores-franceses/a-68379834>. 26 October 2024.

guaranteeing biodiversity and the territorial challenge. The latter preserved the 'sector to vitalise the rural economy, our roots and heritage'.<sup>2</sup>

In essence, the reforms respond to the prolonged market liberalisation process, following the consequent destruction of competitive regulation mechanisms. To be precise, it is not binding for the agrifood sector based on genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) and the application of pesticides at all stages of monoculture. The European Climate Legislation, which has become a political ambition, stands out for reducing net GHG emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030. The regulation in force corresponds to the European Climate Law, the 'law of laws' for the next thirty years.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the report of the *Agence européenne pour l'environnement* presents unprecedented figures under global warming: 'The average over the 12 months between February 2023 and January 2024 was 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The year 2023 was the warmest year on record in over 100,000 years worldwide, exceeding pre-industrial levels by 1.48 °C. Ocean temperatures also reached new heights. Europe is the fastest-warming continent. In fact, since the 1980s, the continent has warmed twice as fast as the planet.'<sup>4</sup>

Based on previous legislative sections, we contrast professional rural peasant agriculture and livestock farming, providing figures and data on the unequal distribution of value and profits of retail supermarket chains and livestock breeders. We also analyse the impacts of selling processed dairy products through a myriad of branded assortments, profits, and high production volumes. In contrast, we present the primary sector's economic losses, difficulties, and shortcomings on the verge of extinction. We highlight the unpredictable impacts of green capitalism under the title *The double game of the EU's deforestation-free Supply Chain Law* on the encroached territories of the Apyterewa Indigenous Reserve in the Brazilian Amazon.

Regarding the energy transition in the extraction, production and demand for strategic materials of geopolitical interest extracted from key countries in the Global South, the multidimensional strategy of the European Green Deal (EGD) articulates EU policies related to technology, security, defence and arms procurement aimed at the war in Ukraine, others underway in the Middle East and their potential geopolitical repercussions. We then compare the actual data emanating from the 'Law of Laws' on climate and the diversion of the original objectives toward strengthening NATO. Here, we address some factual events opposed to fulfilling the stated objectives and agree with Alfons Pérez:<sup>5</sup> the EGD strategy learned nothing from the virus, which was to strengthen health, sanitation and global supply chain risks. However, from the Global South, the answer to the question that interests us most is: 'Do we want to recover at the expense of what and of whom?' Eurocentrism has overlooked the impacts of the EGD on poor populations in the Congo, Indonesia, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, and so on. It even deliberately ignores the limits of cobalt, lithium, nickel, neodymium or dysprosium reserves.

<sup>2</sup> Junta de Extremadura. Consejería de Educación y Empleo. "El sector primario en Europa". 2020. [https://escholarium.educarex.es/useruploads/r/c/136933/scorm\\_imported/12722923854658283862/el\\_sector\\_primario\\_en\\_europa.html](https://escholarium.educarex.es/useruploads/r/c/136933/scorm_imported/12722923854658283862/el_sector_primario_en_europa.html), 2020

<sup>3</sup> Consejo de la Unión Europea. "Pacto Verde de la Unión Europea". <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/green-deal/#:~:text=Tras%20el%20acuerdo%20provisional%20alcanzado,El%20Reglamento%20est%C3%A1%20en%20vigor>

<sup>4</sup> Agence européenne pour l'environnement. "Évaluation européenne des risques climatiques. Synthèse. Rapport 01/2024 de L'AEE". Luxembourg: Office des publications de l'Union européenne, 2024 ISBN 978-92-9480-639-0. doi:10.2800/54161. 5

<sup>5</sup> Alfons Pérez, *Pactos Verdes en tiempos de pandemias. El futuro se disputa ahora*. (Barcelona: Icaria editorial en Acción). ISBN: 978-84-120139-6-2. 65, 142

## The Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Mercosur

The EU-Mercosur FTA<sup>6</sup> has been at the centre of the massive mobilisations of farmers and livestock breeders in the primary sector, which has been challenged as 'obsolete and unfair'. In 25 years, the two parties have disagreed, and it seems that the long history of rejections, ambiguities, and changes in terms and political interests of European governments has ended. The arguments are unquestionable: on the European side, the primary sector demands that the EU defends the agricultural objectives of the EGD and reforms the CAP in defence of food sovereignty, fair and stable prices, elimination of tariffs and unfair competition from imports of products exempt from environmental, labour and animal care regulations. The proposal aims to diversify consumer food options, from regulating genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) to different agroecological systems and professional livestock farming.

Mercosur countries also reject it because of the imposition of the same neoliberal policies subjugated to foreign corporate monopoly, imposing environmental standards and the eradication of deforestation on fertile lands flooded with monoculture cereal plantations, leading to the ruin of food sovereignty, hunger and the exacerbation of poverty in indigenous and peasant communities. Unlike the EU, national governments are co-opted by hidden agreements and levies of hegemonic capitalism under FTAs, corruption, and loss of sovereignty. In conclusion: 'The free trade agreement with the EU deepens a productive matrix strongly concentrated in primary products with intensive modes of production in using land, in the application of agrochemicals strongly controlled by transnational companies with precarious labour relations and poor health and welfare conditions',<sup>7</sup> with no benefits for primary farmers.

## The European Union's primary sector

In the EU 'the agricultural and food sectors together account for 7% of all jobs and 6% of GDP and are highly productive, although they employ few people. Despite its small weight, the annual budgetary investment of the CAP is very high within the overall budget of the European continent.<sup>8</sup> The actions of the new CAP and Agenda 2000 emphasise the development and diversification of the agroindustrial economy, agrotourism, and the incorporation of natural conservation areas on primary sector land. Thus, in Central and Eastern Europe,<sup>9</sup> the transition to the neoliberal economy has been reflected in "agricultural crises over agricultural job losses (more than one million in the eastern Länder of Germany), declining productivity (the output per job in Poland is only 10% of the EU average, while in the Czech Republic it is 20%), and in the trade deficit in agrifood products". The Commission's 'Farm to Fork' strategy, under which the transformation of *the current EU food system into a sustainable model*, together with food security and food safety, are part of the main objectives of the strategy to ensure sufficient, affordable and nutritious food without exceeding the limits of the planet.

Based on the above, let us inspect reality. To begin with, what causes the current crisis in the European agricultural model that has led thousands of producers to put up demonstrations? The EU's global agrifood system is close in some respects to that of the Global South. Let us note that South and Central America share certain characteristics. Although neoliberal governments have weakened the primary sector, it still retains power and deep community roots through its contribution to food sovereignty. It has been at the base of peoples since the origin of planetary agriculture with

<sup>6</sup> Made up of Full Member Countries: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia. Mercosur Associated Countries: Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru.

<sup>7</sup> SERVINDI. "Diez razones para rechazar el tratado de libre comercio entre la Unión Europea y el Mercosur". <https://www.servindi.org/actualidad-opinion/26/03/2021/diez-razones-para-rechazar-el-tratado-de-libre-comercio-entre-la-union> 26 de enero de 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Junta de Extremadura. Consejería de Educación y Empleo. El sector primario en Europa. [https://escholarium.educarex.es/useruploads/r/c/136933/scorm\\_imported/12722923854658283862/el\\_sector\\_primario\\_en\\_europa.html](https://escholarium.educarex.es/useruploads/r/c/136933/scorm_imported/12722923854658283862/el_sector_primario_en_europa.html) 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Geografía de Europa. Actividades primarias. <http://www.ub.edu/medame/TEMA4-2.pdf> 4



universal principles and functions adapted to the great variety of contexts in continental territories, as we analysed in the Peasant Resistance.<sup>10</sup> Thus, rural agriculture on fertile soils, biodiversity and freshwater underlie the origins of all cultures and civilisations throughout history. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2008 economic crises, the expansion of agrifood oligopolies and natural disasters have triggered protests and mobilisations against food shortages and rising food prices. It cannot be overemphasised that Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine have exposed the priority of strengthening local agriculture and making it less dependent on global supply chains as a historical alternative to food security.

Returning to recent CAP reforms, EU corporate and governmental interests have almost entirely removed support for farmers in relation to production volume and the requirements of organic and environmental legislation. Although the reforms have controlled overproduction [generated by agribusiness, but attributed to the primary sector] and put less pressure on the environment, there is still a need to reduce dependence on the use of pesticides and mineral fertilisers.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, these restrictions are not binding for the agrifood sector and supermarket chains built on the production of the primary sector.<sup>12</sup> From this point of view, farmers have opposed the new 'reform of the CAP because it favours large landowners, who collect aid without putting their land into production or get more resources to implement more productive techniques (20% of farmers receive 80% of the resources, partly because of yield premiums), and that it benefits continental agricultural regions (arable crops, beef and dairy account for 66% of EAGGF Guarantee expenditure)'. The countryside faces another problem: the lack of interest among young people is putting pressure on farmers to replace them with immigrants, who are assigned the hardest tasks in precarious working conditions.

La Via Campesina has therefore denounced the agrifood sector, conceived by capital as a miraculous solution to climate change and the end of pesticides. On the contrary, transgenic plants are agroindustrial products and an environmental disaster, a false solution that only aims to enrich a few multinationals! The standardisation of plants alters the geomorphological conditions of the soil through adaptations contrary to the laws of nature but akin to the establishment of monocultures thirsty for the essential chemical inputs of industrial agriculture. In short, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are the antipodes of rural agriculture. In fact, the peasant sector is entirely opposed to GMOs for human consumption, *a false solution that only aims to enrich a few multinationals!*<sup>13</sup>

Ultimately, the EU's strict legislation since 2001 on the regulation of plants processed by genetic engineering or DNA technologies has begun to give way despite mobilisations by farmers, environmental organisations and citizens' groups aware of the irreplaceable benefits of agroecological agriculture in permanent adaptation to global warming. The European Commission's legislative reversal has proved disastrous, challenging the age-old rights of GM-free rural agriculture. In this respect, Via Campesina in the EU stands for food sovereignty. Furthermore, it advocates that new genetically-modified foods should be regulated appropriately and labelled under the precautionary principle. Accordingly, the European Via Campesina urges 'decision-makers to promote and support proven solutions for sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture under agroecological and organic farming practices, and to protect the freedom of breeders to operate without being restricted by the broad scope of patents on seeds produced with new GMOs'.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Nubia Barrera Silva. "Ethnic-Peasant Resistance in South America and Mesoamerica to the 4.0 Agriculture of Catastrophe Capitalism". The Jus Semper Global Alliance <https://jussemper.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/NubiaBarrera-EthnicFarmingResistanceVSAgribusiness.pdf>. January 2021.

<sup>11</sup> European Environment Agency. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/es/articles/la-agricultura-en-europa-como> 11 mayo 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Geografía de Europa. 4.2. Actividades primarias. <http://www.ub.edu/medame/TEMA4-2.pdf> 4

<sup>13</sup> Vía Campesina. "Europa: Firma la petición para los nuevos alimentos transgénicos estén estrictamente regulados y etiquetados". <https://viacampesina.org/es/europa-firma-la-peticion-para-que-los-nuevos-alimentos-transgenicos-estén-estrictamente-regulados-y-etiquetados/> 22 octubre 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Vía Campesina. Europa,

In contrast, the European Commission's proposal eliminates the traceability of GMOs resulting from 'new genomic techniques'. Eliminating labelling requirements intentionally suppresses traceability and prevents verification of the application of the recommended regulations, showing its true interests on the side of the corporate seed industry. It thus doubles down on a double standard: when it suits its interests, it claims that patented GMOs are indistinguishable from plants derived from traditional, non-patentable selections. And when it is not, they fire an arsenal of techniques to identify and prosecute patented genes under any patent infringement.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, this agribusiness takeover of seeds seriously threatens farmers' seed autonomy, agricultural biodiversity, the protection of nature, the environment, free choice and food security.

## Economic contradictions between the primary sector and food intermediary hypermarkets

We cannot confuse the responsibility of the agricultural-livestock sector with the oligopoly of large supermarket chains through the declaration of intent of the 2030 Agenda. The primary sector corresponds to organic agriculture, which cannot avoid the precarious employment of migrant workers.<sup>16</sup> In Spain, it is taxed at a higher rate than the agrifood sector - which is very adept at evading tax responsibilities - and is at a disadvantage in the face of mega-farms owned by a vulture fund run from Luxembourg with a salaried workforce. Also, it allows itself to establish legal-administrative centres with information systems and databases and lobbies with government officials on a large scale in decision-making centres on the European continent and on a global scale. As we can see, it builds controversial legal frameworks that circumvent environmental requirements. It exploits its workers and introduces low prices for consumers at the cost of over-exploitation of primary producers. In addition, it transfers ecological fractures and rising emissions to society and nature. This represents an oligopolistic arsenal of destruction against small and medium agricultural owners who pollute less despite the high prices of farming inputs, digital technologies, technical assistance, etc. Let us look at the following prices per unit of origin and destination. "This is one of the major problems".

The primary sector has long been subject to dangerous economic shocks attributed to over-exploitation by both corporations and supermarket chains. At the same time, they have to sell their produce at rock-bottom prices, with no government enforcement of the European Food Chain Act. Oligopolistic competition pushes low-wage contracts, benefiting the first link in the supply chain. Spain's five largest supermarket chains—Mercadona, Carrefour, Lidl, DIA, and Eroski—account for nearly 50% of sales. This comparative advantage unleashes enormous bargaining power,

Table 1. Retail mark-up margin

|          | Source price | Destination price | Increase |
|----------|--------------|-------------------|----------|
| Lemon    | 0.20 €       | 1,96 €            | 880 %    |
| Banana   | 0,27 €       | 2,25 €            | 733 %    |
| Potato   | 0,32 €       | 1,83 €            | 472 %    |
| Garlic   | 1,18€        | 6.56 €            | 456%     |
| Cabbage  | 0,34 €       | 1.82 €            | 435%     |
| Broccoli | 0,54 €       | 2,85 €            | 428%     |
| Orange   | 0,39 €       | 2,05 €            | 426%     |

Fuente: Julen Bolhain. "Cuota de mercado de las grandes cadenas de supermercados en España en 2023"

<sup>15</sup> Vía Campesina. "La propuesta de la Comisión Europea sobre los nuevos OGM favorece la biopiratería sobre los derechos de agricultorxs y ciudadanxs". <https://viacampesina.org/es/la-propuesta-de-la-comision-europea-sobre-los-nuevos-ogm-favorece-la-biopirateria-sobre-los-derechos-de-agricultorxs-y-ciudadanxs/> 10 julio 2023.

<sup>16</sup> "The modernisation of the primary sector is not without negative effects, as the overuse of pesticides, chemical fertilisers and animal feed have contributed to environmental degradation and have given rise to diseases such as BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). In response to these problems, agricultural products with designation of origin have emerged, including those related to organic farming, which avoid the use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers'. In: Geografía de Europa. Actividades primarias. <http://www.ub.edu/medame/TEMA4-2.pdf> 3.

forcing purchase prices down. This strategy allows them to increase their profit margins. For this reason, 'The supermarket chain Mercadona led the Spanish market in 2023 with a market share of 27.6%, which stands out against its next competitors, Carrefour and Lidl. The Spanish subsidiary of the German company, which achieved a market share of just over 6%, consolidated the position that had been held by the Día Group until 2019'.<sup>17</sup>

## France: Contrast between livestock breeders in the primary sector and the agrifood sector

Net profits derived from large processors' sales of dairy products increased by 61% between 2018 and 2021 (from €523 million to €842 million). However, dairy farmers remain below the minimum hourly wage, financed mainly by public subsidies. The combined effect of two causes can explain the unequal distribution of value and monetary benefits: first, a physical and economic disconnect between milk as a raw material produced by farmers, and second, the final product sold to both consumers and the agrifood industry: cheese 44%, butter 24%, cream and skimmed milk 11%; standardised whole and semi-whole milk, 11%; yoghurt and fresh desserts, 9%, whole milk powder and semi-whole milk 1%. Dairy industries operate around three functions: (1) They centralise the flows disseminated in livestock farms. (2) They homogenise the diversity of milk collected on a large scale. (3) They break down the standardised raw material into intermediate ingredients (milk and cream) and derivative products (milk powder, whey, etc.), which are then reassembled to manufacture a wide variety of dairy products at optimal costs. Consequently, from homogenised and standardised raw material, the major dairy manufacturers have created many product brands that have captured market shares that reduce the risk of competition. In these segments, brand strength and advertising are often more decisive than the character of the original product. From this point of view, the diversity of products in mass distribution is due more to the profusion of brands than to the agricultural raw material.<sup>18</sup>

Between 2018 and 2021, the net profits of major retail brands doubled through dairy sales, from €74 million in 2018 to €145 million in 2021. Thus, major agrifoods achieved net profits through dairy processing with increases of 55%, from €449 million in 2018 to €697 million in 2021. In contrast, breeders earned between €22,400 and €33,000 gross annually for 58 weekly work hours. This equates to a wage below the minimum hourly wage (0.7 and 0.9 between 2018 and 2021). This amount was stable from 2011 to 2021, in the order of 0.6 to 0.9 SMIC<sup>19</sup> per hour worked. At the same time, the number of dairy cow farms continues to fall with a recent acceleration: where there were 107,000 dairy farms in 2011, the figure dropped to 74,000 in 2020 and 71,000 in 2021. Thus, a 6-way split has been incorporated since 1983, when there were 427,000 dairy farms.<sup>20</sup>

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) accounted for 97% of the dairy sector in 2021. Medium-sized companies and large companies (the latter employing more than 5,000 salaried workers), 80% of the total in this segment, accounted for 93% of the sector's turnover and 97% of cumulative profits. In this context, farmers have little bargaining power and are forced to intensify production to compensate for low milk prices. This means that 42% of dairy farms are heavily over-indebted and have no cash flow, with the aggravating factor of many fixed assets on the farm (from 140,000 euros in 2000 to 330,000 euros in 2020) and a significant number of working hours. Farmers thus represent the

<sup>17</sup> Statista. "Cuota de mercado de las grandes cadenas de supermercados en España en 2023". <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/540894/porcentaje-de-ventas-de-los-grandes-supermercados-en-espana/>. 12 marzo 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Etienne Elyne, Thomas Uthayakumar, Christophe Alliot, Maylis Labusquière, *Filière laitière: mieux partager la valeur pour assurer un élevage durable en France*. (Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme, 2023), trad. Nubia Barrera Silva, 4, 10-12.

<sup>19</sup> The acronym SMIC stands for Minimum Interprofessional Wage. It is the legal minimum wage that employers must pay their employees in France. The SMIC is updated regularly and varies according to region and job category.

<sup>20</sup> Etienne Elyne et al. "Filière...", 6.

adjustment variable in the dairy value chains after the price and margins that each intermediary actor wishes to generate have been fixed. This asymmetry is reinforced by the prevailing lack of transparency regarding the value of milk, partly in traditional dairy products for mass consumption but also partly in industrial raw materials (dairy products can depend on world markets against a background of international competition).<sup>21</sup>

In short, cattle breeders are the big losers from the milk price increase. The pre-tax price has increased by 51%, i.e. by 34% over the same period, beyond inflation; the margin of the large-scale distribution link has increased by 188%; the margin of the processing link has increased by 64%, and the margin of the livestock farmers' link has decreased by 4%. This mechanism, therefore, results from the economic and physical disconnection, which has allowed the valorisation of packaged milk through consumer marketing and advertising without increasing the price paid to farmers (or minor in the case of specific approaches). It also reflects the asymmetry of power within the chain.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, between 2011 and 2021, the subsidy portion of livestock income averaged 84%, ranging from 65% to 100% of revenue. It has also served as a buffer for years when production costs have exceeded revenues from milk sales, as in 2015 and 2016, years of a terrible dairy crisis. As for 'the dairy sector, there is no strength in numbers: 71,000 dairy farms produce 24 billion litres of milk, 3 agrifood companies account for almost 70% of milk and 8 major distributors sell 98% of the milk produced in France'. The precariousness of the livestock sector is also reflected in these figures: 'In 2020, 53% of lowland farms used maize/soybean as the main feed for cows, compared to 42% in 2000. In November 2023, almost half of dairy cows are in low grass systems: 10% have no access to grazing, 13% consume mainly maize and 21% consume maize heavily. The reduction of the cattle herd speeds up considerably (-1% per year between 2016 and 2019, -2% per year between 2019 and 2021 and a decline of more than -2% in 2022), giving way to larger intensive farms.'<sup>23</sup>

## Nature-based European Green Deal Strategies Towards 2050

Global agrifood capitalism has irreversibly fractured ice-free land by more than 70%. In this century, native terrestrial species have declined, with up to one billion at risk of extinction. This is generally attributed to habitat loss, demand for food, raw materials and urbanisation. The Commission 'recognises that the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of habitats and ecosystems is the most effective way to protect biodiversity'. Of the objectives, we highlight how the new strategy ignores the commitment to identify, eliminate or modify perverse subsidies on biodiversity, such as some of those granted to agricultural and fisheries activity. However, it is framed by the principles of green capitalism without considering the planet's biophysical limits. This approach perpetuates the logic of unlimited economic growth as an unquestionable dogma.<sup>24</sup>

In the conclusion under the heading 'Assessment of the implementation of the European Biodiversity Strategy 2020', the EU has failed to halt the decline of protected species and habitat types; pressures to use land and water in agriculture and forestry sectors persist. Similarly, the network of protected areas remains incomplete, while the marine environment has also failed to deliver investment in nature inside and outside protected areas. If this component is not corrected, erosion will intensify with definite fractures in the soil ecology and thus affect human health with increased droughts

<sup>21</sup> Etienne Elyne et al. *Filière...*, 17,19.

<sup>22</sup> Etienne Elyne, et al. *"Filière ..."*, 18, 20-21.

<sup>23</sup> Etienne Elyne, et al. *"Filière ..."*, 6-7,24.

<sup>24</sup> García María, Jaume Grau, Carolina Martín, Jesús Martín y Theo Oberhuber. *Luces y sombras de la Estrategia europea de Biodiversidad 2030*. (España: Ecologistas en Acción, 2020) <https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/informe-luces-y-sombras-biodiversidad.pdf> ISBN 978-84-120139-9-3, 10.



and floods. On the other hand, by promoting sustainable forest management under financial incentives to forest owners and managers, the EC aims to increase the size and biodiversity of forests through the planting of 3 billion new trees in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. For Ecologistas en Acción, although this strategy is in line with ecological principles, it confuses 'forest' with 'forest plantation' and does not guarantee the functionality of ecosystems.<sup>25</sup>

### Deforestation and the leather of the luxury car industry. Global North<sup>26</sup>

Let us now look at the double standards of the transnationals of the Global North - Europe and the USA - under the deforestation of millions of hectares in the Brazilian Amazon, a geographical segment of Pan-Amazonia, a macrosystem interrelated with the rest of the Earth's natural heritage. We clarify that green capitalism and carbon emissions have no geographical boundaries, which is why it should be included in the framework of the EGD strategies. The reduction of GHG emissions should also be programmed from this Amazonian macrosystem within the energy transition policies. The ENCO (European Network of Corporate Observatories) report states that when European transnationals face criticism for their activities abroad, they immediately shift the blame to the host governments; they argue that they are merely implementing approved projects according to their rules. In practice, 'large European and North American companies influence national governments and pressure them to approve policies favourable to their business interests, through lobbying, corruption or the use of investment protection mechanisms'.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the above, we present a synthesis of the research of the International Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) of the U.S., carried out in the Apyterewa Indigenous Reserve of the Amazonian State of Pará, a territory of 800,000 ha. By ancestral tradition, it subsists on the hunting of deer and wild boar. Today, the territory is ruined by fire and logging, and only charred stumps remain.<sup>28</sup>

*Amazonian livestock industry and value chains: Huge growth rates in butcheries and tanneries have emerged in deforested areas. Criminals destroy more than 2,000 ha of forest per day. An indigenous woman says, that there is only forest left here around the village. Everything else has been cut down. Mafia traders drive entire villages off their land, where the rule of law is surrendered. Only the law of the jungle applies.*

*Organised crime from the Global North: Cattle are constantly moved from one farm to another before reaching the slaughterhouse. This strategy makes it very difficult to link the livestock areas resulting from illegal deforestation with the slaughterhouse. This is called cattle laundering, and it works like money laundering. The traces of illegal transactions are covered up. In essence, a cow raised on illegally deforested land is sold to a Hacienda outside that area. The ranch then sells the animal legally to international corporations in charge of the products derived*

<sup>25</sup> García María et al. "Luces y sombras...", 9, 18

<sup>26</sup> Methodology: Alexander Bismark, director of the International Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) in the USA, and his team leader used state-of-the-art tracking methods and techniques. They collected enormous amounts of data, digital images, photographic analyses, statistical evaluations, and documents from local authorities and confidential documents from the Marabá Prosecutor's Office. Additionally, economic databases, aerial photographs and hidden footage. They shared information about the gigantic investigation of the Brazilian prosecutor Igor Spinola. From space and with precision, they counted the number of cows and the forms of bovine transport. Using geographical coordinates, they located the farms. They followed the tracks until they discovered the names and details of the people to whom they illegally sold the cattle and established links to German manufacturers. At the headquarters of JGB, LEAR, and other companies, environmental activists engage in sensitive conversations through hidden filming. In: Jan-Philippv Scholz, Johannes Meier, Annkathrin Weis. Cuero ilegal - Cómo la industria automotriz amenaza la selva tropical | DW Documental. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnnwFR75VdM&t=127s>

<sup>27</sup> Observatoire des multinationales, Amis de la Terre France, CETIM, Transnational Institute (TNI) y Observatorio de Multinationales en América Latina (OMAL). "El vínculo entre la UE y la impunidad empresarial". <https://www.tni.org/es/publicaci%C3%B3n/el-vinculo-entre-la-ue-y-la-impunidad-empresarial>. Octubre de 2018, 5

<sup>28</sup> Jan-Philippv Scholz, Johannes Meier, Annkathrin Weis. "Cuero ilegal - Cómo la industria automotriz amenaza la selva tropical" DW Documental. 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnnwFR75VdM&t=127s> 42:41.

*from the animals, be it meat, milk or leather, that reach the world market. And so, at the end of the chain, consumers in Germany also unintentionally contribute to deforestation in the Amazon.*

*JGB and LEARS: Animals are sold to processing corporations at specific transshipment points. Cattle raised illegally on the Apyterewa reserve end up as fresh meat and their hides are transported around the world through international supply chains. JGB's processing capacity reaches 30,000 head of cattle per day into fresh meat and 90% of the hides go to the automotive industry, shoe and furniture factories. The illegal leather sector supplies the demand and adapts to all needs. The JBS slaughterhouse in Tucumá is one of dozens of locations in the Amazon. The family of a middleman stated: the tanning of the hides is only done at the slaughterhouse and then sent to Marabá. Exclusive hidden camera footage reveals the interview between environmental activists and top management of JGB: Today these Europeans always talk about trees, trees, trees, trees, in Germany, France, Norway, they all say, my God, we have to save the Amazon rainforest! In the end they only care about their own economic interests.*

*Connections between illegal deforestation and the international automotive industry: Official US import data has confirmed that JBS leather products are shipped from Brazil in large quantities through the port of Houston, Texas. In 2023, the products were worth tens of millions of dollars and almost all of the animal skins ended up at LEAR. LEAR in turn sells the leather seats worldwide. German car companies are not accountable for environmental crimes in their supply chains. The leather used in German luxury cars is stamped with the buzzword sustainability. They also make huge profits from the extraction of timber, gold, diamonds and, above all, from the illegal occupation of land used for cattle grazing. Every year, Brazil exports around 500,000 tonnes of cattle leather, almost half of which goes to the international car industry. To equip automobiles, hides from 50-60 million head of cattle per year are needed (Source: DUH, Earthsight, Grand View Research).<sup>29</sup>*

## The double standard: Supply Chain Law without deforestation in the EU

*'The real criminals are not the ones acting in the Amazon. The pressure and the money often come from our countries.'*  
Alexander Bismark<sup>30</sup>

According to the database provided by Alexander Bismark, in Germany, since 2023, the Supply Chain Diligence Act has been inoperative. However, the Federal Office of Economics and Export Control has extensive control powers. After checking through file consultations and inspection of companies, it did not impose a single sanction in its first year of existence. Indigenous communities cannot go to court because the law does not include civil liability. Thus, the weak legal system prevents direct claims for compensation. In addition, business lobbies obtain significant concessions from legislators, for example, for certification of the impeccable origin of leather, while the rest of the supply chain remains in the dark. The Deforestation-Free Supply Chains Act is also subverted by corporate lobbies by placing profits at the expense of human rights, as is the case at some major car supplier LEAR's headquarters in the southern United States.

BMW is the largest exporter of automobiles in the USA, and 60% of this production equates to more than 400,000 vehicles sold abroad annually. The assembly line produces 1,500 luxury cars a day, also for the German market, and

<sup>29</sup> Source: Jan-Philippv Scholz, Johannes Meier, Annkathrin Weis. "Cuero ilegal - Cómo la industria automotriz amenaza la selva tropical" DW Documental. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cnnwfr75VdM&t=127s>

<sup>30</sup> Jan-Philippv Scholz et al. "Cuero ilegal..."

many of the vehicles have an exclusive leather interior in the door panel, steering wheel and seats. For its part, LEAR supplies leather seats on a large scale to BMW, Mercedes and Volkswagen factories worldwide. In short, illegal products travel through chains of exploitation that pass through animal processing companies and suppliers to major car brands. In the end, the driver in Germany unwittingly shares responsibility for the illegal destruction of the last virgin forests.

In conclusion, the indigenous leader Benatoa of the Wenatoa tribe states: For us Parakaná, the forest is our life, our mother (...) But if this destruction continues, it will disappear soon and forever. There will no longer be the clean air that we need to breathe, not only for us here in the forest but also for the whites and all the people of the world. Do people who buy cattle from here think what they are causing with that? These people are also complicit in the destruction of our forests in Apyterewa. But who are the invaders that are destroying the indigenous forest? Here, with their cattle, they actually work for international corporations today. The laws that the whites make don't seem to work!<sup>31</sup>

## Projections and geopolitics of the energy transition

According to Antonio Turiel, the world produces 108 tonnes of lithium annually. If we were to use the entire production only for electric car batteries, excluding the production of lubricating greases, mobile phones, laptops, tablets, other portable electronic devices, and ceramic glass, we could produce 8 million electric cars per year. There are currently 1.446 million cars in circulation in the world. Replacing them with electric vehicles would take 180 years  $(1,446,000,000 \div 8,000,000,000 = 180.75)$ .<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the demand for critical materials for electric cars will increase through limitations on access to certain elements necessary for batteries (lithium, cobalt, nickel). Other limitations are also foreseen in the manufacture of steel alloys that may require chromium or molybdenum and in the manufacture of some electronic equipment. By element, those at greatest risk of future supply are: tellurium, silver, cadmium, cobalt, copper, gallium, indium, lithium, manganese, nickel, tin and zinc.<sup>33</sup>

Wind energy, photovoltaic, solar thermoelectric, biomass or electric cars do not emit CO<sub>2</sub> (or have neutral emissions, as is the case with biomass). However, many materials are involved in their construction. For example, *to produce 1 gigawatt (GW) of electrical power, which is the equivalent of what a natural gas thermal power plant could supply, 200 wind turbines of 5 megawatts (MW) or 1000 wind turbines of 1 MW are needed. This implies using about 160,000 tonnes of steel, 2,000 tonnes of copper, 780 tonnes of aluminium, 110 tonnes of nickel, 85 tonnes of neodymium and 7 tonnes of dysprosium for their manufacture.* On the other hand, the thermal power plant would have required, by weight, *about 25 times less metal than the wind power plant.* Indeed, the problem lies more in the variety of materials than in the quantity, i.e., the new technologies practically use the entire periodic table of elements. And many of them are scarce in nature or controlled by just a few countries. This is the case of China, which exceeds 80%, and in 2022, limited exports to 24,000 tonnes compared to foreign demand of 55-60,000 tonnes, which is a problem for the West as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

In Perez, unlike the geographical distribution of cobalt, lithium and nickel, the extraction of other vital elements (this does not include the U.S. due to lack of data) is concentrated in China: 81% of rare earth extraction, 67% of tellurium

<sup>31</sup> Jan-Philipp Scholz et al. "Cuero ilegal..."

<sup>32</sup> Marcó del Pont, Alejandro. "Transición energética y los acordes del ecofascismo". <https://eltabanoeconomista.wordpress.com/2024/04/21/transicion-energetica-y-los-acordes-del-ecofascismo/> 21 abril 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Valero, Alicia. "Límites minerales de la transición energética". Instituto CIRCE. Universidad de Zaragoza. <https://coordinadraelrincon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/L%C3%ADmites-minerales-de-la-transici%C3%B3n-energ%C3%A9tica.pdf> 2,10

<sup>34</sup> Valero Alicia, 2

and more than 50% of global aluminium in 2017.<sup>35</sup> Materials processing operations reached 35% of nickel, 65% of cobalt, 87% of rare earths and 58% of lithium. 'In 2017, the price of cobalt doubled in less than a year, and today, it has become one of the most critical elements in the automotive sector because of the electric vehicle. In twenty years, the production of cobalt and lithium has increased fivefold and eightfold, respectively.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, China is growing stronger with new lithium supply centres in Africa and is a leader in electric car battery manufacturing. Lithium extracted from a Chinese project in Zimbabwe arrived last June at the Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt facility on China's east coast.

Meanwhile, the Chengxin Lithium Group's lithium production project is progressing. Chinese companies Ganfeng Lithium Group, Contemporary Amperex Technology and Sichuan Yahua Industrial Group are investing in Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, respectively. The Moroccan government announced a preliminary agreement with the Chinese company Gotion High-Tech to construct the first battery factory for electric vehicles with a capacity of 100 gigawatts per year. Similarly, Africa's new scenarios add to forecasts that global lithium feedstock supplies will rise by 35% during 2024, with half of this increase coming from greenfield projects. Under these forecasts, some nations such as Zimbabwe and Namibia have taken action to ensure that revenues created by lithium exports stay in their territories and thus boost the construction of processing or refining plants.<sup>37</sup>

## A light at the end of the tunnel in the Sahel Strip

Niger supplies 4.7% of the world's uranium production, behind Kazakhstan with 45.2%. Australia, Namibia and Canada each supply 10% of world production. Uzbekistan supplies 7 % and Russia 5 %. The proportion of Niger's uranium supplied to the EU and France is much higher. Niger is the second largest supplier to the EU and supplies a quarter of the uranium used in nuclear power plants. In the case of France, Niger supplies 20 per cent of its uranium consumption, behind Kazakhstan, which supplies 27 per cent.<sup>38</sup> The collective West is facing the transition from imperialism to a multipolar world with new revolutionary currents in overseas territories. After the coup d'état in June 2023, 'Niger's military junta announced the immediate suspension of uranium and gold exports to France. This decision raised the alarm in France, which generates about 70 % of its electricity from atomic energy. Much of the uranium used as fuel for the 56 nuclear reactors that power 18 French power plants comes from the African nation.'<sup>39</sup> As a result, France, a unipolar country, faced the loss of influence in the Sahel region extended to New Caledonia.

*As we can see, we are facing new horizons to put an end to the plundering of strategic minerals, the exploitation of children in mines, the absence of health services, electricity, food sovereignty in circumstances of extreme poverty. It is about opening up new possibilities for development with energy and financial capacities with the support of other leading partner countries in the multipolar world. In short, Africa is moving forward with policies to retain surpluses, multiply and rechannel capacities towards industrialisation and internal development. It is the beginning of a long road to independence, under the new opportunities of the emerging multipolar world.*

<sup>35</sup> Alfons Pérez, *Pactos Verdes en tiempos de pandemias. El futuro se disputa ahora*. (Barcelona: Icaria editorial en Acción). ISBN: 978-84-120139-6-2. 65

<sup>36</sup> Valero Alicia,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Bloomberg: "China lidera la carrera por el litio en África". <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/472092-china-inversiones-africa-suministro-litio> 3 julio 2023. Artículo traducido por RT

<sup>38</sup> Bouamama Said. "Uranium: quand le Niger recadre Orano". <https://investigaction.net/uranium-quand-le-niger-recadre-orano/> 27 juin 2024.

<sup>39</sup> RT. Reportan que Níger suspendió la exportación de uranio y oro a Francia. <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/475009-reportan-niger-suspendio-exportacion-uranio>. 31 julio 2023.



## Energy crisis, arms production and wars

With regard to the European security manoeuvre of 2003 on strategic energy, the security of the military sector, access, flow and transport to residences, industry and territory, over the last thirty years, two-thirds of military missions have been dependent on fossil fuels. According to the Commission's 2020 report, out of 30 minerals required, 98% of rare earths came from China. It also identified nine inescapable technologies for the renewable energy, electric mobility, defence and aerospace sectors. The EU is shifting global conflicts into space (satellites orbiting the Earth). Thus, as the use of strategic minerals increases, so do environmental problems and the destruction of habitats to the point of depletion. In the absence of strategic resources in continental Europe, the countries of the North are expected to continue to put pressure on the global South with more trade agreements and risks, human rights abuses and the never-ending spate of assassinations of environmental defenders in mining areas.<sup>40</sup>

As can be seen, we know very little about the real interests of Operation Atalanta. The deployment of military vessels has been directed at protecting fossil fuel distribution routes off the coast of Somalia, the Strait of Hormuz, the northern Mediterranean from Libya to Algeria, on the Atlantic coast and in Africa. The EU maintains seven military operations in the Strait of Hormuz on sea and land routes dedicated to protecting infrastructures in the Strait of Hormuz. The operations close to the Libyan coast are not aimed at containing migration to Europe but rather at controlling the maritime transport of so-called illegal oil exports to other countries. This is the same script as the intervention mission in Iraq, which aimed to ensure the control and distribution of fossil resources, as shown by the declassification of documents in England. This debate was to resolve how the oil wells and exports were to be distributed among the oil companies. On the other hand, the state assumes investments in military operations without reverting to energy production to which they should be allocated. For example, in 2021 alone, Italy spent 797 million euros on access, surveillance or transport, Spain 274 million euros and Germany 161 million euros. For Alfons Pérez, this is a record moment for world defence spending, with a budget of 1.34 trillion dollars in 2023 for NATO members, without this meaning the opening of new mines to feed the war industry.<sup>41</sup>

In the above context, according to Ho-Chih Lin et al., the arms industry is a major beneficiary of NATO's goals, multiplying its revenues, profits and stock prices. Moreover, it will boost arms exports to non-NATO countries once the war in Ukraine is over and plans to export arms to 40 countries that are the most vulnerable from a climatic point of view.<sup>42</sup> As we can see, the outlook is bleak for the planet; the arms business will increase conflicts in the countries most affected by the loss of monetary income, fertile land, internal migrations, bloody dictatorships in dispute for power and even the destabilisation of entire countries under scorching temperatures at the worst moment in the anthropogenic history of the planet.

Consequently, the proposed IPCC target is ignored and none of the NATO members nor the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan have committed to real reductions. Among the most relevant calculations: NATO's average annual military carbon footprint is 205 million tCO<sub>2</sub>-eq, higher than the total annual GHG emissions of many individual countries. For European NATO members, the additional one trillion euro effort needed to reach the target of 2% of GDP in military spending is equivalent to the one

<sup>40</sup> La Casa Encendida. "Transición energética sin crisis ecosocial". Vídeo de YouTube, 46'35-55'31 Publicado el 26 de abril de 2022. Tica Font 18'50 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYTA8H7wKo&t=3378s>

<sup>41</sup> Alfons Pérez. "¿Quién lidera la ..."? 12

<sup>42</sup> Ho-Chih Lin, Lin, H.C., Buxton, N., Akkerman, M., Burton, D., de Vries, W. *El clima bajo fuego cruzado*. Transnational Institute, <https://centredelas.org/publicacions/climatecrossfire/?lang=es>. Octubre de 2023, 6,10,17.

trillion euros required by the EGD. Therefore, the projected increase in military budgets will significantly increase military GHG emissions and divert funds away from climate action.<sup>43</sup> As the facts are now becoming clear, the outlook for the Earth is bleak: the arms business will increase conflicts in the most vulnerable countries of the global South, plunging entire countries into internal wars, destabilising them under scorching temperatures, at the worst time in the planet's anthropogenic history.

## The European Union with no emission reductions and the AMOC stream

Under climate neutrality, European legislation has committed itself to reducing net GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels by 2030, a legal obligation.<sup>44</sup> In the face of this policy, the process shows devastating events: intensification of climate risks, heat waves and prolonged droughts, torrential rainfall leading to storms and flooding from rain, river and sea level rise and coastal flooding. Impacts can cascade from one system or region to another, even to the outside world, and can cause systemic problems, affecting social groups and entire societies.<sup>45</sup> Let's look at some of the effects of climate on risk cascades:

Table 2. Cascading climate risks

| Non-climatic risk factors | Cascading climate risks. Examples   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Food                      | Food production. Especially in southern European countries, low-lying coastal regions and the outermost regions of the EU are particularly affected by a series of climate risks in Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vatican City, Cyprus, Croatia, Slovenia and Spain. This affects rural and coastal livelihoods, land use, the health of socially vulnerable populations and the economy in general. This region is particularly affected by heat and prolonged droughts affecting agricultural production, outdoor work, summer tourism, and fires.  |
| Health                    | Health and human well-being. There is a risk that workers' labour productivity, access to health care needs and resources, and thus, the whole economy will be affected. We must be better prepared to combat epidemics of vector and water-borne diseases associated with extreme weather conditions in Europe in the face of more frequent and intense heat waves. This warming has more marked effects on older population groups most exposed to heat stress, particularly in the south and centre-west of the EU.  |
| Ecosystems                | Land, freshwater and marine-related risks on food production and security, human and animal health, infrastructure, land use and the economy. This group represents a critical area for action due to the increased number of 'urgent need for action' risks. Climate change is expanding large forest fires, storms, droughts and insect epidemics, causing widespread tree mortality in several European countries. The effects have reduced carbon sinks and even turned some forest areas into sources of CO <sub>2</sub> with negative impacts on biodiversity, water regulation and other ecosystem services. |
| Infrastructures           | Energy, water and transport infrastructures can affect virtually every aspect of society, from human health to the economy to the financial system. Infrastructure assets and infrastructure networks are often interconnected, so a failure at one point in the network can also cascade to other regions and countries.   |
| Economy and Finance       | Regions with high levels of unemployment, poverty, emigration and population ageing are less able to adapt to the effects of climate change. These regions are concentrated in Central and Eastern Europe and parts of Southern Europe. Many climate effects may spill over into other domains that may be deprived of or excluded from access to financial resources.  |

Source: Data extracted from Agence européenne pour l'environnement. "Évaluation européenne des risques climatiques. 8-10,11,13,15.

Ibidem.

<sup>44</sup> Pacto Verde Europeo. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/green-deal/#:~:text=Tras%20el%20acuerdo%20provisional%20alcanzado,El%20Reglamento%20est%C3%A1%20en%20vigor>

<sup>45</sup> European Environment Agency. "Évaluation européenne des risques climatiques". Rapport 01/2024 de l'AEE, (Copenhague: Agence européenne pour l'environnement), <https://www.eea.europa.eu/fr/publications/evaluation-europeenne-des-risques-climatiques-synthese>, 8

Building on the box above, the Agence Européenne pour l'Environnement's report calls not only for improving the implementation of many existing policies but also urges the EU to be more coherent in addressing risks to ecosystems with respect to their multiple services, e.g. preserving and restoring the resilience of ecosystems, especially the protection and minimisation of anthropogenic pressures, in particular on marine and coastal ecosystems.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, to remedy the most alarming climate risks, European scientists have issued early warnings of a possible collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) in 2030. According to the University of Copenhagen, the collapse of the AMOC would begin anytime between 2025 and 2095. This projection coincides with the hypothesis of the University of Utrecht and those of physicist Antonio Turiel, who even claims that we could already be in the preliminary stages.<sup>47</sup>

*The AMOC water current circulates at the surface from the South Atlantic to the North, and once in the polar regions, it flows down to the depths - what we call convection - and back towards the Southern Hemisphere. This descent into the abyss occurs in two zones. One is in the subpolar gyre (south of Greenland, in the Irminger and Labrador Seas), and the other is further North, in the Nordic Seas.<sup>48</sup> This means that global climate change and sea ice liquefaction are interfering with the salinity and density of the oceans and altering circular flows, causing increasingly destructive extreme weather events and sea level rise. According to various sources, the EU could be the continent most affected. At the same time, carbon-rich soils are being desertified, and millions of insects and micro-organisms per square metre are disappearing. This challenges the storage capacity of up to 200 gigatonnes of carbon, including a few disturbances of natural cycles. And, as if that were not enough, we are being given an ultimatum through the disappearance of agriculture and other changes in the wet and dry seasons in the Amazon and the disruption of the monsoons in West Africa and India. There would also be more erratic temperature fluctuations: the southern hemisphere would warm, while Europe would experience dramatic cooling, with freezing temperatures, stronger winds and less precipitation. Subtropical regions, including the entire Mediterranean region, would experience warming and desertification.*

## Conclusions

Green capitalism is incompatible with energy transition under EGD policies. It responds to unlimited expansion of production and consumption, physical scarcity of materials, ever-decreasing fossil fuels, and unchecked environmental deterioration. In this context, the worrying depletion of fresh water, an essential natural resource for extracting strategic minerals, is worsening as floods and temperatures reach record levels yearly on all continents, severely affecting human health, nature and countries' infrastructure. In addition, the policies of the EGD invigorate agro-industrial capitalism in Continental Europe through profit maximisation and increased international competitiveness under irremediable environmental damage. Therefore, in this paper, we have seen that the EGD, as defined by Alfons Pérez,<sup>49</sup> became a growth strategy consolidating the theses of green capitalism: absolute decoupling between economic growth and environmental impact, the market as a dynamiser and technology as a solution. Thus, the counterpart of the covenant was revealed by handing over NextGenerationEU funds to big business, confirming that the European transnationals should be in charge of economic recovery and decarbonisation.

<sup>46</sup> Agence européenne pour l'environnement. "Évaluation...", 16

<sup>47</sup> Especially Spanish media, social networks and specialised YouTube sites and media outlets etc. offering 'ammunition for climate deniers and climate retardationists'. In: Moreno Isabel y Eduardo Robaina. "Ni la AMOC va a colapsar esta década ni habrá una glaciación en Europa, ¿Qué se sabe realmente? <https://centredelas.org/publicacions/climatecrossfire/?lang=es>. 13 de junio 2024.

<sup>48</sup> Moreno Isabel y Eduardo Robaina. "Ni la AMOC va a colapsar..."

<sup>49</sup> Alfons Pérez. "¿Quién lidera la...", 5

We allude in this paper to the indiscriminate use of GMOs, pollutants and toxic substances in the prefabricated production of food distributed in European hypermarkets, the evasion of precautionary labelling regulations and the traceability of verification of ingredients and percentages of sugars, saturated fats and a plethora of transgenic substances, etc. In contrast, small and medium-sized professional farmers and livestock breeders are deprived of their rights and economic incentives to face oligopolistic competition in the agrifood sector to benefit big business under the CCAP's requirements, challenges and policies. And, even more, the European continental government does not demand the application of competitive regulation instruments under the 1962 CAP principle summarised in "reasonable guarantees for farmers' livelihoods."

The European and Mercosur countries' rejection of the FTA has valid arguments, not only from sectors of the peasant agricultural economies but also from hundreds of eco-environmental organisations linked to the countryside in the South of the South American continent. One thing is the interests and impositions under the table in the negotiations between imperial states and the periphery, and another between the rural producers of the two continents. Similarly, in the light of North-South food sovereignty, there is a predominance of different analyses of risks, impositions and limitations arising from the evolution of the negotiation agenda, mostly linked to public policies and the imposition of tariffs for the benefit of global agribusiness. On the other hand, neoliberalism privileges agribusiness and imposes policies of land grabbing, financial concentration, concentration of small farms, indiscriminate use of technological packages, and infringements of human rights and environmental justice. Furthermore, due to the collapse of the global climate, the gradual and planned substitution of value chains by local agriculture with agroecological practices compatible with human, plant and animal health is necessary. Finally, no FTA favours the environment, the primary sector and regional integration. Even less does it bring technology, innovation and development to peripheral countries.

As a result, corporate capitalism develops on a planetary level, overlapping contradictions between the irreversible fracturing of natural cycles under the accumulation of unlimited profits of big capital. In this fundamental contradiction, governmental regulations have reduced the food sovereignty previously vested in the agrarian-livestock sector without foreseeing the gradual and systematic deterioration of human and animal nutrition with natural products and the care of ecosystems, the conservation of fresh water and biodiversity. Thus, data from the agro-industrial sector endorse the historical decline in production volumes with worrying figures: - 2.2% of milk collected between January and June 2023, compared to the previous year. Until now, the decline in dairy herds has been compensated by an increase in milk production and a reduction in livestock numbers.<sup>50</sup> In comparison, the technological factor of agribusiness capital and state subsidies accelerate the supply of highly profitable agribusiness and low consumer prices to the detriment of the profit rate of the peasant agricultural sector.

Added to this is the conflict between European and US transnationals and the indigenous community of Apyterewa in the Brazilian Amazon. The adverse neo-colonial trajectory presents a double standard through the No Deforestation Supply Chain Act for non-compliance with the environmental standards of the EGD in the extra-territorial geography. As we have seen, a lurid international organised crime of money laundering operates. This skilful and cruel animal strategy has deforested millions of hectares under illegal occupation and dispossession of the Brazilian Amazon rainforests, with unpredictable impact on the unity of the Pan-Amazonian macro system. As we have reported, the movement of millions of animals from ranch to ranch covers up the traces of the illegal meat, milk and leather transactions of the transnationals JBS and LEARS destined for the international automobile industry of luxury cars manufactured in Germany, USA and exported to the high-income countries of the Global North. We point out that this is not the only case; the same strategy

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<sup>50</sup> Elyne Etienne, 27



ignores GHG emissions from biofuels emitted in the Global South. Although the policies of the EGD were designed for the EU, emissions are global. From this reality, we expect the EU to assume the responsibility and commitments acquired in reducing emissions in the Amazon before international organisations.

Moving on to the excessive demand for extraction of strategic minerals without foreseeing nature's finite reserves or the rapidity of the move towards climate collapse, the minerals of the energy transition are of geopolitical interest. Lithium is preferably extracted in the countries of the Lithium Triangle in the Southern Cone,<sup>51</sup> so far with fewer supply problems than cobalt from the Congo and spodumene from Australia. In addition, Europe has China as its main key partner in the supply of strategic materials and its main competitor in the dispute for global hegemony; meanwhile, the change of hegemony towards a multipolar world is advancing. The EU's hegemonic decline is also progressing along this path. Although the West collectively has the diagnosis of the ongoing collapse of unipolar hegemony, the neo-colonial and Eurocentric vision that has been entrenched for more than 200 years is resisting and intensifying the war against the Russian Federation in Ukraine. It should be noted, however, how economic and environmental conflicts, when transferred to the peripheral countries, go hand in hand with the unlimited consumption of consumer goods, the permanent replacement and disposal of small technologies, the replacement of fossil fuel cars by electric cars, etc., to the point of the extinction of the finite natural heritage.

The other tensions that have been noted in the failed energy transition are wars and the substitution of investments in emission reduction goals with arms equipment to fight in Eurasia, the Gaza Strip and those peripheral countries located in strategic geographies for the control of the Global South. However, new revolutionary currents are emerging in overseas territories through the agenda of a gradual transition to a multipolar world. In the same direction, the neo-colonial independence movements in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali have also emerged. Following the signing of the Treaty of Confederation of Sahel States, its objectives aim to cooperate and integrate the three African countries in terms of security, socio-economic and cultural development. Its decisions reinforce economic and financial cooperation,

*Whatever one may say, there is no energy transition, despite European eloquence; what predominates is the disproportionate consumption of genetically modified fossil fuels and foodstuffs.*

notably creating an investment bank and a stabilisation fund for the Sahel. Furthermore, the leaders of these countries consider that 'the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) is the only effective sub-regional grouping in the fight against terrorism'. They also called for the Confederation of Sahel

States to become a 'community free from the domination of foreign powers'.<sup>52</sup>

Whatever one may say, there is no energy transition, despite European eloquence; what predominates is the disproportionate consumption of genetically-modified fossil fuels and foodstuffs. From this point of view, we agree with Jean-Baptiste Fressoz: 'The transition discourse is above all a discourse of the "era": the era of coal, the era of steam, the era of electricity, the era of oil. It is a classic discourse of industrial promotion. It allows a new technology to be placed in the grand scheme of human history.<sup>53</sup> While the transnationals promote anti-global warming technology, even if this path were viable, it does not solve the 'core' problem of emissions reduction on its own. Therefore, the only possible solution is based on economic degrowth, care and conservation of the natural heritage and all life forms through actions

<sup>51</sup> Nubia Barrera Silva. "Lithium and the Contradictions in the Energy Transition that Devastate the Global South In Favour of the Global North". <https://jussemper.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/NubiaBarrera-LithioInSouthAmerica.pdf>. The Jus Semper Global Alliance. November 2021.

<sup>52</sup> RT. Tres países africanos crean una confederación "alejada de potencias extranjeras". <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/515211-burkina-faso-mali-niger-confederacion-sahel>. 6 de julio 2024.

<sup>53</sup> Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. "La transition énergétique n'a pas lieu, selon vous. Quel est le problème ? <https://reporterre.net/Jean-Baptiste-Fressoz-La-transition-energetique-n-a-pas-commence>. 29 janvier 2024

and policies planned by a people's state built from below. This guarantees the participatory intervention of grassroots organisations in permanent mobilisation for the common good.

In this way, the placing on the land the validity of 'living well' or 'good living' can only be achieved through the conscious actions of the people translated into fundamental transformations of the capitalist system towards ecosocialism. Finally, we fully agree with John Bellamy Foster:<sup>54</sup> 'It is now clear that, without the return of planning and environmental-state regulation of the economy in a context of degrowth/capital deaccumulation, there is no possibility of successfully addressing the current planetary emergency and guaranteeing the continuation of industrialised society and the survival of the human population'.

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<sup>54</sup> John Bellamy Foster. "Planned Degrowth: Ecosocialism and Sustainable Human Development". <https://jussemper.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/JBFoster-PlannedDegrowth.pdf> - The Jus Semper Global Alliance. September 2023.

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❖ **About the author:** Nubia Barrera Silva is an Anthropologist from the Universidad del Cauca, Business Administrator from the Universidad Externado de Colombia, Master in Environmental Management and Audits from the Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana and Master in Climate Change from the Universidad Europea del Atlántico. In her role as professor and researcher, she has approached the areas of business and corporate social responsibility, environmental education, socio-anthropology, ecology and the environment from interdisciplinary approaches. She has been an Academic Par of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation in Colombia. She has formulated and executed projects in the area of corporate social responsibility. She has been a prominent speaker on the Integral Rural Reform, the axis of the Peace Agreement in Colombia. She has promoted the defence of water in common areas, public health, food sovereignty of the ethnic and Afro-peasant sectors and the human rights of environmental leaders. She has published essays and articles on the neoliberal impact on education and the conservation of watersheds, among other issues, in indexed journals of different universities. She is currently preparing the second edition of a book.



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e-mail: [informa@jussemper.org](mailto:informa@jussemper.org)

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