



Soybeans and Power: Genetically Modified Crops, Environmental Politics, and Social Movements in Argentina (Global and Comparative Ethnography)

Pablo Lapenga

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In 1996, the Argentine government authorized the use of genetically modified (GM), herbicide-resistance soybean seeds. By the mid-2000s, GM soybeans were cultivated on more than half of the arable land in Argentina and represented one-fourth of the country's exports. While this agricultural boom has benefitted agribusiness companies and fed tax revenues, it also has a dark side: it has accelerated the deforestation of native forests, prompted the eviction of indigenous and peasant families, and spurred episodes of contamination.

In *Soybeans and Power*, Pablo Lapenga investigates the ways in which rural populations have coped with GM soybean expansion in Argentina. Based on over a decade of ethnographic research, Lapenga reveals that many communities initially resisted, yet ultimately adapted to the new agricultural technologies forced upon them by public officials. However, rather than painting the decline of the protests in an exclusively negative light, Lapenga argues that the farmers played an active role in their own demobilization, switching to tactics of negotiation and accommodation in order to maneuver the situation to their advantage. Lapenga offers a rare, on the ground glimpse into the life cycle of a social movement, from mobilization and protest to demobilization and resigned acceptance.

Through the case study of Argentina, a major player in the use and export of GM crops, *Soybeans and Power* gives voice to the communities most adversely affected by GM technology, as well as the strategies that they have enacted in order to survive.

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