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The Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture (CFS-RAI) and SDG 2 and SDG 12 in Agricultural Policies: Case Study of Ecuador

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Abstract: Global governance is a strategy to address the problems of food production and consumption, as well as to encourage responsible investments in agriculture. The FAO proposed 10 Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture (CFS-RAI) which, like the SDGs, are guidelines that guide the design of policies; however, although they are not necessarily considered, there are semantic coincidences. The objective was to analyze to what extent the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12 are being contemplated in Ecuador's agrarian policy. The semantic and content analysis of the policy was carried out, coding nodes and categories from keywords using the Nvivo program. The results show that the policy incorporates Principles 2, 8, and 7 and is aligned with SDG 2 in terms of increased productivity and income (target 2.3) linked to international markets (target 2.b, 2.c), the provision of infrastructure, research, agricultural extension, technology (target 2.a), agrobiodiversity, and traditional knowledge (target 2.5). It is related to targets 12.1, 12.2, and 12a of SDG 12. It is concluded that responsible investment in agriculture following the CFS-RAI Principles is a viable way to promote the achievement of the SDGs. The agrarian policy must be reformulated to incorporate the Principles and targets of the SDGs that are not considered but are important. The findings give insight to researchers and policymakers working on this area.

Keywords: CFS-RAI Principles; agrarian policy; sustainable development goals; Ecuador



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1. Introduction

Given the pressing need to respond to the economic, social, environmental, political, and institutional crises that the world is going through [1], and how these affect food systems, it is imminent to act globally. The FAO and other institutions [2], recognize that large investments in land purchases can have negative effects in terms of political stability, social cohesion, human rights, sustainable food production, food security or environmental protection for the recipient country. To mitigate these negative impacts, the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture (CFS-RAI) were proposed in 2014 [3] as the codes of conduct that govern these investments. These Principles contribute to identifying ways in which investments can better contribute to the development of countries, articulating efforts among all actors. They promote the legal, regulatory, and institutional changes necessary to strengthen the capacities of the State in terms of the effective implementation of policies and laws; and establish ways for investors to consider the social and environmental concerns related to their activities and the need for them to take corrective measures, if necessary, to make them sustainable.

The CFS-RAI Principles are aimed at rural areas to promote the development of agriculture and food systems. They are important guidelines for the achievement of the SDGs [4]. As with the SDGs, since the CFS-RAI Principles are not binding, the evaluation of actions regarding these global agendas and frameworks is left to the will of policy makers. The configuration of governance networks can be an alternative to solve the problems

of collective action, through the mobilization of public, private, and social actors around common objectives [5].

The formulation of the CFS-RAI Principles precedes the SDGs. As investment behavior guides, the CFS-RAI Principles are consistent with the SDGs and have become a guide for the definition of State plans, programs, and projects, as well as for their application in rural development, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs [4,6].

Regarding food systems, there are two reasons to act globally: one of an economic nature, addressing market failures due to its transnational nature and link to global problems such as emission regulations, and food production through germplasm improvement; and another refers to ethical issues and the well-being of the population, such as in the case of food crises that exceed national capacities [7].

However, on the side of private non-state actors, global agreements on food and agriculture often try to consolidate favorable scenarios that undermine the right to food [8]. Faced with this, social movements propose alternatives to generate changes in production and consumption models, prioritizing food sovereignty as a political proposal [9]. Hence the importance of addressing governance at the local and global level, considering the criteria of all those involved in agri-food systems, and considering that the agricultural sector is based on the adoption of effective public and governance policies [10], that is, in state action that tends to achieve cooperation between agents to achieve common objectives [11] based on participation.

The 2030 Agenda includes 17 goals (SDGs) to strengthen universal peace, which include economic, social, and environmental sustainability considering people and the planet as the axes of sustainable development, propose the achievement of the end of poverty and hunger, guarantee equality and dignity, and additionally protect natural resources and mitigate the effects of climate change [12].

The global nature of the SDGs leaves countries free to define their local agendas, leading to different levels of compliance and the lack of the specification of actions or policies to underpin common global problems. Given that policies are generally applied at the subnational level, the development of countries must focus on policies that are articulated with the SDGs, which requires designing appropriate solutions for each territory and economic and social context [13]. However, governments face many challenges in selecting realistic but ambitious national targets and setting appropriate policies and strategies to achieve them.

The SDGs are global, but the policies are local [12], that is, they require concerted efforts at the national and regional levels, and consequently each nation needs to build concrete food policy pathways and measures adapted to their local conditions [14]. Such policies must be consistent with relevant international norms and commitments so that they are mutually supportive to achieve strengthened and improved global economic governance [15].

CEPAL has defined as a priority the empowerment of resources for the implementation and integration of the SDGs into the national development plans and budgets of each country [16]. Ensuring the coherence of policies with the SDGs is the responsibility of the governments that support the 2030 Agenda [8]. The SDGs are for the States the main reference for development policies and programs at the national level [15,17]. Therefore, the objective is that public policies and their corresponding budget allocations are oriented by the SDGs that allow them to be managed, since their lack is a barrier to overcome gaps in financing for development and comprehensive policies for their implementation [16].

Given the broad scope of the SDGs, policymakers will need to be able to easily assess the long-term economic, social, and environmental implications of their strategies in an integrated manner [18]. Thanks to their long-term vision, they constitute support for each country on its path towards sustainable and inclusive development and in harmony with the environment through public policies and budgetary, monitoring, and evaluation instruments that allow them to be managed. Policies are an important ingredient for learning and cooperation; they are necessary to implement development projects and

increase the resilience of communities [19]. In addition, political networking is considered a key objective of local governance, which has become a development strategy to be applied in programs, whether governmental or not [14].

Domestic policy is crucial in middle-income countries in terms of how and why state actors make decisions about the implementation of certain objectives or goals while ignoring one or the other [20]. Adequate policies should be applied to support agriculture and food systems [21]. They should also concomitantly seek the development and consolidation of the models of the global, regional, and local governance of food systems.

This article aims to be a contribution to other studies that can be used by researchers and policymakers by analyzing to what extent national agrarian policies are considering the CFS-RAI Principles and the related SDGs. The related SDGs are SDG 2 and SDG 12, as they tackle the same issues as the agrarian policies, sharing their concern about food security, agricultural productivity, and the sustainability of consumption. This research is presented as a case study. Ecuador happens to be suitable for the analysis, as the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador of 2008 proposes important structural changes for the agricultural sector which had to be incorporated into the policies, plans, and programs of the State. Other countries having strategic documents to define macro agrarian policies could also be selected.

Taking Ecuador as a case study, it seeks to frame agrarian policies in the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12 through a diagnostic exercise that, in turn, serves to direct future actions so that progress continues in the responsible investment in agri-food systems as drivers of change, as well as in the eradication of hunger and malnutrition and sustainable production and consumption. Within this view, the research question is the following: to what extent are the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12 being contemplated in the current Ecuadorian agrarian policy?

The next section reviews previous research on the relationship between the SDGs and CFS-RAI Principles and Agrarian Policies. Given that the research is presented as a case study of Ecuador's agrarian policy, Section 3 on the materials and methods begins by making a description of such policy, and later describes the methodology, which consists of a semantic and context analysis focusing on identifying the gaps and coincidences of keywords between Ecuador's agrarian policy and the CFS-RAI Principles and the SDG 2 and 12. The outcomes are presented in Section 4 and discussed in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 summarizes the results and findings, formulates implications and recommendations for practice, presents suggestions for future research and acknowledges the limitations of the research.

2. Literature Review

Some studies maintain that being voluntary guidelines, the CFS-RAI Principles are likely to have little success in generating initiatives. Some arguments are that they complicate efforts to discern who bears the burden of responsibility in practice [22], that guidelines and principles alone will not address the challenges being faced [23], or that they do not offer certainty for producers who have difficulties with public and private foreign investors [24,25].

This is not the case of the SDGs, which do not establish guidelines, but goals and targets, and there is evidence of a greater commitment to compliance, as is the case of Spain [26–28], where lever policies have been implemented that are equivalent to what the UN calls “accelerators”, that is, those that address specific bottlenecks and become potential drivers of sustainable development, creating virtuous circles and compliance with several SDGs at the same time [29].

Some research has focused on specific SDGs. A study conducted in Ukraine and the Czech Republic [30], in which the best practices for the implementation of SDGs 2 and 12 were analyzed within the framework of responsible investment, concludes that, although there is no good monitoring system, the problems identified for the achievement of the SDGs are common in both countries and are specifically the gap between the goals

and the investment that is made, the unequal access of farmers to economic resources, as well as the effective use of the investment mechanisms of public–private partnerships to provide transparency. A study conducted in Sweden on the research needs of SDG 12 in high-income and low-income countries, based on a literature review and workshops with experts, suggests conducting research on the role that policy legal frameworks and legal social structures can play a role in the change towards sustainable production and consumption [31].

At the Latin American level, little specific research has been carried out on the relationship of the SDGs with agrarian policies and less with the CFS-RAI Principles. But there are some studies that deserve consideration.

Siegel and Lima (2020) examined how the SDGs had been incorporated into the domestic politics of agri-food governance in three South American countries where agriculture is a leading economic sector with significant weight in domestic politics: Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. A comparison of the three cases reveals how, despite its formally agreed norms, level of detail, and ambition, the same international framework has been considered very differently in distinct domestic political contexts [32]. Using the Uruguayan beef sector as a case study, Kanter et al., applied a methodology that makes good use of local tools and expertise to develop policy roadmaps towards 2030, aimed at transforming the national agricultural sectors in a way that is consistent with the SDGs [14].

There are also studies that note that considering the targets of the SDGs when drafting policies or social programs not always results in progress toward the achievement of the SDGs. In Bolivia, the achievement of the SDGs has difficulties; thus, SDG 1 and 2, which are directly related, despite the social programs and delivery of bonuses, have not prevented the country from reducing urban (26.1%) and rural (53.9%) poverty levels and leads hunger in Latin America, with 19% of the population mostly located in rural areas. The extractive development model transcends the food sector, in which low yields are obtained that can grow at the cost of compromising natural resources [33]. In Peru, the effects of the pandemic affected the achievement of SDGs 2 and 12, since food consumption due to reduced income and unemployment has decreased and dietary patterns have been altered, becoming less nutritious [34] and the rate of chronic childhood malnutrition is 12.9% [35].

Regarding the CFS-RAI Principles, FAO has made efforts to disseminate them and promote their application in Latin America, focusing in both state and non-state actors.

FAO and the research group GESPLAN of University Polytechnic of Madrid reached an agreement in 2016 that has been renewed every year and remains in force in 2023. The main objectives being contributing to raising awareness among non-state actors—specifically academia—of the application of the CFS-RAI Principles, as well as promoting collaborative research and dialogue between multiple stakeholders and strengthening the capacities of the Academia and the Private Sector of Latin America and the Caribbean. Within this frame, the research group GESPLAN created a network of eleven universities located in Spain, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, México, Perú, and the Dominican Republic. The network has organized seminars and workshops and has shared case studies and teaching material for undergraduate and postgraduate studies (the documentation regarding the FAO and Gesplan Agreements on CFS-RAI Principles is consolidated in <https://www.principiosiaruniversidad.com/>, accessed on 14 October 2023). As a result, a few masters and PhD theses on responsible investment in agriculture have been carried out and some papers regarding local case studies have been published. Two examples are the paper on the Integration of the Principles of Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems from the Local Action Groups, in Perú [4]; the paper on the social impact of the CFS-RAI Principles in Ecuador [36].

Additionally, the FAO (2020) launched a Handbook on Responsible Investment in Agriculture, addressed to parliamentarians and parliamentary advisors [37], as they are considered “change agents”. The handbook includes guidance notes, examples of good practices and practical indications, as well as examples of laws that are relevant for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems. It includes examples of the laws of

Perú, Colombia, and Chile, indicating their impact and potential contribution to the SDGs. The case studies of México, Perú, and Argentina of real agricultural investments are also included [37].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Description of Ecuador's Agrarian Policy 2017–2025

The case study was carried out in Ecuador, where the Constitution of the Republic (2008) proposes a productive model that prioritizes the reproduction of life in combination with solidarity, complementarity, and social justice [38]. Substantial changes are proposed in the modes of production, with a new endogenous strategy for the accumulation and redistribution of wealth to satisfy basic needs. In addition, in 2021, Ecuador was ranked 53 out of 165 countries [35] and is still facing important challenges to solve pressing problems such as chronic child malnutrition, which is at 23%, and there are 2.2 million undernourished people; and overweight and obesity, which affects 64.6% of people between 19–59 years old.

Using this, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock prepared the 2017–2025 agrarian policy that proposes four fields of action: (a) the generation of conditions for generational substitution; (b) structural factors; (c) the exploitation of agricultural potential and solution to land use conflicts; and (d) complementary policies that support rural territorial development.

The agrarian policy sets out priorities for rural development with a focus on sustainability and strategic processes for improving governance and the application of the policy itself. It seeks to strengthen the agricultural vocation and maintain the supply of food for domestic consumption, without losing sight of agricultural exports and the production of products for which there is a deficit. Mitigation and adaptation to climate change are considered challenges and agroclimatic diversity has the potential to have heterogeneity in agricultural production. To take advantage of it, it is proposed to develop the sector based on differentiated agro-productive zoning, considering the natural risks and vulnerabilities.

The policy seeks to move from a model of institutional action by items to one of rural territorial development processes, where farmers are the protagonists. It is proposed to establish sustainable systems and at the same time intensify production and the development of productive chains assumed as clusters and agglomeration economies. It has a clearly productivist approach under the context that, the higher the production, the higher the income. We believe that this research can contribute to the analysis of the design of policies that consolidate them and these, in turn, can be utilized in countries with similar characteristics and conditions, or those that promote sustainable consumption and production, achieving the guidelines that align with the application of the CFS-RAI Principles and with the targets of SDGs 2 and 12.

3.2. Analysis Methodology

Ecuador's agrarian policy for the period 2017–2025 includes 58 guidelines distributed in 4 axes: productivity, productive innovation, systemic competitiveness, and consumption patterns.

The CFS-RAI Principles are global voluntary guidelines that address all types of investment in agriculture and food systems. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development constitutes the new global and universally applicable frame of reference for sustainable development (agrarian sustainable development in the case of SDG 2 and SDG 12). While both have a global approach, the 2017–2025 agrarian policy in Ecuador has a local approach, as the 58 guidelines constitute a frame of reference at a national level. This means that any regulation aimed at agrarian development in Ecuador must correspond with some of the 58 guidelines. To frame such agrarian policies in the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12 through a diagnostic exercise, which may be complementary to other methods of assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the socio-economic policy, is the view of the analysis concerned.

The proposed methodology is inspired by the reflection expressed in the following two paragraphs.

The drafting of norms or regulations must be done with the necessary study and rigor, since a single norm or regulation can have different interpretations, not indifferent to its consequences in relation to the original intention of those who drafted them. However, such interpretations are not arbitrary, but are primarily interpreted, both in the proper and literal sense, as the very words and in relation to the context and social reality of the time in which they are applied [39].

Given that *words become actions*, and actions shape our reality, the inclusion of one word or another in the writing of a political program or any strategic document is not trivial.

Therefore, recognizing the importance of the words used to achieve the purpose of the policies, and to determine to what extent the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12 are contemplated in the 2017–2025 Ecuadorian agrarian policy, a semantic and a content analysis (qualitative and quantitative) was used [40] as a research methodology. In this way, the analysis focuses on identifying gaps in and the coincidences of keywords between Ecuador's agrarian policy and the CFS-RAI Principles and the SDGs 2 and 12. Previously, a careful, comprehensive and interpretative reading was carried out, relating the CFS-RAI Principles with the goals of SDGs 2 and 12 from a semantic and content point of view. A second careful and detailed reading of the 58 guidelines of Ecuador's agrarian policy resulted in a first approximation relating them to the CFS-RAI Principles and the goals of SDGs 2 and 12 (Appendix A).

In the second phase of the analysis, keywords were identified in the formulation of the 10 CFS-RAI Principles (Table 1); the 8 targets of SDG 2 and the 11 targets of SDG 12 (Table 2), understanding that keywords are the basic container of their meaning.

Table 1. Keywords for coding the CFS-RAI Principles.

CFS-RAI Principles	Keywords
1. Contribute to food security and nutrition	food, nutrition
2. Contribute to sustainable, inclusive development and the eradication of poverty	development, sustainable, poverty
3. Promote gender equality and empowerment of women	gender, empowerment, women
4. Promote the participation and empowerment of young people	youth
5. Respect land tenure, fishing, forests and access to water	land, fishing, forests, water, hydric
6. Conserve and sustainably manage natural resources, increase resilience and reduce disaster risk.	resources, resilience, risks
7. Respect cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and support diversity and innovation	culture, local knowledge
8. Promote safe and healthy agricultural and food systems	productive, innocuous, healthy systems
9. Incorporate inclusive and transparent governance structures, processes and grievance mechanisms	governance
10. Assess and address impacts and promote accountability	effects, accountability

Table 2. Keywords for coding the targets of SDG 2 and SDG 12.

No.	Goal Description	Keywords
SDG 2: End hunger		
2.1	End hunger and ensure access to healthy, nutritious and sufficient food throughout the year.	hunger, undernourishment, food insecurity
2.2	End all forms of malnutrition of children under 5 years of age, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women and older people.	malnutrition

Table 2. Cont.

No.	Goal Description	Keywords
2.3	Doubling agricultural productivity and income for small-scale producers through secure and equitable access to land, resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities	productivity, production, income
2.4	Ensure the sustainability of food production systems and apply resilient agricultural practices.	sustainability, sustainable, resilience, ecosystems, climate
2.5	Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, plants, animals and wild species through good management and diversification of seed and plant banks and promote access to benefits derived from the use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge.	seeds, germplasm, genetic resources, breeds, traditional knowledge
2.a	Increase investment in agriculture: rural infrastructure, research, agricultural extension, technological development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to improve agricultural production capacity.	research, technology, irrigation, agricultural extension, germplasm
2.b	Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, through the elimination of subsidies for agricultural exports.	market, subsidies, subsidies, exports
2.c	Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food and derivatives markets and facilitate timely access to information.	market, food safety, prices
SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns		
12.1	Implementation of the 10-Year Framework on sustainable consumption and production patterns	sustainable production, sustainable consumption, policies
12.2	Achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.	efficient use, material consumption, material footprint
12.3	Halve global per capita food waste in sales at the consumer level and reduce food losses in production, supply and harvest chains.	food losses, waste
12.4	Achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste throughout their life cycle, in accordance with international frameworks.	hazardous waste, chemical waste, environmental agreements
12.5	Reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.	waste, reduce, recycle, reuse
12.6	Encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and incorporate information on sustainability.	companies, sustainability
12.7	Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities.	public procurement, politics
12.8	Ensure that the world population has information and knowledge for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.	education, sustainable development, policies, lifestyles
12.a	Strengthen scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns.	research, technologies
12.b	Apply instruments to monitor effects on sustainable development, in order to achieve sustainable tourism.	tourism, work
12.c	Rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, removing market distortions by restructuring tax systems and removing subsidies.	subsidies, fossil fuels

Subsequently, the keywords are searched in the 58 guidelines, to establish the parallelism, based on two hypotheses:

H1. *The greater the incorporation of keywords in the policy, it is assumed that the Principles and goals are taken into account, and the absence of keywords means the opposite.*

This hypothesis is consistent with the idea of interpreting the words in their proper and literal sense.

H2. *The existence of the keyword, by itself, does not represent the consideration of the Principles or goals in the policy.*

This hypothesis is consistent with the idea of interpreting the words within the context of the whole sentence and paragraph.

The assumption of the first hypothesis constitutes a limitation of the methodology expressed by the second hypothesis. To address such a limitation, the qualitative analysis complementing the quantitative one was performed.

It proceeded as follows:

- (i) The definition of keywords for coding the analysis reference corpus [41,42], these being the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12. The keywords were established based on the meaning and relationships of the existing meaning in the description of the CFS-RAI Principles (Table 1) and the targets of SDGs 2 and 12 (Table 2).
- (ii) For the quantitative analysis, the *Nvivo* program was used as a tool [43]. At first, codification was carried out associated with the reference incorporated (CFS-RAI) Principles and ODS 2 and 12 which served to name the nodes. The hierarchical nodes or cases option [44] was not used because it was not a comparison between the documents. Then, we proceeded to the quantification in a matrix of the keywords existing in the policy, referring to H1.
- (iii) The qualitative analysis was carried out to contrast the H2. The words were discriminated by analytical coding. The semantic analysis in the context offered by *Nvivo* was applied, assuming as valid the keywords that have the same meaning, theoretical similarity, and that which correspond to the same semantic field, and discarding those quantified but that do not fit with the reference corpus, are out of context, or repeated. Based on this, the results matrix was adjusted.

4. Results

4.1. Alignment between the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12

Table 3 shows the leverage of the CFS-RAI Principles with the SDGs. Principles 1, 2, and 8 are related to most of the SDG 2 targets, specifically targets 2.1 and 2.2, to end hunger and malnutrition, as well as target 2.3, on increasing productivity; 2.4, of sustainable and resilient practices; as well as targets 2.b and 2.c, of market stability and the control of price volatility. The same is not the case with SDG 12, in which Principles 5 and 6 are mostly related to targets 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 12.7 and 12.c.

Table 3. Leverage of SDGs 2 and 12 with the CFS-RAI Principles.

CFS-RAI Principles										SDG 2: Zero Hunger		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Target *	No.	
+										+	End hunger	Target 2.1.
+										+	End all forms of malnutrition.	Target 2.2.
	+		+	+	+						Doubling of small-scale agricultural productivity and income.	Target 2.3.
+	+				+		+				Sustainable and resilient agricultural practices	Target 2.4.
							+	+			Maintain genetic diversity of seeds.	Target 2.5.
							+				Increase investment in agriculture	Target 2.a
		+							+	+	Stability of world agricultural markets	Target 2.b
									+	+	Control of food price volatility	Target 2.c
										SDG 12: Sustainable production and consumption		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Target *	No.	
+	+										Application of the sustainable consumption and production framework	Target 12.1.
						+		+			Achieve efficient use of natural resources.	Target 12.2.
							+				Food waste reduction	Target 12.3.
						+		+			Waste and chemical management	Target 12.4.

Table 3. Cont.

CFS-RAI Principles	SDG 2: Zero Hunger		
+	Prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse of waste.	Target 12.5.	
+	Adoption of sustainable practices in companies	Target 12.6.	
+	Sustainable public procurement	Target 12.7.	
+ +	Ensure education for Sustainable Development	Target 12.8.	
+	Strengthening science and technology for sustainability	Target 12.a	
	+	Achieve sustainable tourism	Target 12.b
+	+	Regulation of fossil fuel subsidies	Target 12.c

Note: (1) Contribute to food security and nutrition; (2) contribute to sustainable, inclusive development and the eradication of poverty; (3) promote gender equality and empowerment of women; (4) promote the participation and empowerment of young people; (5) respect land tenure, fishing, forests and access to water; (6) conserve and sustainably manage natural resources, increase resilience and reduce disaster risk; (7) respect cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and support diversity and innovation; (8) promote innocuous and healthy agricultural and food systems; (9) incorporate inclusive and transparent governance structures, processes and grievance mechanisms; (10) assess and address impacts and promote accountability. * Short version of the SDG 2 and SDG 12 targets. "+" indicates the existence of alignment.

4.2. Incorporation of the CFS-RAI Principles in Ecuador's Agrarian Policy

Among the 58 policy guidelines, 26% of the coded references to Principle 2, on sustainable development and poverty eradication were found; 23% of the references were to Principle 8, on promoting safe and healthy agricultural and food systems; 20% of the references were to Principle 7, to respect cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and support diversity and innovation; while the inclusion is minimal of Principle 3, women's empowerment, and Principle 4, of the empowerment of young people (Figure 1).

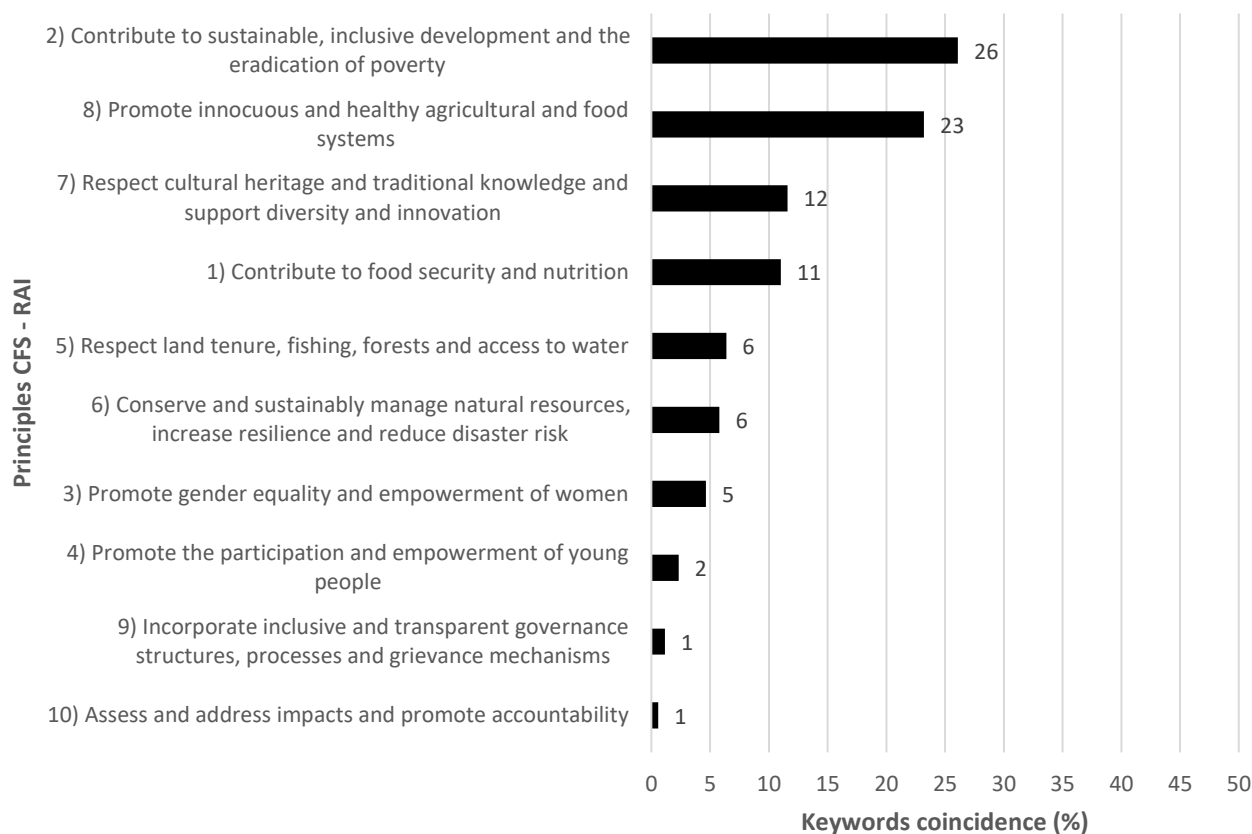


Figure 1. CFS-RAI principles incorporated into Ecuador's agrarian policy.

It highlights the minimal incorporation of CFS-RAI Principles 10 and 9, on evaluating and addressing repercussions and promoting accountability, and specifically defining reference data and indicators for monitoring and quantifying the economic, social, environmental, and cultural repercussions of investments in agriculture, especially in State institutions related to the agricultural field.

4.3. Incorporation of SDGs 2 and 12 in Ecuador's Agrarian Policy

In regard to the incorporation of the policy with the goals of SDG 2, a higher percentage is evident in the increase in productivity and income (target 2.3) linked to export markets (target 2.c). It is weakly aligned with target 2.5 (maintenance of the diversity of seeds), plants, animals, etc., to preserve agrobiodiversity and the traditional knowledge of producers (Figure 2). Productivity guidelines are aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture and developing the capacities of producers through continuous training processes and participatory innovation programs.

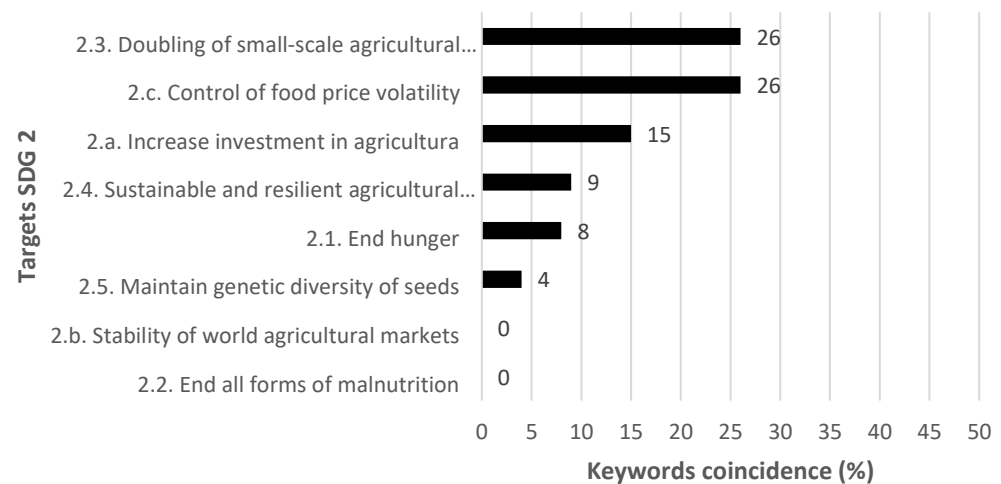


Figure 2. SDG 2 targets incorporated into Ecuador's agrarian policy.

In regard to the interaction of the policy with the SDG 12 targets, there is a high alignment with targets 12.1 (sustainable production and consumption), 12.2 (efficient use of natural resources), and 12.a (strengthening science and technology for sustainability). The concordance between target 12.5 (the prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse of waste) and the adoption of sustainable practices in companies (target 12.6), as well as education for sustainable development and healthy lifestyles (12.8), is minimal. There is an absence of alignment regarding target 12.4 (waste management and chemical products) and the regulation of subsidies for fossil fuels (target 12.c) (Figure 3).

The related guidelines refer to creating and strengthening small production chains at the local and national level, market regulation, the control of smuggling, commercial coordination between public and private actors, as well as maintaining and improving the sanitary and phytosanitary status of food products for export. They aim at productive innovation through the articulation of research, innovation, and the exchange of knowledge, science, and technology, and implement thematic tables to suggest and validate research and disseminate the results. They also contemplate integrating territorial suitability, ecological footprint, and food balance into multi-sector planning; agricultural and productive use and exploitation of water with a participatory approach; and guarantee access to seeds, quality improvement, availability, and promotion.

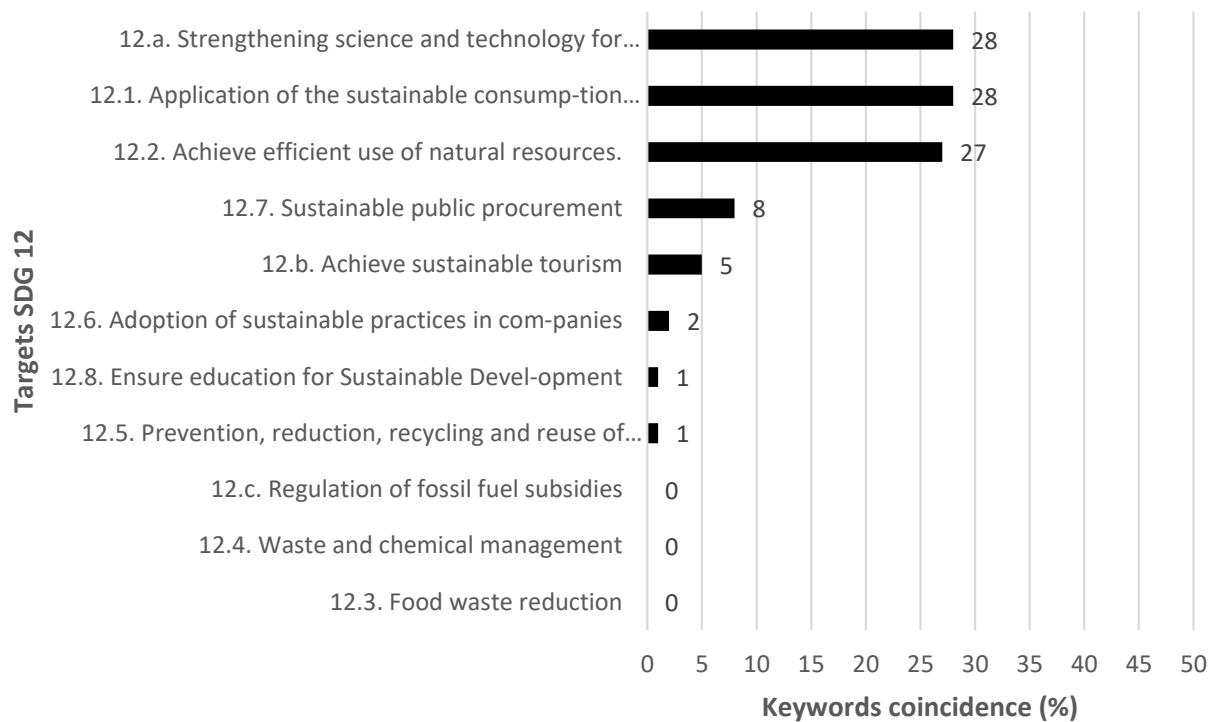


Figure 3. SDG 12 targets incorporated into Ecuador's agrarian policy.

5. Discussion

It is clear that the CFS-RAI Principles are intended to provide guidance to host countries, including the preparation of strong domestic legislation for fair contracts, and investor advice for socially responsible investing. However, the limited incorporation of the CFS-RAI Principles in the Ecuador's agrarian policy allows us to infer that they were not considered in its design, since they are not mentioned anywhere. This corroborates previous research that claims that by being non-binding, the CFS-RAI Principles are likely to have little success in generating initiatives [22–25]. Nevertheless, when carrying out the analysis, they are present in some way, as some behavior patterns in line with the codes of conduct of the CFS-RAI Principles are present in Ecuador's agrarian policy.

Responsible investment in agriculture following the guidelines of the CFS-RAI Principles is recognized as a means to achieve SDGs [3], and, in particular, SDGs 2 and 12, as indicated in the examples of legislation and the study cases included in the FAO Handbook mentioned in the literature review section [37]. The research results are consistent with this approach.

5.1. SDG 2, on the Ecuadorian Agrarian Policy

SDG 2 is questioned by social movements because, on the one hand, it promotes sustainable agricultural systems, especially peasant family farming, and, at the same time, it proposes doubling productivity, which leads to an intensification of the use of productive resources, which are opposite visions (p. 156) [45].

The productivist and economic approach to the policy (targets 2.3 and 2.c) is evident, which establishes a neo-developmental orientation [18], but which, nevertheless, contributes to the reduction in food prices by improving access [46]. The policy minimally incorporates SDG 2 with target 2.5 (the maintenance of the diversity of seeds), plants, animals, etc., to preserve agrobiodiversity and the traditional knowledge of producers. It is assumed that the absence of target 2.2 (put an end to malnutrition), in politics, is defined by the field of health and not agriculture. The problem of malnutrition is reflected in other sectoral policies to address the problems of food insecurity, undernutrition, and overweight

and obesity. This implies a lack of exhaustiveness in the formulation of the intersectoral policies of the State.

In 2020, Ecuador, in its voluntary report on its compliance with the SDGs, indicates that, for SDG 2, exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months of life went from 46.9 to 62.1% between 2014 and 2018, and the index of agricultural productivity went from 98.89 in 2016 to 121.64 in 2018. Contrary to the study in Bolivia, in which it was highlighted that the implementation of programs addressed to the achievement of SDG 2 had not achieved the expected progress, it can be concluded that, in the case of Ecuador, the focus on increasing productivity is generating results [33]. But it is worth noting that of the 12 prioritized indicators for SDG 2, data for only two of them are reported. Other studies have also noted that the same international framework has been considered very differently in distinct domestic political contexts [32].

Achieving SDG 2 implies thinking about other areas of natural resource use, such as bioenergy production, which occupies spaces destined for food production [45]. This would contribute concomitantly to the achievement of the end of poverty (SDG 1), seeking the self-sustainability of food for producers, generating surpluses and income (SDG 8), and covering health and well-being needs (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), decent work, reduction in inequalities (SDG 10), actions in favor of the climate (SDG 14), and the achievement of peace (SDG 16).

5.2. SDG 12, on the Ecuadorian Agrarian Policy

The almost null incorporation of the target of waste reduction (12.5) and the adoption of sustainable practices in companies (12.6) may be due to the weakness of the State to establish mechanisms for the environmental responsibility of companies and to make follow-up on the implementation of actions concrete. The absence of targets 12.4 and 12.c in the policy coincides with the study of Chaudhary et al. [47], which quantifies the state of the performance of the national food system of 156 countries in seven areas: nutrition, environment, availability and affordability of food, sociocultural well-being, resilience, and food security and waste, in which it concluded that the countries have patterns of very varied performance. Those with high incomes score high on most indicators; however, when it comes to the environment and food waste, as well as those related to health, the scores are low.

In its voluntary report, Ecuador hopes to concentrate efforts towards economic stability, the collection of taxes that reaffirm the horizon of increasing exports and productivity, addressing, marginally and in a blurred manner, the stakes of economic inclusion and food sovereignty (p.163) [45]. Regarding SDG 12, in the voluntary report of Ecuador, it was reported that its area decreased from 0.74 hag (global hectares) in 2016 to 0.51 hag in 2019. Similarly, of the 13 indicators, only 2 are mentioned [48]. Sustainable consumption and production are driving forces of the economy, and they depend on the use of the environment, generating effects on it. With the achievement of SDG 12, it is expected to produce more with less, being efficient in the use of resources, contributing to the eradication of poverty, and moving towards models with low greenhouse gas emissions.

6. Conclusions

The CFS-RAI Principles are related to policy that has an emphasis in terms of productivity, and the orientation to agro-exports and the market economy. Responsible investment in agriculture following the codes of conduct, that are the CFS-RAI Principles, is a viable way to drive the achievement of the SDGs.

Ecuador's agrarian policy incorporates SDG 2, promoting the productivist model with an emphasis on economic development, minimally assuming the care of agrobiodiversity, which does not lead to the goal of ending hunger and malnutrition in real terms. SDG 12 is incorporated into the policy, emphasizing the efficient use of natural resources, sustainable consumption and production, and the development of science and technology for sustainability, but there are no guidelines to avoid food waste, waste management, and

the demand in the implementation of sustainable practices in companies, evidencing a weak intention to provoke a transformation process towards sustainable production and consumption.

Interventions in the agrarian field, having SDGs 2 and 12 as the center of rural development, implies establishing clear policies that go beyond the productivist and agro-export emphasis that leaves family farming production aside. Land policy should be reformulated to incorporate the CFS-RAI Principles and SDG targets that are not considered but important. Structural changes such as the inequity of the access to and control of water and land, loss of seeds, strengthening of the solidarity economy, and promotion of fair prices, in addition to policies, require other long-term government actions that include the evaluation of policies.

Through seeking to reconcile the global aspirations for shared prosperity, as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, with the private objectives of each State, the result of the study is a divergence between the desired and the real. The findings can give insight to researchers and policymakers working on this area.

With this research, the hypothesis has been raised that when new public policies are designed within the frame of the Ecuadorian agrarian policy, important issues regarding malnutrition and food waste will be neglected. The analysis and evaluation of such public policies at different levels of the Ecuadorian government to assess the territorialization and achievement of the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs could made use of a bibliometric analysis, emphasizing specific keywords and generating a new line of research.

The methodology used in this case study in Ecuador is replicable to diagnose the incorporation of the CFS-RAI Principles and the SDGs in sustainable agrarian development plans in countries where macro agrarian policies have been defined. The study shows limitations in terms of clearly identifying the semantic contents of the SDGs to carry out the analysis with the policies. The use of computer tools is essential, but context analysis will be a determining element in the results.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Guidelines of Ecuador’s Agrarian Policy 2017–2015 and Relationship with the CFS-RAI Principles and SDGs 2 and 12.

N°	Guidelines	CFS-RAI Principles	SDG 2	SDG 12
1	Promote sustainable agriculture	5, 6	2.4	
2	Establish sustainable production systems	5, 6	2.4	
3	Continuous training processes	4	2.3	
4	Standardize training programs	4	2.3	
5	Articulate participatory innovation programs	4, 7	2.5, 2a	12.8, 12a
6	Develop research and technological development through Bio knowledge and ancestral knowledge	4, 7	2.5, 2a	12.8, 12a

Table A1. Cont.

N°	Guidelines	CFS-RAI Principles	SDG 2	SDG 12
7	Identify and develop research-based technologies to diversify production and generate resilience in agroproductive systems	6, 7	2.5, 2a	12.8, 12a
8	Generate new knowledge and value-adding technologies, promoting the preservation, recovery and use of agrobiodiversity	6, 7	2.5, 2a	12.8, 12a
9	Establish value adding mechanisms through associative processes	2, 3	2.5, 2c	
10	Diversify production considering commercial seasonality and incorporate agroecology standards.	5, 6, 7	2.4	
11	Regulations for production to be a self-sustaining sector	9		12.1
12	Mechanisms for adding value to production and associative processes	2, 3	2.5, 2c	
13	Articulation of research, innovation and exchange of knowledge, science, and technology	4, 7	2.5	
14	Provide scientific and technical assistance in research	4, 7	2.5, 2a	12.8, 12a
15	Implement thematic tables to suggest and validate research and its dissemination	9, 10	2.5, 2a	12.8, 12a
16	Encourage the promotion and marketing of bio trade products	1, 2	2.5, 2a	
17	Articulate financial services	2	2.3	
18	Strengthen the capacities of producers to access credit	2, 3, 4	2.3	
19	Promote the strengthening of the financial sectors of the EPS	2, 3, 4	2.3	
20	Promote the access of small farmers to the public procurement system	2, 10		12.7
21	Strengthen the capacities of producers as providers of the public procurement system	2, 4, 10		12.7
22	Strengthen the food provision institute	1	2.1	
23	Implement associative centers for the provision of support services for production and marketing	1, 2, 4	2.5, 2a	
24	Continuously improve processes, strategic management and application of information and communication technologies	9, 10	2.5, 2c	
25	Create and strengthen fair chains of small production at the local and national level	2, 5, 7	2.5, 2b	
26	Promote the development of marketing support services	2, 7	2.5, 2a, 2b	
27	Develop interventions to regulate markets, maintain balance in food balances and manage the country's strategic reserves	1, 2	2.1, 2.5, 2b	
28	Promote commercial articulation strategies with public and private actors that prioritize the purchase of products from small producers	1, 2		12.7
29	Promote information exchange strategies between ministries	2, 9, 10		12.8
30	Promote product diversification	6	2.5	
31	Regulate the market, control smuggling	2	2.5, 2c	
32	Encourage the production of small and medium agriculture	5	2.3, 2.4	
33	Prioritize the ordering and use of the territory with agricultural aptitude	5		12.2
34	Integrate territorial aptitude, ecological footprint and food balance into multisector planning	2, 5, 9		12.2
35	Promote conditions of systemic competitiveness necessary in the strategic chains	5, 6		12.2, 12.5
36	Improve access to the local and international market	1	2.5, 2b	
37	Preparation and presentation of investment alternatives to attract investment	9, 10		
38	Promote associativity	3, 4	2.4	
39	Strengthen AGROCALIDAD and INAP for pest risk analysis in products for export	4, 7	2.5, 2b	
40	Promote sustainable production models in the agricultural sector that respond to endogenous territorial development	2, 5, 6, 7	2.4, 2.5, 2a	
41	Guarantees the quality of the products, strengthens the post-registration control of inputs	8		12.4
42	Maintain and improve sanitary and phytosanitary status	8		12.4
43	Raw material production	8		12.4
44	input ventures	7		12.4
45	Controlled of marketing		2.5, 2b	

Table A1. Cont.

N°	Guidelines	CFS-RAI Principles	SDG 2	SDG 12
46	Regulate imports		2.5, 2b	
47	Strengthen the redistribution, regularization and legalization of land	5	2.4	
48	Agricultural and productive use and exploitation of water with a participatory approach	5	2.4	
49	Guarantee access to seeds, quality improvement, availability, and promotion	7	2.5	
50	Articulation with decentralized autonomous governments	9	2.5, 2a	
51	Continuous training processes	3, 4	2.3	
52	Standardize training programs	3, 4, 7	2.3	
53	Articulate participatory innovation programs	3, 4, 7	2.3	12.8, 12a
54	Promote the association of small and medium producers	3, 4	2.3	
55	Establish mechanisms for incorporating associative production into production chains linked to priority sectors	2	2.3, 2.5, 2b	
56	Expand the storage and collection infrastructure for primary products	5, 9	2.5, 2a	
57	Develop harvest and post-harvest evaluation systems to establish prices for traditional products	2	2.5, 2b	
58	Develop control mechanism and create regulatory measures in the intermediation links	1	2.5, 2b	

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