

Back in 2014, while I was working in the area of environmental economics in Costa Rica, I asked myself a question: how could I gauge sustainable development properly without an in-depth understanding of the sector that provides the essentials for living: the agricultural sector? Fortunately, the solution to this challenge came shortly after. In 2015, I was granted a scholarship by the German Academic Exchange Service (abbreviated DAAD in German) to study the joint master's degree program "Sustainable International Agribusiness" with the specialization in "International Agribusiness and Rural Development".

As part of the master program, I spent the first two semesters at the University of Talca in Chile studying and visiting different agricultural production systems across the country. This experience allowed me to broaden my knowledge in the field of agricultural economics in Latin America. Thereafter, during the third semester at the University of Göttingen, I developed a strong interest in the econometric techniques utilized to assess the level of price transmission and market integration in crop and livestock markets.

Subsequently, I started an internship in the Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch (AGAL) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which specializes in livestock sector analyses. During this time, I benefitted substantially from working alongside with an interdisciplinary global network of experts, who are dedicated to the understanding of the crucial role that the livestock sector plays in poverty reduction, resource use, creation of value chains, and environmental and human health.

In some of the meetings with the global team, we discussed about the risk that animal disease outbreaks pose to livelihoods and their impact on the overall economy. Thus, these discussions motivated me to write my master's thesis on the effects of animal disease outbreaks on food price dynamics and the potential implications for food security, using the 2012 Avian Influenza outbreak in the Mexican egg market as case study.

Mexico leads egg production in Latin America and ranks as the fifth largest producer in the world. In June 2012, the country suffered from three outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus (H7N3) in the Jalisco State of Mexico, which accounts for more than half of the country's egg production. Consequently, 22.4 million birds were slaughtered and disposed, which provoked a shortage of egg supply and culminated in an abrupt increase of real egg prices.

Using the econometric techniques that I learned during my studies, I analyzed how the H7N3 outbreak affected price dynamics along the Mexican egg supply chain and increased the real wholesale-retail marketing margins. Furthermore, eggs are the most accessible and affordable animal protein in Mexico; therefore, I also considered the impact that higher food prices may have on food security, particularly in regions with low-income levels and high poverty rates.

Once I graduated from the SIA master's program, my ongoing interest in price transmission and market integration inspired me to continue with the Ph.D. program "Agricultural Economics" within the PhD-course "Agricultural Sciences in Göttingen". Currently, I am exploring the role that various aspects of industrial organization play on price transmission and market integration in Latin American livestock markets. The aim of my research is to provide theoretical and empirical inputs to address policy issues regarding food security, welfare distribution, competition policies, trade policies, among others.

Today, as I look back on this academic journey, I realize that this experience has not only contributed with one chapter in my life but constitutes a new path to other horizons. I could not have imagined how that question at the beginning of 2014 would have changed my life in so many ways. My deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have supported me along the way!

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