

Margarita Fernandez

Nationality: Dual Citizenship USA and EU-Spain

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EDUCATION

University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

January 2011 – May 2015

Ph.D. in Agroecology, Department of Plant and Soil Science

- *Doctorate Thesis: "Subsistence Under the Canopy: Agroecology, Livelihoods and Food Sovereignty among Coffee Communities in Chiapas, Mexico"*. Dissertation research used a participatory action research approach to explore issues related to and identify solutions for sustainable livelihoods, agrobiodiversity, food security/sovereignty, and climate change adaptation and mitigation with certified coffee communities in Chiapas, Mexico and northern Nicaragua. Integral to dissertation research was an evaluation of two food security projects implemented by farmer cooperatives who are funded by Keurig Green Mountain. Advisor: Dr. V. E. Mendez

Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, New Haven, CT

Aug 2002 - May 2004

Master of Environmental Science

- *Concentration: Social Ecology, Community Development and Ecology of Agriculture.*
- *Master's Thesis: "Cultivating Community, Food, and Empowerment: Urban Gardens in New York City and Havana"*. Advisor: Dr. William R. Burch.

Tufts University, Medford, MA

Sept 1994 - May 1998

Bachelor of Science in Biology

School for Field Studies, Atenas, COSTA RICA

Fall 1996

Semester Abroad Program focused on sustainable development.

Long Term Contracts

Executive Director. Vermont Caribbean Institute. Vermont, USA. January 2015-Current

- Lead fundraising, communications, program management and strategic vision for a small non-profit that works in Cuba to implement collaborative research and development projects, and to coordinate professional and educational exchanges that address socio-ecological challenges associated with agriculture and climate change. Our main initiative is the Cuba-US Agroecology Network which connects people, institutions and movements in Cuba and the US to build more ecologically resilient, socially just and economically fair farming systems rooted in agroecology. We do this by raising awareness about Cuba's agroecology advances, facilitating partnerships and building capacity amongst stakeholders through participation in exchanges, courses, conferences and workshops. In addition, we work to amplify Cuban voices internationally, and to channel resources and opportunities to our counterparts on the island. Funders include the Ford Foundation, Flora Family Foundation and Christopher Reynolds Foundation.

Research Associate. University of Vermont, Agroecology and Rural Livelihoods Group. Vermont, USA.

November 2015-October 2015.

- Project coordinator for a one-year research project with the CGIAR Research Program on *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)* focused on climate change adaptation measures to build resilient coffee landscapes and ensure food security in Central America.

International Consultant. United Nations Development Program. Havana, CUBA and Vermont, USA.

November 2009-March 2011.

- Responsible for coordinating planning and preparation of project document for submission to the Global Environment Facility for a 5,000,000 USD inter-sectoral project on invasive species prevention, management, and control in Cuba. Activities included: writing project document in English following GEF guidelines; working with national coordinators, consultants, and stakeholders to-1) collect baseline legal, economic, and technical data regarding invasive alien species and biodiversity, 2) identify key threats and causes of introduction and

spread of invasive alien species and develop strategies and activities to address these issues, 3) agree on institutional implementation arrangements, 4) establish monitoring and evaluation strategy, 5) prepare detailed budget; coordinate key workshops with stakeholders.

Technical Reviewer. Quality Assurance International. Oaxaca, MEXICO and Vermont, USA. May 2008-June 2011.

- Review inspection reports of organic producer and processor companies in Mexico, USA, and Canada seeking certification to the USDA National Organic Program and other international organic standards.

Program Officer. Helvetas – Swiss Intercooperation. Vientiane, LAO PDR. Feb 2005 – June 2006.

- Planned and prepared project document for ‘ProRice – Promotion of organic rice from Laos’, a 3-year project with budget over 300,000 USD; developed effective strategies and methods for implementation with a focus on pro-poor and systems based approaches; identified and developed relationships with main stakeholders within rice food system; ensured participation of stakeholders in planning process; developed monitoring and evaluation system; served as liaison between Helvetas and Government of Lao PDR to secure approval of project and official Helvetas office in the country; recruited staff and established national office; networked with other NGOs.
- Designed and led national survey of small farmers’ soil and pest management practices and marketing systems of lowland rainfed rice in 6 provinces; identified project sites based on findings.
- Provided technical assistance to PROFIL – Promotion of organic farming and marketing in Laos project; involved in developing organic certification system for Laos; involved in quarterly activity planning meetings; wrote activity reports; wrote and edited quarterly newsletter ‘Organic Matters’.

Farm Manager. Tierra Farm. New Hope, NY, USA. May 2000 – Aug 2002.

- Led management of 2.5 acres of rainfed organic mixed vegetables. Responsible for overall farm planning including crop rotations, soil fertility management, greenhouse management and pest control. On-farm activities included bed preparation, direct seeding, seedling care, transplanting, harvesting and post-harvest handling. Marketing strategy included direct sales at 3 farmers markets per week, to the local food coop, and to local restaurants. Supervised three farm assistants.
- Conducted on-farm research for BionSoil Inc., an organic turf management company, comparing growth rate and overall health of four types of vegetables grown on plots containing different compost treatments.

Community Organizer. Green Guerillas. New York, NY, USA. May 1999 – May 2000.

- Served as field representative for The City Farms program, a collaborative effort between five non-profits working to develop and sustain an urban agriculture network of community gardens in low-income neighborhoods of New York City to combat food insecurity.
- Led on-site trainings and workshops on methods of sustainable food production and conducted monitoring and evaluation of project.
- Provided technical assistance to community gardeners on building partnerships with emergency food providers, establishing garden-based marketing initiatives, and preserving urban land for long-term food production.
- Strengthened grassroots gardening groups and supported emerging gardening coalitions by assisting with fundraising, outreach, event planning, leadership development, and garden preservation campaigns.

Short Term Consultancies

Global Alliance for the Future of Food. Oaxaca, MEXICO. June 2018-June 2019.

- Supported agenda development, facilitation, and report writing for global strategic planning convening held in Oaxaca, Mexico in October 2018 on Resilient Seed Systems.

Hivos-Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries. CUBA. Jan. 2016-March 2016.

- Led final external evaluation of 1.5 million Euro project funded by the European Union and Hivos to support the Cuban Association of Agronomists and Foresters (ACTAF) implement a project entitled “Agroecological Articulation for Food Security”. Evaluation included visits to 4 provinces, 4 municipalities and interviews with

189 direct and indirect beneficiaries including farmers, cooperative staff, NGO staff, government officials, policy makers, service providers and academics. Wrote final report analyzing impacts and sustainability of the project.

Campeños Ecológicos de la Sierra Madre de Chiapas (CESMACH). Chiapas, MEXICO. 2013-2014.

- Led the development, implementation and analysis of carbon sequestration study in organic coffee agroforestry systems of the farmer cooperative CESMACH. Study was funded by the Mexican foundation Fundacion para la Naturaleza y el Hombre and executed with technical support from El Colegio de la Frontera Sur (ECOSUR).

Global Plant Clinic. NICARAGUA. 2007- 2008.

- Conducted external, participatory evaluation of a 3-year DANIDA funded initiative focused on developing a community-based plant protection system through ‘mobile plant clinics’. Designed methodology and collected data via field site visits and interviews with major stakeholders in 7 departments of northern and western Nicaragua. Analyzed data and co-produced 90-page evaluation report.

International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT). Texcoco, MEXICO. 2007.

- Conducted baseline research on value chain systems of specialty maize varieties in 23 countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Integrated Organic Services, Inc. Oaxaca, MEXICO. 2007.

- Conducted feasibility analysis of developing medium to large scale organic production systems in the Mexican state of Chiapas.

Food First – Institute for Food and Development Policy. Oaxaca, MEXICO. 2007.

- Coordinated Oaxaca leg of reality tour entitled ‘El Camino del Migrante: Immigrants and the Struggle for Food Sovereignty’, a 20-person fact finding delegation of sustainable agriculture and human rights experts, academics, and NGO leaders from across the USA and Mexico.

Village Focus International. New York, New York, USA. 2006.

- Conducted technical review of political, socio-economic and environmental dynamics affecting development in Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Bolivia; generated strategic recommendations for establishment of a Latin America program.

Oxfam Solidarite – Belgium. Vientiane, LAO PDR. 2005.

- Coordinated translation, production, and distribution of English version of book entitled “Organic Agriculture: Foundations for the ecological management of pests” by Nilda Perez Consuegra, Agriculture University of Havana, Cuba (originally in Spanish).

Lao-Swedish Upland Agriculture and Forestry Research Programme/ National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute. Vientiane, LAO PDR. 2004 –2005.

- Edited sourcebook publication with over 100 articles describing best practices in shifting cultivation, poverty eradication, and sustainable natural resource management in the uplands of the Lao PDR.

Food First – Institute for Food and Development Policy. Havana, CUBA. 2003.

- Co-coordinated 90-person fact finding delegation of food security experts, academics, and NGO leaders from across the Americas who collected information about Cuba’s transition to sustainable agriculture.

Global Exchange. Havana, CUBA. 2002.

- Worked as tour leader for educational exchanges between US and Cuban agriculture practitioners.

Oxfam America. Havana, CUBA. 2002.

- Served as organizer and translator for delegation of Oxfam America’s board members and donors visiting sustainable agriculture and community development projects in Cuba.

Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Urban Agriculture. Havana, CUBA. 1998- 1999.

- Volunteered and conducted research with four different urban agriculture management systems implemented in Havana.

New York Botanical Garden: Bronx Green-Up. Bronx, NY, USA. 1998.

- Managed The Botanical Square Children's Garden through participatory community projects.

New York Botanical Garden: Institute for Economic Botany. Morichitos, VENEZUELA. 1998.

- Assisted ethnobotanist in research of the Warao indigenous peoples' farming systems.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Food Systems Leadership Certificate. Burlington, VT, USA. 2011. University of Vermont Professional Certificate.

Independent Organic Inspectors Association. San Jose, COSTA RICA. 2007. Certified as Organic Crop Inspector.

Brooklyn Botanical Garden. Brooklyn, NY, USA. 2000. Certified as Master Composter.

New York University School of Public Policy. New York, NY, USA. 1999. Professional training course on conflict resolution and mediation.

University of Colorado Mountain Research Station. Nederland, CO, USA. 1996. Completed two courses entitled Grasslands to Glaciers and Forest Ecology.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

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| • Gund Institute of Ecological Economics Graduate Fellow 2012-2015 | • Yale Hixon Center for Urban Studies Fellow, 2003 |
| • Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Fellow, 2011-2015 | • Yale Agrarian Studies Fellow, 2003 |
| • Buttrick Fellow, 2003-2004 | • Yale University Minority Scholarship, 2002-2004 |
| | • Tufts University research grant, 1998 |

PUBLICATIONS

Fernandez, M. and Méndez, V.E., 2019. Subsistence under the canopy: Agrobiodiversity's contributions to food and nutrition security amongst coffee communities in Chiapas, Mexico. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 43(5), pp.579-601.

Fernandez, M., Williams, J., Figueroa, G., Lovelace, G.G., Machado, M., Vasquez, L., Perez, N., Casimiro, L., Romero, G. and Aguilar, F.F., 2018. New opportunities, new challenges: Harnessing Cuba's advances in agroecology and sustainable agriculture in the context of changing relations with the United States. *Elem Sci Anth*, 6(1).

Fernandez, M., Nelson, E., Locke, K., Figueroa, G. and Funes-Aguilar, F., 2018. Cuba's agrifood system in transition, an introduction to the Elementa Special Feature. *Elem Sci Anth*, 6(1).

Galford, G., **Fernandez, M.**, Roman, J., Monasterolo, I., Ahamed, S., Fiske, G., Gonzalez, P., Kaufman, L. 2018. Cuban land use and conservation, from rainforests to coral reefs. *Bulletin of Marine Science*. 94 (2).

Fernandez, M. 2017. Urban Agriculture in Cuba: 30 Years of Policy and Practice. [Urban Agriculture Magazine no 33](#) - Urban Agroecology, p.41-44.

Cruz, P. Merritt, V. Izzo, S. Castro, J. Wiegel, A. Ospina and **M. Fernandez**. 2016. Assessing Resilience in Coffee-Dependent Communities of Honduras, Nicaragua and Haiti. ARLG/LWR Research Brief # 5. Agroecology and Rural Livelihoods Group (ARLG), University of Vermont: Burlington, VT.

Fernandez, M, Mendez, V.E., and T. Mares. 2015. Agroecology, food sovereignty, and urban agriculture in the USA. In: Mendez, V.E., Bacon, C., Cohen, R. and Gliessman, S. (eds.). *Agroecology: A Transdisciplinary, Participatory and Action Oriented Approach*. CRC Press.

Caswell, M., V.E. Méndez, M. Baca, P. Läderach, T. Liebig, S. Castro-Tanzi & **M. Fernández**. 2014. Revisiting the "thin months"- a follow-up study on livelihoods of Mesoamerican coffee farmers. Policy Brief # 19. Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT): Cali Colombia

Fernandez, M., V.E. Méndez & C. Bacon. 2013. Seasonal hunger in coffee communities: integrated analysis of livelihoods, agroecology, and food sovereignty with smallholders of Mexico and Nicaragua. *Conference Paper # 42. Food Sovereignty: A critical dialogue. International Conference at Yale University*. September 14-15.

Fernandez, M., Goodall, K., Olson, M., & Mendez, E. 2013. Agroecology and Alternative Agrifood Movements in the United States: Towards a Sustainable Agrifood System. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 37(1), 115–126.

Fernandez, M. and Jon Hellin. 2008. Maize and high value agricultural products: Trends in trade and value chain systems. *Maize Facts and Futures*. CIMMYT. Texcoco. Mexico.

Ortiz, R., **M. Fernandez**, J. Dixon, J. Hellin, M. Iwanaga. 2007. Specialty Maize Types: Unveiling a Global Horticultural Crop. *Chronica Horticulturae* Vol. 47, No. 4.

Roder, W., S. Schurmann, P. Chittnavanh, K. Sipaseuth, **M. Fernandez**. 2006. Soil fertility management for organic rice production in the Lao PDR. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 21 (4): 253-260.

Fernandez, M. 2006. Survey of farmers' management practices in lowland rainfed rice systems and local rice market systems in the Lao PDR. Development Report. Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation.

Fernandez, M. 2006. Cultivating Community, Food, and Empowerment: Urban Gardens in New York City and Havana. In: Cohn, A., J. Cook, M. Fernandez, R. Reider, C. Steward (eds.). *Agroecology and the Struggle for Food Sovereignty in the Americas*. IIED, IUCN-CEESP, and Yale F&ES Publication Series. (English and Spanish)

Cohn, A., J. Cook, **M. Fernandez**, R. Reider, C. Steward (eds.). 2006. *Agroecology and the Struggle for Food Sovereignty in the Americas*. IIED, IUCN-CEESP, and Yale F&ES Publication Series. (English and Spanish)

SKILLS

- *Languages*: Bilingual English – Spanish; French (proficient).
- *Computers*: MS Office, Adobe, SPSS, JMP, database management and internet. Basic knowledge of GIS.
- Simultaneous interpretation Spanish-English/ English-Spanish.

PRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

Fernandez, M. *Nuevos Retos, Nuevas Oportunidades: El Rol de la Agroecología y Soberanía Alimentaria en la Normalización de Relaciones entre Cuba y EEUU*. Presentado en la XVII Edición de la Serie de Conversaciones Cuba en la Política Exterior de los Estados Unidos de América organizado por el Centro de Investigación de Política Internacional del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba. Habana, Cuba. Dec 2018

- Fernandez, M. *Nuevos Retos, Nuevas Oportunidades: El Rol de la Agroecología y Soberanía Alimentaria en la Normalización de Relaciones entre Cuba y EEUU*. Presentado en panel sobre Desarrollo sostenible en Cuba en el congreso de Latin American Studies Association (LASA). Barcelona, España. May 2018
- Fernandez, M. *Nuevos Retos, Nuevas Oportunidades: El Rol de la Agroecología y Soberanía Alimentaria en la Normalización de Relaciones entre Cuba y EEUU*. Presentado en evento de mesa redonda sobre Cuba en el Congreso de la Sociedad Científica Latinoamericana de Agroecología (SOCLA). Brasilia, Brasil. Sept 2017.
- Fernandez, M. *The Role of Sustainable Agriculture in Cuba's Changing Agrifood System*. Presentado en evento sobre sostenibilidad en Cuba organizado por Brookings Institute Latin America Initiative. Washington DC. Abril 2017.
- Fernandez, M. *La Agroecología para la Soberanía Alimentaria: Estudio de Caso de Chiapas, México*. Taller de Gestión de Conocimiento para el Desarrollo Sostenible de Cuba. FANJ. La Habana. Febrero 2017.
- Fernandez, M. *Nuevos Retos, Nuevas Oportunidades: El Rol de la Agroecología y la Soberanía Alimentaria en la Normalización de Relaciones entre EEUU y Cuba*. Conferencia Magistral. IV Convencion Internacional AGRODESARROLLO. Indio Hatuey. 23-30 de octubre 2016.
- Fernandez, M. *Cuba's Changing Agrifood System*. Cuba-Vermont Partnership Opportunities. Vermont Agriculture Agency. July 16, 2016.
- Fernandez, M. *Subsistence under the canopy: Agroecology, livelihoods and food sovereignty in coffee communities of Chiapas, Mexico*. Middlebury Food Insecurity Conference. March 10-12, 2016.
- Fernandez, M. *Solidaridad Agroecológica sin Fronteras: Productores y Activistas de Estados Unidos Apoyan al Movimiento Agroecológica de Cuba*. V Encuentro Internacional de Agroecología. ANAP, Havana, Cuba, November 2015.
- Fernandez, M. *Cuba's Changing Agrifood System*. NYC Meeting for Foundations Interested in Engaging with Cuba. November 12-13, 2015.
- Fernandez, M. *Agroecología, diversidad y soberanía alimentaria en áreas productoras de café*. Seminario Institucional. El Colegio de la Frontera Sur. San Cristobal de las Casa, Chiapas, Mexico. June 2014.
- Fernandez, M. *Seasonal hunger in coffee communities: Collaborative research on agroecology, food sovereignty and livelihoods in Mexico and Nicaragua*. Paper presented at conference "Innovation and Collaboration Across the Food System" hosted by the Association for the Study of Food and Society and the Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society. University of Vermont, Burlington VT. June 2014.
- Fernandez, M. *Seasonal hunger in coffee communities: food sovereignty, agroecology and livelihoods*. Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers. Tampa, Florida. April 2014.
- Fernandez, M. *Enfrentando los Meses Flacos: Aprendizaje Participativo de Agroecología y Soberanía Alimentaria con Comunidades Cafetaleras de México y Nicaragua*. IV Encuentro Internacional de Agroecología. ANAP, Havana, Cuba, November 2013.
- Fernandez, M. *Seasonal hunger in coffee communities: food sovereignty, agroecology and livelihoods*. Research Slam. Gund Institute for Ecological Economics. Burlington, VT. October 2013.
- Fernandez, M. V.E. Mendez, C. Bacon. *Seasonal hunger in coffee communities: Integrated analysis of livelihoods, agroecology, and food sovereignty with smallholders of Mexico and Nicaragua*. Paper presented at Yale University Conference "Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue" International Conference, New Haven, CT. September 14-15, 2013.
- Fernandez, M. *Seasonal hunger in coffee communities: Integrated analysis of livelihoods, agroecology, and food sovereignty with smallholders of Mexico and Nicaragua*. Paper presented at University of Vermont Department of Plant and Soil Science Research Seminar. Burlington, VT. October 2013.
- Fernandez, M. *Farmers' Management and Marketing Practices in Lowland Rainfed Rice Systems of the Lao PDR*. Paper presented at University of Vermont Department of Plant and Soil Science Research Seminar. Burlington, VT. November 2011.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Member, Latin American Studies Association
 Founding Member and Coordinator, Cuba-U.S. Agroecology Network
 Member, Latin American Scientific Society for Agroecology (SOCLA)
 Member, American Association of Geographers
 Member, Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society