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Sustainable Beef Labeling in Latin America: Initiatives based on Silvopastoral Systems

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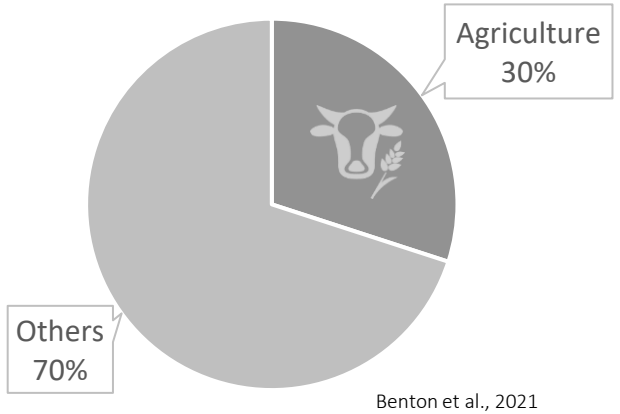


Introduction, objective and methodology

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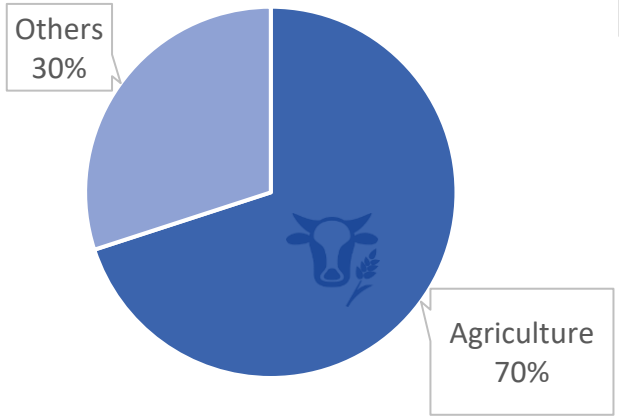
Introduction

Anthropogenic GHG emissions

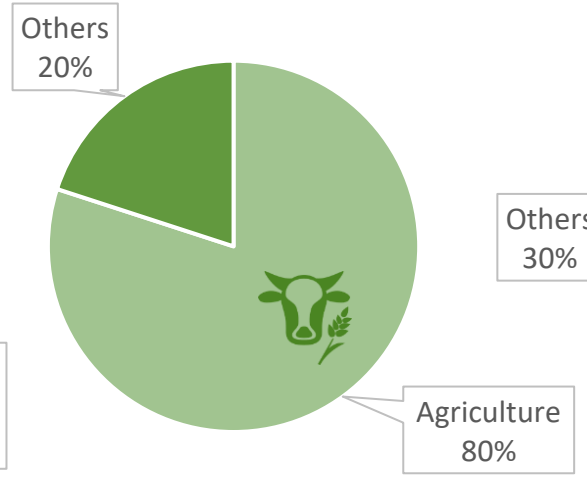


Benton et al., 2021

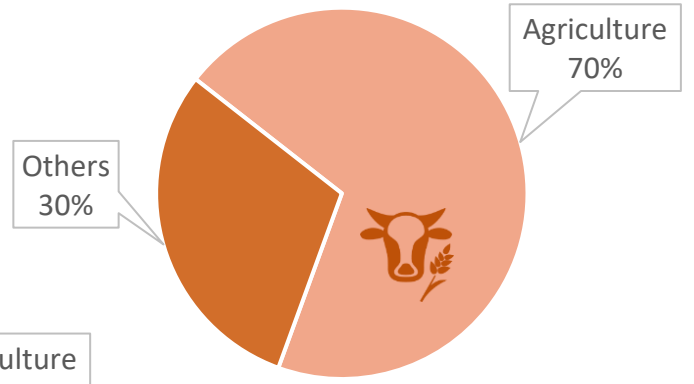
Global freshwater use



Cause of deforestation



Loss of terrestrial biodiversity



WWF, 2020

- Food supply chains are increasingly associated with environmental and socioeconomic impacts at various stages, from production to distribution, consumption, and waste generation (Sala et al., 2017)
- Environmental issues (e.g., deforestation, biodiversity loss, natural resource exploitation, and climate change) have awakened the awareness of citizens in recent decades.

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Introduction











- Socially responsible consumption awareness is growing (Izquierdo et al., 2018)
- Products and services are chosen not just on the basis of their quality or price, but also **on the basis of their environmental and social repercussions**, as well as the conduct of the corporations that provide them.
- **Sustainability seals have evolved**, providing assurances that production is based on criteria such as animal welfare, zero-deforestation, and carbon neutrality, among others.
- **They have spread in different regions of the world**, such as the USA and Europe, but there is no evidence documenting the progress in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

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Objective

To identify and analyze existing sustainability labels for beef and other on-going initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Materials and Methods

A Qualitative-descriptive approach:

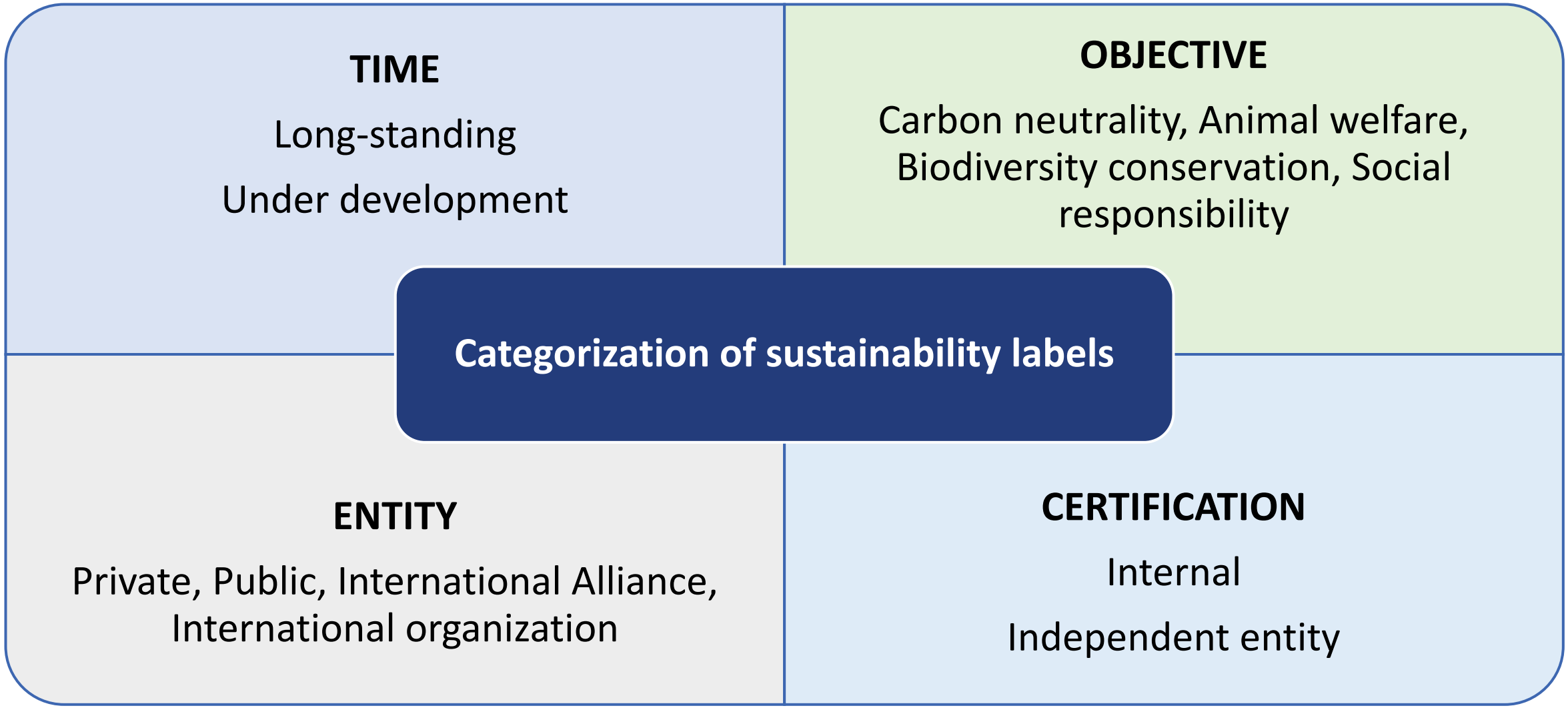
- Primary sources: expert interviews
- Secondary sources:
  - scientific articles
  - Documents from international organizations such as FAO, IICA, ECLAC, and others
  - Publications of entities involved in sustainability labelling



Results and conclusions

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Categorization of sustainability labels



Historical development of sustainability labels in LAC

2008

Brazil and Uruguay
Certified Humane

2010

Carne del Pastizal
Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay

2014

Uruguay
Never Ever 3

2015

Carne Carbono Neutro

Carbon Neutral Brazilian Beef
Brazil

2017

Bolivia
Bolivian Natural Beef

2019

Angus Sustentabilidade
Brazil

2020

Colombia
-Colombian Beef Grass-Fed CO
-Aval Ganso

2021

Grass Fed
Argentina

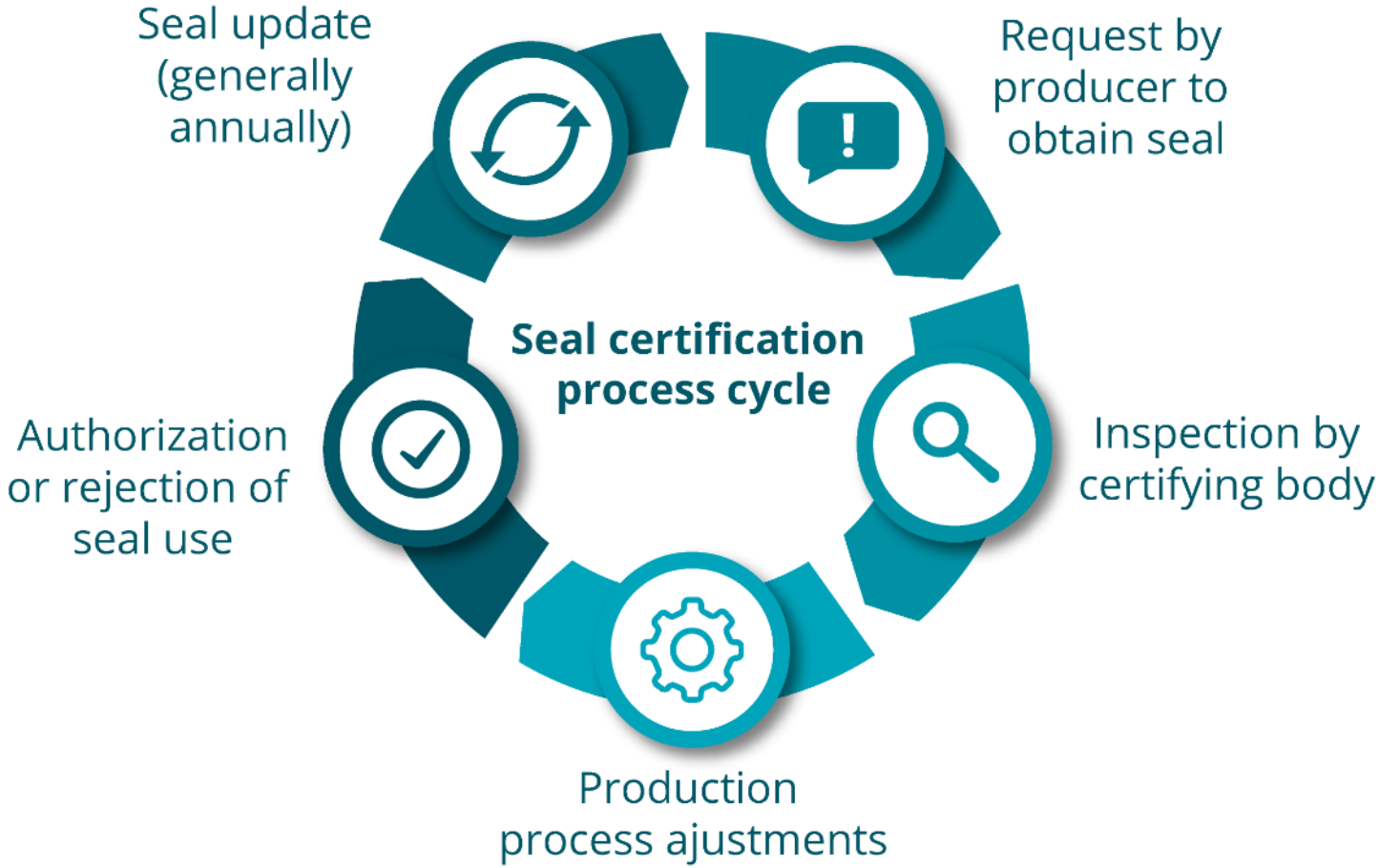
2021

Uruguay
Carne Carbono Neutralidad

2021

-Sello de Ganadería Sostenible
-Sello Ambiental Colombiano
Colombia

Seal certification process cycle



Tendencies

- The development of sustainability seals has happened in parallel with the development of quality seals, instead of talking about a transition from one to the other.
- A scenario is configured in which **sustainability is an added value, but not necessarily a priority**.
- Mexico and Argentina: In spite of occupying a leading place in the production and export of beef, there **don't exist sustainability seals with a long tradition**.
- The most common labels for sustainable beef production are for **carbon neutrality and animal welfare**. Most of them exist in Brazil but some are also being developed and applied in other countries, such as Uruguay and Colombia.
- In contrast, criteria such as fair payment to the producer, optimal working conditions, and human and children's rights, do not figure prominently in the seals identified (except in Brazil's *Angus Sustentabilidade* label).



Brazil and Uruguay: regional benchmarks

- The two countries share labels and protocols for beef production (Certified Humane and Carne del Pastizal).
- Both Countries show the opening of national and international markets, one of the objectives of the sustainability seals:
  - *External demand: "*Carne del Pastizal", "Certified Humane", and "Never Ever 3" labels export to customers in Europe and China.
  - *Internal demand:* Carbon Neutral Brazilian Beef and Angus Sustentabilidade
- Although Brazil and Uruguay are regional references in the development of this type of sustainability labeling, their contexts are clearly diverse, which affects the approaches by which the labels are governed.



The increasing growth of sustainability labelling in Colombia

- Since 2020, no other LAC country has been developing sustainability labels as intensively as Colombia.
- The main focus consists not only in the conservation of forest areas, but in the promotion of the use of endemic and introduced trees and shrubs for livestock feeding.
- Animals have been fed on pasture in forestry systems, thus contributing to the reduction of GHG emissions and the protection of the natural environment and biodiversity.

But…

- The COVID-19 situation generated difficulties in the import and export of feed and agricultural inputs which coincided with the emergence of the seals.
- One of the challenges is the certification processes, since no international organizations have been involved that could provide consumers with greater confidence.







Conclusions

- Although the conditions in LAC are favorable for the development of sustainable beef labeling, progress to date has not been significant.
- The identified sustainability labels correspond mainly to the large producers and exporters from the region, and lags are observed above all in Central America and the Caribbean.
- Uruguay and Brazil rely on the collaboration between private and public institutions, with independent third parties for governance. This offers greater guarantees with respect to the certification process, as well as contributes to promoting good governance.
- Since sustainability schemes are still in a voluntary phase, great perseverance is required. There is a need to invest in education and training to stimulate sustainable cattle farming over long periods.

Conclusions

- Because it is difficult to monitor cattle in the many facilities where they have resided from birth to slaughter, **traceability is a problem**.
- The existence of **private labeling methods might jeopardize trustworthiness** because it makes it difficult for consumers to distinguish between those that have and don't have rigorous certification processes.
- In this scenario, **sustainability labels will require greater public-private cooperation** to solve governance issues and enhance their effectiveness.





Further reading



Labeling of sustainable beef products in Latin America and the Caribbean: Initiatives and developments

hdl.handle.net/10568/116665

Spanish version
hdl.handle.net/10568/116873

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Thanks!

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