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Lopes, Maria-Aparecida; de los Reyes Patiño, Reynaldo
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Dossier: Ganadería en el mundo americano: algunas reflexiones sobre tecnología, consumo e intercambio

Institutions and Interest Groups: Meat Provision in Mexico City, c. 1850–1967

Instituciones y grupos de interés: el abasto de carne en la ciudad de México, c. 1850–1967

Maria-Aparecida Lopes
California State University, Estados Unidos
mlopes@csufresno.edu

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Reynaldo de los Reyes Patiño
El Colegio de México, México
rdlosreyes@colmex.mx

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RESUMEN:

Este artículo analiza el sistema de abasto de carne de la ciudad de México desde la década de 1850 hasta 1967. Durante este periodo, mientras algunos centros urbanos del continente americano reemplazaron sus métodos tradicionales de aprovisionamiento -el sistema de rastros- con compañías empacadoras, la ciudad de México siguió dependiendo del monopolio municipal para proveer de carne a las masas. Este estudio se centra en el rol que jugaron en este proceso los ganaderos, proveedores de ganado (introdutores) y trabajadores del rastro, junto con las autoridades de la ciudad. Muestra cómo estos actores evolucionaron adaptándose a cualquier autoridad en el poder sin importar la ideología y cómo grupos de interés, introductores, trabajadores y ganaderos no sólo proporcionaron un servicio a los habitantes de la ciudad, sino que, con diferentes grados de influencia, también proveyeron un importante apoyo político para los gobiernos. Por su parte, y en nombre del orden público, las autoridades de la ciudad protegieron esas asociaciones como forma de gestionar los suministros. Esta relación de beneficio mutuo les permitió a ambos (grupos de interés y autoridades) resistirse a los conglomerados de empacadoras hasta bien entrado el siglo XX. Este trabajo resalta que, aunque en ocasiones estos arreglos facilitaron el suministro de carne, en otras no permitieron que las proteínas animales llegaran hasta los trabajadores pobres – uno de los objetivos principales del México posrevolucionario.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sistema de rastros, Monopolio municipal, Grupos de interés, Suministro de carne, Ciudad de México.

ABSTRACT:

This paper examines Mexico City's meat supply system from the 1850s to 1967. During this period, whereas some urban centers in the Americas replaced traditional provisioning methods – abattoir system – with meatpacking companies, Mexico City continued to rely on the municipal monopoly to provide meat for the masses. This study focuses on the role that ranchers, cattle purveyors (*introdutores*), and slaughterhouse (*rastra*) workers, alongside city officials, played in this process. It shows how these actors evolved accommodating to any authority in power, regardless of ideology. As interest groups, introductores, workers, and ranchers not only delivered a service to city dwellers but with varying degrees of influence, they also provided essential political support to governments. For their part, city officials protected these associations as a means of managing supplies and in the name of public order. Such a mutually beneficial relationship allowed both (interest groups and the municipality) to resist meatpacking conglomerates well into the twentieth century. The work underscores that although at occasions these arrangements facilitated meat provision, in others, they hindered the extension of animal proteins to the working poor – one of the main goals of post-revolutionary Mexico.

KEYWORDS: Abattoir system, Municipal monopoly, Interest groups, Meat supply, Mexico City.

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the nineteenth century, urban centers on both sides of the Atlantic experienced dramatic changes propelled by industrialization and population growth. Urban dwellers faced—and city officials sought to tackle—housing, sewerage, and food provision challenges. In the third realm, the increase in agricultural productivity and technological innovations in food preservation led to a dietary shift. Likewise,

as emerging nutrition studies elevated animal proteins above all other foodstuff, knowledge about the links among nourishment, hygiene, and disease transformed the notion of what constituted the ideal diet. Indeed, concerns over the wellbeing of the poor evolved to the point that governments, public officials, and even consumers saw the “absence of meat in the diet of the working class . . . as a form of deprivation” (Knapp 1997, p. 544). Despite the consensus that meat was an “element of human health and . . . a matter of public policy” (Finlay, 1995, p. 48), how to provide meat for the masses varied.¹ In some Latin American and Western European cities, this renewed dietary concern strengthened the traditional abattoir system. For their part, meatpacking companies contended that only their industry could offer the right kind of animal protein to all. Although conventional wisdom maintains that advanced technology resulted in better supplies, the sudden expansion of meatpacking companies provoked unfettered business activity, industry concentration, and food health scares.

This paper examines how these developments played out in Mexico City. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Mexico began a prolonged economic recovery, underwent a revolution in 1910, and in the 1920s and 1950s, reconstructed the state around corporate foundations. Remarkably, the institutions and groups that supplied fresh meat to the country’s capital city remained mostly the same (see Appendix 1). We seek to address the following questions: How did meat-provisioning institutions evolve in Mexico City alongside these political changes? What role did cattle purveyors (*introduectores*), ranchers, and slaughterhouse (*rastro*) workers play in the meat supply chain of Mexico’s largest city? How did these interest groups relate to municipal authorities and consumers? This study argues that the continuity of these actors resided in part in their capacity to evolve and accommodate the city’s governments for several decades, which allowed them to resist meatpacking conglomerates well into the twentieth century. There is no doubt that natural endowments and human-made upheaval shaped the Mexican livestock industry and its byproducts provision to the country’s largest urban market. In this discussion, we will underscore the institutional conditions that, on occasion, facilitated meat provision and, on others, represented an obstacle to better supplies.

THE ABATTOIR SYSTEM

In the Americas, access to meat and other foodstuffs deemed essential had been a concern of urban authorities since the colonial times. Stemming in part from the Old Regime provision policies, the abattoir system allowed municipalities to supply meat to urban dwellers at fair prices and in good conditions. In locales without natural ice or refrigeration, meat has to reach the marketplace within hours after an animal’s slaughter. Thus, municipal authorities’ methodical control of almost all (if not all) processes involved in the transformation of animals into meat assured daily distribution of the wholesome product within the urban grid. Studies on New York City, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro show that, with some variations, a series of regulations on either cattle transport and processing or meat preparation and retailing produced the meat marketplace (Moncada, 2017; Dupuy, 2013; Baics, 2013; Horowitz, Pilcher & Wats, 2004; Quiroz, 2003).

Over the nineteenth century, as freezing and chilling technology allowed meat to be transported over great distances (while maintaining good appearance and nutritious value), traditional cattle production and meat preservation techniques were phased out or relocated to less competitive areas. Fierce disputes between old and new interest groups characterized this transition. In the majority of cases, private industrial technology prevailed while the municipality’s role was limited to sanitary matters. Whereas meatpacking companies were operating in New York City, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro, in Mexico City, the municipal monopoly continued to play an essential part in the cattle-meat provision system well into the mid-twentieth century.

The political-economic philosophy behind municipal monopolies rested on the following principles. First, centralization and government oversight were instruments with which authorities sought to prevent

unfettered competition and price-fixing by powerful actors (Claffin, 2008, p. 41). Second, in cities, in which the “policy of provision” reigned, market competition was meant to accomplish that goal. City officials conceived of municipal monopolies as a way of achieving two ends: as a source of revenue and as means of price controls. Local administrators and others arrived at the “fairest market price” based upon the number of animals in lairage, on the capacity of urban technology to process and store meat and other byproducts, and on local conditions to distribute the product within the urban grid. Understandably, such arrangements endured for as long as the technological structure remained unchanged. Shortages and price fluctuation were not only typical but also expected in the urban marketplace. The abattoir system attempted to “compensate” for such volatilities.

In early-twentieth-century Mexico City, municipal slaughterhouses were one of the departments—alongside prisons, water commission, public instruction, markets, festivities, and electricity—under the local government’s purview. In its annual report, the latter included summaries of those branches’ activities, together with data on animals slaughtered for consumption, meat prices, and various related affairs. The city council appointed administrators as well as other *rastros* bureaucrats. For their part, municipal slaughterhouses collected fees on each animal introduced and processed at their facilities. In the 1901 budget, for instance, these fees accrued significant amounts for city council funds, second only to direct contributions (*contribuciones directas*) (México, 1901, pp. 34–36); hence, any change in supply had repercussions beyond the *rastros* themselves.

Additionally, centralization in processing and sanitary inspection gave the city council latitude to oversee slaughterhouses’ output and to mediate working relations in municipal abattoirs. Such a far-reaching role had several long-term consequences. In a broad sense, the notion that meat was a necessary food merged with early concepts of social welfare whereby the state had to ensure that the right kind of food (animal proteins, in particular) was within reach of the working class. Concurrently, cattle suppliers, *rastro* workers, and other actors in the meat-provisioning chain strengthened their position, as did the municipality. They all knew that industrial meatpacking would bankrupt their traditional businesses and possibly erode the municipality’s political leeway vis-à-vis those groups and the population.

INTEREST GROUPS: INTRODUCTORES, RASTRO WORKERS, RANCHERS, AND CONSUMERS

Interest groups deliver a service, advocate for their constituents, and mediate between their membership and governments. The extent to which each function shapes the local market and society varies according to the political, technological, and financial frameworks. When any of these develop to the point of displacing interest groups’ functions, these organizations might be capable of inhibiting innovation and jeopardize political stability. Because interest groups provide essential political support to governments, public officials tend to “protect” them for the sake of social order. Such a dependent relationship was clearly at play in Mexico City’s meat supply institutions from the 1850s to the 1960s (Berry, 1978; Baccaro, 2003; Arrieta, 2001; Horgos & Zimmermann, 2009; Patroni, 2001).

Several interest groups participated in Mexico City’s meat commodity chain. Ranchers raised and fattened cattle in Mexico’s Central Plateau; *introduttore*s transported these animals to Mexico City; skilled workers transformed them into meat, and another crew delivered the finished good to multiple butcher stalls in the city. During the period under consideration in this study—and with different degrees of influence—these individuals acted and employed a language closely associated with the definition aforementioned. As a group that connected breeders to consumers, *introduttore*s amassed considerable power in the supply chain.

*Introduttore*s acquired cattle in rural areas or in Mexico City’s hinterlands, shipped herds from these areas to fattening grounds near the urban grid, and delivered them in the main *rastro*. These operations had to account for the nature of the livestock industry and the unpredictability of animal transportation. When purchasing cattle, *introduttore*s usually made advance agreements with ranchers and fatteners. They did so

considering the city's demand and the fact that too many animals would drive down prices or—worse yet—that herds would perish given the lack of pasture near the urban perimeter. In the same vein, the cattle trailing industry was a high-risk undertaking. Distances from consumption centers, poor transportation infrastructure, exposure of animals to the elements, and above all, the weight loss that cattle incurred during transit all affected herd's prices (Pilcher, 2006; Claffin, 2006).

Trying to attract enough interest to the industry and to compensate for such risky prospects, since the late colonial times and throughout the nineteenth century, Mexico City auctioned off exclusive rights to merchants. They acquired the right to supply the city of beef and mutton at specific prices for a year or more. In the late 1800s, although anyone was allowed to introduce animals in Mexico City, a mere fourteen merchants brought cattle and sheep to the San Lucas slaughterhouse in herds of about twenty to thirty animals daily. A dozen or more traders were in charge of hog supply (Pilcher, 2006). In the twentieth century, these merchants continued to exercise the functions mentioned. They provided “credit to ranchers, as well as to meat retailers” and, under the supervision of the city council, determined the price of fresh meat and lard.²

At the *rastros*, different groups of specialized workers butchered the animals, separating the skin from muscles, preparing meat and other byproducts, and transporting these goods to butcher stalls. These laborers were a fundamental part of the meat supply chain. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the processes by which they “disassembled” animals bore striking similarities to that of their mid-nineteenth-century peers. During the first half of the twentieth century, facing the prospect of meatpacking companies in Mexico City, laborers employed a diverse range of strategies to block so-called interlopers. They sent petitions to the municipal and federal governments vigorously resisting innovation and threatening strikes. They gained preeminence as a group, particularly in the 1930s, with the codification of article 123 Ley Federal del Trabajo of the 1917 Constitution. The legislation had a twofold consequence; it “sanctioned unions” and gave them the “monopoly of representation” (Patroni, 2001, p. 255). In the 1940s, as one worker put it, they operated as guilds whereby they sought to preserve their craft (*oficio*), to safeguard their constituents against exploitation, and to protect their membership.³

From the late 1800s, at least until the early 1940s, ranchers seemed to be one of the weakest groups in the meat supply chain of Mexico City. Most beef cattle consumed in the city originated in the country's Central Plateau. During that period, with some significant regional differences, an open-range system dominated Mexico's pastoral landscape. Improvements related more to the expansion of cattle holdings rather than to the industry's organization patterns. For instance, only a few breeders (especially in Northern Mexico) engaged in animal genetic upgrading, utilized barbed wire, or enhanced feed for fattening (Lopes & Riguzzi, 2012). Not surprisingly, Northern cattlemen showed interest in Mexico City's meat market, where they attempted to introduce meatpacking companies.

The Revolution of 1910 and land reform prospects immediately after the almost decade-long armed struggle greatly affected the Mexican livestock industry. The sector began a slow recovery after the 1930s, thanks in part to the federal government's efforts to revitalize the agricultural industry. Although since the late 1800s, there had been several state and regional cattlemen's associations, only after 1935 did a national one take shape—on the heels of the 1932 federal Ley sobre Asociaciones Agrícolas. In the former year, as the First National Cattlemen Convention occurred, its delegates lobbied the federal government for land reform exemptions (*inafectabilidad ganadera*), credit, and other incentives. In the 1940s and 1950s, ranchers became as vocal as introductores in Mexico City's intricate debates on meat provision. Their organizations engaged in those discussions and proposed solutions to further their interests.⁴

In late-nineteenth, early-twentieth-century Mexico City, strictly speaking, and based on the definition aforementioned, consumers were not an interest group; however, they voiced their opinions about Mexico City's meat market via newspapers. For instance, they rejected new products, criticized price hikes, requested specific standards, and—above all,—demanded action from the municipal government in meat supply matters. Despite occasional shortages, buyers of animal-derived foodstuffs relied on a system

that “had provided certain predictable protections” (Graham, 2010, p. 191). City dwellers not only pressed the municipality to comply with its provisioning obligations, but also resisted radical changes (i.e., “modernization” in late nineteenth-century language) to the system. In late-1800s Mexico City, municipal authorities, introductores, and consumers continued to conceive of meat as a “special food.” Indeed, when disruptions of any sort affected supplies, these actors asked for more, not less, intervention from city officials.

MEAT IN THE DIET OF MEXICO CITY’S DWELLERS

In Mexico City, meat-based dishes were not as integrated into the diet as they were in cattle-producing regions of the country. Alden Buell Case (1917), an American Protestant pastor who lived in Chihuahua from the 1880s to 1910, noted, “Beef is abundant in that cattle country. No family was too poor to afford meat of some type” (p. 58). Those who visited Mexico City had the opposite impression, invariably remarking that “meat [was a] rarity.” The British author, Hugh B. C. Pollard (1913), went further concluding, “This probably accounts for their [Mexicans] lack of energy” (p. 88). Visitors in Mexico City, perhaps craving stakes or roasts, might have found them in exclusive restaurants, but not in taverns (*fondas*) or street markets. Hence, they detected a class divide in the diet, whereby meat was mostly available at the tables of the rich. In Mexico City, meat supplemented the staple food of “stewed vegetables, frijoles, crispy tortillas” (Blake & Sullivan, 1888, p. 85). Alongside offal, strips of chicken, beef, lamb, mutton, and pork meat (cooked with vegetables and chili peppers) constituted the basic filling for tacos. Beans (occasionally seasoned with lard and topped with grated cheese) accompanied daily meals. Shredded or minced meat was also an ingredient in enchiladas, stuffed chiles, tamales, or meatballs. These were everyday dishes found in households and hawked in the streets of Mexico City.

According to recent studies, the food basket of a worker in late-nineteenth-century Mexico City consisted of those essential items aforementioned in addition to bread, sugar, pulque, and lard. Those who could afford beyond staple foods had more variety, partaking in fruits, chickpeas, and vegetables. Nevertheless, most of the calories of a dweller in Mexico City derived from maize (as tortillas) and beans. As for animal proteins, the data available and findings based on variables such as height, income, prices, and real wage estimates suggest that the laboring poor in Mexico City had more meat compared to their counterpart in other regions of the country, except for the Bajío and Northern Mexico (Challú & Gómez Galvarriato, 2015, p. 88; López-Alonso, 2012).

Certainly, this snapshot does not account for all segments of the urban worker; variation per occupation, skills, and family size shaped dwellers’ living standards (Busto, 1880). Aside from wage disparity, some segments of the society did not participate in the monetized economy. Finally, meat was not evenly distributed in a household. Usually, the “traditional” breadwinner would take a significant portion of such a fare (Griffin, 2018; López-Alonso, 2012). In sum, travelers’ impressions do have some ground in pointing to significant inequalities between rich and poor—as expected—but most importantly, within the working class.

For all of this uncertainty, recent estimates about the evolution of real wages in Mexico City from the latter decades of the eighteenth century until 1929 maintain that after the 1860s, workers’ living conditions began to improve, although slowly and with pronounced downturns (Challú & Gómez Galvarriato, 2015, p. 98). During the later decades of the 1800s, unskilled workers in the city spent, on average, more than 50 percent of their wages on food, which is consistent with household budgets in other Atlantic cities (Clafin, 2006, p. 128; Román, 2018). In those years, in Mexico City, beef expenditures fluctuated around 20 percent, only below wheat bread (Gómez Galvarriato & Musacchio, 2000, p. 74). Besides, according to official wholesale data, beef was perhaps the one meat to which the urban poor would have greater access, for it was cheap and abundant.

During most of the Porfiriato period (1876–1911), the per capita meat supply grew consistently with beef cattle—far exceeding pork, lamb, and mutton provisions in the urban marketplace. The same figures reveal that, between 1878 and 1898, wholesale beef cattle prices ranged around fourteen cents, lamb and mutton twenty, and pork twenty-one. After the latter year, prices for the three types of meat saw an upsurge, particularly pork, which more than doubled from 1904 onward. These data somewhat coincide with figures collected in the *Estadísticas Económicas del Porfiriato*, which indicates minor variations in meat prices until the end of the nineteenth century, and increases by 1909–1910 (Lopes, 2011; Seminario de Historia, 1965, p. 155; Cossío, 1965). Qualitative information from the late 1800s corroborates these figures, indicating that meat prices were “sky high,” while news of shortages and complaints about the “monopolies” filled the leading newspapers of México city (Pilcher, 2006, pp. 151–52; Gómez Galvarriato, 1998, pp. 349–55).⁵

There is no doubt that at the dawn of the twentieth century, city dwellers were paying more for their meat and, that by the 1910s, this rise coincided with wage reduction. What is more, as the analyst of *The Mexican Year Book* (1909–1910) suggests, “[Meat’s] home demand, . . . has increased owing to the gradual spread of prosperity among the working class, enabling them to include more meat in their diet. As a result . . . there has been a steady rise in the price of beef cattle during the last decade” (p. 398). Indeed, the conjunction of these factors might have contributed to a decrease in meat consumption in Mexico City in the early 1900s. Following the example of other metropolises, modernization enthusiasts concluded that the proper response to scarcity and high price was industrialization. As the next section explores, the actors involved in city’s meat supply chain did not anticipate the disruption an industrial slaughterhouse would cause in a century-old system.

A NEW ABATTOIR FOR MEXICO CITY AND THE FIGHT BETWEEN NEW MONOPOLIES AND OLD INTEREST GROUPS

Operating chiefly in this political-economic setting, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Mexico City attempted to overhaul its supplies of animal-derived foods. To curb clandestine slaughtering, in 1850, the San Lucas rastro became the only authorized plant for cattle and sheep processing. The existing pork slaughterhouses (*tocinerías*) would remain in operation temporarily. It took more than two decades for the completion of these renovation projects. In 1871, the city council and private interests agreed to modernize the old San Lucas municipal facility. The goal was to centralize meat processing, which in turn would facilitate the collection of municipal fees, veterinary checkups, and meat inspection. One year earlier, local officials had closed all pork-processing facilities within the urban perimeter, designating the San Antonio Abad plant as the city’s *tocinería* (Pilcher, 2006).

Despite improvements in the old slaughterhouses and the existence of two so-called packinghouses—“San Lázaro” and “Nonoalco”—in the late 1800s, these facilities were no longer satisfying dwellers’ demand in Mexico City. What is more, clandestine slaughtering continued to be common practice. Once again, discussions about building a new facility emerged. Whereas meat industrialization was gaining momentum in other regions of Mexico, in the Republic’s capital, cattle merchants, rastro workers, municipal authorities, and consumers bet on the traditional abattoir system. In September 1897, Mexico City inaugurated the Peralvillo slaughterhouse (*Rastro nuevo*). The Rastro nuevo was located in the city’s northeast area, near the Grand Canal and the Peralvillo racetrack, adjacent to the railway line; however, shortly after, Peravillo closed for remodeling. Apart from the plant’s structural deficiencies, flooding halted all animal processing, and cattle merchants returned to San Lucas (López Rosado, 1988).⁶

The firm charged with rebuilding the Rastro nuevo, *La Internacional* was the property of Luis Terrazas, the head of a livestock conglomerate from the State of Chihuahua, on the border with the United States. Terrazas’s interests included not only ranching, banking, and mining, but also meatpacking. In 1898, his firms had installed such a facility in Chihuahua, and three years later, another in Torreón (Pilcher,

2006). In Mexico City, meat traders and introductores hotly criticized this concession, deeming it “illegal and inconvenient.” In a lengthy, historically detailed petition, they contended that since the 1812 Cádiz Constitution—which established free commerce (*comercio libre*)—the municipality only “administered” the abattoir, ceding to private agents (ranchers, introductores, and workers) the right to use the public facility. Thus, they argued, the city council could not yield to a “third party” the services of cattle slaughtering and meat preparation without their consent:

allowing La Internacional to set up its packinghouse and forcing us to continue [using] the slaughterhouse, or preventing us from establishing our slaughterhouse is a privilege . . . that constitutes a real monopoly. A slaughterhouse has never been able to compete with a meatpacking plant, because . . . this industry has reached its highest degree of perfection Where a meatpacking plant is founded, a slaughterhouse necessarily disappears. . . . We do not ask for privileges from anyone. We want to be free to exercise our industry and trade in fair conditions with our new competitor.⁷

Próspero Ramírez y Juan N. Zepeda, owners of a pork-processing facility, addressed the controversy in a similar tone. They stressed that, as a matter of “public order,” the municipality was only responsible for “collecting fees and monitoring public health.”⁸ Despite these allegations, by 1905, Peralvillo was functioning as Mexico City’s slaughterhouse. Its regulations established that all livestock supplied to the city was to be inspected and processed at that new abattoir, which opened its doors to any cattle merchant. However, some alleged that powerful livestock companies enjoyed an unfair advantage as their animals were processed first, reaching the market earlier and tapping out local demand (México, 1905, pp. 3–4; Pilcher, 2006, pp. 108–11).⁹

The significance of the latter altercations and the difficulties involved in the construction of the Rastro nuevo speak to meat’s social meaning in Mexico City. Although introductores and rastro workers were not victorious on this occasion, the notion that theirs was a cause for the common good endured well into the mid-twentieth century. The municipality sanctioned those private actors (organized in interest groups) to deliver livestock to the city and transform them into meat. What is more, apart from overseeing the product’s healthfulness, the city council mediated labor relations in the rastos. It acted as a guarantor that meat would be plentiful and affordable to all. Any attempt to change the system had to reckon with such an agreed-upon provision framework.

THE SHORT LIFE OF THE MEXICAN NATIONAL PACKING COMPANY

The second attempt to overhaul meat supply institutions in modern Mexico City was the result of a merger between La Internacional and interests from the United States. In 1908, John DeKay, who had been secretary of the North American Beef Company, opened the Mexican National Packing Company (MNPC) in Uruapan (Michoacán). In Mexico City, the MNPC operated the Rancho del Chopo, a cold storage plant that distributed its output to several butcher stalls in the urban grid. Newspaper adverts portray MNPC’s meat as “healthy,” and urge consumers to “insist upon Popo meats [the nickname of meat from Rancho del Chopo] government inspected meats produced exclusively in the great plant of the MNPC” (Guzmán, 1982);¹⁰ nevertheless, the success of Popo meats was fleeting. First, in 1910, the company underwent a tumultuous, politically charged bankruptcy. Second, introductores, butchers, and rastro workers—who accused the company of monopolistic practices—promoted a series of strikes and boycotts against foreign dominance over Mexico City’s meat market. Further, consumers had not yet become accustomed to American cuts, let alone chilled or frozen beef (Pilcher, 2006).

Such a state of affairs coincided with the onset of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917). Although most of the war action occurred in north and south Mexico, in 1913, Mexico City was the setting for Victoriano Huerta’s coup-d’état. Two years later, famine struck the capital. Graphic reports depict food shortages, as opposing armies cut off food supply lines from the Bajío region to Mexico City. When Huerta’s

government went down, arrangements to maintain the MNPC afloat fell apart. As the bureaucracy of the nearly victorious Constitutionalist faction took shape, administrators attempted to ascertain conditions in the *rastro* and to normalize supplies. In 1916, they gained control of meat provision in Mexico City. Per Constitutionalist reports, the city's central slaughterhouse had obsolete facilities and the conditions by which workhands slaughtered, processed, and distributed meat had changed little since the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹ On several occasions, during the 1920s, those laborers went on strike for better wages and working conditions. In the 1930s, unified under the motto of the Revolution, they found an effective conduit for channeling their grievances: the corporatist policies of the Cárdenas administration.

THE CORPORATE STATE, THE UNIONS, AND THE ADMINISTRACIÓN OBRERA

In the first half of the twentieth century, the wellbeing of the working poor took center stage in national politics almost everywhere in the Western world. In the background, the 1929 economic crisis and privations of both World Wars shaped the conditions under which those sectors' integration into national economics and politics became a matter of domestic prosperity. Indeed, the state shifted from "ignoring" or "persecuting" social ills to one promoting social security. Governments developed pension programs and fostered unionization. Proper nutrition—broadly defined as expanding protein intake beyond corn and beans—was also a means of achieving social fairness. In the 1930s and 1940s, policymakers—aided by scholars in the area of nutrition—strove to provide "rational" (according to their terminology) food for the masses (Quintín, 1941; Miranda, 1947). In Mexico, such a role became central to the political agenda of post-revolutionary governments and coincided with the emergence of "nutritional studies" as a field of knowledge in the country (United Nations, 1943, pp. 39–41; Zazueta, 2011).

In 1939, President Lázaro Cárdenas issued a decree determining that Sindicato Único de Obreros de Matanza y Similares de los Rastros del Distrito Federal (SUORDF) provided "the service of Rastros," supplying "bovine, hog, mutton, and lamb" meat to the Distrito Federal (DF). A council composed by members from the SUORDF, the Departamento del Distrito Federal (DDF), and the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM) was designated to oversee such operations. Although in the late 1930s, President Cárdenas's most radical labor policies were dwindling, at the beginning of his term, the federal government ceded to unions the administration of areas deemed strategic to the national economy. Such were the cases of the energy and transport sectors.¹²

The Administración Obrera (AdmOb) put in the hands of organized labor the management of one of the foodstuffs most identified with rational dieting. One objective of the AdmOb was to deliver a "social service, from which the consumer benefits exclusively."¹³ To realize such an ambitious goal, it had to overcome several obstacles. Only five months into their tenure, the council of the AdmOb reported that the *rastros* had high deficits, thanks in part to increased expenses with "personnel compensation" and the "reorganization of services." What is more, as the number of animals that entered municipal facilities declined, so did their primary source of revenue, fees collected on animal management and processing. Worse yet, by one account, "clandestine meat" at low prices had flooded the city, competing with the product from municipal *rastros* (Adler, 1988; Cárdenas, 2010; Niblo, 1999; Gerber, 1995).¹⁴

The AdmOb attempted to improve the *rastro* Central (the main slaughterhouse in Mexico City) facilities. It set up a laboratory for processing animal by-products and expanded the capacity of the refrigerating plant. Moreover, it established "popular butcher stalls" to which, "hundreds of housewives come every day to provide themselves with their most important means of food."¹⁵ However, technological backwardness plagued the facilities that the AdmOb administered. In 1942, the federal government granted legal personhood to the AdmOb to seek loans to "substitute the abattoir system for a meatpacking company;" nonetheless, it never did, in part because the union deemed it inappropriate "to appeal to people who

have always tried to take over the slaughterhouses and whom the workers consider enemies of the working class.” Since the beginning of the AdmOb, disagreements took place between the DDF and the SUORDF. Such divergences reached new heights in June 1944, when local newspapers reported that, “despite the opportunities that the DDF offered, [the AdmOb] did not convert the rastro into a meatpacking company.”¹⁶

As the federal government shifted its revolutionary stance, from class struggle to national unity, the experiment with the AdmOb ended in 1947 (Knight, 1991; Medin, 1990).¹⁷ Concomitantly, crises of different natures jeopardized meat supplies in Mexico. First, World War II market disruptions resulted in food scarcity and price hikes. Second, an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 1947 structurally changed Mexico’s livestock industry. On the one hand, between March and November of that year, more than one million sick animals—or those thought to be infected—were slaughtered and buried. On the other, the epizootic leveraged the federal government to push for meat industrialization in the entire country. As for Mexico City, it entered the 1950s with approximately 50 percent fewer beef cattle per capita than it had two decades earlier.¹⁸

In discussions about meat supply in the DF, references to free trade were a common trait. Most actors involved in Mexico City’s meat provisioning espoused free-market principles while opposing a meatpacking company. The Union’s disapproval of the latter rested upon the conviction that “any private company that intended to reduce the price of meat would have to control all activities related to this industry constituting a true monopoly.” Said monopoly “is contrary to social service, from which the consuming public has benefited exclusively.”¹⁹

Although repackaged as an outcome of the Revolution of 1910, in essence, such arguments were no different from those their counterparts used in the late nineteenth century. In post-revolutionary Mexico, the expansion of the foods (meat and milk in particular) to the working poor was reframed as a matter of revolutionary public welfare. However, it continued in many aspects as a private/public undertaking. While a series of intermediaries controlled supplies, municipal/federal authorities’ oversight went far beyond sanitary matters. Such arrangements effectively blocked the arrival of foreign industrial plants in one of the world’s largest cities. Expectedly, meat provision in Mexico City remained subjected to political vicissitudes, as it had been in the late nineteenth century. It is less clear if such arrangements were to blame for meat shortages, as will be discussed.

MEAT FOR THE NEW WORKING CLASS

During the 1940s, Mexico City experienced incredible population growth and an equally remarkable urban extension—both pushed the city’s supply system to its limits. Between 1940 and 1970, the inhabitants of the capital jumped from 1.7 to 6.9 million, and its metropolitan area, whose limits reached the neighboring Estado de México, had 8.7 million dwellers (Unikel, 1976, p. 134). Driven by post-war development policies, in those years, the Mexican economy grew 6.4 percent annually in real terms, while the national population growth was 3 percent. The nicknamed Mexican Miracle was characterized by a high concentration in Mexico City, which in 1970 accounted for half of the nation’s total industrial production (Garza, 1985, pp. 139–40). This economic dynamism attracted many migrants from the countryside looking for a better standard of living as factory workers. However, the benefits of the Mexican Miracle were not evenly distributed, as real wages in the manufacturing sector did not accompany the ever-growing cost of living.²⁰

As the horizontal city tripled its surface between 1950 and 1970, housing and food shortages, which affected the most vulnerable, followed suit. The urban sprawl encompassed rural and semirural areas in the DF, where locals consumed not only vegetables from their gardens but also wild animals and insects. According to a 1945 report of the Instituto Nacional de Nutriología (INN), as competition for land

increased, the poorest abandoned their traditional diet (particularly insect-eating) but were unable to purchase milk or meat, losing their vital sources of proteins (Aguilar, 2009, p. 63). In 1947, the head of the INN, Francisco de P. Miranda, acknowledged that in some regions of Mexico City, the diet of urban dwellers was as precarious as that of those living in the impoverished countryside (p. 24). Ten years later, another study noted that rural and suburban communities as well as neighborhoods had a sizable proportion of people with “serious nutrition deficiencies.” The most acute problem, estimated the report, was the quantity and quality of the proteins consumed. Dwellers in impoverished neighborhoods barely obtained 10 percent of their proteins from animal sources, whereas in affluent areas, that ratio was five times higher (Chávez, 1974, pp. 305–13).

Meat’s popularity and association with a higher status made the middle classes ever more interested in its consumption (Aguilar, 2009; Pilcher, 2017), while provision difficulties and price hikes jeopardized the realization of such ambitions. In 1960, a family in Mexico City designated approximately 39 percent of its household income to the food basket, allocating more than half of that to animal-derived foods alone. The same study revealed that beef spending increased in absolute terms according to income, but in relative terms, middle-class families allocated the most money to that product (México, 1963). In 1963, the former head of the Dirección General de Ganadería, Guillermo Quesada Bravo, warned that livestock production in Mexico was insufficient to satisfy domestic demand, even in the Republic’s capital. It “is urgent,” he continued, that Mexicans meet the recommended dietary allowance for animal proteins, which would “increase life expectancy and [boost] their capacity to work and physical structure.” Ultimately, such changes would result in “improved individual and collective opportunities.” Quesada Bravo singled out the excess of intermediaries and the lack of planning in international trade as critical obstacles to proper supply. Both, it is worth remembering, were tied to two powerful interest groups: introductores and export ranchers.²¹

Once again, in Mexico City, the government responded to those overwhelming hurdles by relying on traditional supply practices and institutions. It sponsored the construction of a new, modern, oversized slaughterhouse that would monopolize meat provision in the city. As expected, old (introductores) and new (ranchers) interest groups took center stage in the process.

THE FERRERÍA SLAUGHTERHOUSE: A NEW MONOPOLY

In the late 1940s, after the federal government dismantled the AdmOb, Mexico faced a breakout of foot-and-mouth disease. President Miguel Alemán responded by designating livestock products as public goods.²² In 1948, he determined that the Comisión Proveedora de Ganados para el Distrito Federal—led by the head of DDF—would manage the provision and distribution of livestock and byproducts in the city. Although it served multiple purposes, functioning as an introducer and managing a subsidy from the federal government to curb prices, the Comisión was only active for three years. Once again, in 1951, the government liberalized livestock supply and created a new entity, the Abastecedora de Carnes, S.A., which was to intervene in the market only in case of shortages (Reina, 1958, p. 122).²³ However, according to some critics, corruption and government ineptitude continued to hinder Mexico City’s meat market. In 1953, in the general assembly of the Confederación Nacional Ganadera, breeders blamed Ferrocarriles Nacionales, some authorities from the Distrito Federal, and the Abastecedora de Carnes for shortages. The speakers alleged that the Abastecedora operated as a business, which public officials controlled, and the government protected.²⁴ The press condemned such a state of affairs, pointing out that the city’s slaughterhouses had an abundance of “dirt, carrion, bribery, and speculation.”²⁵

In the mid-1950s, as liberalization did not deliver the expected results, the state increased its role in the meat market through the Compañía Exportadora e Importadora Mexicana (CEIMSA) (Acosta, 1964, p. 139; Moguel & Azpeitia, 1989, p. 14). President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines accompanied such a measure with

plans to build a new slaughterhouse in the city, hoping that it would meet the city's growing meat demand. In 1955, the federal government commissioned the Industrial de Abastos (IDA)—a company with 51 percent of the shares under state control—to take charge not only of cattle introduction in Mexico City but also meat processing, storage, and distribution in the urban grid. The projected facility required an extensive area to operate, alongside railway tracks, in a poorly urbanized area, as it would keep a regulatory stock of five to six thousand cattle to manage supplies (Núñez, 1982, pp. 93–95). The city's Regent Ernesto P. Uruchurtu tasked the architect José Villagrán with this gigantic project. Known as “the iron ruler,” Uruchurtu completely transformed Mexico City during his tenure, from 1952 to 1966. The Ferrería slaughterhouse, located in the city's northwestern area, was one of his greatest works. However, Ricardo Legorreta, then a young artist who collaborated with Villagrán, revealed that “no study was done to assess if it was convenient [to build] one, ten, or fifteen slaughterhouses.” For Uruchurtu, “It was necessary to construct an impressive slaughterhouse.”

²⁶ In 1958, when Ferrería celebrated its third anniversary, its director, Ernesto Santos Galindo, stated with great enthusiasm that the plant had resolved “definitively the deficit in the supply of meat for the Distrito Federal” (Lopes, 2017, p. 295).

Unfortunately, Ferrería provoked new predicaments for consumers, introductores, and breeders. Regularity in supplies was only achieved because IDA operated as a monopoly. In 1956, a group of introductores under the Unión de Criadores, Engordadores y Comerciantes de Ganado slaughtered approximately 90 percent of the cattle processed in the city. This monopoly allowed the evasion of price controls and effectively removed meat from the table of the working poor (Acosta, 1964, p. 137). The arbitrariness of IDA impinged on introductores and breeders as well. In 1963, IDA attempted to overhaul its livestock purchasing system, acquiring live cattle instead of carcasses. Introductores were the first ones to condemn such a move. They accused IDA of maintaining a fictitious shortage of cattle to drive prices up, thus obtaining what amounted to illicit returns. The introductores submitted an appeal for amparo against “the private monopoly,” but a judge rejected it because IDA was a state-owned company. Following the introductores, breeders accused the IDA of unfair practices. The president of the Confederación Nacional Ganadera (CNG), Octavio Ochoa y Ochoa, portrayed Ferrería as “the sewer of Mexico where the rancher is exploited,” a company owned by a mafia of intermediaries led by public officials of the DDF. A leftist magazine, *Política*, attributed the disputes to disagreements between interest groups. As an alliance between the CNG and Ferrería had been severed, they said, the two “mafias” were fighting over Mexico City's meat market.²⁷

Nonetheless, the problem seemed to be more complicated than a simple skirmish between “mafias,” for there were multiple actors involved in Mexico City's meat supply chain. IDA bought cattle from breeders and sold it to the Unión de Introductores y Abastecedores de Ganado del Distrito Federal. The latter slaughtered the animals and processed, sold, and distributed the byproducts. According to a former worker of the Departamento de Industria y Comercio, the “unjustified” existence of that Union was a crucial factor in high meat prices, another being the excessive number of butcher shops in the city (Moreno, 1964, pp. 83–85). In 1963, the CNG petitioned the DDF for complete control over the meat supply and the removal of all intermediaries (Arriola, 1963, p. 144). Soon after, several non-state actors followed suit. Although each played a different role in the commodity chain, unsurprisingly, they all evoked their right and responsibility to provide meat for the masses; labeled other interest groups as real “intermediaries”; and claimed to be able to resolve provision issues in Mexico City definitively.

THE END OF THE MONOPOLY AND THE RISE OF BREEDERS

Even though the Mexican cattle industry maintained steady growth during the 1950s and 1960s, meat prices in the domestic market continued to climb. To uphold official prices, the federal government had to

import offal, one of the primary animal goods in the working-class diet.²⁸ Between 1955 and 1964, Mexico purchased more than two thousand tons of that product annually, which represented 68 percent of the total value of meat and byproducts imports (Comisión, 1975, p. 140). As prices continued to rise, the press published several complaints against the IDA monopoly, arguing that the company strategically used cattle and byproducts purchases from the United States to manipulate the market. Consequently, they pondered that some ranchers “preferred” to send live cattle abroad: “The situation would be laughable, paradoxically, if people’s nutrition were not at stake. Mexico imports waste from the United States, [and] sells hundreds of thousands of cattle on foot every year to that country.”²⁹ In such a scenario, domestic monopolies and international trade continued to hinder Mexico City’s meat supply system.

To address the monopoly problem, at the end of 1965, President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz finally issued a decree allowing the free introduction and distribution of livestock in the DF.³⁰ Hereafter, and for two years, breeders, introductores, traders, and retailers fought to control the city’s meat provisioning. The immediate result was that the measure aimed at ending Ferrería’s monopoly boosted municipal and private slaughterhouses in the city’s periphery. By February 1966, municipal *rastros* in the Estado de México had increased their production by 70 percent. The state’s governor, Juan Fernandez Albarrán, asked the mayors of Naucalpan, Cuautitlán, Santa Clara, Texcoco, and Chalco to expand production and improve services. Undoubtedly, the business opportunity for these plants grew to the detriment of Ferrería, which reduced its daily production by half in the first months of that year.³¹

On the other hand, claims about the negative consequences of cattle exports to the internal market made headlines. Nationalistic arguments seemed to unite all interest groups except Northern breeders. During the 1960s, Mexico had a surplus in all agricultural goods except in cattle production. Ranchers were required to send 20 percent of their exported cattle to the Distrito Federal, but did so hesitantly, while foreign remittances reached historical levels in that decade (Machado, 1981, p. 110). The director of the Asociación Nacional de Productores de Leche Pura, Mario Ramos Córdova, affirmed that exports contributed to breaking “the balance between population growth and livestock production.” *Tablajeros*, under the umbrella of the Federación de Organizaciones Populares del Distrito Federal, stressed that the government had to reduce the “export permits” it gave to Northern ranchers. Further, they urged the authorities to put an end to the meatpacking industry of North Mexico, as it compromised the quality of cattle left for domestic consumption.³²

In early 1966 pressures on the government led the Secretary of Agricultura y Ganadería, Juan Gil Preciado, to halt exports of “carcass or boneless meat”; for, in his words, “in the coming months it would be impossible to satisfy adequately internal consumption with this product.” The measure soon proved unsustainable. By June, the “Unión de Empacadoras de Tipo Inspección Federal de México” filled the desk of Preciado with requests for export permits. Fearful of losing the United States market and not being able to fulfill their commitments, the members of the Unión claimed to have more than three thousand tons of boneless meat. This product, they argued, had no place in the domestic market, not even as raw material for meatpackers. Additionally, leftover animals were bound to perish, particularly to dry weather. In July, federal officials reversed their position and authorized livestock exports because—or so they claimed—the market had averted shortage.³³

Contrary to almost any other interest group in the meat supply chain, ranchers lobbied the federal government to protect and incentivize live animal and processed meat exports. At its convention in 1967, the CNG acknowledged the industry’s shortcomings. The country consumed 618 thousand tons of meat per year, and that amount was increasing by twenty-one thousand tons annually; at that rate, the group stated, “demand for the year 1970 will register a deficit of 68 thousand tons of carcass meat.” To meet this need, breeders asked the federal government to support the expansion of their operations by halting imports and providing property security. Their concerns were not unfounded. In 1964, when Díaz Ordaz

came to power, the president vowed to implement land seizures and to deny the renewal of certificates of *inafectabilidad ganadera*. Although these threats failed to materialize, Díaz Ordaz dismantled some large estates and distributed more land than any other president in history (Moguel, 1989, p. 218). Such radicalism was, in part, a response to peasant militancy encouraged by the Cuban Revolution. Acutely reading this politically charged atmosphere, the CNG president, Octavio Ochoa Ochoa wondered, “Hunger is around our people, are we going to remedy it with speeches and demagogy? Will they eat the hungry and undernourished steaks of exotic doctrines and drink juices of radical theories that do not fit the determining principles of our Mexicanidad?”³⁴

In 1967, a study by the Secretaries of Agricultura, Hacienda, and Banco de México concluded that if the livestock industry were not overhauled, Mexico would face a severe meat shortage later that year. According to their data, breeders only received 25 percent of what city dwellers paid for their meat. A set of intermediaries collected the remainder; 28 percent went for introductores, 38 percent for meat retailers, the rest covered taxes, processing fees, and other expenses. The newspaper *El Día* published a note that seemed to sum up the problem: “True gangsters had long prevented the free flow of meat . . . The vice seems to be in the organization of the supply and not in meat availability.”³⁵ The chaos prompted the federal authority to attempt, once more, to, in its words, “deliver a definitive solution to an old problem.” The *Industrial de Abastos* was to be converted into a decentralized public organism (a state-owned enterprise). The head of the DDF and five secretaries of state—Agricultura, Industria y Comercio, Salubridad, Hacienda, and Patrimonio Nacional—would integrate its board. The state assumed the company’s control “to satisfy more regularly, and completely, the population needs and to take preventive measures [as to] avoid scarcity.”³⁶

These measures ended the monopoly of Ferrería and modified the supply and distribution of cattle in Mexico City. By the end of the 1960s, the facility provided almost three-quarters of the total cattle delivered to the capital, while eleven small slaughterhouses in the city’s outskirts supplied the remainder. Twenty years later, that ratio was reversed, as Ferrería supplied 25 percent of the cattle provided to the city. Decentralization also boosted demand for specialized beef products sold at grocery store chains. Likewise it encouraged the emergence of meatpackers in cattle production areas, where breeders started a vertical integration process. In the late 1980s, city dwellers got almost half of their meat from plants located far from the capital (Comisión, 1975, pp. 180–87; Rello, 1988, pp. 52–54). In 1992, however, Ferrería shut its doors in part because of water and air pollution and other environmental problems caused by the slaughterhouse wastes. Again, some critical voices, echoing the past, questioned the withdrawal of the state from the meat supply system in Mexico City.³⁷

FINAL REMARKS

The actors who controlled Mexico City’s meat market primarily channeled cattle to the city, and processed and delivered livestock products to butcher stalls. They also served other purposes. As special-interest groups, they protected their membership and exchanged favors with the government. This relationship was mutually beneficial, as city and federal officials counted on those groups for political support. As examined in these pages, from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, the interplay among wholesalers, *rastro* workers, cattle merchants, ranchers, and the government revealed how these entities attempted to secure their interests by, on occasions, countering innovation. For instance, they delayed the introduction of foreign meatpacking companies in one of the largest cities in the world—which is not to say that such plants would have resolved Mexico City’s meat provisioning ills.

The evidence analyzed in this article suggests that, in Mexico City, where traditional meat supply and processing practices survived, the actions of interest groups distorted the livestock and meat markets. Surely, other developments beyond their control curtailed the expansion of animal-derived foods to the

working poor. Consider, for instance, wage disparity and the accelerated population growth in the urban grid. What is more, these groups were not homogeneous. Their relationship with the government was sometimes ambiguous, and they had different degrees of influence depending on the context. In any case, who was in power or what political-economic theories they claimed to sponsor did not matter, for the institutional framework remained unchanged. Although the Mexican government recognized its shortcomings in providing meat for the masses, in the 1960s, its response was a state-owned company. Public officials still believed that they should not leave the provision of livestock products to the will of the free market. Interest groups concurred with that solution and the principles behind it.

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Appendix 1

Meat Supply Facilities in Mexico City (1850-1967)

In Function	Facility	Entity in Control
1850	Rastro de San Lucas	Municipality
1897	Rastro de Peralvillo	Municipality
1908	Rastro de Peralvillo	Municipality / La Internacional
1908	Mexican National Packing Company	Municipality/ North American Beef Company/ La Internacional
1916	Rastro Central	Municipality
1939	Rastro Central	Municipality (Adm Obrera)
1948	Rastro Central	Municipality / Comisión Proveedora de Ganados para el Distrito Federal
1951	Rastro Central	Municipality / Abastecedora de Carnes
1955	Ferrería	Municipality / Industrial de Abastos
1967	Ferrería	Municipality / Industrial de Abastos (state-owned enterprise)

NOTAS

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, the word meat refers to beef cattle.
- 2 Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN), Manuel Ávila Camacho (hereafter MAC), box 594a, document 1, "Mi opinión sobre el problema creado por la carestía de la carne en el Distrito Federal," Armando J. de Mendoza, n/d.
- 3 AGN, MAC, box 594b, document 7, letter from the general secretary of Sindicato Único de Obreros de Matanza y Similares de los Rastros del D.F., Antonio Flores, July 24, 1941.
- 4 Guillermo Quesada Bravo, Convención Nacional Ganadera, Comisión Permanente, "Estudio y puntos de vista que sustentan la primera Convención Nacional Ganadera," May 10, 1937, typescrip. The Bancroft Library.

- 5 *El Hijo del Ahuizote* (November 22, 1891; May 28, 1899; July 16, 1899); *El Economista Mexicano* (January 3, 1903), 35(14); quoted in Pilcher, 2006, p. 94.
- 6 *El Economista Mexicano*, 37 (January 2, 1904, p. 14).
- 7 Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de México (hereafter AHCM), Rastros, "Petición de los comerciantes del ramo de carnes al ayuntamiento de la ciudad de México," September 18, 1902.
- 8 AHCM, Rastros, "Petición de Próspero Ramírez y Juan N. Zepeda al presidente municipal de la ciudad de México," August 1st, 1902.
- 9 AHCM, Rastros, "Petition from P. Caballero to the Government of the Distrito Federal to build a new rastro in Milpa Alta," November 15, 1911.
- 10 *El Tiempo* (November 7, 1908).
- 11 AHCM, "Letter to C. General Don Cesar López de Lara, Gobernador del DF," September 6, 1915; AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, "Que el rastro con todas sus dependencias pasan a ser administrados por este gobierno," *El Oficial Mayor*, December 14, 1916.
- 12 "Decreto que reforma el Capítulo VI del Reglamento del Rastro de la Ciudad de México" (February 3, 1939). *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, pp. 12-14. Recovered from: http://dof.gob.mx/nota_to_imagen_fs.php?cod_diario=188057&pagina=14&seccion=0
- 13 AGN, MAC, box 594b, document 7, "Carta del secretario general del Sindicato Único de Obreros de Matanza y Similares de los Rastros del D.F.," Antonio Flores, July 24, 1941.
- 14 AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, box 361, "Rastros del Distrito Federal (Administración Obrera), Boletín Mensual del Consejo de Administración" July 1939; AGN, MAC, box 594a, document 1, "Carta de Manuel Granados y Celerino Venegas, [comerciantes legalmente establecidos en la vecina Delegación de Iztapalapa] al presidente", December 13, 1940.
- 15 AHCM, Rastros, "Administración Obrera de los Rastros del Distrito Federal, *Informe General*," 1945, pp. 8, 13.
- 16 "Rastros del DF, Sindicato Único de los Obreros de Matanza y Similares del DF, Consejo de Administración. "El problema de la carne y la administración obrera." (July 8, 1944). *Excelsior*. Alfonso Zorrivas presidente del consejo de la administración de los rastros del D.F. (AdmOb). "El problema de la carne y la administración obrera." (August 19, 1944). *El Universal*.
- 17 "Decreto que otorga personalidad jurídica a la administración de los rastros del Distrito Federal". (October 9, 1942). *CXXXIV*(33), pp. 24-26. Recovered from http://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_to_imagen_fs.php?codnota=4542593&fecha=09/10/1942&cod_diario=193989
- 18 AGN, MAC, box 594b, document 7, "Estudio sobre el problema de la carne", Drs. Héctor López Arista, Salvador Villagómez, Adrián Ezeta González, June 1941.
- 19 AGN, MAC, box 594b, document 7, "Carta del secretario general del Sindicato Único de Obreros de Matanza y Similares de los Rastros del D.F.," Antonio Flores, July 24, 1941.
- 20 According to Jeffrey Bortz, the real wages for the manufacturing sector in Mexico City decreased significantly between the 1940s and 1970s. In 1946, the wages were at half of their level of 1939 and remained stagnant until 1952, when they began to increase. Despite the rise, they only reached the 1939 level in 1968-1969 (Bortz, 1985, pp. 150-151).
- 21 AGN, Secretaría de Agricultura y Recursos Hidráulicos (hereafter SARH), box 58, document 2, "Mercado doméstico, exportación e importación," Dr. Guillermo Quesada Bravo, September 1963. The report was presented to the General Coordinator of the "Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Económico y Social del Partido Revolucionario Institucional" in 1963, and delivered to the Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería in March 31, 1965.
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- 32 “Sigue la carestía.” (March 1st, 1967). *Política, VII*(165), pp. 24-25.
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- 37 “Informe de Labores de la Quinta Comisión.” (July 10, 1992). “Diario de debates de los debates de la Asamblea de Representantes del Distrito Federal” (25), pp. 45-50. Recovered from <http://www.aldf.gob.mx/archivo-390be36d88ef2ecff1839966fd597be5.pdf>

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