

WHO DECIDES WHAT YOU EAT?



# THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

A DOCUMENTARY BY  
VICTOR LUENGO



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DIRECTED BY VÍCTOR LUENGO WRITTEN BY VIRGINIA DÍAZ · VÍCTOR LUENGO EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION PABLO DE LA CHICA · VÍCTOR LUENGO  
PRODUCTION VÍCTOR LUENGO · PABLO DE LA CHICA · GUILLERMO LOGAR · VIRGINIA DÍAZ · DAVID TORRES · RAU GARCÍA  
PHOTOGRAPHY VÍCTOR LUENGO EDITION CARLOS AGULLÓ · VÍCTOR LUENGO SOUND DESIGN AND MIXING ROBERTO H.G. COLOR CORRECTION PEPE ABELLÁN DE PIGMENTO GRADING

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# THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

## DIRECTOR

Víctor Luengo



## EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Pablo de la Chica Salon Indien Films  
Víctor Luengo enerofilms



SALON INDIEN FILMS

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## FILM DETAILS

Duration: 52min//78min  
Screening format: HD Prores 422  
Shooting format: 4k HD  
Video/Audio: Color/Stereo and 5.1  
Production: 2019  
Nationality: EU  
Current affairs documentary  
[www.thepriceofprogress.eu](http://www.thepriceofprogress.eu)

**WORLD SALES**  
Mediawan Rights



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**A PROYECT SELECTED IN  
THE FOLLOWING PITCH  
FORUMS**



**LAU HAIZETARA**

Pitch Coproduction Forum  
Festival de Cine San Sebastian  
2016




**MEDIMED**

Documentary Market  
Euro-Mediterráneo  
Pitch Forum  
2017



**DOCLISBOA**

International financing and  
coproduction Forum  
2017



## ***SHORT SYNOPSIS***

The Price of Progress is a portrait of the decision-making process in the Food Industry.

What is the highest priority and what is the price to be paid?



## ***SHORT SYNOPSIS 2***

What is at stake in the Food dilemmas? Power, Money or Health? Concepts that are not always compatible while global warming and modern diseases seem to trigger all the alarms.



## ***SYNOPSIS***

Within the context of urgency that determines most of the debates around the future of Agriculture in the European Union, *The Price of Progress* explores the intrigues, fears, emotions, political pressures and arguments of key players such as corporate lobbies, politicians, renowned scientists and investigative journalists related to the international Food Industry.

What is at stake in the Food dilemmas? Power, Money or Health?



THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

## ***LONG SYNOPSIS***

Progress involves risks. This is true, but, to what extent?

Within the context of Agriculture, progress has been often linked with the mass use of tons of chemicals, as a requirement to fertilize the soil and to “protect” the food from weeds and pesticides. A questionable solution that despite being used throughout the world since the middle of the 20th century, during the so-called Green Revolution this has been increasingly criticized by many voices ranging from Science to social platforms. Chemical Agriculture is meant to be God’s magic gift to feed humanity eternally on a global scale; or instead, a slow but steady path to intoxicate population and the biosphere for decades. The question remains unanswered.

The main selling argument to keep the industrial model has been widely disseminated: the world is overpopulated and there are not enough resources to choose any other path than growing food with synthetic chemical products.

Alongside this, perhaps another compelling reason that feeds this vision from the beginning is the fact that since 1950’s Agriculture has also implied a growing and lucrative market for major companies. In this sense, the present business landscape is eloquent: today less than 5 corporations oversee more than the half of the planetary market of seeds and plant protection products. And the portion of the cake is expanding exponentially.

Hence, within the arena of regulatory bodies and public institutions that rule health and environmental issues, different sort of tensions and pressures are served.

The precautionary principle, often due to common sense, is only officially recognized in the European Community as part of the core that shapes the criteria to regulate health and environment.

Of course, this is how it works on paper.

And it is precisely here, in this key element, where main debates converge and dramatically collide.

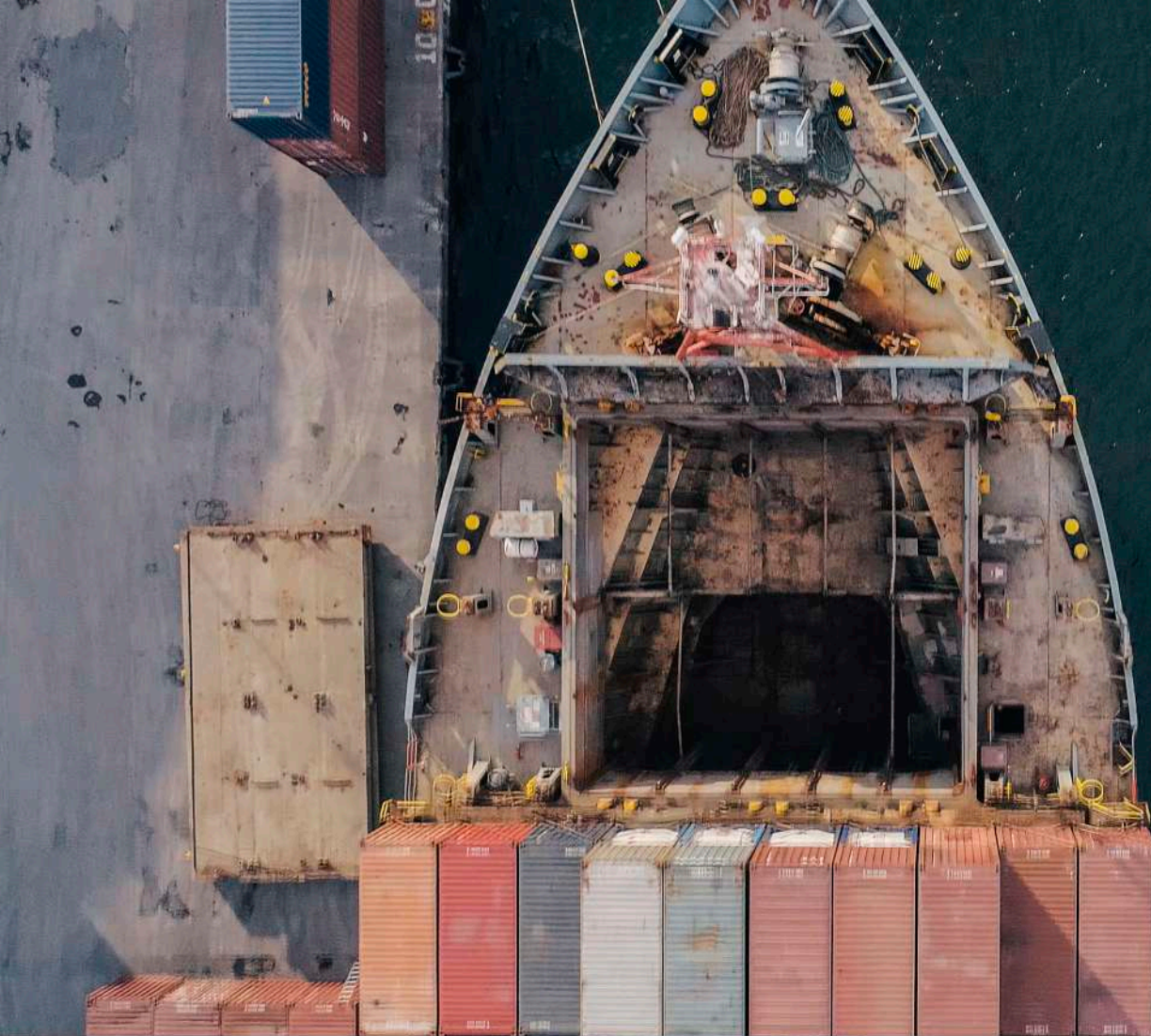
Nothing new under the sun. Politics is part of the human attributes and suffers from all its weaknesses like fear, ambitions, machinations, hidden interests or simply ignorance.

The film explores this context within the institutional arena of the European Community. It focuses on the debates around the implementation of Genetically Modified Organisms, the use of chemicals for Agriculture and endocrine disruptors. At the end, it is the hypothetical toxicity versus promises of wealth and cheap food for everyone.

It gives the floor to speakers and representatives with different approaches like activists, renowned scientists, international researchers, speakers from main agri-food corporations, politicians, regulators and entrepreneurs of the food chain. In this way, *The Price of Progress* outlines a mosaic of opinions and statements that suggest not only the size of the challenge where we are now, but the price to solve it or, in the opposite case, to ignore it.



**THE PRICE OF PROGRESS**



THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

## **FILM STYLE**

This work addresses current topics and struggles in the headquarters of European Community. The film will be revealed as a thriller in crescendo which, at the end, will ask the public for reflection. Nonetheless, the tempo at the beginning will be slow and quiet. Voices of the interviews will be listened most of the time over images, all of which contextualize somehow the reading of the story.

In short: slow motion, shifting, aerial shots and symmetry shot using wide-angle lenses to create that spatial perception of “being there” (Roland Barthes).

My visual references are many, but in short I would say Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Ulrich Seidl and Stanley Kubrick.

One of my script references is Laura Poitras' work or the Darwin's Nightmare, from Hubert Saupert.



**THE PRICE OF PROGRESS**

## ***DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT***

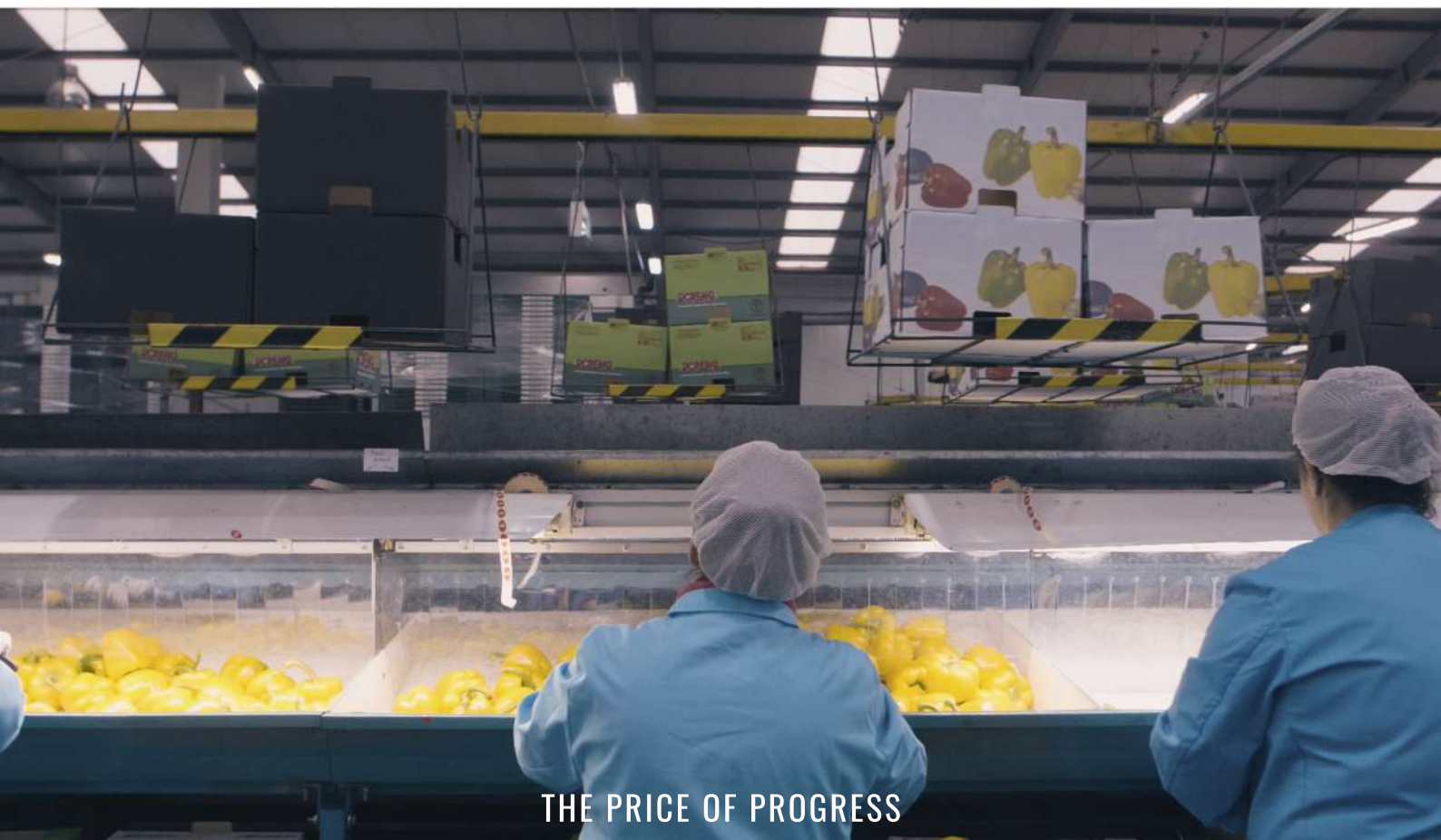
We, as a society, are used to living in continuous uncertainty in times of post-truth and deeply hyperreality. Here the truth seems to be a menu in which everyone has the right to take whatever they wish. This could be permissible in particular issues, though when everybody's life is at stake, to follow ambiguous criteria might genuinely prove to be dangerous.


I have worked for a long time in South America. In Mendoza, Argentina, small communities are ravaged by the herbicide Glyphosate. In Eastern Bolivia, there are major monocultures grabbed from once small and indigenous lands. And there, as in Peru or in Ecuador, farmers complain that land is too barren following decades of intensive farming.

Meanwhile in Europe, where these risks are far away, big farming corporations continue promoting a kind of endless doubt platform where science seems more like a spectacle and marketing rather than pursuing knowledge and wellbeing for everyone.

Quite often indictment and reform are needed. That explains why there are so many recent documentaries that report Food Industry abuses.

That said, *The Price of Progress* should not be seen as an accusing finger at any particular industry. Rather, through all the debates, our aim is to unveil the motivations, needs and the logic of people who carrying out the current food chain.





As only with a nonaligned standpoint and adopting a neutral approach to the matter, and the true dimension of the difficulties we are facing be displayed.

Life and society are highly complex. There are many different institutions involved in the corporate world vision and behind them are thousands of workers in their offices sharing similar arguments, which are much more familiar to everyone than we might think.

It is for this reason, in order to gain credibility, I wanted from the beginning to let everyone expose clearly their point of views and their expectations.

Only in this way the industrial farm vision could be contrasted without prejudices with the organic farm vision or any other option.

In the next decade there is a great deal at stake. The eyes of the world are opening, and I believe history is giving us this moment to choose a better path. These times predict lack of resources, global warming, suffering and serious conflicts. These are well-known facts. That is why the rights and wrongs of the farming path that we take will be crucial to determine that coming future. Every effort must be made to know better how our society is and how serious are the risks we are facing in the coming decades.

Choosing the most suitable option is key and I hope this film will help towards this.



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## **RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In recent years, Brussels has been facing three unsolved dilemmas: whether to approve or not the production of transgenic seeds on European soil, the continuity of Glyphosate pesticide and the regulation of endocrine disruptors.

Many voices, such as the expert team working for the IARC, International Agency for Research on Cancer, warn of the existing links with cancer, diabetes or Parkinson's, which would explain the increase in these illnesses in our society. Precautionary principle should lead to the outright regulation, but strong economic interests delay the resolution over and over.

Europe does not want to lose competitiveness on the globalized food market. While Brazil, Argentina, United States or China are gaining ground, Brussels needs to raise its game.

Besides this, industrial pressure increases to give the approval to the free trade agreements: TTIP with United States and CETA with Canada.

This would mean the end of the European regulatory framework, (the world's most stringent) and a significant loss of decision-making power of national parliaments.

That is why a group of international companies such as Monsanto-Bayer or Dow Dupont invest millions of euros to garner influence with the scientific community, media and education professionals as well as inside the political arena of European Countries.

The result is that in Brussels for example, the borders between communication and PR strategies, law expertise and traditional lobbying are blurred. Demonstrating the problematic symbiosis between corporate interests and the EU institutions in Brussels, the same lobbying consultancies often get hired by both, bringing serious risks of conflicts of interest.

Which are the priorities here? Productivity and development for few enterprises or to ensure both animal and human health and a sustainable future for the environment?



***LIST OF INTERVIEWEES***



**THE PRICE OF PROGRESS**

## LIST OF INTERVIEWEES



**Bernard Url**  
Executive director of  
EFSA  
EUROPEAN FOOD  
SAFETY AUTHORITY



**Nathalie Moll**  
Former Secretary General  
EUROPABIO



**Jean Philippe Azoulay**  
Director General  
ECPA  
EUROPEAN CROP  
PROTECTION AGENCY



**Luc Peeters**  
Chairman Copa-Cogeca  
and Berlorta



**Mella Frewen**  
Director General Fooddrinkeurope



**Janusz Bujnicki**  
Scientific Advisor  
European Commission.



**J.M. Mulet**  
Phd. Biochemistry  
Molecular Biology



**Kat Z. Guyton**  
Senior Toxicologist  
IARC  
Internationa Agency  
for Research of Cancer



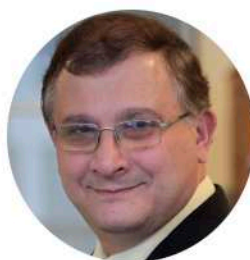
**Soledad de Juan**  
Director of Antama Fondation



**Angelika Hilbeck**  
Senior Researcher  
of Biology and Agroecology  
and ex chair of ENSSER



**David Kirkland**  
Gernetic Toxicology consultant for  
Monsanto-Bayer



**Gilles-Éric Séralini**  
Molecular biologist, political advisor and  
activist on genetically modified organisms..



**Franziska Achterberg**  
Eu Policy Director at  
Greenpeace Europe



**Nina Holland**  
Researcher CorporateEurope Observatory



**Pat Thomas**  
Director at Beyond GMO  
Journalist



**Henk Hobbelink**  
Co-founder of Grain  
Agronomist  
Alternate Nobel price of Agro-Ecology



**Stephane Hörel**  
Journalist investigator



**Nicolás Olea**  
Proffesor and Epidemiology researcher



**Miguel Porta**  
Proffesor and  
Epidemiology researcher



**Hildefonso Hernández**  
Proffesor and expert in Public Health  
General secretary at  
Spanish Institution of Public Health  
2008-2011



**Carey Gillam**  
Investigative journalist  
Mainly focused into  
Agrifood Business



**Michael Hansen**  
Senior Staff Scientist  
at Consumer Union of USA  
Ecologist and Biologist



**Katryn forgie**  
Plaintiff's attorney at  
Monsanto Lawsuit



**Christopher Portier**  
Expert in Carcinogenity  
Risk Evaluation and  
Environmental Health



**VICTOR LUENGO** Zaragoza, Spain 1973  
DIRECTOR/WRITTER/PRODUCER

## FILMS

- THE PRICE OF PROGRESS (2019 Director)

I come from an arts background. For 10 years I was represented by a Spanish gallery until I decided to migrate to the digital image and journalism. At the halfway stage I studied History and Anthropology. Then, I was fascinated by post-modernism theories which explain how Language shapes our everyday reality.

Since then, I have worked as journalist and filmmaker in South America, Cambodia, Madagascar and Spain. I was also editor of Magnum Spain, Seven and AFP, amongst other agencies. Now I earn my living in the field of Advertising working for very diverse clients and markets here in Spain.

The Price of Progress is my first film where somehow my professional career as photographer, journalist and filmmaker joins with the task of an emerging Anthropologist who is asking himself about the steps that our society are taking.

## PHOTOJOURNALISM

- MUJERES DEL ALTIPLANO (2012)
- SOBERANÍA ALIMENTARIA (2011)
- LOOKING FOR A CHANCE (2010)
- PHONM PENH AT NIGHT(2010)
- THE FOREST OF THEMINEERS (2010)
- KMHER ROUGE HERITAGE (2008)
- I SEE WITH MY EARS (2008)
- ILAKAKA SAPPHIRE RUSH(2008)
- THE FINAL FRONTIER (2004)



**PABLO DE LA CHICA** Madrid, Spain 1986  
**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

As an actor, he has participated at multi-awarded short films. As Producer / Director has completed the short film 'El mundo de Mao' and his first feature documentary 'The Other Kids' with a large-scale tour of festivals and international sales.

In 2013 founded the production company Salon Indien Films, in order to produce independent cinematographic works, mostly documentary and fiction films dealing with social subjects seeking out the human side of the self-improvement from an independent approach. His first feature length documentary 'The Other Kids' was made in co-production with La Mirada Oblicua, Al Jazeera Documentary Channel and Canal Sur RTVSpain.

The World premiere was at Documenta Madrid International Documentary Festival 2016 and came first in the Best Documentary Award 2016 Spanish Category. He has won prestigious awards, such as the Japan Prize 2016-Best Work Youth Category, Audience Award DocMX, Audience Award HumanDOC, and Special Mention in Directing Gold Panda Awards.

**FILMS**

- THE OTHER KIDS (2016. Director)
- THE GREEN ELEPHANT (2018. Dev. Director)
- PAPA OUTSIDER (2018. Coproducer)
- TRANSITION (2018. Coproducer)
- VATERNI (2018. Coproducer)
- THE PRICE OF PROGRESS (2019. Coproducer)
- SUAREZ (2019. Producer)

**SHORT FILMS**

- FANTASMA (2014. Producer)
- EL MUNDO DE MAO (2015. Director)
- WHY WE ARE HERE (2018. Director)
- MARS LOVE (2017. Animation. E Producer)