



Fig. 1: April corn planting near Santa Teresita.

#### b) Agricultural Calendar

One rhythm of work centers upon the production, harvesting, and marketing of the basic grains, with two complete cycles occurring annually. During the dry season (January–March: verano, “summer” in local usage), fields are prepared in March for the planting of maize, rice, and beans in late April and early May (Fig. 1). Four to five months later, in August and September, these crops are harvested and sold, generally to the Consejo Nacional de Producción (CNP) office in Buenos Aires. Immediately thereafter, a second planting is accomplished in late September and early October, during the middle of the rainy season (April–December: invierno, “winter”), and these crops are ready for harvest and marketing after another four to five months in the period between December and February.

Conventionally, the April–May planting is referred to as the year’s “first crop” or *consecha*, and the September–October planting is the “second crop.”<sup>4</sup> Ricardo performs the bulk of the labor involved in the production of the basic grains, although he sometimes hires peones to keep the maturing field crops free of weeds and to assist with harvesting. Another major capital expense, chemical herbicides to retard weed growth, is incurred shortly after the planting periods in late May and November.

Another facet of agricultural life is less cyclical. María may assist Ricardo during the peak harvest periods, but generally her work involves the continuous ongoing maintenance of fruit trees

and garden crops near the house, tending of chickens and pigs, daily household food processing and meal preparation, and child care.

#### c) Time Allocation

The organization of the domestic economy also may be assessed with a finer temporal scale: the use of time within a 24-hour period. On a sample day in mid-April, for example, Ricardo invested a total of 7 hours 15 minutes in farm-related production. Most of his labor involved planting rice, but he also constructed a chicken coop and tended horses, among other tasks. María’s investment in agricultural work, pig tending, and cutting of bananas and plantains, was only 1 hour 30 minutes.

However, if all agricultural work, domestic and household work, and any outside employment activity are combined into a profile of “total work”

<sup>4</sup> The CNP office in Buenos Aires purchased 245 metric tons of beans and 2,811 metric tons of maize derived from canton farmers’ first crop in 1987. An additional 870.9 metric tons of beans and 616.3 metric tons of maize were purchased from that year’s second crop. The office had not completed collation of data for 1988–1990 at the time of my fieldwork (CNP: March 13, 1990). – For 1989, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) reported 3,000 ha of land devoted to maize cultivation in Buenos Aires canton, producing a total annual crop of 4,500,878 kg of maize or an average yield of 1,500 kg per ha. In the same year, 2,200 ha of land in bean cultivation produced a total crop of 1,124,939 kg of beans or an average yield of 511 kg per ha (MAG 1989: Cuadro 2).