



A LOOK TO SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES OF RURAL AGROINDUSTRY IN LATIN AMERICA



The background features a repeating pattern of line-art illustrations in a golden-brown color. The illustrations include various agricultural elements: a horse, a person wearing a wide-brimmed hat, a large ear of corn, a bunch of grapes, a pineapple, and other plants and tools. A horizontal band of a darker shade of the same color runs across the middle of the page, containing the main title.

A LOOK TO SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES OF RURAL AGROINDUSTRY IN LATIN AMERICA

DIRECTION OF TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP
AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

HEMISPHERIC PROGRAM OF RURAL
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PROGRAM OF AGROTOURISM

DIRECTION OF REGIONAL OPERATIONS
AND INTEGRATION

DIVISION OF HORIZONTAL TECHNICAL
COOPERATION

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presentation

The Rural Agroindustry Hemispheric Program – PRODAR- has promoted the development and application of mechanisms that make possible the direct exchange of lessons, experiences and testimonies among actors directly involved with rural agroindustry and agrotourism in the Americas. As a part of this vision, it has implemented a contest for the documentation of experiences that has been conducted for four editions.

Such mechanisms are part of the IICA's institutional strategy on knowledge management and horizontal cooperation, through which the Institute gathers, analyses and systematizes the advancements achieved in different territories of the region with respect to development processes, to later negotiate their transference to actors that need them through adapted methodologies and certify its adequate reception, with benefits for all parties. Thus, the Institute pretends to facilitate the solution of problems related with rural development that can be similar in different regions.

The above has allowed, since the fourth edition of the contest for the systematization of experiences on rural agroindustry, the inclusion to the initiative of the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Division of IICA and the Hemispheric Program of Agrotourism. The first Division works along the line of boosting the Offices and the Thematic Areas to aggregate value to the way cooperation is delivered. The second Program mentioned has a similar interest in identifying and disseminating good practices on this subject. In the first three versions of the competition, the financial support came from the program Information INet about Postharvest (INPHO, from FAO).

Thanks to these contests we now have updated information on successful rural agribusinesses, specifically on rural agroindustry and agrotourism, which it is hoped will be useful as a reference for

the horizontal technical cooperation that can be directly achieved among countries, with IICA's support.

This document describes the experiences of the winners of such contests, the same that have been divided into four sections: the first one includes cases that deal with technical change and supply diversification (files 1, 2 and 3); the second one gathers experiences in which the subject of associativity for business management is relevant (files 4, 5 and 6); in the third one, the testimonies emphasize the strategies to reach markets (files 7, 8, 9 and 10) and in the fourth one, the experiences point out the appreciation of the local (files 11, 12, 13 and 14).

Through these files, the reader can travel along the road lived by each one of these entrepreneurship, from the emerging idea of the business, going through the different stages of its development until its present situation, the accomplishments achieved, the challenges faced and the lessons learned.

The files are presented in a summarized and easy to read way, so they can be understood without any important difficulty. All of those who wish to study in depth one of the described experiences may do so through the contacts appointed in each case.

We hope this document will be useful and satisfactory for the reader, and that it will allow to stimulate the generation of more entrepreneurship for the aggregation of value in the rural sphere as an effective strategy for territorial development and poverty alleviation.

THE EDITORS

The publication of this document has been possible thanks to the joint work of the programs of Rural Agroindustry and Agrotourism, and the Technical Horizontal Cooperation Division from IICA.





TECHNICAL CHANGE AND SUPPLY DIVERSIFICATION

assistance to 70 farmers in cultivating pineapple and citrus fruits, and help in implementing an irrigation system for the seed plant plot. With the irrigation, the plot produced better quality seeds, which were distributed among the partners.

In 2006, the PRODAP II Project transferred funds to be administered directly by APES, which were used to increase the technical assistance to 90 fruit farmers. APPES diversified its

activities, one of its most innovative new activities being the production of tilapia.

Additionally, under the Inter-American Foundation (FIA) APPES managed a three-year support project in which it made advances in the self-managing introduction of MD2 pineapples and began handicraft development from fruit by-products among groups of partners and partners' relatives.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Women learned about manufacturing techniques for jams, jellies, fruit drinks and typical sweets, as well as gender issues and other important areas for their development. The fact that their products have been accepted by the consumer has allowed them to feel truly appreciated.

Towards competitiveness

At the end of 2006, APPES secured technical support from the Foundation for Development (FUNDE) for the control of plagues and diseases. The National Fruit Programme (MAG-Frutales), carried out by IICA, trained the partners in diversification of supply of processed fruit products, including pulps and concentrates. In addition, they guided them towards developing a brand.

In March 2008, APPES was chosen by the International Project PORFIN to receive technical assistance in financial areas and market access. In April, it participated in the Competitive Advantage Development Project of the MIPYMES Fruit Processors carried out by IICA, with OAS financing.

Today, the Association is investing in infrastructure in the processing plant to comply with manufacturing best practice. The project donated machinery for citrus juices and sent one of its leaders to the "Expo-Comida Latina" fair in the US. This allowed for learning about presentation and opened possibilities to supply the ethnic market in Los Angeles through the Liborio Markets and La Tiendona stores.

The many positive impacts

- APPES has positioned itself as a key local point of reference for fruit chains.
- The adoption of new technologies and practices has increased fruit production.
- Economic and environmental benefits have been derived (protection of the hillsides).

- An organised and direct marketing of the fresh fruit has been achieved.
- Volumes of fruit to be sold via the partnership have been guaranteed.
- A marketing brand is being worked on for the promotion of processed products.
- Jobs have been generated, with an emphasis on young people and women; at least nine partners have steady work in the orange juice processing plant.
- Enterprise capacity for mobilising resources has been strengthened.
- The partners are committed: today they are financing the remodelling of the processing plant.

Lessons learnt

- Organisation is effective for managing resources and revitalising agricultural productivity.
- The partners' motivation is key to them remaining active and complying with the rules.
- The growth of their own capacities is crucial for the sustainability of the initiatives.
- It is better to depend on one's own infrastructure to reduce costs and comply with best practice.
- Constant quality training promotes sustainability.
- The proactive attitude of the partners and leadership of the Board of Directors is key to success.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Salvador Beltrán, President of APPES; Jorge Alberto Candelario, Secretary of APPES; Delfina Candelario de Campos, Coordinator of the APPES-FIA Project.

NOTES:

<http://www.mag.gob.sv/dga> - <http://mail.mag.gob.sv/DesRural/FichaPro.nsf>
<http://www.iaf.gov/grants/awards>



2



Tropical flowers of Iquitos gain market thanks to the efforts of a woman

Ángela C. Ríos²



PERÚ

This experience took place in Iquitos, in the area of influence of the Iquitos highway - Nauta, in Perú.

A woman with a dream and “push”

Although Margarita Ríos has already received several prizes, she still does not consider herself a winner: her dream is to export her flowers to markets as far away as Europe or the United States.

A fighter from the start, she made up her mind to succeed after a divorce that left her with three children in her charge, one of them with a genetic illness. She had a tannery and a small factory of handcrafted furniture and when no one believed in the cut-flowers business, she insisted and insisted.

In spite of the effort that she has been putting into her work for over two decades, Margarita still feels she has made little headway: when she needed information to improve her production, there was no research institution to help her; when she sought financing, no financial institution heeded her; when she inquired about consultancy for marketing, she could not get any either. Achieving success was hard but she continues in the struggle because she believes firmly in her dreams.

A path scattered with growth

Margarita Ríos started to grow tropical flowers more than 25 years ago, in Iquitos. The key of her success was perseverance: from the beginning, she had to struggle with the aunts that painted the flowers stems so she was forced to seek for technical advice even in Colombia. This allowed her to improve the yield of her plants.

Fifteen years ago she specialized in the production of heliconias and ginger, when the provincial Municipality of Maynas promoted the cultivation of these flowers donating seeds. She was one of the 100 persons who accepted the challenge. The following year, only 20 persons remained, and after three years, three: Margarita Ríos, Otto Obenhausen and Luis Jiménez.

The three of them combined efforts to trade their production, which was increasing each day. They shared trading channels, experiences and knowledge. But it was Margarita who finally stood out. Little by little, more persons joined the cultivation of tropical flowers, stimulated by the visible success of Margarita. She started to grow them in her 2,5 Has field and today she has 10 additional Has. Her production of 5,5 Has is mainly traded in the national market, even though the local market is also starting to demand this kind of flowers.

“ Margarita s flowers include around 50 varieties, which has turned her into the producer with most varieties of heliconias and gingers in the zone. She also produces “tapeinochelos”, pineapple, two color kimi, chocolate heliconia, white rod, green ginger shampoo, tulip rod, porcelain rod and red valerian, among other varieties. ”

² Business Faculty Teacher. Private University of Iquitos. IV Concurso de Sistematización de Experiencias Exitosas en Agronegocios Rurales en América Latina y El Caribe (IV Compilation of Systematisation of Successful Experiences in Rural Agribusiness in Latin America and the Caribbean). PRODAR-IICA. October 2008.



AN EXAMPLE OF CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

Margarita started employing her two children in the flower business, and little by little she introduced more workers. Nowadays, she gives direct employment to 30 persons. Her method to protect her employees will be sistematized by a financial institution, since she has seek an alternative to the official social security and she provides food, shelter, training and health to her workers and their families in conditions that the workers have said to be satisfying. Thus, for instance, her workers have a fish farm where they grow fish and poultry with wich everyone is fed. Owners and workers share all the comforts of the main house, the children of the owners and the workers go to the same school and the salaries are similar for everyone.

Some thorns in the way

Even if Margarita has reached international standards, she cannot export directly her flowers because the National Institute of Natural Ressources (INRENA, in Spanish) asks her to fill procedures as if her flowers were extracted from nature. She has insisted from the beginning that INRENA was wrong since her business was about agriculture and growing flowers. It seems that she will finally win the battle: there is some evidence that such institution will not insist with the procedures and it will let her free from its jurisdiction.

The other problem she has delt with is the lack of connections with international markets. Margarita knows that with the extension of the international airport of Iquitos new international routes will open so she can sell her flowers directly, without going through Lima.

When merits are recognized

- Since 2004, Margarita has received awards such as the one given by the Bank of Work for reaching the first place in the Third National Price for the Micro-Entrepreneur Woman.
- The last edition (october 2007) of the book "Perú Exports", published by the Ministry of Work, points out her story as that of a prosperous and exemplary business women of Iquitos.
- Students of the Exporters Institute (ADEX) have conducted a research study on Margarita's plantation, benefitting from her experience and knowledge.
- Her heliconias plantation made it posible that the Encounter of Heliconia Collectors of all over the world took place in Iquitos, in march 2008. This generated tourism income to Iquitos economy.

An advanced vision

Nowadays, Margarita has a web page and she communicates by mail with her clients and amateurs that share the pleasure to collect heliconias. Soon, she will inaugurate her own accommodation for those who wish to get away from the city. There, the persons interested will find a house to stay and prepare their food, besides being able to enjoy the beauty offered by the flower farm. With this, Margarita plans to introduce another activity to generate income for several families.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

This story has been told by Margarita Ríos Chiang (margaritariosc Chiang@yahoo.es)

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Development of quinoa real products for the bolivian market

Gonzalo Fernando Ramírez Cala³



BOLIVIA

The agro-industrial project was developed in the municipalities of Colcha “K” and San Pedro de Quemes in the province of Nor Lipez, in the southeast of the departament of Potosí, Bolivia.

How the project started

The project “Development Technology and Obtention of Derivates from the Quinoa Real for the National Market” was carried out by the Food and Livestock Cooperative Central’s “Operación Tierra” Ltd. (CECAOT), with the support of the Potosi Association of Municipalities and with financing from the Foundation for Food and Livestock Technological Development in the Altiplano (Highlands), between November, 2004 and June, 2006.

It was inaugurated in the locality of Mañica, (Nor Lipez Province), for the purpose of generating products of quality and competitive prices made from Quinoa, for the national market.

The Project was requested by 288 producers belonging to the fourteen cooperatives of producers of quinoa real which make up CECAOT.

What did it consist of?

The higher objectives of the Project were to contribute to the improvement CECAOT which looks out for the welfare of the producers of Quinoa in the province and to increase their operational and economic capacity and their offer of finished products.

The work was centred around three objectives:

1. To have a look at the demand for products of greater preference in the national market, in the cities within the three macro-regions of Bolivia (Andean region, the valleys and the tropical areas.
2. To adjust the technology to obtain products identified as being of greater preference.

3. To validate the appropriate technologies and carry out participatory training of the beneficiary group.

How was it implemented?

The activity plan for the Project foresaw the completion of five stages:

Stage 1 was dedicated to the presentation and agreement of the Project to the beneficiaries; the construction of a base line; the adjustment to the proposal of the Project; and the study of the national market (in Cochabamba, La Paz, Potosí, Sucre and Santa Cruz).

Stage 2, consistency in the design and selection of the three products to be developed (demanded by the market and requested by the partners of CECAOT), the validation of the technology for its elaboration and the definition of the construction of the kind of machinery to be used in the production process.

In stage three the producers were trained in the transformation of derivates according to the technology developed in the previous stage. This process was carried out with the help of a production manual that was developed and agreed upon. This generated the change of behaviour necessary to develop the activity of transformation as an alternative to the traditional activity of exporting pearled quinoa.

Stages 4 and 5 oriented towards the application of the process of training through the on site production of the derivates (in the new CECAOT plant) and its later commercialization by the producers themselves, who were trained in technical development and container design.

³ Responsible of the Local Economic Development Unity, Association of Potosí Municipalities. III Concurso de Lecciones Aprendidas de Agroindustria Rural: Experiencias Exitosas de Asociatividad Empresarial en América Latina (III Competition of Learned Lessons in Rural Agroindustry: Successful Experiences of Business Associativity in Latin America). PRODAR-IICA and INPhO-FAO, July 2006.

The principal results

- Three new products were produced: quinoa bread, instant quinoa soup and chocolate coated quinoa candy.
- The technological process has been adjusted through the acquisition of new machines and equipment.
- The rank and file have been trained and 28 leaders have been further trained in production and transformation.
- There is a technical economic evaluation of the capacity for agro-industrial processing of CECAOT (1 Tm of derivatives). There is a filing cabinet corresponding to each product.

- A production plan was developed and another for marketing for the strengthening of CECAOT.

“What stood out was the participation and changed attitude of the female producers of quinoa of CECAOT to improve their quality of life reaching 85% of all persons trained during this process.”

THE THREE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS SELECTED AND DEVELOPED



QUINUA BREAD

Description of the product: Food developed from a mixture of enriched wheat flour with 20% quinoa flour to improve the nutritional benefits of the bread.

Line of production: An adjustment and validation was made of the line of production of the quinoa bread which will be developed in CECAOT working basically on combining the ingredients so that the product will be more acceptable to the palates of children and adults in general.



INSTANT QUINUA SOUP

Description of the product: Product pre-prepared for making instant quinoa soup. It contains greens, salt and seasoning.

Line of production: Work was done in all the line of production of the instant soup which includes the improvement of the product itself and the equipment. With respect to the development of the product, a product was achieved where the quinoa was of greater acceptability to the palate of the Bolivian consumer.



CHOCOLATE COATED QUINUA CANDY

Description of the product: Finished quinoa product ready to be served made from insuflada quinoa and honey or sugar, moulded and coated with chocolate. Ideal for the consumption of school aged children and for the family in general.

Line of production: This consists of the use of a turrón making machine which makes cylindrical turróns from a mixture of pipocas of quinoa and honey which is put to cook in an oven of 50 degrees centigrade for 15 minutes and then they are coated with chocolate in a special machine. The product is finally put in a container in the appropriate manner.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

The Hitos Report on the Project and the Final Report Presented at the FDTA, 2004 – 2006 / Commonwealth of Municipalities of la Gran Tierra de los Lipez/ Quinoa Real “Grano de Oro” CECAOT Ltda., 2004. / Foundation for Technical for Food and Livestock Development of the Altiplano FDTA, 2006

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You can get additional information about the reports presented to the FDTA Altiplano (www.fdtaltiplano.org), as well as at CECAOT: www.quinoa.com.bo or cecaot@ceibo.entelnet.bo. / <http://exoticaamazonflowers.com/contacto.html>.





PARTNERSHIP FOR BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

4



The reconversion from illicit crops to the processing of milk products

Carlos Eduardo Gavilanes Caicedo⁴



COLOMBIA

This programme of milk development was carried out in 28 municipalities in the departments of Antioquia and Nariño, in Colombia.

How the program started

In Antioquia and Nariño agricultural activity was combined with the rudimentary exploitation of dairy farming. Milk production was low in technology: it was realised with little investment, family labour, minimum cultural practices and bad soil management.

The producers fed their cattle on local grass which was introduced without agronomic control, which affected production and reproduction. Small pastures, low capacity to support stock, bad milk quality and low prices, among other factors, made in-roads on profit.

All these problems encouraged the communities to engage in the cultivation of illicit products. To reverse this, this Programme set out to increase the legitimate income of the rural workers through the milk agro-industry.

The Dairy Development Programme (PDL) was realised through an agreement financed by USAID and carried out by Land O'Lakes, an agro-industrial cooperative from the United States that provides services to more than 400.000 families of agricultural workers.

The PDL initiated its activities in August, 2003, following a process tried in other similar projects implemented by Land O'Lakes and with the support of local governments.

The six stages of the process

Stage 1 called for the elimination or prevention of the sowing of illegal products where milk production was viable. The farmers who got rid of all their illegal crops or agreed not to plant them were incorporated into the Programme and work on the formation of associations was begun.

In stages 2 and 3, the already existent associations were strengthened and new ones were created. The country teams of the PDL and the technical persons trained 4.465 producers in the practices of milking, the management of grass-lands and animals and organisation. Moreover, they were provided with agricultural inputs to establish and improve their pastures.

Stage 4: 72 centres to collect milk for a high quality storage facility were started, and these could count on the support of 20% of the associations (in labour and materials). These are managed by the association of producers, and they have all necessary infrastructure.

During stage 5, the PDL gave assistance to 11 processing companies. To this end, action plans were prepared which improved the methods of production, processing and distribution, and generated greater sales and margins of profit. Moreover, there was work done in the area of strategies for marketing.

In stage 6 the hygiene and micro-biological content of the milk was improved and this allowed the producer to perceive around 86 additional pesos per litre of milk produced. The market was guaranteed through supply and demand agreements with processing plants (Friesland, Colanta and Parmalat).

⁴ Land O'Lakes inc Staff. Private advisor. III Concurso de Lecciones Aprendidas de Agroindustria Rural (III Competition of Learned Lessons in Rural Agroindustry). PRODAR- IICA, INPhO-FAO, July 2006.

In 24 months of existence of the program significant results have been achieved

CHART 1 • SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Activities	Unit	Antioquia	Nariño	Total
		Up to 31 of December 2005		
Illegitimate Crops eliminated	Has.	714	297	1.011
Legit. Crops planted and/or improved. Pasture	Has.	5.365	790	6.155
Associations of producers established and/or strengthened	No.	25	23	48
Milk Collection Centres established	No.	50	22	72
Processing plants strengthened	No.	8	3	11
Jobs created	No.	2.118	731	2.849
Families benefitting	No.	3.479	986	4.465



Source: Final report PDL 2005.

Benefits to the families in the area were considerable

CHART 2 • SUMMARY OF BENEFITS PER FAMILY

Concept	Unit	ANTIOQUIA		NARIÑO	
		Without project	With project	Without project	With project
Animal production		Without technology	With technology	Without technology	With technology
Vol. milk produced	Lts/day	Less than 10	More than 12	Less than 35	More than 50
Price	\$	350	600	350	580
Market		Unsure	Sure	Unsure	Sure
Load capacity.	An/ha*	Less than 1	More than 2	Less than 1	More than 2
Animal feed	Fodder	Unsure summer	All year	Unsure Summer	All year
Birth intervals	Days	More than 600	Fewer than 420	More than 600	Fewer than 420
Quality of life	NB*	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Community		Not organised	Organised	Not organised	Organised

*An/ha: animals per hectare. NB: básical needs.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Secretariats of Agriculture in Antioquia and Nariño: www.gobant.gov.co, www.gobeernar.gov.co / Territorial Organisation Plans (POT) for the municipalities in Antioquia and Nariño. / Dairy chains in Antioquia and Nariño www.agrocadenas.gov.co, www.ccpasto.org.co / National Dairy Council. cnlacteo@etb.net.co / Ministry of Agriculture 1999. Dairy chain competitiveness agreement. www.agrocadenas.gov.co / FEDEGAN. Cattle-ranching in Colombia 2003 – 2004. Bogotá, Colombia.

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Salamina Trading Cooperative: a support company committed to development

Ana María Tabares Castrillón⁵



COLOMBIA

The Salamina municipality is situated to the north of the department of Caldas, in Colombia. It was founded in the first half of the XIX century when it came to form part of the southern route from Antioqueña to Caldas.

Some background

The municipality of Salamina is one of the oldest in the department of Caldas. This area was first inhabited by the indigenous peoples known as the Carrapas and the Pícaras.

Their productive activities centred round coffee cultivation, cattle-ranching, and the planting and the processing of sugarcane. There are also micro-industries which supply the domestic demand for construction materials, blankets, ponchos, mats, fertilizers and candles.

At first the production of brown sugar was done on farms for domestic consumption and was only commercialised when there was an excess in production. With the coffee crisis, many producers turned to brown sugar production because of the facility with which cane could be cultivated in the area.

Origins of the cooperative

At the beginning of the 90's, the brown sugar producers in the region faced a serious crisis because of the low prices paid by the middlemen, so low, they did not allow them to cover their production costs.

For this reason, in February 1992, 21 farm producers decided to organise themselves and form a cooperative that would allow them to commercialise their produce at a fairer price: the Salamina Trading Cooperative "COOMERSA". Among these producers was the Group for Communal Action from the Vereda Cañaveral, the Association of Peasant Users and the Committee of Peasant Women.

The first step was to raise enough money to start up the execution of some projects. In order to legalise COOMERSA, help was sought from the National Service of Apprenticeship, which trained the partners in financial and legal management, and in general organisation. Once it was legally constituted, the cooperative managed, through the municipal council, to get the loan of premises for warehousing brown sugar, which allowed for the storage of produce, unification of prices and competing in volumes which provide it with an increased capacity for negotiation.

Around the same time, in Colombia, they were dismantling the IDEMA, (Institute for Agriculture and Livestock Marketing). In the face of the imminent closure of the IDEMA establishment in Salamina, COOMERSA sought to have the administration of that business with a view to making itself known in the community and having a better showcase for the sale of brown sugarloaf. So it began to sell the basic products in the family food-basket, these at first being produce with the IDEMA brand. Once the Institute was wound-up, COOMERSA inaugurated its own supermarket in the premises.

The Cooperative also began to sell agricultural supplies, which on being bought wholesale, could be acquired at a lower price than what was on offer in other commercial establishments.

The high-point of the cooperative: promoting productive projects

When the cooperative began to gain strength and increased the number of partners (today they number more than 80), it

⁵ Agroindustry Plants Coordinator. Agriculture Secretary, Caldas Governorship. III Concurso de Lecciones Aprendidas de Agroindustria Rural Rural (III Competition of Learned Lessons in Rural Agroindustry). PRODAR- IICA, INPhO-FAO. July 2006.

initiated a number of projects to improve the quality of the sugar-loaf processed by the association. It managed to get resources from FEDEPANELA and from the Caldas Agricultural Secretariat for improvement in the means of production: the construction of casting rooms, warehouses and sanitary services, and the acquisition of utensils and equipment such as juice-cleaners, storage tanks, mills and engines. With this, the sugar loaf from the different mills became more bland and ideal for consumption.

Besides, the cooperative managed to get training for its members and individuals in areas such as the production of sugarloaf and other areas of interest to the producers such as the management of smaller stock.

With the success achieved by the Cooperative in the commercialisation of the sugar, the producers decided to

venture into the commercialisation of milk since many of them had cattle and were selling their milk to middle-men and were having the same problems that arose before with the sugar. So, COOMERSA presented a project to the Agriculture Secretariat of the Department and was able to become the operator of a processing plant of dairy products set up in Salamina with support from the Japanese embassy, the Caldas Town Council and the Association of North Caldas Municipalities. The project included the training of producers in the processing of dairy products and the hygienic handling of milk.

At the moment, COOMERSA obtains the milk for processing from members and some other individuals at a price more in keeping with the expectations of the producers. At the plant, added value is given to the milk production and the profits remain in the joint capital of the Cooperative.



THE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COOMERSA COOPERATIVE

- Be connected to the farming or agro-industrial sector.
- Be an adult.
- Fill out an application form.
- Pay 60% of the legal minimum salary in effect (this amount may be financed).

“COOMERSA was born out of the initiative of the producers and it is they who nurtured and have consolidated it into a company of solid economy, committed to development, thus making it one of the few successful cooperatives in Caldas.

COOMERSA constantly promotes the technical, economic, social, recreational, cultural and organisational development of the community in general and member producers in particular, with a view to achieving an overall improvement in their quality of life.

The Cooperative has achieved regional recognition seeing that thanks to steps taken by it, the quality of life of member producers has improved considerably in recent years and overall consolidation has been achieved in the farming sector of the municipality. ”



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

This information was provided by Yuri Andrea Gallo, production head of the dairy plant, the manager of the Cooperative, Nestor Jaime Correa, and the secretary of the Cooperative, Lucy Esneda Córtez Hernández.

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6



Rural agroexport of avocado in Costa Rica

German Masís Morales⁶



COSTA RICA

This experience took place in the Los Santos area in the south central region of Costa Rica.

A brief history of APACO

The Association of Agricultural Producers and Marketing (APACO) was established in 1979 as an initiative of 80 small coffee producers in Santa Cruz de León Cortés with the aim of finding productive and marketable alternatives for families in that rural community.

In 1985, the Association was able to establish a grocery store selling products to meet basic necessities at more competitive prices. Subsequently, in 1994 it established a credit fund to finance non-traditional producing activities in that community and surrounding areas, and in 2001 a project for credit and marketing was begun to foster the agricultural diversification of small producers, with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

This cooperative business went through an important experience with the marketing of both agricultural products and basic necessities, as well as the management of financial resources for agricultural and agribusiness production, the creation of microbusinesses, its linking with state and private institutions, and the securing of agreements to carry out projects with several entities such as Acorde, FIA, IDB, the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Council on Production.

Its commercial development helped boost secondary activities such as small farming, the installation of biodigesters, soil improvement, reforestation, recycling, creation of avocado-based products and an agrotourism initiative on coffee, avocado and fruit plantations: "PROTURCO".

APACO's most noteworthy experience has been the drive to produce 150 hectares of Hass avocado for export, with technical and financial support due to the establishment of the nurseries and the attention to the crops up to packaging and marketing stage.

The avocado gamble

The production and export of avocado originated from the initiative of agricultural diversification among small producers in the Santa Cruz community. They found that tall fruit trees such as blackberry, passion fruit, naranjilla and avocado could be introduced to their exhausted but fertile farms to supplement the income from coffee cultivation, their traditional activity.

In 2002, APACO finalised a project with support from the National Programme for Productive Reconversion to increase the use of technology on the production and export of avocado. This included the establishment of a nursery, the sale of inputs, technical and financial assistance for crop management, a storage facility and marketing of avocado at the disposal of the producers and the community, and consultancy at the post-harvest and export stages.

Finally, with the consolidation of the exportable production of this fruit, an "Avocado Fair" was organised in 2006. This activity promoted consumption and cuisine using this product as well as agrotourism in the Santa Cruz community.

⁶ School of Economics, National University. IV Concurso de Sistematización de Experiencias Exitosas en Agronegocios Rurales en América Latina y el Caribe (IV Compilation of Systematisation of Successful Experiences in Agribusiness in Latin America and the Caribbean). PRODAR-IICA, November 2008.

In addition, construction has recently begun on a new packaging plant for the product, with more space and better

equipment for selecting and preserving the avocado, according to the quality requirements of foreign markets.

“Currently, APACO produces and exports avocado to Central America and the Caribbean. Its brand HassTico is recognised in foreign markets and generates local employment and net income of more than US\$400 000 annually for producers, something which has improved the quality of life of Santa Cruz families.”



POSITIVE IMPACTS

- APACO's export of avocado represents an effort in agricultural diversification with a vision of sustainability. There has been an integrated development of the activity from the reproduction of the seed, sowing, crop management, harvesting, post-harvesting, storage and marketing of the product.
- The aims of achieving efficient agricultural production have been combined with the drive of agribusiness to generate value, develop products and penetrate foreign markets.
- The success of the activity reflects a management model guided to maximise human, technical and financial capacity and to strengthen the social capital of the rural population.

Some lessons learnt

Avocado production has generated a genuine “know-how” among the small farmers of León Cortés with respect to the establishment of the crop, its technology, post-harvest management, adding value and foreign marketing.

One of the lessons learnt is that it is possible to combine productive activities and to boost diversification in harmony with the agroecological conditions, maintaining traditional

activities (coffee) along with tall crops that allow maximisation of the farm's resources.

Other lessons refer to the importance of a vertical structure for the activity and the cooperative management of the chain.

The León Cortés farmers have been successful, increasing their capacities and resources in a sustainable way via the commercial activity of avocado and the equity in local distribution of the generated benefits.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

APACO. Hand out/ APACO. “Financiamos su proyecto productivo” (We finance your productive project). Handout/ APACO. “Guía para el establecimiento de plantaciones de aguacate” (Guide to establishing an avocado farm) Interview with Mr. Carlos Gamba, General Manager.

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STRATEGIES TO GAIN ACCESS TO MARKETS

7



La Pampa sheep farmers organise and improve their production

Marcelo Rubén Real Orellano⁷



ARGENTINA

This project was carried out in the southeast of the La Pampa province, Argentina.

Project background

The southeast of La Pampa has semidry agricultural climatic conditions with marked annual changes in rain and temperature, and a soil of low yield.

The farmers in the area were, for the most part, micro and small farmers who at the beginning of the project had small flocks of sheep for personal consumption, no breeding or marketing planning, little diversification and low economic and environmental sustainability.

On the other side, the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA) had at its disposal a technical budget for sheep breeding in semidry areas, in addition to a system with rural outreach, and towns sought to collaborate on all processes that involved small producers.

In this context, INTA sought to give a boost to small farmers with technological limitations and contribute to the region's development through a project focusing on sheep breeding.

Planning stage

The project was developed between 2003 and 2008, in an area of 10.000 km² that included five towns. They were already able to use a socio-productive analysis of the report.

The action strategies were: training, partnership, small projects in research and adaptative experiments, and technical and personnel assistance from INTA.

The areas of focus were: increasing sheep breeding, improving the quality of the final product, developing partnerships, agricultural diversification, sensitisation about environmental fragility and erosion, and improvement of marketing conditions.

The three stages of the project

First stage: 2003-2005.

Formation of informal partnership groups

The project begins with the enlisting of farmers who formed two groups to work in teams, enlist other farmers, organise meetings, field trips and training sessions.

Work began on breeding, since there were sheep flocks of different breeds and grades of genetic improvement, and low producing management practices and differences in quality. It was proposed that a multipurpose local breed with high genetic value be used, using the most fertile breeders and adopting new management practices. This increased the number of heads in the flock, homogenised the quality of the lamb meat and improved the marketing of the product.

On their part, the farmers proposed that a regional conference take place called Expo Ovino where they showcased products, exchanged experiences and organised a large sale of lamb. They also decided to elect a new fair body that will ensure their representation but will not pose a risk to the partners' capital: a "consortium of farmers".⁸

⁷ INTA EEA Bordenave. IV Concurso de Sistematización de Experiencias Exitosas en Agronegocios Rurales en América Latina y El Caribe (IV Compilation of Systematisation of Successful Experiences in Agribusiness in Latin America and the Caribbean). PRODAR-IICA. October 2008.

⁸ Legal figure of provincial scope in which a group of producers join efforts, without the integration of capital or group civic responsibilities. The integrants of a consortium can gain access to some benefits such as considerations for the services, but they cannot, as such, trade products.

**Second stage: 2005-2007.
Formation of the Consortium**

In 2005 the “Los Pastores del Sur Sheep Farmers’ Consortium” was established. It sought to have a structure with high representation in the area since it involved farmers from a large region.

Thanks to training sessions, good practices and alliances, the production and diversity, as well as the commercial and institutional management of the Consortium improved. It developed a quality brand “Los Pastores del Sur®” for cheeses, icecreams, cold cuts, sausages, fleeces and thread, and organised new editions of the Expo Ovina. It also created a Women’s Group to create handcrafted items from the fleece.

The partners wanted to incorporate another partner to better respond to areas such as marketing and external relations. They opted for the creation of a cooperative.

**Third stage: 2008.
Formation of the Cooperative**

This period has been characterized by the formation of the Regional Cooperative of “Los Pastores del Sur” Sheep Farmers (with 24 partners), and by having achieved greater institutional interrelations, participation in a research and development project, recognition for the “Los Pastores del Sur®” brand and development of a commercial experience with sheep products.

EVOLUTION OF PRODUCTS OBTAINED AND THEIR QUALITY					
2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Fleece in bulk					
		Fleeces and handcrafted fabrics			
		Fleeces differentiated by quality (PROLANA)			
Lamb meat of equal quality					
			Lamb meat of specific quality		
				Milk	
				Cheeses	
				Icecreams	
				Cold cuts	

“ Before the project, many separate farmers coexisted, with small flocks in parcels of land with low productive diversity and little care for the environment. The project brought about the construction of a Regional Cooperative and the adoption of technology with alternatives as regards productive diversification of high value added, improving the farmers’ quality of life. ”



SOME LESSONS LEARNT

- The time of each person has to be respected when a partnership is undertaken.
- Local institutions have a key role in consolidating new forms of management.
- Development projects must take note of agricultural climate and socio-cultural issues in order to minimize unforeseen possibilities.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Real Ortellado, Marcelo Rubén. Coordinator of the Project and Consultant to the Regional Cooperative.

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For more information visit: www.inta.gov.ar/anguil/cr/grupos/grupopastores.htm / Documents from the INTA Profeder Project: www.dowagro.com/ar/resources



The family agricultural fair: promoting small farming and craft production

Marta Sánchez Miñarro⁹



ARGENTINA

This event took place in Santiago del Estero, in the north of Argentina.

A successful coming together of producers and consumers

The Craft fair was organised by the Undersecretary for Culture in the Municipality of that province. It was held from the 8th to the 31st of July, 2007. About 50 organizations of small producers and crafts-people from the province of Santiago del Estero took part in it.

Within this Fair was organised the Fair for Products from Family agriculture, which brought together organised country-folk connected to the Social Farming Programme (PSA) and to the Prohuerta and Minifundio programmes from the National Institute for Farming Technology, (INTA).

So, from north to south and from east to west of the province, organised small farmers from the 17 departments were able to offer their products directly to the local buyers and to tourists from distant urban centres such as Córdoba, Rosario or Buenos Aires.

The event turned into a multi-purpose happening. On the one hand, the rural folk were able to establish direct contact with the visitors and fix their own prices. In some cases, commercial links were established with buyers, and the farmers became aware of some key aspects of commercialization, such as quality, presentation, pricing and negotiating.

On the other hand, there was a rich exchange of experiences among country folk from very distant parts of the province. And, lastly, it created an opportunity for reflection and learning

for the farmers and the visiting public thanks to the programming of discussions on agro-ecology, food sovereignty, business plans, micro-financing, “producer to producer” tips, etc.

How the idea of the fair came about

The fair was the result of the positive balance from previous experiences in direct commercialization of their produce by some groups of farmers and the need to create more frequent opportunities for sale. It also came about to cater to a niche in the local urban population interested in fresh farm produce and reviving traditions through craft.

The PSA and the INTA took note of those concerns and put things in place to plan for the participation of the producers in a central setting and in the city’s most important month.

Its development

The planning for the Family Agricultural Fair involved holding previous meetings with a number of public and private stakeholders: the PSA, the INTA, the Under-secretariat for Culture, the Rural Development Programme for Northeast Argentina, the Department of Health and Social Development, the architect of the Municipality and the speakers on the panel-discussions, among others.

The planning and holding of the Fair was carried out in several stages:

⁹ Trading Responsible – Urban Agriculture Program of Rosario Municipality. IV Concurso de Sistematización de Experiencias Exitosas en Agronegocios Rurales en América Latina y El Caribe (IV Compilation of Systematisation of Successful Experiences in Agribusiness in Latin America and the Caribbean). PRODAR-IICA. October 2008.

The call: To get the attention of the visiting public, a campaign of diffusion and publicity was carried out through: brochures (5.000 copies); a three-page information leaflet, diffusion on radio programmes and in magazines; invitations to stakeholders in the area and diffusion among the main rural organisations.

Participants: A survey was made of the groups who might have an interest in participating in the fair; with data from the

accompanying technician, the products they would be presenting and other data to assess their profile.

The logistics: The participating groups were set up in stands located in a main tent 10x24 m². The technicians connected to the small producers and craftsmen were briefed on the products that could be exhibited, their presentation, prices and publicity.



SOME OF THE POSITIVE IMPACTS

The products that received most sales were the leather-craft, fabrics and breads. In second place were the preserves and the medicinal soaps; and in third place the liqueurs, cheeses, honey, plantains, greens, pottery, woodcraft and cold porcelain.

The greatest volume in terms of sales was in the area of leather craft (more than \$100/day), followed by Pottery (\$200/day), fabrics (\$50/day), bread - products, preserves and liqueurs (between \$40 and \$50/day) and lastly the soaps, preserves and medicinal plants (between \$20 and \$25/day).

68% of the participants made some sales contact and 42% percent were able to exchange products.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNT

- It is necessary, beforehand, to do preparatory work with the participants in key areas such as: the stand, product stock, presentation, consensus on prices and commercial dealings.
- Previous coordination among the stake-holders involved and the assumption of commitment is crucial.
- The support of the local soil expert involved in the day-to-day work of the farming families is very important. Bonds of trust facilitate the task and respect for agreements.
- It is advisable to establish agreements previously vetted by the farmers with respect to the logistics for the functioning of the fair (stand, product, daily dynamic, getting along with each other, etc).



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

This file came out of the reflections of the author, who was a Referent of the PSA.

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A successful experience in the industrialization of native potatoes in Bolivia

Augusto Guidi¹⁰



BOLIVIA

This experience was undertaken in Bolivia, with emphasis in the departments of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.

WHAT DOES PROINPA DO?

The Foundation for Promotion and Research of Andean Products (PROINPA) works with a chain focus, bearing in mind all the links and actors that form part of it, with their problems and their potentialities; identifying their demands to set up projects that will improve their performance, competitiveness efficiency and sustainability; and respecting the culture of the actors.

The potato and its industrialization in Bolivia

With the support of the International Center of the Potato (CIP), PROINPA carried out, in the year 2000, the first study of "Characterization of the agro-alimentary chain of the potato and its industrialisation in Bolivia". This showed four results:

1. Production, supply to the industry and traditional processing are deficient (unstable quality and price, low yields and ignorance of the varieties) but they have potential: under-utilised bio-diversity, varieties that make for high industrial yields, a culture of potato consumption, chuño and tunta, and shortages in some periods.
2. Industrial and traditional production is small and technology poor: the industry processes only 1% of the national production; there are few small industries, the majority being artisanal; there is an intensive use manual labour and scarce use of technology and finance; low quality standards persist; few by-products of potato are registered; and processing technologies are obsolete.
3. In the market, the locally produced products compete with better-quality, imported products: 40% of these have no brands; 40% are distributed between Lucana, Cabañitas, Chipitas and others; and the imported potato chips have up to 16% of the market (Pringles, Dorytos, Fritolay).
4. Organization among producers and their relationship with the industry is poor: They produce and market individually and at prices set by the wholesaler; marketing is done through middlemen, which raises the costs; and there is no respect for quality, in the presence of mistrust.

¹⁰ PROINPA Foundation. Agribusiness Area. III Concurso de Lecciones Aprendidas de Agroindustria Rural (III Competition of Learned Lessons in Rural Agroindustry). PRODAR- IICA, INPhO-FAO, June 2006.



Identified demands, opportunities and responses

In the face of these results, PROINPA and the CIP developed the methodology of Participatory Focus of Productive Chains (EPCP) whose objective is that small producers be closer linked to the markets, be more competitive and be able to respond to the new demands.

The EPCP has three separate stages which were applied as follows:

Stage 1: quality evaluation

In April of 2003 a quality evaluation was carried out on the potato chain in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz with different actors and support institutions. This facilitated the identification of problems and possible solutions. In August was held the first meeting for coordination among stakeholders where there was

participation from the processors, merchant representatives, organised groups of producers and support institutions. There the information from the evaluation was analysed and three thematic groups were organised: "potato seed", "potato for the chips industry" and "selected and bagged potato".

Stage 2: analysis of business opportunities

After the first event, the interested groups of business people continued their meetings to analyse and highlight business opportunities. The group from "selected and bagged potatoes" was more interested in working with native potatoes, and the group from "processed potatoes" saw a better opportunity in the chips from native potatoes.

Stage 3: business implementation

This stage has to do with the implementation of agri-business itself. For the native potatoes, market studies and surveys were carried out; marketing support (posters, brochures, participation in fairs, events, design of brands and labels); advice on industrial production (development of new products and HACCP); support for organizational reinforcement (training in the basic pillars of a company: technology, work, human resources and the market) and the development of strategic alliances; technological development (transfer in MIC and post-harvest; management of capital (relations with support institutions and financing companies, the granting of rotary funds in supplies; and human resources (organizational, administrative and business management.

“The development of the potato agro-industry in the countries of high biodiversity, with an agriculture of small producers, reduced areas, under-developed technology, low yields and heterogeneous productions would be difficult to achieve with the traditional approach of seeking efficiency and competitiveness through economies of scale and vanguard technology. It is more convenient to promote comparative advantages, develop small potato processing companies and products with special characteristics directed at high-income consumers or special niche markets. This type of product could be classified among the so-called organic ones, with a cultural or territorial identity, nutraceutic, from supportive markets etc. It is recommended that the necessary studies and tests be done to achieve its successful development.”



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Bemet T., Thiele G., Devaux A., Lopez G. Enfoque Participativo de Cadenas Productivas. CIP- Andean Potatoe. Lima, Peru. 2004 26 p. / Barrero A. Guidi A. Aguilera. Perfil del consumidor del producto papa y sus derivados industriales en las tres principales ciudades de Bolivia. PROINPA, CIAT y la UMSS. Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 3 volumes, 28 p, 41 p. y 32 p. / Encinas, F.M, Arze, X, Carvajal M. Investigación cualitativa, cuantitativa y auditoria de puntos de venta de chips de papa nativa de Lucana en la ciudad de Cochabamba. Working documents, Foundation PROINPA, Cochabamba Bolivia 2005, (3 volumes) 45 p, 38 p, y 16 p. / Guidi A. Mamani P. Caracterización de la cadena agroalimentaria de la papa y su industrialización en Bolivia. Working document 14, Foundation PROINPA, Cochabamba Bolivia, 2000. 90 p. / Irigoyen J, Mamani P. Evaluación participativa con la industria de nuevas variedades de papa nativa por su aptitud para la obtención de chips. Technical Foundation PROINPA, Cochabamba Bolivia 2004 12 p.

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Promoting gourmet products in regional economies

Federico Romanella ¹¹



ARGENTINA

Why this project?

The main motive that gave rise to this project, carried out by the author, was observing that in the Argentine hinterland there are excellent small companies with very well-finished products but which do not have access to the large urban centres since they have neither the finance nor the knowledge of the channels for marketing.

How to be a good trader in three steps

At the first stage, a wide range of products with the potential to be marketed was selected and contact was made with every one of the respective producers to find out about their production processes, the quality of their supplies and the organization of their companies, among other variables. The first products that were marketed were tea, cooked mate, mate herb, sugar, honey, cheeses, caprines and bovines, "cookies" and "biscottis". The providing companies were medium or small (from two to 15 employees) and, except for the cheese producer, they did not have any sales force nor their own distribution mechanism.

At the second stage, the products that were marketed in the end were selected. The main factor involved in this selection (apart from the degree of professionalism of the producer and how the product had fared in the market) was the differentiation, in other words, the product provided the consumer with an added value over the competition or the existing substitutes. The products selected were those of the Luigi Veronelli brand: dry pastas, sweet bread and "pandoro" (gold bread). This small company has four employees and is to be found in the locality of Junín, in the province of Buenos Aires.

The third stage consisted of the marketing of the product in Buenos Aires. To this end, a data-base was built up of potential customers who were subsequently paid a visit. They had outlined to them the advantages of the product and delivery service, and they were given samples and lists of prices. After a period of 15 days, they were called: 25-30% of the clients visited took an interest in the products and a commercial relationship was begun.

The positive impacts

The principal gains from this project were:

Gaining the trust of the product manufacturers and the clients

The manufacturers were made aware of commercial exchanges experienced with the clients: what they are asking for, what their tastes are, what they think of the prices and how the competition operates. The relationship with them was consolidated, showing them commitment: their web-page was designed, the expenses for product samples and brochures were shared, and their growth was supported. Team work facilitated the achievement of improvement in product and service.

¹¹ Author and executant of the Project. IV Concurso de Sistematización de Experiencias Exitosas en Agronegocios Rurales en América Latina y El Caribe Caribe (IV Compilation of Systematisation of Successful Experiences in Agribusiness in Latin America and the Caribbean). PRODAR-IIICA. October 2008.



The clients trust was gained by providing an excellent delivery service (seven days a week), maintaining uniformity in the quality of the products, offering immediate solutions and showing interest in their business. So, for example, the clients were helped in not buying in excess, they were advised on the advantages of the product, its manufacture, origin and rotation, and trade promotions were realised at the points of sale.

Incorporating large accounts into the clients' portfolio

This action had a double benefit: on the one hand the large clients allowed for an increase in turn over and obtaining greater income, and on the other hand they became a calling-card for the following potential clients.

Having an atomized network of clients

This facilitated spreading the risk, both from the point of view of collection as well as from that of volume of sales.

“ Confidence in the chain “producer, distributor, merchant” is the key variable for growing in a solid and sustainable way. ”



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

All the information comes from the particular experience.

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For more information on products promoted see: www.blesfoods.com

Lessons learned

The lessons learned can be divided into two groups:

- Those related to the manufacturer-product relationship:
 - The product to be chosen must be difficult to substitute so as to limit the competition. It is preferable if it necessitates sophisticated working which makes it difficult to copy.
 - It should not be viable to produce the goods on an industrial scale, that is to say, on a large scale, so that it would not be of interest to the large companies.
 - The products should be niche market and consumer trends indicate that they will gradually increase.
 - The products should have different seasons (when consumption of one decreases the other increases) in order to keep sales stable throughout the year.
 - The quality of the raw materials used should be recognised worldwide.
 - One should know the producers well to ensure volume, price and quality.
- Those related to the process of selection of the clients:
 - It is crucial do a prior selection of clients, analysing their financial status and if their consumers will buy the products.
 - At first, it is better to make do with small sales but collect on all that is sold. Otherwise, one could incur unnecessary expenditure.
 - So that the customer will value his provider; it is crucial to draw up a policy of service to the client which will include: calling by phone to set up the order; precise the day and time of delivery of the product, having change at the moment of delivery, provide an invoice and show products so that the client can check what he is being charged for.





APPRAISAL OF THE LOCAL



The aguadeño hat: a generator of associativeness

Ana María Tabares Castrillón¹²



COLOMBIA

This experience took place in the municipality of Aguadas, north of the department of Caldas, in Colombia.

The area known as Aguadas

Was inhabited by the Armas Indians of the Tahamí ethnic group and after the conquest, that city was founded at the beginning of the XIX century. Its economic processes involve the primary as well as the secondary and tertiary sectors. Particularly outstanding are the coffee and plantain crops, cattle-ranching, handicraft made from iraca fibre material (hats, bags and miniatures) and trading in the municipal capital. Besides, there are reports of deposits of coal, clay, silver and platinum, among others.

The origin of the Aguadas hat and its importance

Production of this hat, known all over the world, dates back to the middle of the last century, when a visitor from Ecuador discovered that the iraca was growing wild in the region. Having knowledge of the technique for the preparation of iraca fibre and that of the making of hats, he spread his knowledge among his relatives and friends. Later, workshops were set up in which both men and women were employed.

The Aguadas hat has been for many years a representative symbol of the municipality of Aguadas and one of the most important craft products of the region. In this area there is a large artisan community that used to do trading individually through middle-men, getting low prices which did not cover the basic costs of production.

In 1986, a group of organizations joined forces to support the Craft Cooperative and stabilise prices. In 1990, the Aguadas Cooperative of Coffee-growers took charge, offering direct support to the production and marketing of the iraca hats both in the country as well as abroad.

“**The Handicraft Cooperative of Aguadas is a supportive economic organization whose objective is to strive continually for improvement in the economic, social, technical and cultural condition of its 300 female members, producers of hats and other handicraft from the iraca palm.**”

The business today

The Handicraft Cooperative of Aguadas is a non-profit organization whose members are at the same time workers and managers. It was created with the objective of producing and distributing articles and services in a coordinated and efficient manner in order to satisfy the needs of its members and the community in general.

¹² Agroindustry Plants Coordinator, Agriculture Secretary, Caldas Governorship. III Concurso de Lecciones Aprendidas de Agroindustria Rural (III Competition of Learned Lessons in Rural Agroindustry). PRODAR- IICA, INPhO-FAO, July 2006.

The Cooperative offers the following services: marketing, technical assistance, handicraft development, social welfare and cooperative and social education. The members are involved in a rural and suburban economy that combines craft with household chores. 97% of the husbands of the members are coffee-growers. Handicraft has an influence on the family circle



“ The handicraft is produced by weaving bio-degradable fibres extracted from the leaves of the iraca (*Carluduvica palmata*), a palm grown along with other important products from the region such as coffee and banana, and which is dyed with natural colours extracted from the bark of trees, flower petals, and wild fruit and seeds. The final touch is a complex process which lasts for between three and four weeks, depending on the delicacy of the fibre. ”

Members and supporters

The Cooperative is made up of 300 craft women, from young ones who have just begun in that world of work, to old ladies who have been doing it for generations. These women have great manual dexterity which allows them to weave the fibre of the iraca palm.

The Cooperative is also receiving support from AGROAGUADAS, the Association of Food & Livestock Producers of Aguadas which advises the craftswomen in organisational management. It also collaborates on the articulation of the productive chain of the iraca, strengthening it through the contact between the different stake-holders – producers, craftspeople and distributors – with the aim of creating linkages which pay dividends in efficiency, output, quality and marketing.

The craft design laboratory, which functions in conjunction with the Municipal Government of Caldas and Craftsmen of Colombia provides advice on the improvement of the system of production being used, with a view to improving the levels of

in that it provides the option of an additional income.

The Cooperative also offers training for the improvement of production techniques and the quality of products which, apart from hats, include bags, miniature objects, bottle-cases, jewelry-cases, baskets, doilies among other things.

efficiency and to making these craftswomen more and more competitive.

At the moment, the Cooperative can count on a few channels of national distribution and is working on the design of a strategy which will facilitate its marketing abroad.

Lessons learned

The key factor in the success of the Aguadas craftswomen has been their 'associativeness', that is to say their integration into the Aguadas Craft Cooperative. Thanks to this, they have been able to improve their quality of life, get the recognition they deserve for the job they have been doing for decades and the tools they need to survive in a globalized world market. Today, the Cooperative is seeking to continue a tradition of craft of quality through organization and solidarity, demonstrating that the best way to achieve development is through mutual cooperation.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Revista Salón, Juan Carlos García Medina, AGROAGUADAS and Alcaldía Municipal.

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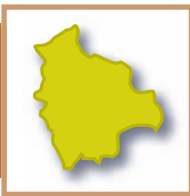
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Llama charkhi: an ancient dish with territorial identity

Antonio R. Tejerina Gómez¹³



BOLIVIA

This experience unfolded in Turco, a community located in the province of Saïama, 164 km southwest of the city of Oruro, in the region of the central high land of Bolivia.

What is charkhi?

Traditional food products with a territorial identity show a growing commercial importance, primarily because of their specific nature and because of the traditions revived with them. In Bolivia, one of those emblematic products is the “charkhi”, a term which has ancestral roots in the Aymará and Quechua languages, and which means “dehydrated or sun-dried meat of the llama”.

Charkhi is produced in the Altiplano which can boast of optimum climatic characteristics for the dehydration of meat: intense sunshine, low relative humidity and low temperatures.

This process is as old as the Andean man himself and just as efficient, from a technical point of view, as any other artificial alternative. There is, in fact, no other method that is more simple, economical and effective in keeping the meat for several years without its nutritive and palatable qualities deteriorating. The llama Charkhi is made up of 57% protein and 7.5% fat.

When discrimination gave way to agro-industry and expanded trade

At first, charkhi came up against certain prejudices which translated into a discrimination and lack of official recognition of camel meat, thus relegating its trade and consumption to being

semi-clandestine. This forced the development of the product into parallel or informal urban commercial circuits, in some cases without legal or sanitary protection from the respective authorities.

One decade ago, a project was started for the production of llama charkhi in sun dryers, when the first rural abattoir for camels started to function in Turco. At the first stage, the available information was analysed as well as the know-how of the rural producers from the region, who placed much value on the techniques of their ancestors. Having identified a leader group that would take charge of the project, there was included the validation of an appropriate technology of dehydration, the same that employs drying rooms with a drying area of 12 square meters covered with a special plastic material or polycarbonate.

The leader group also took charge of all the work of market penetration, participation in trade-fairs and sampling of the product.

At the moment, some 20 rural small-businesses produce llama charkhi in bags, thus generating 100 jobs. The annual production of charkhi is approximately 800 tons, with an average annual growth rate of 9.7% and a gross production value of around 2 million US\$ per year.

¹³ Rural Agroindustry Net of Oruro, Bolivia. Sistematización de Experiencias de Productos Tradicionales con Identidad Territorial Territorial (Sistematization of Experiences in Traditional Foods with Territorial Identity). PRODAR-IICA and INPhO-FAO, August 2005.

Because of the importance of this commodity and the increasing demand from different markets, the small-businesses have organised themselves as the National Association of Charkhi Producers (ANPROCHAC).

Industrial production is carried out in a hygienic manner and according to the norms of best production practices that are issued by the Bolivian Institute of Standards and Quality (IBNORCA).

Today, the municipality of Turco is considered the main provider of the finished product, not only in the national but also in the international arena, with initial exports to Chile and Argentina.

A contribution to bolivian gastronomy and tourism

This product has facilitated the preparation of various Bolivian dishes using, as a base, dehydrated llama meat, for which there are specific recipe guidelines. Besides, it has become a cultural heritage of the region which reinforces the tourism generated by the famous Carnaval de Oruro and by the legal declaration of the province of Sajama as the "Capital of South American Camel (meat) in Bolivia".



HOW IS CHARKHI PREPARED

The preparation begins with the quartering of the carcass, de-boning, cutting-out the fat, the slicing, seasoning and the drying in sun-rooms. The drying may last from three to four days in winter and five to seven days in the rainy season. When the charkha is collected, the remaining fat is removed then it is pounded and packed. From one llama carcass 8 to 10 kilos charkhi is obtained.

The product is usually processed during the periods of intense cold and deep frost. The quality in the end depends on the state of health of the animals, hygiene, methods of processing, the temperature and humidity of the environment, and the length of time exposed to the sun.

“ Llama charkhi is a product with the potential to receive a name of origin since it brings together local knowledge and care of the environment and it has peculiar qualitative characteristics linked to the territory in which it is produced. ”



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Ortiz de Moya V., Van Rijckeghem M., 1993. In defense of the Llama/Alpaca Meat. Cedidas. Tejerina G. A., 1995. The Commercialization of the Meat and Charkhi of Camels. Conpac/UE. Tejerina G. A., 2004. Turco – Agro-tourism and Local Development. REDAR.

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From the sweet heart of Caldas: biscuit manufacturing and marketing

Team from the Caldas Secretariat of Agriculture¹⁴



COLOMBIA

This experience took place in the town of Supía, situated in the north west of the Caldas department in Colombia. It has 25 005 inhabitants.

“ Supía, biscuit territory, is renowned for this spherical sweet that comes from a crystallization of sugar syrup or from brown sugarloaf stuck to a small macaw palm nut (*Acrocomia aculeata*). This typical confectionary produced by several microbusinesses in brown sugar mills is a key aspect of the town’s economy. ”

A brief history

Supía is a town founded in 1540 by the Spanish who came to tap the mines. They brought Africans from Mozambique, thereby pushing the indigenous people of the region into the background because they considered them to have little physical capacity for mining.

It is estimated that the first cultivation of sugar cane and construction of sugar mills occurred in the macaw palm nut (which is abundant in the area), instead of the pieces of coconut or peanuts used in the original recipe.

The biscuits were mainly made from non-refined sugar syrup that was produced in the mills and that gave the product a brown colour. With the emergence of large sugar refineries, the production of syrups was stopped in the region and the biscuits began to be made with brown sugarloaf syrup or from refined sugar obtained on the local market.

At the start of the 20th century, the biscuits were given as gifts to children in stores where their families shopped, as a means of encouraging customer loyalty. The biscuit thus became the traditional sweet in the town.

The first reference to the commercialisation of the biscuits goes back to the 1930s, when the owner of a mill started to sell sugar biscuits and brown sugarloaf wholesale. But during the time known as “The Violence” incited by the death of liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the mills decreased their production and the biscuits lost prominence.

The rebirth of the biscuit-making skill

At the end of the 1950s, in an attempt to leave aside the trauma caused by confrontations between political parties, people began to revive traditional festivals that often were celebrated before the arrival of the Spanish.

Wanting to be able to depend on a celebration, the town of Supía decided to revive the old festival of the “matachines” dancers, renaming it for something that was symbolic of the region. They opted for the traditional biscuit and in 1960 the celebration of the “Biscuit Festival” was institutionalised.

With the celebration of the Festival began a new era for the product in which it regained the importance of its early days. Its production was thus resumed to meet the growing demand. For many years, the biscuit was bought only by inhabitants of

¹⁴ Sistematización de Experiencias sobre Alimentos Tradicionales con Identidad Territorial (Sistemization of Experiences in Traditional Foods with Territorial Identity). PRODAR-IICA, INPhO-FAO, August 2005.

the region and by some occasional visitors who came mainly during the festival.

A new era of commercial expansion

In the 1980s, with the construction of a highway that links the coffee zone with the Atlantic Coast, points of sale were established for biscuits and other products such as whiteners and pionono pastries.

Thus biscuits from Supía came to be known throughout the entire country, with demand increasing significantly and developing into a key industry for the town's economy. This generated several sources of employment through the planting of sugarcane, its agronomic management, cane-cutting, collection, transport to the mill, conversion to syrups, biscuit production and its marketing.

Today, the biscuits have a health standards certificate issued by the Town and they are packaged in clear plastic bags and on icopor trays with cristaflex.

Biscuits are distributed from the production sites to the different points of sale: stores, supermarkets and the main transport terminals in the coffee zone. The main point of sale is still at the place known as El Palo, situated on the highway that goes to Supía.

A tourism driver

The production of brown sugarloaf allowed the Town to develop an agrotourism process known as the "Sugarloaf Route", which consists of a tour where tourists can observe the sugarcane plantations and mills, sample guarapo (typical regional drink) and buy biscuits and fresh brown sugarloaf.

On these tours, visitors experience the main activity of the region, thus participating in an exchange of cultures and knowledge that results in the preservation of indigenous traditions.

HOW THE BISCUITS ARE MADE

The biscuit manufacturing process varies according to the place of manufacture:

At the mill:

Production begins with the cutting and grinding of the sugarcane to extract the juice. Then, it is pre-cleaned by sedimentation and taken to the ovens where, in a brick oven fuelled by cane bagasse, open evaporation of the juice takes place, preliminary clarification with vegetable mucilage.

During evaporation 90% of the water in the juice is lost. The concentration goes to the "plucking" stage, that is, until the sucrose crystallises. This occurs at approximately 118°C. Subsequently, the syrup is whipped so that the sucrose crystals expand and their stickiness increases.

At the same time, the macaw palm nuts are prepared. These are roasted and the shells removed. Given their small size, this is tedious work: some adapt the depulping machinery used in coffee production for this purpose.

Finally, the syrup is taken to a cylindrical container where the macaw palm nuts are added. As the cylinder rotates, the syrup begins to stick to the nuts and forms small balls until it solidifies.

At another location:

When the biscuits are produced in different sites to the mill, the process begins with the melting of the already broken up brown sugarloaf or sugar, depending on the type of biscuit desired. The rest of the process is the same.

Initially the sugar biscuits were colourless. With the re-emergence of the Festival, they began to give them colour using natural colorants, initially pink. Currently, there are white and green biscuits.



Biscuit producers work with professionals in food engineering, agribusiness, design, publicity and marketing, who help them to improve quality and competitiveness.



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Information was provided by lawyer and historian, Jorge Eliécer Zapata Bonilla, director of the Caldas Academy of History (Academia Caldense de Historia) and Director of Culture at the Supía Civic Centre; and by biscuit producer Jesús Antonio Ayala, owner of the "Dulces La Cabaña" factory. Information about the town was obtained from a tourist publication edited by the current administration.

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“Aguadas piconos, a heavenly delicacy”: manufacturing and marketing

Ana Maria Tabares Castrillón¹⁵



COLOMBIA

The town of Aguadas is situated in the north of the Caldas región in Colombia, four hours away from Manizales, the region’s capital.

Some background

Founded in 1808, Aguadas has the advantage of being situated along the only route, at the time, between Bogotá and Medellín. This allowed for an accelerated growth and development of knowledge from all over Colombia and other countries.

In the middle of the 20th century, the pionono, a rolled sponge cake filled with caramel, guava jelly and figs, started to be made by the town’s aristocratic families and eaten on special occasions, usually religious ones. Due to the social segregation that prevailed at the time, its recipe was kept as a secret within the upper class.

Soon, the limited access to education resulted in the migration of the wealthier families from Aguadas to cities and, similarly, the more well-off peasants moved to urban areas. With the number of old families dwindling, the remaining families integrated into the rest of the town and shared their culinary knowledge, including the famous pionono recipe.

With the women’s liberation movement, many women left the kitchen and making piconos was no longer important to the town’s inhabitants. Only some of the women who knew the process made them on request. Today, however, Aguadas is recognised on the national and international level for its spongy pionono.

Its marketing

The Aguadas pionono has become a traditional food in the area and a must-have souvenir for visitors to the region (declared as part of the historical heritage of the country), particularly at festival times. This has generated a growing demand which is hoping to be met by a group of microbusinesses dedicated to manufacturing the traditional delicacy.

The pionono is marketed in two packages: one approximately 50 cm long and the other, 25 cm. Weekly production of the pionono gives around 50 units per factory, although this can reach 200 during festival times.

The six microbusinesses dedicated to the manufacture and marketing of the pionono are located in the urban outskirts of the region, usually in the manufacturer’s home, sharing the family kitchen space. Often, this also functions as a point of sale. Each one generates around four direct jobs and, due to the need for ingredients and inputs, generates four other indirect jobs, thus benefiting 50 to 60 families.

The origin of the pionono: between myth and reality

There are several stories in folklore and legends about the origin of the Aguadas pionono. One of them makes reference

¹⁵ Agricultural Secretariat of Caldas, Colombia. Sistematización de Experiencias sobre Alimentos Tradicionales con Identidad Territorial (Sistematization of Experiences in Traditional Foods with Territorial Identity). PRODAR-IICA and INPhO-FAO, August 2005.

to the “Putas de Aguadas”, a mythical character that embodies the jovial and adventurous spirit of Aguaderans. On one of his innumerable adventures, he went up to heaven in the midst of preparations for the celebration of the Virgin Mary’s birthday. When Jesus Christ entrusts the angel in charge of the kitchen to make a very special dessert, the “Putas de Aguadas”, hidden in the kitchen, takes note of the ingredients and the method of making the dessert. When it is taken to the table the celestial court congratulates the angel for such an exquisite delicacy, which they call the pionono in honour of Pope Pío IX. As the “Putas” sees the success of the recipe, he decides to return to

Aguadas to share the recipe of this “heavenly delicacy” with his fellow men.

Another version recounts that, at the beginning of the Second World War, the European bourgeois society started to migrate to America, fleeing the war. In that scenario, a European baroness arrived and stayed with a well-known Aguadas family for a while. In appreciation of the family’s hospitality, she prepared a pionono with ingredients from the region and taught her skill to the women of the house. The pionono recipe is in fact of European origin and came to America in the middle of the last century.



BRIEF RECIPE

The process of making the pionono starts with the preparation of its ingredients.

- The caramel (or “milk jam”) is made in the traditional manner: a mixture of sugar and fresh milk from regional farms is submitted to high temperatures with constant stirring until concentration and caramelization occurs.
- For the guava jelly, the fruit is selected and processed to obtain strained pulp, which is heated until it reaches a concentration that does not allow solidification.
- The figs, prepared beforehand, are cooked with brown sugar loaf or sugar until they become soft. Subsequently, they are cut up into small pieces.

Once the ingredients are ready, they are spread over the surface of the sponge cake; the preparation is rolled and wrapped first in a plastic film, then in paper and lastly in a box or thicker paper, which carries the brand.

“ Traditional consumption of the pionono over the decades has allowed its manufacture and marketing to become factors in the development of several families in Aguadas.

The Aguada pionono stands out for its quality, its incomparable taste and for being a symbol, along with the aguadero hat, of the town that “was born with the country”. ”



SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

Information was provided by historian Anibal Valencia Ospina, teacher, artist and director of the Aguadas House of Culture for more than 20 years, and by Mrs. Janet Muñoz, owner of the Monte Rey piononos factory.

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