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Marketing of Alternative Products of the Tropics of Cochabamba (Bolivia) as Substitutes for the Coca-Cultivation

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 1980s in the tropics of Cochabamba, Bolivia, started a fast spread of “illegal” coca-cultivation. That’s why, in the middle of the 1980s, the government started a program called “Alternative Development”. The objective of this program was to fight against drug-production and drug-trade and gradually reduce the coca-plantation area. To promote the substitution of coca-plantations, the government had to offer alternative crops to the farmers. Unfortunately the program was focused mainly on aspects of production and not on aspects of marketing. Now, that the production of alternative crops has increased, farmers recognize that the marketing of their alternative crops is a major problem. If the marketing conditions of alternative crops will not improve in the near future, farmers will start with the cultivation of coca-plants again. This would destroy the partial success of the coca-substitution-program and would stop the necessary development of the whole region. This survey will identify the most important marketing problems of alternative crops. This can be a starting point to improve the complete marketing chain. The current marketing barriers can be located at different points between production and consumption. A complete investigation of the whole marketing chain of alternative crops is difficult to realize. For this reason, the investigation will focus on areas with a potential high impact. After a preliminary survey the following main constraints were identified: production conditions of different alternative products; trade conditions between different market participants; characteristics of supply and demand; market infrastructure; farmer’s organization to market their products; promotion activities for alternative products and market information. For the survey, primary as well as secondary data was collected in Bolivia. Primary data was collected through interviews with farmers and experts. Since the data has not yet been completely evaluated, the results of the current survey are not yet available.

Keywords: Alternative development, coca-cultivation, marketing chain, marketing of alternative products