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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

The Challenges of Smallholders and Small Entrepreneurs as Indirect Conservationists

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Abstract

Peru is one of the richest countries in highly nutritious agrobiodiversity; however, the commercial varieties produced by research centres conquer the markets and consumers' preferences, contributing directly to the loss of indigenous genetic resources. The commercial varieties are more attractive over the native agrobiodiversity because of their higher crop productivity, bigger final products and shorter times to harvest. Moreover, even when highly nutritive and resistant to plagues, diseases and climate changes, the lack of economic incentives causes then the loss of local knowledge on traditional and sustainable management of the indigenous varieties and their consumption.

This situation is even more critical for smallholders in rural areas as it is too expensive to bring products to the niche markets for such special native products, as these markets are mainly in the capital cities of the regions. The lack of an efficient transport system and deficient conditions of roads, increases the inaccessibility to these markets. Moreover, these niche markets for native products, are also market for organic or ecological products. That means, the smallholders have to register their products as organic with an international certificate or in the PGS (participatory guarantee systems) to get premium prices. Both processes take time, require technical assistance, require social capital, and then the transaction costs increase.

There are several key actors, which should be involved in a strategy to increase nutrition based on native agrobiodiversity, such as the representatives of producers 'organisations, local governments, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women's and Vulnerable Populations' Affairs, universities, ONGs and international funding organisations. But in my poster I will present that for sustainability it is more critical to include the niche markets, such as the Eco-fairs, ecological markets, producers' markets, and all the small entrepreneurs and smallholders, who are currently investing time and financial resources to promote special processed food with native products. These initiatives receive no support from the government, and their legal functioning is surrounded by bureaucratic procedures, high taxes, and no financial facilities, even though they are the only ones guaranteeing the sustainable conservation of indigenous agrobiodiversity and food security.

Keywords: Conservation, native agrobiodiversity, Peru, small entrepreneurs, smallholders, sustainability