







Alliance  

Youth in livestock and the power of education, the case of "Heirs of Tradition"

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Conceptualizing rural youth, lessons from historiography:

- Contested hegemony: peasantry and nation-state formation processes in Latin America¹⁹.
- Agency: relationship between producer families, private companies and the state (from field schools and farm plans to Heirs of Tradition).
- Power dynamics within families, youth livestock producers as a discrete social group^{1,2,4,6,7,9, 11,12,13}.
- Participation in educational projects, as well as in rural household economies.



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The origins of "Heirs of Tradition", (2012-2020)

- Alquería's program and the company's importance in Colombia's dairy sector.
- Pilot initiative in Meta, Colombia, one of the most affected regions due to the presence of armed actors and illicit crops.
- Objective:** to tackle the low rates of schooling amongst producers, and the need for a technification of livestock farms to increase their productivity and, in turn, the quality of life of families.
- Initial field activities were centered on two major fronts: ECAS or field schools (Escuelas de Campo) and the Plan Finca (farm plan), an educational initiative that introduces tools to facilitate the planning and improvement of farms (Alquería's suppliers)¹⁵.

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The role of young participants

- Heirs of Tradition program launched in 2012 in partnership with SENA (National Training Service)
- Objective:** that "young farmers from different parts of the country be trained on livestock practices at no cost and enhance their knowledge and skills on management of soil, animals, and the environment".
- Address generational transfer, critical issue in the livestock sector in Colombia and Latin America at large^{3,5,8,14,16,17}.
- Duration:** two years. It awards the title of *Livestock Production Technologist*.
- The first 18 months students receive their training at SENA educational centers, and the last 6 are spent in practical on-the-job experience.
- 2020-2021, partnership with the Alliance Bioversity International -CIAT (environment, productivity, socioeconomics)

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"I really enjoyed the planning stage of the Farm Plan and decided to get more involved with other activities. I noticed my family needed to improve in several aspects, such as soil management. Later I was told the company had launched a program for us children of small producers, and I applied. It was a very enriching experience for me, and all of us. I am now qualified to assist my family in a professional manner."




  

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The program at a glance (students, disaggregated)

Class	Male	Female	Total
2012/2013	15	7	22
2014/2015	35	11	46
2016/2017	30	16	46
2018/2019	31	15	46
2020/2021	20	11	31
Total	131	60	191



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Regions where students come from




No data: 23
Total: 191

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Assessing the impact achieved (qualitatively)

- Interviewing former and present participants on their perceptions of the program, and exploring if they continued a career in the livestock sector or maintain their bonds with the company.
- Bridging and facing gender disparities (not central to the project from its inception, yet critical in terms of equality, and generational transfer).
- Maintaining the program for educational purposes (that can and will benefit the company), in addition to the improvement of milk quality and farm management.

"I was able to gain vital knowledge and tools to grow professionally, as a farmer and as a family member. Yet, overcoming gender stereotyping was one of the hardest parts, as many employers (producers, managers) could not stand the fact of being somewhat "trained" by a woman."

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Assessing the impact achieved (qualitatively)




- Closer, deeper relationship with producers and their families, getting to know their needs and ways of life
- COVID contingency:** rethink educational initiatives when circumstances deepen existing gaps (gender inequity, access to technology and information, remote learning, etc).
- Build on past and present testimonies to strengthen the program onwards: listening To young farmers, amplifying their concerns and including their feedback. In sum, *contesting hegemonic* relationships, as historiographical readings on rural Latin America suggest.

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