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Palm fruit’s potential for sustainable commercialisation in Pando, Bolivia

ANDREA VIOLETA ARANCIBIA ALFARO¹, CHRISTOPH SCHUNKO¹, DANIEL CALLO-CONCHA²

¹*University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), Dept. of Sustainable Agricultural Systems, Austria*

²*University of Bonn, Center for Development Research (ZEF), Germany*

Abstract

Palm fruits are important non-timber forest products (NTFP) for the livelihoods of rural people in the Amazon region, as many are nutritious foods and have the potential to generate income. However, the conditions for their commercialisation are in many cases underdeveloped. The aim of this study was to assess the potential of four palm fruits for sustainable commercialisation in two different rural communities in Pando, Bolivia: inside and outside of a national reserve. The palm fruits studied were Asai (*Euterpe precatoria* Mart), Majo (*Oenocarpus bataua* Mart), Motacu (*Attalea phalerata* Mart. ex Spreng) and Palma real (*Mauritia flexuosa* L.f.). We gathered data from 14 key informants, using semi-structured online interviews, and 20 community members, using structured interviews. We analysed the data with qualitative content and multi-criteria analyses. Asai was the palm fruit with the highest commercialisation potential due to its high abundance, high demand and targeted institutional support, among others. Second was Majo, which benefited from its similarities with Asai regarding harvesting and processing, but technical processing deficiencies limited its commercialisation. Palma real and Motacu had medium and low potentials because of a lack of knowledge regarding their harvesting and processing and low consumption. The community inside the national reserve had higher potential for palm fruit commercialisation than the community outside, which was due to institutional support for the development of NTFP commercialisation in protected areas. This study demonstrates the importance of considering varied multidisciplinary factors and their interrelations for sustainable commercialisation of NTFP. Furthermore, it served to identify the factors that need further promotion and implementation for each palm fruit studied.

Keywords: Economic income, markets, non-wood forest products, rural producers, sustainable harvesting, value chains, wild fruits