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Assessing the relevance of traditional peasant markets for tuber landrace diversity and food sovereignty on the peruvian andes

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Abstract

On the Peruvian Andes, traditional forms of agricultural production and commercialisation prevail, which offer prospects for conceptualising resilient and sustainable food networks. Ferias campesinas, i.e., peasant markets, are spaces of exchange where diversity of Andean tubers, knowledge, and practices are traded, representing an accessible direct marketing channel for peasant produce. An extensive network of ferias taking place regularly in rural villages and urban centres constitute an ancestral intra-ecological corridor, known as the Qhapaq Ñan, where agricultural exchange and barter from diverse geographies occurs. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Andean peasant economies, as severe mobility restrictions prevented farmers from reaching markets for

selling and buying products essential for their subsistence. The shock of the pandemic, coupled with further economic, political, and environmental crises affecting the global food supply, including climatic changes as well as the drastic increase of fertiliser prices, impact production and marketing cycles and continue to push farmers into poverty. This study sets out to investigate ferias across eight regions of the Peruvian Andes in the aim of evaluating their relevance for peasant economies, landrace diversity, and food sovereignty. For this, we apply a multi-stepped research approach in which we (1)

identify market-related vulnerabilities and farmers’ responses to shocks, (2) measure the levels of tuber diversity prevalent in markets, and (3) assess the relevance of traditional peasant productive and marketing forms in the current shock scenario. This research generates empirical evidence comprising cartographic, quantitative, and qualitative data for understanding the significance of peasant markets. In that manner, we identify pathways for enabling the persistence of peasant productive and economic organisation forms over time.

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