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Conflict dynamics and opportunities for rural women’s associativity under agroecological production schemes in Nariño Colombia

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Abstract

Food shortages are increasingly common in capital cities, even in rural areas suitable for agricultural production. Thus, environmental, economic, or social factors can cause this phenomenon. A common overview for many peasant communities represented by rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean is the lack of associativity, which can affect food production, marketing, and self-consumption. For this reason, this study seeks to analyse the implementation of a project aimed at strengthening the food and nutritional security of rural women of Obonuco in Pasto (Nariño), where technologies were adopted to promote the clean and healthy crop production (vegetables, legumes, aromatic and medicinal plants) and minor livestock species (chickens and guinea pigs). During the execution of the project, changes were evident in the dynamics of teamwork, commitment, and communication by two associative groups of 25 women (each), to carry out the establishment of agroecological gardens, agriculture modules in reduced spaces, awareness for healthy eating and strategies of short marketing circuits. After implementing a SWOT analysis through participatory workshops aimed at the rural women of this project, it was possible to identify land and water use conflicts, a high lack of confidence in working jointly using common goods, and resistance to transfer the ancestral knowledge by some women. Although these problems have a complex historical, cultural, and environmental background, which originates from previous generations and could weaken collective action and the social fabric of the territory, it is worth highlighting the commitment and motivation of most of the members to adopt the knowledge acquired during the execution of the project. However, even though the findings of this study confirm that associativity can be an opportunity to make this community more resilient to food and nutritional insecurity, it is necessary to study its grassroots conflicts to develop strategies to improve cooperative work.

Keywords: Co-innovation, female farmers, food security, peri-urban agriculture